



2024 Community Food Systems Fellowship

an initiative of Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center

Request for Applications

Fellowship Overview

Purpose

The primary goal of the Community Food Systems Fellowship program is to help center community leadership and the agency of caregivers, parents and families in efforts to promote community ownership of local food systems. Fellows will lift up evidence of community powered food systems and the fellowship will expand leadership opportunities. Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center approaches achieving a culture of health by ensuring effective implementation of community-based strategies, uplifting strengths-based narratives, and fostering sustainable community engagement and leadership. The Community Food Systems Fellowship is made possible by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

Award Information

Up to **10 community leaders** will be selected by December 2023 and invited to participate in the Fellowship program.

Key Dates and Deadlines

September 29, 2023 at 12 pm ET	Applications Open
October 5, 2023 at 1pm ET	Optional Informational Session
October 30, 2023 at 4pm ET	Optional Informational Session
November 3, 2023 at 11:59 PM ET	Deadline for Fellowship Application
December 2023	Finalist Interviews
December 15, 2023	Selection of Community Fellows
January 2024 – December 2024	Fellowship Program - Part 1
January 2025 – June 2025	Fellowship Program - Part 2

How to Apply

We invite you to submit your Fellowship Application online by selecting this [APPLICATION link](#) to begin. Nominate a fellow at this [NOMINATION link](#).

Submission Options

Applicants can submit their application responses for Sections 3-5 through:

- a) the online application portal
- b) pre-corded video or audio uploaded to the application portal, or



- c) scheduling a Zoom application intake session

If you would prefer to complete this application through a pre-corded video/audio or a Zoom application intake session through a phone interview, please contact villagefood@bmc.org.

Contact Information

Please direct inquiries to: villagefood@bmc.org.

Register for two Optional Info Sessions to learn more:

Register for the optional informational webinar at the following links:

- [October 5, 2023 @ 1pm ET](#)
- [October 30, 2023 @ 4pm ET](#)

Both sessions will include Spanish interpretation. To submit questions ahead of the informational webinars, please email villagefood@bmc.org.

About the Community Food Systems Fellowship

The Community Food Systems Fellowship is an 18-month leadership program that seeks to increase opportunities for diverse grassroots, community rooted leaders to build skills, capacity, and networks. Emerging leaders who are committed to food justice and equity and are seeking advanced tools to measure and share the impact of local work are a good fit for the Community Food Systems Fellowship.

The fellowship is an opportunity to contribute to a living, collective fellowship roadmap for community-powered food systems and build capacity around participatory data to capture impact and narrative storytelling strategies. We encourage applicants who are committed to:

- working to develop resilient and equitable local food systems
- community leadership, engagement, and the leadership of caregivers and families
- food justice, nutrition justice, racial equity and social transformation
- developing skills to measure impact and success of local food systems
- developing collaborative leadership skills

We actively seek to spotlight community-powered food systems and inform and advance community leadership in local food systems. We are committed to supporting self determination of communities of color and the advancement of diverse community leaders. We encourage prospective fellows committed to justice and equity and improving local food systems to promote child, family and community wellness to apply. We invite stakeholders representing diverse voices across the food system (e.g. agriculture, labor and food chain workers, food service, public health, environmental justice, economy and entrepreneurship, education, early care and education, immigration, and arts, culture), to apply.



The Community Food Systems Fellowship is made possible by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to advance the vision that every child, regardless of race/ethnicity or family income, achieves equitable health, development, and education outcomes and mindsets, social and structural conditions, and systems contribute to these outcomes. Vital Village Networks at Boston Medical Center approaches achieving a culture of health by ensuring effective implementation of community-based strategies, uplifting strengths-based narratives, and fostering sustainable community engagement. We can more effectively identify root causes, mobilize neighborhood resources, and scale community identified solutions through comprehensive cross-sector partnerships between residents, nontraditional partners, and entities that provide services or make decisions on behalf of children of color and families.

Community Fellowship Program Outcomes

Through this 18-month program, participating Community Food System Fellows will:

- Build meaningful relationships, foster connections, and co-create a peer learning space with other food systems leaders across the country
- Gain knowledge, skills, and resources in telling the story of your local food systems impact through narrative change and participatory storytelling
- Strengthen ability to use healing-centered, trauma-informed and resilience frameworks to advance local food systems work
- Build capacity to leverage data to tell the story of your work and impact, including developing and implementing a participatory research plan
- Build and strengthen engagement with local stakeholders, including parent and caregiver leaders in your local community
- Together, work collaboratively with the fellowship cohort to refine a roadmap of collective actions to advance community powered food systems.

