

Chelsea Neighborhood Market & Food Business Grant Program

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State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

City of Chelsea
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>PROGRAM OVERVIEW</i>	2
<i>ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA</i>	3
<i>FOOD BUSINESS VERIFICATION</i>	3
<i>APPLICATION PROCEDURES</i>	4
<i>APPLICANT SELECTION</i>	4
<i>GRANT REPORTING PROCEDURES</i>	5
<i>PROGRAM GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES</i>	5
<i>EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY</i>	6
<i>CONFLICT OF INTEREST</i>	7
<i>TERMINATION</i>	7

Chelsea Neighborhood Market and Food Business Grant Program Guidelines

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The City of Chelsea hosts many locally owned and run restaurants, cafes, and bodegas, as well as several wholesale produce distributors. The City is a major regional food distribution hub and food processing and retail offers a great opportunity for Chelsea entrepreneurs. At the same time, food security was raised as one of the top community priorities to address in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Funding Allocation Report. Food insecurity in Chelsea has grown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, aggravated by inflation and economic turbulence. As part of a multidimensional strategy to increase economic opportunities for food businesses, strengthen partnerships with Chelsea-based food distributors, and improve food security, the City is launching Chelsea Neighborhood Market.

Chelsea Neighborhood Market will offer a central location for local vendors to sell foods and ingredients, including but not limited to fresh and dried produce, meat, fish, dairy, oils, and spices. The Market will be open to the public, near residential neighborhoods, and within walking distance of public transportation. The Market site will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal health and safety requirements and generally acceptable quality standards.

Chelsea Neighborhood Market will create entrepreneurial opportunities for Chelsea-based food businesses and expand food retail options for Chelsea residents. To support the launch of Chelsea Neighborhood Market and provide support for Chelsea residents to become Market vendors, the City of Chelsea allocated \$100,000 to be disbursed over 3 years to the Chelsea Neighborhood Market and Food Business Grant Program (the “Program”).

The objective of the Program is to provide direct financial assistance to Chelsea residents who are first time entrepreneurs and food business owners interested in becoming vendors at Chelsea Neighborhood Market.

The Program is administered by the City of Chelsea’s Department of Housing and Community Development, in accordance with the ARPA Final Rule, promulgated by the U.S. Treasury Department. The Program consists of direct financial assistance, based on demonstrated costs, to eligible Chelsea resident business owners and entrepreneurs. This is a temporary program, designed to align with the launch of the Chelsea Neighborhood Market and to promote and strengthen the local Chelsea food economy.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Program seeks to aid disproportionately impacted Chelsea-based entrepreneurs and food businesses to become vendors at Chelsea Neighborhood Market. Eligible applicants may qualify for funding if they are Chelsea residents, currently operate or plan to operate a Chelsea-based food business, and commit to becoming a vendor at Chelsea Neighborhood Market for three (3) months.

Eligibility for funding is determined after the complete application is received and reviewed by the Program staff, and should not be understood as a guarantee for approval. Program staff will inspect all applications for completeness.

Failure to submit a complete application with all required supporting documentation would result in the disqualification of an applicant.

The Department reserves the right to seek additional documentation, if obtaining such documentation is reasonably necessary to determine program eligibility.

The Program has the following criteria for eligibility:

- Chelsea Resident: This program is available for Chelsea residents. Applicants will be asked to provide proof of Chelsea address.
- Chelsea-Based Small Business or Entrepreneur: This program is available for small businesses and first-time entrepreneurs whose businesses are based in Chelsea and/or whose businesses primarily serve Chelsea residents.
- Interest in selling at Chelsea Neighborhood Market: This program is available for small businesses and first-time entrepreneurs who are interested and committed to becoming vendors at Chelsea Neighborhood Market for a minimum of three (3) months.

FOOD BUSINESS VERIFICATION

Chelsea-based food business is defined as a business of which the primary purpose is food production, transportation, aggregation, distribution, processing, or retail and which is based at a physical location in Chelsea.

Current Chelsea-based food business will be verified by Program staff by examining all current documentation that must be reported and self-certified, under the pains and penalties of perjury, by applicants. Entrepreneurs who intend to become vendors at the Chelsea Neighborhood Market do not need to provide proof of current food business but should complete all application questions for first-time food entrepreneurs.

To be eligible, applicant(s) must meet the Chelsea-based food business requirements as listed above.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

The application forms necessary to apply for the Chelsea Eats Program are available through the City of Chelsea, Department of Housing + Community Development, 500 Broadway, Room 101, Chelsea, MA 02150 and the City's website. The applicant must supply all information required in order to submit a complete application. At a minimum, a complete application shall consist of:

A complete application is defined as a (i) signed and dated application form, containing the responses to all mandatory questions.

In order to objectively and transparently carry out this program, applications shall be requested by the deadline set by the Department. Applications mailed to the Department shall be postmarked by the application deadline. Applications will be accepted and processed on a rolling basis after the program deadline pending available funds.

It is expected that applications will be received, clocked in, and checked for obvious errors and omissions. The Program staff will consult with the applicant regarding issues as well as other errors, discrepancies, or missing information on the application. Subsequently, Program staff will conduct a preliminary examination of the application to ensure completeness, conformance with the Chelsea-based business requirement, and adherence to all program policies.

APPLICANT SELECTION PROCEDURES

Following review of a complete application, the Program Manager will conduct a brief meeting with the applicant to verify application materials, including but not limited to reviewing the supplemental application questions for first-time entrepreneurs.

Grant awards are contingent on recipients committing to becoming vendors at Chelsea Neighborhood Market for a three (3) month period, not to exceed six (6) market days.

