



2024 Community Food Systems Fellowship
an initiative of Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center

Frequently Asked Questions

1) What are the eligibility criteria?

All applications will be screened for eligibility prior to their review.

- The fellow must be based in the United States or one of the US territories
- The fellow must have an established partnership with a nonprofit organization, coalition, network, group, cooperative, business, or institution that has a strategic focus on local food systems.

2) What criteria will be used to select fellows to advance to the final round of the process?

Applicants will advance to the final round of the application process based upon how clearly their application and recommendation can articulate details of the categories outlined below:

- Commitment to developing resilient and equitable local food systems
- Commitment to community leadership, engagement, and the leadership of caregivers and families
- Commitment to food justice, nutrition justice, racial equity and social transformation
- Commitment to addressing inequities, e.g. racial, ethnic, geographic and economic, in your community or state.
- Interest in developing skills to measure impact and success of local food systems
- Interest in developing collaborative leadership skills
- Ability to leverage the Fellowship Cohort experience to build community capacity
- History of effective collaboration and partnership with organizations, groups, or cooperatives within local food systems.

2) What is the deadline for applications?

The Fellowship application period ends on November 3, 2023 at 11:59pm ET.

3) When will Community Fellows be selected?

Applicants will be notified of their status by December 2023. We ask that applicants please hold the program calendar dates as listed in the [Request for Applications](#).

4) Do fellows receive a stipend?

Community Fellows will receive a \$2,500 fellowship stipend. Fellows also have the ability to apply for \$2,500 of innovation pilot project funds, which would be dispersed after the first



12-month of the fellowship program, after a proposal development and action planning period that would take place in the first half of the program

5) What should finalists expect from the virtual interview?

If selected to the final round, applications will be invited to participate in a brief virtual interview in early December 2023. The finalist interview will be no longer than 45 minutes and will take place virtually on Zoom. Finalists can participate in the virtual interview independently. Finalists can also invite a member of their partner organization, coalition, network, program or group, who engages with them in food systems work, to join the interview.

6) What will be discussed in the virtual interview?

An overview of the goals of the interview will be shared with applicants moving into the final phase of the application process.

7) Is there a budget required for the innovation pilot funding or a template we should use?

Fellows are not required to submit a budget for the pilot funds at this time. If awarded, there will be an opportunity to submit a proposal and budget during the fellowship program.

8) What will participation in the Community Food Systems Fellowship include?

Participation in the Community Food Systems Fellowship will include:

- **Virtual Program Launch:** Formal kick off of the fellowship program, scheduled for January 24, 2024 at 2-4pm Eastern. Fellows will have an opportunity to meet and get to know other fellows in the cohort and introduce the program goals, structure, and learning opportunities.
- **Virtual Community Design Labs:** Participation in two sets of Community Design Labs (February 2024 and May 2024) focused on a facilitated co-design process to identify areas of collective action and momentum around key fellowship goals. These workshops will be held virtually over three(3), two-hour sessions, and build on the collective roadmap developed by the 2022-23 fellowship cohorts to develop a collaborative learning tool or resource to share with other leaders in the field.
- **Monthly Group Learning Sessions:** Virtual learning sessions will take place once a month on the **3rd Wednesdays of the month from 2-5pm Eastern** starting in February through December 2024, with the exception of months with Virtual Design Labs and National Convening (February, May, and October 2024). November and December 2023 sessions are scheduled earlier in the month due to holidays. Sessions include active peer-led components to support learning, and capacity and knowledge building around key topics.



- **Bimonthly individual check ins:** With members of the Vital Village Networks team .These regular 1-hr check in’s will be scheduled at a regular time block to be confirmed at the start of the fellowship.
- **In-Person National Convening:** Participation in a community leader convening and project presentation or session during the 2024 National Community Leadership Summit, planned for October 2024. Tentative summit dates are October 14-16, 2024. Location TBD.
- **Peer Groups with Alumni Mentors:** Fellows will be grouped by shared interest, geography, or focus, and matched with an alumni mentor. Groups and alumni mentors are encouraged to meet quarterly to deepen connections and learning with one another.
- **Individualized coaching and technical assistance support,** for innovation pilot grant and collective project implementation, to take place during the final 6-month of the fellowship program.
- **Fellowship Showcase at Virtual Community Food Systems Forum:** Fellows will present their final cohort’s collective project, and share reflections and learnings, in June 2025 in a final session joined by alumni, partners, and other invited stakeholders.

9) When will the Fellowship begin and end? What are the important dates? The Fellowship will begin in January 2024 and end in June 2025. The program is structured in two phases:

- **Part 1: January 2024 - December 2024,** which involves intensive peer learning experience with regular group, small group, and individual meetings. Virtual Design Labs, planned in partnership with the cohort of fellows and other partners, will take place in February 2024 and May 2024, followed by a virtual program kick off session in January. Fellows will collaborate together around a collective project and also present or lead a session in person at Vital Village Networks’ 2024 National Community Leadership Summit, which is tentatively planned for October 14-16, 2024.
- **Part 2: January 2025 - June 2025,** which involves self-directed time focused on applying fellowship learnings, implementing innovation pilot grant supports, and individualized coaching and technical assistance with peers and staff. Fellows will present their final projects and learnings in June 2025 as part of a Virtual Community Food Systems Forum, joined by alumni, partners, and other invited stakeholders.
- Please see the [Request for Applications](#) for a complete listing of 2024 Fellowship Program dates.



10) Who in the community would the Community Fellows engage over the 18-month time period?

Community stakeholders the Community Fellows engage may vary depending on their focus within the local food system. However, we strongly encourage Community Fellows to have an aspect of their project that engages parents and caregivers to ensure inclusive and meaningful ways for families who face the largest inequities to be integrated in the participatory research process.

11) Who is the main point of contact?

Please direct inquiries to villagefood@bmc.org.

12) Will there be a way for applicants who are not awarded the Fellowship to engage?

Yes, we invite all applicants to sign up for [our mailing list](#) to continue to engage with Vital Village Networks and receive updates regarding future opportunities and to join our [NOW Innovation Network online forum](#), which shares stories, resources, and tools. We are eager to continue to learn about you and your community's work.