Program Details and Requirements

The fellowship will involve a series of interactive virtual meetings and peer learning sessions to support their local efforts and refine a roadmap of collective actions to advance community powered food systems centered on healing, resiliency, and parent and caregiver leadership.

Community Fellows will receive a \$2,500 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 will take place in the first half of the program.



Participation in the Community Food Systems Fellowship is structured around two parts and includes the following requirements. While unforeseen circumstances arise, we ask that participation fellows commit to consistent participation in all fellowship activities to the best of their abilities to ensure a rich, collective learning experience for all fellows.

Part 1: Intensive Peer Learning, Skill Building and Co-Design – January - December 2024

- **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 in February 2024 and May 2024, focused on a facilitated co-design process to shape the fellowship experience and identify areas of collective action and momentum around key fellowship goals into a collective group project. These interactive sessions 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. Meeting dates include:
 - **February 7, 14, and 21, 2024 from 2-4pm Eastern**
 - **May 8, 15, and 22, 2024 from 2-4pm Eastern**

- **Monthly Group Learning Sessions:** Three-hour virtual learning sessions will take place once a month and include active peer-led components to support learning, and capacity and knowledge building around key topics. Sessions will include generous breaks to support wellness and accessibility.

Examples of topics discussed in past fellowship meetings and sessions include but are not limited to:

- Foundational program topics
 - Community co-design approaches
 - Participatory approaches to research, data planning, collection, and analysis methods
 - Data storytelling for social change
- Additional topics, identified based on fellows interest, such as:
 - Local food systems equity assessment tools
 - Community engagement strategies
 - Healing centered strategies
 - Parent and caregiver leadership
 - Collaborative leadership and sustainable leadership pathways



- Digital media and narrative storytelling training

Monthly meetings will be held from March 2024 to December 2024, on the **3rd Wednesday of the month from 2-5pm Eastern**, with the exception of February, May and October 2024 (no monthly meeting due to Virtual Design Labs and the National Community Leadership Summit), as well as November and December 2023, which are scheduled earlier in the month due to holidays. Fellowship meeting dates are listed in the 2024 Fellowship Calendar below.

- **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. The convening will focus on key areas of community capacity building. Tentative dates include:
 - **October 14-16, 2024 (In person, 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.

Part 2: Self-Directed Project Implementation with Individualized Coaching/TA Support - January - June 2025

- **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.

There will be optional opportunities for connections with fellowship alumni and other informal group gatherings that emerge due to interest and capacity from each fellowship cohort.

2024 Fellowship Calendar: Overview of Key Dates

Please consider these dates as you apply for our 2024 program. While unforeseen circumstances arise, we ask that participation fellows commit to consistent participation in all fellowship activities to the best of their abilities to ensure a rich, collective learning experience for all fellows.



Date	Time	Session
January 24, 2024	2-4pm ET	Virtual Fellowship Launch Meeting
February 7, 14, and 21, 2024	2-4pm ET	Community Design Labs, Part 1: <i>Co-Designing the Fellowship Experience</i>
February 2024	Regular time block with fellows to be scheduled	Bimonthly Fellows Check In's
March 20, 2024	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
April 17, 2024	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
April 2024	Regular time block with fellows to be scheduled	Bimonthly Fellows Check In's
May 8, 15, and 22	2-4pm ET	<i>Community Design Labs, Part 2: Collective Action Co-Design and Ideation</i>
June 2024	Regular time block with fellows to be scheduled	Bimonthly Fellows Check In's and MidPoint Reflections
July 17, 2024	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
August 21, 2024	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
August 2024	Regular time block with fellows to be scheduled	Bimonthly Fellows Check In's
September 18, 2023	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
October 14-16, 2024 (tentative dates)	In-person	<i>VVN National Community Leadership Summit and Fellows Retreat</i>
November 13, 2024	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session
November 2024	Regular time block with fellows to be scheduled	Bimonthly Fellows Check In's
December 4, 2024	2-5pm ET	Monthly Fellowship Learning Session -



		Part 1 Wrap Up
January - March 2025	As scheduled	Individualized coaching, technical assistance and office hours. Additional meetings scheduled as requested / needed
End June 2025	TBD afternoon ET	Fellowship Showcase and Celebration

Application Process and Award Information

Vital Village Networks will accept applications for Community Fellows from September 29, 2023 through November 3, 2023.