The Department shall incorporate certain local preferences, determined to be necessary to support disproportionately impacted households, increase economic stability, and lessen risks to health and wellbeing. Each preference category is assigned one point. Applicants must substantiate their preferences by attaching to their application supporting documentation that clearly demonstrates the household satisfies any local preference categories they seek to qualify for.

Applications will be assigned a score based upon the following self-reported application preferences with respect to the current or expected vendor:

- Chelsea resident owner;
- Hispanic, Latino, Black, African American, Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander owner;

- Women owner;
- Veteran owner

Funds are generally available until they are exhausted. In the event funds are exhausted, Program staff may create a waiting list for additional funds if they become available at a later date. Selected applicants shall be placed on the waiting list in the order of their applicant scores.

GRANT REPORTING PROCEDURES

Upon receiving the grant award, vendors will be expected to track all expenses and submit documentation of all spending to the Program Manager on a monthly basis. Funds will be disbursed when the grant is awarded. Vendors are responsible for ensuring all spending aligns with the proposed budget and allowable expenses. Vendors are responsible for all expenses exceeding the funding amount.

Allowable expenses include:

- Tables
- Product displays
- Pop-up tent(s)
- Point-of-sale (POS) system
- Food storage equipment
- Food transportation to and from the market site
- Fees for necessary state and municipal permits
- Other supplies and equipment necessary for safe food management and retail

Other expenses may be permitted on a case by case basis if necessary for market operations and retail.

PROGRAM GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Persons dissatisfied with or aggrieved by administrative or operations decisions made during the Program will have access to the following complaint resolution hierarchy:

1. Persons aggrieved should prepare an appeal in writing specifying the nature of the complaint and suggested remedies, if applicable, and submit it to the Program Manager. If the complaint involves a decision to deny, modify, or set conditions on assistance or benefits, the person(s) making the complaint will establish standing to appeal the decision. "Standing" is limited to individuals who applied for and were denied assistance or were otherwise required to meet certain requirements that had the effect of denying assistance. The Program Manager will respond to a written complaint within 15 days of receiving it, and may hold a meeting with any persons involved to attempt to resolve the complaint. Aggrieved persons with standing may request a meeting with the Program Manager within a commercially reasonable timeframe and the Program Manager shall attend such a meeting

at a mutually agreeable time in City Hall.

2. If the Program Manager cannot resolve the complaint, the aggrieved persons may request in writing a meeting with the Director of Housing and Community Development. The Director will respond to a written complaint within 15 days of receiving it, and may hold a meeting with the persons and Program staff or other parties together or separately, depending on the nature of the complaint and the potential to resolve the complaint by mediation. Preference will be given to mediation wherever possible and appropriate.
3. If the persons aggrieved are not satisfied with the Director's decision, a written appeal may be submitted to the City Manager. The City Manager and/or his designee will respond to a written complaint within 30 days of receiving it. The City Manager and/or his designee may meet with the aggrieved persons and Departmental staff, separately or together, depending on the nature of the grievance and its potential for being resolved by mediation. Preference will be given to mediation wherever possible and appropriate. The decision of the City Manager is final, and will be issued within 45 days of receiving the appeal.
4. Administrative actions that are not eligible for appeal include a denial of assistance based on an applicant's household income exceeding the permissible limits, fraudulent or misleading income representations, a lack of residency in Chelsea, and requests for types of assistance not funded by the Program.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

It is the policy of the City of Chelsea to carry out the Program as effectively as possible and without regard for race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, children, marital status, immigration and citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, public assistance, or rent-subsidy status. This Program shall be carried out in conformance with all local, state, and federal equal opportunity laws and affirmatively further equity by proactively addressing racial, ethnic, economic, social, and cultural disparities.

The City will not discriminate against any person because of race, color, immigration status, religion, national origin, sex, sexual preference, familial status, disability, or any other specific classes protected by applicable laws.

The City is committed to language justice. All Program materials, correspondence, and communications shall be performed in English and Spanish, with translation and interpretation available for speakers of other languages by contacting Lourdes Alvarez at lalvarez@chelseama.gov. If the City needs to accommodate non-English and non-Spanish speaking persons, it will take all administratively feasible steps to provide translation assistance upon request at no cost, nor penalty, to the applicant.

The City's objective is to reduce barriers to all programs and public services. This policy is exemplified by the City's commitment to complying with and surpassing the minimum

requirements of all federal, state, and local fair laws, while proactively eliminating barriers to public services.

In accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, the City will reasonably accommodate qualified persons with disabilities in all programs and services. All programs will be offered in accessible locations (e.g., those meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines), or redesigned and modified to be accessible when barrier-free facilities are unavailable for program delivery. The City of Chelsea will provide auxiliary services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request and at no cost to the applicant. Reasonable accommodation for other types of disabilities will be made at the request of the affected person. Accommodations are available for persons with disabilities and non-English speaking residents by contacting the City's ADA Coordinator by calling 311 (617-466-4209).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The City of Chelsea shall adhere to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 268A, with respect to the Conduct of Public Employees and all applicable federal laws, regulations, and policies. In addition, no member, officer, elected official, and/or employee of the City, or its designees, or agents, and no member of the governing body of the locality who exercises any function or responsibility with respect to the Program during his tenure or for (1) year thereafter shall be eligible for the Program, nor have an interest in any contract or subcontract, or the proceeds thereof, for work to be performed in connection with this Program.

TERMINATION

The City of Chelsea has the right to reject the Program application or terminate any agreement if a participant is found to be in violation of any conditions set forth in these guidelines.