

North Lawndale Fresh

Call for Ideas 2026 Guidelines & FAQs

Opportunity

Despite strong health institutions and the corridor that is Ogden Ave, North Lawndale ranks 6th lowest in life expectancy out of Chicago's 77 community areas. It also ranks among the highest in the Healthy Chicago 2.0 Hardship Index. North Lawndale envisions a better future. Its community-driven Quality of Life Plan states emphatically that the next chapter of North Lawndale can be *a healthy, vibrant community with a diversified and innovative economy, competitive workforce, engaged citizens and infrastructure that supports long-term, sustainable growth* (1).

We agree. In line with the [Quality of Life Plan](#)'s findings that *it's difficult to stay healthy when confronted by a combination of neighborhood safety concerns and a lack of fresh food options* (110), this call for ideas seeks to promote healthier food choices across North Lawndale and green up shared spaces, further increasing the community's food-productive assets and combatting urban blight.

Background

[Builders Vision Philanthropy](#), [Food:Land:Opportunity](#), [The Lumpkin Family Foundation](#), [Steans Family Foundation](#) and the [Walter Mander Foundation](#) want all Chicago communities to thrive. We are united in the belief that access to healthy, affordable food is a human right and critical to community health. We envision an equitable Chicagoland region in which all people have knowledge of and access to healthy food.

In 2022, we established North Lawndale Fresh, a one-million-dollar annual fund modeled on our related fund, Austin Fresh. Over five years (2022-2026), we will work collaboratively with partners to expand healthy retail options, support community gardens and local food production, grow food enterprises, and protect and strengthen food assistance programs in the North Lawndale neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. Learn about the 2022-25 grantees [here](#).

We believe in a place-based model of funding. We strive to listen and learn from the community of North Lawndale, and community representatives participate in grant-making decisions. The foundation partners will seek additional ways to learn from and with the people of North Lawndale to ensure that the challenges of providing affordable, plentiful, and healthy food are community-owned and supported. Our work in North Lawndale has led us to the wells of talent in the community and a deep appreciation for all of North Lawndale. We hope our investments can lend support to local leaders in ways that tip the scales toward justice, healing, and equitable access for all.

Goals & Outcomes

North Lawndale Fresh seeks to encourage fulfillment of the [North Lawndale Quality of Life Plan](#) goals by supporting organizations doing work that contribute towards meeting the “Greening and Open Space” and “Health and Wellness” goals from the Quality of Life plan via food. We are looking to fund organizations that:

- Build the North Lawndale economy through food-related businesses including grocery and culinary enterprises,
- Expand access and quality of green spaces and food production,
- Develop and promote culturally relevant food justice and nutrition education,
- Innovate emergency food efforts and nutrition assistance programs that expand healthy food options,
- Promote information on food resources and activities to North Lawndale residents.

Examples of Eligible Ideas

We are issuing this call for ideas to elicit projects and encourage collaboration among organizations and people who know the North Lawndale landscape and understand the requirements for success.

Examples of the types of ideas we would welcome include (but are in no way limited to):

- Planning grants to support the early development of large-scale and long-term project ideas that need more time and resources prior to implementation (see the FAQs below for more info);
- Commercial ventures, including brick & mortar stores, designed to increase access to healthy or local food while building the economy of the North Lawndale community (provided a non-profit organization/partner is the applicant);
- Promoting the importance of purchasing food within North Lawndale and increasing awareness of where to buy healthy food whether that be grocery, restaurant, farmers market etc.;
- Community food gardens which increase access to healthy, affordable food, or activating and connecting North Lawndale’s network of food growers;
- System improvement: planning for longer-term strategies around food access in order to create improved systems and build out underdeveloped ideas and strategies;
- Community kitchens and other processing enterprises that add value to food and empower entrepreneurs to build businesses and create jobs;
- Food cooperatives;
- Food as medicine and food education approaches to health which focus on diet and nutrition;
- Nutrition education, cooking classes, or community cooking efforts focused on the preparation of fresh and healthy meals, in which the work of creating prepared meals is shared to make it easier for families to eat well;
- Expanding or coordinating emergency food efforts;
- Neighborhood or school habitat projects that support food production (e.g. pollinator gardens) or which give residents greater access to nature or green spaces, even if they aren’t directly related to food production (e.g. tree planting).

