

## **Regional Solutions Project Proposal Form**

**Purpose: The following information will assist the Mid-Valley Regional Solutions Advisory Committee and RS Team in evaluating proposals.**

1. Provide a brief description of the project, including the benefits derived from accomplishing the project.

***What is the project?***

Development of a Food Hub facility at Central School District's Oak Grove Road property. This facility would serve as a location where small farmers could aggregate and process their produce in order to sell to larger, institutional buyers. The location of the Food Hub would also allow students to learn and gain skills in agribusiness and food processing.

***Can the project be characterized as a Capital Project?***

The project would involve the planning, purchase and installation of production, processing and storage equipment (greenhouse, sinks, refrigerator, freezer, etc.) at a physical location. It could easily be characterized as a capital project.

***Where is the project?***

The project would be located at Central School District's Oak Grove Road property, a rural school which has been closed for several years. The 10 acre property includes a two room school house in good condition with a full basement, and a large covered basketball court which could easily be converted into an enclosed facility.

***What are the benefits of the project?***

Many small farmers are unable to access some markets because they cannot produce enough product to sell to larger buyers. The food hub will open new markets to small buyers and act as a connection point to link buyers directly with farmers. Additionally, the school district would like to open this site as an agricultural technology education center. Students would grow and harvest crops onsite while learning how to use technology to increase yields and make processes more efficient. Incorporation of a food hub into the facility would allow students to get hands on experience with a full range of agricultural and agribusiness processes.

2. Does project comply with the Advisory Committee's priorities?

The food hub meets the Committee's priorities to "Enhance programs that encourage business retention and expansion" and "Promote regional workforce development opportunities"

3. What would happen if this project was not accomplished?

Small farmers would continue to be limited in their sales opportunities, and would have more difficulty accessing larger wholesale and institutional markets. The lack of buyers would also continue to limit in the variety of crop choices available for small farmers to grow.

4. Does the project have strong community and agency support?

- Who are the responsible/lead parties?
- Who are partners that need to be involved?

The City of Independence partnered with the Mid-Valley Council of Governments and the University of Oregon in 2012 to develop a food hub feasibility study. This study

identified strong interest in the concept of a food hub among small farmers and local food advocates. The City of Independence is leading this effort, and Central School District is a key partner ensuring that the Food Hub can be incorporated seamlessly into the District's plans for the facility. The District would also be an important buyer for the food hub, as they run the meal programs for Central, Dallas and Falls City School Districts. The District's food service coordinator places an emphasis on purchasing local produce whenever possible, and a food hub located on school property would facilitate this. Additional potential partners for this project include Marion Polk Food Share, Polk County and various farm organizations.

5. List identified or potential funding sources needed to carry out the project.
  - What is a rough cost estimate to complete the project?
  - If state funds are used, will they leverage other resources?
  - Are there operating or maintenance costs associated with the project?  
We estimate this project will cost \$200,000 to complete, the bulk of which would be devoted to purchase and installation of equipment. State funds would be leveraged by School District funds that would be used to operate the facility. City Economic Development funds would be leveraged for the final planning of the project. The food hub would be expected to operate in a self-sustaining manner, with a portion of sales going to cover overhead costs.
6. Is this project characterized as short or long term. (short = 1-2 years)
  - List the approximate time frame for implementation.  
This project would be a short term project, requiring only final planning, purchase and installation. It could be accomplished in a 1-2 year timeframe.
7. Outside of permits and funding requirements, list any impediments/obstacles to accomplishing the project. List possible solutions to those obstacles.  
Aside from funding and permits there are no impediments to completion of this project.
8. Is the project economically and environmentally sustainable?  
*(Sustainable Community Objectives established by Oregon Legislature per ORS 184.423)*

A food hub is the agricultural equivalent of a "buy local" campaign. It directly connects local farmers with local buyers, cutting out the middleman and keeping more money in the local economy. Various studies have indicated that a dollar spent with a local company (in this case a purchase made from a local farmer) keeps as much as 3.5 times more money in the local economy than a purchase from a national company or chain. Additionally, local institutions and restaurants reduce their impact on the environment by purchasing from nearby farmers instead of a national food delivery company whose food will travel a much greater distance to the buyer.

**Regional Solutions Agency Team Review/Comments:**

- A. Can the project be easily implemented? List the requirements for permits, policy conflicts, planning compliance, etc.
- B. Is project consistent with state agency missions/priorities?
- C. Is project duplicative of, or contrary to, another state, regional or local government entity's efforts or involvement?
- D. List potential funding sources
- E. List state agencies that might be involved with this project:
- F. List potential "Lead" state agency person