An informational webinar will be held on [Thursday, October 5, 2023 at 1pm ET](#), and Monday, [October 30, 2023 at 4pm ET](#), to provide an overview of the fellowship program and interview process. Interested applicants have the opportunity to submit questions to villagefood@bmc.org in advance of both webinars. The webinar will be recorded and the video link shared upon request.

If you would like to submit your application responses through a Zoom application intake session, please email villagefood@bmc.org.

Applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee. Finalists will be invited to participate in a virtual interview in December 2023.

Selected Community Food Systems Fellows will be announced in early December 2023.

Key application and selection process dates include:

- **Optional Informational Session 1:** Thursday October 5, 2023 at 1pm ET: [Register here](#) (Note: Spanish interpretation will be available)
- **Optional Informational Session 2:** Monday, October 30, 2023 at 4pm ET: [Register here](#) (Note: Spanish interpretation will be available)
- **Deadline for Fellowship Application:** November 3, 2023 at 11:59 PM ET
- **Virtual Interviews with Finalists:** December 2023
- **Selected Community Fellows Announced:** Friday, December 16, 2023

Innovation Pilot Project Funds

Selected fellows will be able to apply for an innovation grant to support participatory research and co-design strategies connected to their local food systems efforts, in partnership with a local community-based organization, coalition, or group. During the fellowship, fellows will be asked



to submit a proposed budget and budget narrative for up to \$2,500 for approval. Funds can be used towards the following categories, as established by funding requirements:

- **Participant incentives and engagement:** incentives for participants and honoraria for community champions that participate.
- **Local Travel:** local travel for data collection or to offset participant expenses.
- **Project costs to support innovation pilot:** such as research expenses, data collection or analysis costs, online survey technology, project space.

A budget template and sample budget will be shared during the fellowship program.

Total Fellowship Awards

Up to **10 fellows will be selected**. Through this application, leaders can express interest in the Community Food Systems Fellowship.

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.

Selection Criteria

In reviewing Fellowship Applications, reviewers will consider the following selection criteria:

- 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.

Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Statement

Consistent with Vital Village Networks and RWJF's values, this project embraces equity, diversity, and inclusion across multiple dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, geography,



disability, gender, age, and socioeconomic status. We strongly encourage applicants to demonstrate an awareness and inclusion of the perspectives and experiences of children, families and communities most affected by inequities. We believe the more we include diverse perspectives and experiences in our work, the more successful we will be as we strive to build a Culture of Health, enabling all in our diverse society to lead healthier lives now, and for generations.

How to Apply

Applicants interested in the Community Food Systems Fellowship must complete an [online application](#) by **11:59 p.m. Eastern on November 3, 2023**.

The application is available here:

<https://connect.vitalvillage.org/community-food-systems-fellowship-welcome>. If you would like to submit your application orally, please email villagefood@bmc.org to schedule an oral application intake session.

Two informational sessions will be held on **October 5, 2023 at 1pm ET** and **October 30, 2023 at 4pm ET**, and applicants may submit questions ahead of time to villagefood@bmc.org. Both sessions will offer Spanish interpretation. Please register for the Optional informational sessions at these links below:

- [October 5, 2023 @ 1pm ET](#)
- [October 30, 2023 @ 4pm ET](#)

Vital Village Networks will invite finalists to participate in a virtual interview scheduled in December 2023. Please direct questions to villagefood@bmc.org.

Key Dates and Deadlines

September 29, 2023 at 12pm ET	Applications Open
October 5, 2023 at 1pm ET	Optional Informational Session
October 30, 2023 at 4pm ET	Optional Informational Session
November 3, 2023 at 11:59 PM ET	Deadline for Fellowship Application
December 2023	Finalist Interviews
December 15, 2023	Selection of Fellows
January 2024 – December 2024	Fellowship Period - Part 1
January 2025 – June 2025	Fellowship Period - Part 2

About Boston Medical Center Vital Village Networks

Vital Village is a network of residents and organizations committed to maximizing child, family, and community wellbeing. Since 2010, Vital Village has fostered partnerships between residents and organizations aimed at improving the capacity of communities to optimize child wellbeing,



prevent early life adversities, and advance equity through coalition building, leadership development, participatory research, data-sharing, and advocacy. Through our grassroots local network in Boston, our national network of peer communities, Networks of Opportunity for Child Wellbeing (NOW), and CRADLE, our participatory research and evaluation lab, we cultivate stronger connections between residents and community-based organizations to co-design community systems-improvement efforts and address structural inequities.