Idea Evaluation

Ideas submitted to North Lawndale Fresh will be considered and evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Understanding of and connection to the community, its needs, and possible partners
- Idea design and strength
- Organizational capacity
- Innovation and creativity
- Alignment with the [North Lawndale The Next Chapter Quality of Life Plan](#)'s priorities

Requirements

All applicants must be:

- A 501(c)(3) non-profit or operating with a fiscal sponsor. See below for more information about fiscal sponsors.
- Deeply embedded in North Lawndale, and preferably located in North Lawndale, or have significant partnerships with a North Lawndale organization. See below to read more about what it means to be embedded.
- Anchor applicants of collaborative work must be led by members of the North Lawndale community.
- Organizations that are actively and always trying to learn from their work, and improve their approaches, even if that involves risk.
- Organizations that are open to shared learning and working collaboratively.

How to Submit

Initial ideas can be submitted through a short form at the [online application system](#), hosted by Forefront, the fiscal sponsor of Fresh Taste. See the Online Application FAQs below for more information. Contact us at northlawndalefresh@freshtaste.org for assistance with the online application system. See the FAQs below for more information.

Key Dates

The 2026 Call for Ideas will open February 2, 2026. **Submissions are due by March 2, 2026, 11:59 p.m.** You will hear from us on or before March 24, 2026, if we wish to receive a full proposal. The deadline for full proposals is April 20, 2026, 11:59 p.m. Grant decisions will be made by a committee of foundation representatives and community members. Grants will be awarded by June 2, 2026.

Important Information

Previous Grantees

You may apply even if you have previously received funding from Austin Fresh, North Lawndale Fresh, or any of the North Lawndale Fresh funding partners. Organizations that have received prior funding from North Lawndale Fresh will be asked to provide an update on their current North Lawndale Fresh project during the application process.

Grant Request Amounts and Terms

The annual pool of funding for all projects funded by North Lawndale Fresh is a minimum of one million dollars. You may submit an idea of any size; ideas for general support; and/or separate ideas for more than one project.

501(c)(3) Partner Options

North Lawndale Fresh can only fund 501(c)(3) organizations. However, organizations without a 501(c)(3) status may engage in projects in several ways:

- Community organizations or emerging projects that are deeply embedded in North Lawndale and do not have nonprofit status (like block clubs) may partner with established non-profits that can support the work as a program expense through a fiscal sponsorship relationship OR may work with a traditional fiscal sponsor organization (fiscal sponsor entities need not be North Lawndale-based)
- Collaborations that include organizations without 501(c)(3) status can be led by an anchor applicant that is already established as a 501(c)(3) and led by members working in North Lawndale
- Food system businesses may execute project work through a vendor contract from a 501(c)(3) organization. The 501(c)(3) must be the applicant to North Lawndale Fresh. The business and the 501(c)(3) must be deeply embedded in North Lawndale.

If you're uncertain whether you qualify or have questions about fiscal sponsorship, email us at northlawndalefresh@freshtaste.org.

General FAQs

See below for FAQs about the online application system.

What does it mean for an organization to be “deeply embedded in North Lawndale?”

Applicants whose work, leadership, and/or relationships reflect their commitment to enhancing North Lawndale residents' quality of life are considered deeply embedded in North Lawndale. Rather than providing a narrow definition, we'd like to let organizations define their ties to the North Lawndale community. A hypothetical example of an organization we would consider to be deeply embedded in North Lawndale can be a nonprofit organization incorporated in Garfield Park that has deep and long-standing relationships in North Lawndale teaching youth urban agriculture and entrepreneurship skills through running a farm stand, selling their grown herbs, flowers, and vegetables to North Lawndale residents at accessible prices.

What constitutes a project eligible for a planning grant?

We highly encourage organizations to submit ideas for planning grants if they are in the early stages of projects that require initial research, feasibility studies, convening a steering committee, large capital investments in the long-term, and/or entail large infrastructural developments, for which North Lawndale Fresh funds would help organizations break ground on the build-out of that project. An example of an application that would be considered for a planning grant could be a request for funds to

acquire site control over a building or begin construction of a building that your organization dreams of one day turning into a food co-op.

About the Foundations

Builders Vision Philanthropy works to realize a humane and healthy planet, while changing markets and minds for good. We champion communities, people, and ideas on the frontiers of change. At BVP we see our role as taking risks, laying the groundwork, and establishing the baseline for change and scale to come.

Food:Land:Opportunity aims to create a resilient local food economy that protects and conserves land and other natural resources while promoting market innovation and building wealth and assets in the Chicago region's communities. Food:Land:Opportunity is a collaborative initiative between Kinship Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust and is funded through the Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust.

