

# LISTENING SESSION LEARNINGS



## BACKGROUND

Local Food Purchasing Assistance provides \$28 million to strengthen the Illinois food system over two years. The funding will buy food from socially disadvantaged farmers and distribute it for free through places in the community like nonprofits, food pantries, schools, and childcare centers. The program wants to ensure that the foods available to people who don't have enough to eat include items that are culturally important to them.

### FUNDER:

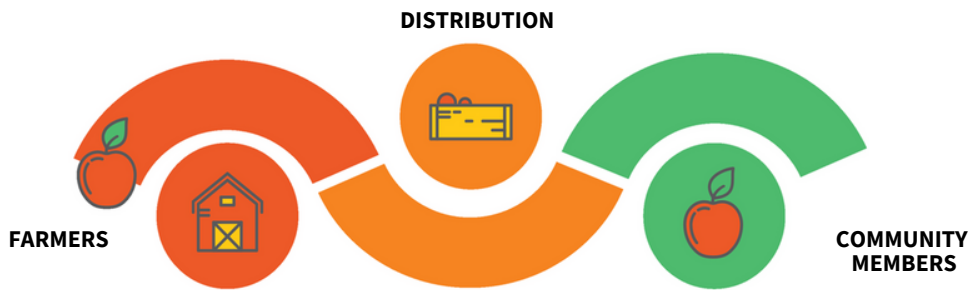
United States Department of Agriculture

### TIMEFRAME:

2023-2025

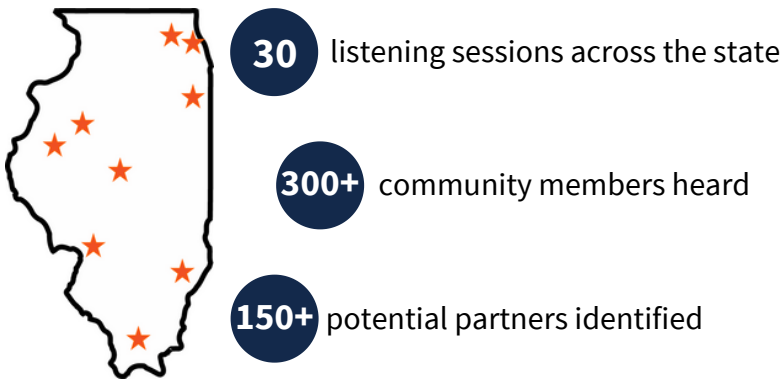
### AWARD AMOUNT:

\$28 million



## LISTENING SESSIONS

Growers, producers, distributors, food access staff, and advocates attended listening sessions throughout Illinois.



*"One thing we want to see is that this actually addresses systemic challenges, so that we're truly using this to change the system as opposed to just shoving food through a pipeline that is broken."*

-Advocate from a virtual session

# Listening Session Learnings

## WHAT ARE THE NEEDS?



### INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS

There is a need for infrastructure to support the local food system including transportation and distribution networks, cold storage, packaging, labor, processing facilities, mobile markets, and ease of access.



### AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities for local agribusiness development were identified that will expand and strengthen our local food system. Needs include cultivating new markets, tools for marketing and businesses development, cost containment, mentoring, succession planning, land access, and connections to local distribution networks.

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***"A sustainable food system requires a new orientation to food – understanding the relationship between food and the land and the connections between human health."***

*-Advocate from Galesburg listening session*

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### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Consumers need help building relationships with their local farmers. Farmers need support connecting to places to sell or distribute their food. Many groups need help connecting to farmers, particularly socially disadvantaged farmers. Sharing best practices and mentoring can support the system. Engaging local, state, and federal policy makers can drive future funding opportunities and support for local food systems.



### MEETING CONSUMER NEEDS

Consumers are often disconnected from where their food comes from. There is a need to raise awareness about foods grown in Illinois and how they get to the consumer. Consumers want more cultural food options and easier access to food through alternative delivery models. There is a need to ensure food does not go to waste by helping with skills in meal prep and food storage.

## NEXT STEPS

To stay connected, [sign up for our mailing list](#).  
If you have questions or comments, email us at [uie-lfpa@illinois.edu](mailto:uie-lfpa@illinois.edu)

