



Oregon LFPA: Oregon Producers Feeding Oregon Communities

In recent years, Oregon has seen a growing movement towards sustainable and equitable local food systems. Local farmers and producers are a major part of the state's economy, employing nearly 290,000 people – 15% of the state's workforce – and contributing 4–5% of the state's GDP every year.

Helping expand these efforts is the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) program created by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and the Oregon Food Bank (OFB) are the primary drivers of the state's LFPA program and are working to improve supply chain resiliency by providing funds to growers, ranchers, Native and Tribal fishers, food distribution organizations, and processors to produce and distribute products to their local and regional communities.

Food insecurity disproportionately affects specific communities in Oregon, regardless of geography. Historic inequities and systemic exclusions mean that Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color are two to three times more likely to face hunger and poverty in the state. The Oregon LFPA program specifically aims to increase the number of socially disadvantaged producers supplying food to underserved communities, increase food access through local distribution channels that are outside of the traditional charitable food system, and increase connectivity between producers through peer to peer sharing and relationship building.

By the Numbers

\$7 million total LFPA allocation for local food purchases across the state

Over \$4 million paid in direct contracts with roughly 180 producers in 2023-2024

100% of Oregon Food Bank's purchases made with socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, fishers, and producers

Oregon LFPA Goals:

- Provide an opportunity for States and Tribal Governments to strengthen their local and regional food system.
- Support local and socially disadvantaged producers through building and expanding economic opportunities.
- Establish and broaden partnerships between producers, the food distribution community, and local food networks including non-profits to ensure distribution of fresh and nutritious foods in urban, rural, remote, or underserved communities.

“This grant is a triple win for Oregon communities: it allows us to strengthen local food systems, support producers of color and provide fresh, locally grown food to people experiencing hunger...Government investments like these are critical to our shared effort to end hunger and its root causes.” - Oregon Food Bank President Susannah Morgan

Building Trust through Transparency and Community Care

In Oregon, LFPA funds are boosting local economies through the expansion of the Community Producer Support Fund, an initiative of the Oregon Food Bank which purchases food directly from historically underserved producers while also addressing rising food insecurity in communities across the state. This locally produced food is distributed to urban, rural and remote underserved communities that have faced disproportionate hunger and poverty for generations.

Building on this existing program, the LFPA partners along with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) created a system to recruit new farmers and producers. A transparent and collaborative application process supported smaller scale and beginning producers' participation in the program. Onboarding to the program includes an application and operational guidelines that are shared with each potential vendor. An independent committee reviews each application and ensures that the program's goals around equity and inclusion and local and regional purchasing are met. Follow-up surveys, individual interviews, and check-ins during the season help both track the progress made by the farmers and producers and allow program administrators to adjust along the way.



A distinctive feature of Oregon's program is forward purchasing agreements of up to \$50,000 per producer. In the spirit of community care, farmers are paid at the beginning of the season for food they will grow and distribute later in the season. This way of contracting enables businesses to make improvements to their operations such as purchasing cold storage and other small infrastructure needs and hiring additional labor. Smaller enterprises can keep working in the slower months and grow their operation on their own terms. Having access to funds early in the process also helps farmers and producers to plan harvest schedules and grow relationships with other producers and distributors.

Community Partnerships Expand Reach While Benefiting Small Farmers

Another unique component of Oregon's LFPA is that the partners work primarily outside of traditional emergency feeding programs. In addition to the 55 producers the Oregon Food Bank is contracting directly with to distribute their products within their own communities through CSA shares, farmers markets, and other creative channels, OFB partners with six community-based organizations running food access programs in the Portland Metro area and statewide including Feed'em Freedom Foundation, Outgrowing Hunger, Friends of Zenger Farm, Growing Gardens, and the Native American Youth and Family Center.

These partners have deep trusting relationships in their communities and are provided with the resources needed to directly purchase and provide access to culturally important foods in ways that make sense in their neigh-



borhoods. This approach helps build strong partnerships in the grower community and broadens food access points for those in need.

In total, nearly 200 farmers, ranchers, and producers in Oregon currently participate in the LFPA program. These businesses are helping increase the impact of the program by working with OFB and others to identify food access challenges and create new opportunities to ensure that Oregon's food insecure communities have access to fresh, locally produced food. By partnering with local farmers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, they are also able to provide nutritious, culturally important foods to people of all cultures. It's a win-win for everyone involved.

For example: Cross-Eyed Cricket Farms, a participating producer who provides chicken, eggs, honey, and microgreens directly to families through the LFPA program, found that some families didn't have freezers for long term storage of their products. This meant that they didn't take advantage of access to the pasture-raised chickens available to them through the LFPA program. The farm, working with OFB, is now exploring what funding is needed to enable community centers to purchase freezers where families could store their foods. This has opened new areas for collaboration and creativity to improve food access.

The LFPA program allows the farmers and producers to build deeper relationships with community-based anti-hunger efforts and helps create opportunities to talk about local purchasing and the various ways to leverage the purchasing power of institutions, food pantries, and organizations. Together the partners are providing food to those who need it most and are creating new economic opportunities for farmers in Oregon.

"(LFPA) in Oregon has showcased and supported the innovative ways our small producers practice community care through food access initiatives. Investing in smaller, socially disadvantaged producers and allowing them the freedom to choose who they serve and how, has led to so many new partnerships as well as trust building — not only with producers but also with the communities they serve. By empowering these producers, we are actively reimagining the foundation for a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive food system." — Sara Cross, Producer Support Funds Program Manager, Oregon Food Bank



Additional Resources

For information about the program, contact Sara Cross at Oregon Food Bank (scross@oregonfoodbank.org)

About LFPA

The USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) is a transformative federal initiative that empowers state agencies, tribal governments, and community partners to collaboratively source and distribute food, benefiting local socially disadvantaged producers and underserved communities. With a budget of \$900M, LFPA, led by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Commodity Procurement Program, aims to strengthen regional food systems, support local and regional farms, and address hunger and food insecurity through partnerships with food assistance programs. This groundbreaking program has demonstrated its potential as a powerful investment in farms and communities in a short time since its inception in 2021.