The Lumpkin Family Foundation supports people working together to create healthy, sustainable communities in east central Illinois and across the US. Our interest in North Lawndale arises from family members who live in and care deeply about the health and vitality of Chicago.

The Steans Family Foundation (SFF) believes effective revitalization can occur within the existing social, educational, and economic networks that create and sustain communities. SFF has been investing in early childhood, education, employment, and community development leaders and organizations in the North Lawndale community since 1996.

The Walter Mander Foundation is a medium sized, family foundation which supports Chicago-area organizations working in the areas of community gardening, urban agriculture and community economic development, particularly organizations seeking to strengthen local food and agriculture businesses.

Questions?

General questions or help with the online application system:

Logan Henderson, Fresh Taste, northlawndalefresh@freshtaste.org

Specific questions about projects may be directed to any of the partner foundation representatives:

Lenore Beyer, Director of Conservation Initiatives, Kinship Foundation, Lenore.beyer@kinshipfoundation.org

Heidi Dusek, Executive Director, The Lumpkin Family Foundation, heidi@lumpkinfoundation.org

Haven Leeming, Senior Program Officer, Builders Vision Philanthropy, hleeming@buildersvision.com

Yolanda Knight, Managing Director, yknight@fic-sff.com

Chuck Wolf, President, Walter Mander Foundation, cbw921@gmail.com or **Cassandra West**: cwest@waltermanderfoundation.org

Online Application System FAQs

How do I use the online application system?

- **If you are a previous applicant or grantee** of North Lawndale Fresh (or Austin Fresh or CRFSF) — log in to the [online application system](#) using your existing account and password.
- **If this is your first time applying** for a grant from North Lawndale Fresh (or Austin Fresh or CRFSF), go to the [online application system](#), create a new account, and set up your password. The confirmation email to finish setting up your account will be sent to you from “Forefront administrator@grantinterface.com.” Be sure to check your junk and spam folders.
 - **We’re an organization applying for funding through a fiscal sponsor. How do we register and apply?** You will register as your organization and include the fiscal sponsor name in parentheses. For example: Fresh Taste (Forefront). The registration form includes fields for providing your fiscal sponsor information.
- **TIP: Centralized user accounts:** Some organizations prefer to set up a centralized user email in the online system (like grants@XYZ.org) so that multiple staff members can access all the applications and reports using the same account information.
- **To invite someone to work on the application with you:** use the “Collaborate” button on the top right of your application page and follow the instructions.
- **If you don’t know your password**, please select the reset password link on the [login screen](#). Your user name is the email you used to create your account. If you don’t know which email you used, contact northlawndalefresh@freshtaste.org .

Can I log out of the online application system and return to my grant request at a later time? Does the online system automatically save my work as I go?

The system autosaves each time you click into a new question, but if you are not ready to submit your application it is advisable to save your work before logging out to ensure no information is lost. Select the “Save” button in the bottom right-hand corner. (Some applicants find that it’s easier to type out answers in a separate Word document and then copy/paste into the online system before submitting.) You can save your draft request in the bottom right corner of the application. Once saved, you can return at any time to complete your request by looking for your draft in the “Active Requests” section. Look for the “Edit Application” link to the right. Do not begin a separate application every time you log in. When a funding round closes, all applications still in “draft” status will be marked as ‘abandoned.’

Save Application

Submit Application

Example of the “Save” and “Submit” buttons

I added the wrong document to my grant request or report. How do I remove it and add the correct one?

If you're still in draft form, you can remove the attachment and reattach different documents. If you notice an error after you have submitted your application, please email northlanwdalefresh@freshtaste.org to let us know, and we'll work with you on the correction

I accidentally started multiple drafts of a grant request. How do I remove the ones I don't need?

To edit drafts you have already started, click Edit next to the draft on your dashboard rather than returning to the Apply page and starting over. To avoid starting multiple requests in the future, please check your active requests folder before beginning a new request and be sure to save your request as you go. When a funding round closes, all non-submitted applications still in "draft" status will be marked as "abandoned."

How can I be sure I've submitted my application?

First, when you're done editing, always "Save" your request using the button at the bottom. Saving ensures you can return to our application and continue editing. When your application is complete, be sure to click the "Submit" button at the bottom of the page. Once you submit, you'll receive a confirmation email. You can also log into the online application system, look to the "Active Requests" section. A submitted application will have a link that says "View" rather than "Edit."

How do I download a copy of my application for my records?

While you are logged-in and viewing your application look for the "Application Packet" button and follow the instructions unique to your browser. The process is the same for any follow-up documents including grant agreements and reports.

