

PRESS RELEASE

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The Food Trust Invests \$800,000 in Grants to Support Retailers Across Pennsylvania to Make Healthy Food More Available and Affordable

The PA Fresh Food Financing Initiative (PA FFFI) supports neighborhood food businesses, healthier communities and stronger local economies across Pennsylvania in 25 counties

Philadelphia, PA – The Food Trust, in partnership with Pennsylvania-based Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, recently awarded \$800,000 in funding to 13 recipients of the 2024-2025 round of the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (PA FFFI) grant program.

The PA FFFI is a statewide public-private financing program that supports the establishment or expansion of fresh food retail sites by providing one-time grants and loans to businesses selling healthy, affordable food in low- and moderate-income communities in urban, suburban and rural areas across the commonwealth. Each of the awardees below accept SNAP, WIC and/or FMNP checks, ensuring their products are available to low- to moderate-income shoppers. All grantees are located in areas underserved by affordable grocery access and have strong support from their local community.

The Food Trust has been instrumental in defining the healthy food financing model and supporting its development in states across the country and at the federal level, and is the lead food access organization managing healthy food financing grants in Pennsylvania. Since launching the nation's first Healthy Food Financing Initiative in 2004, The Food Trust has continued to guide the evolution of these programs by convening stakeholders, promoting best practices and providing technical assistance to other states engaged in this work. (See below for information on the history of the PA FFFI.)

“For over three decades, we have fought for communities’ ability to find, afford and learn about the foods that support our health and bring us joy,” says Mark Edwards, President & CEO of The Food Trust. “By granting funds to healthy food retailers across the commonwealth through the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, we are not only improving health outcomes for shoppers, but we’re also supporting the local economy by boosting retailers’ revenue, adding valuable job opportunities for neighborhood residents, and giving farmers new business opportunities. It’s a clear triple win, and The Food Trust is a proud partner in this effort.”

A new round of PA FFFI funding is now available, and applications are being accepted August 15-November 1, 2025. Please refer to The Food Trust’s website for more details, or email pafffi@thefoodtrust.org.

Since 2018, the PA FFFI has distributed \$4 million in grant funding to 92 eligible projects, the majority of which qualified for up to \$50,000. The PA FFFI is thrilled to support the most recent cohort of awardees and looks forward to the successful completion of their projects. The grantees are:

Almadina Supermarket (Erie): An international grocery store on the East side of Erie where the nearest supermarket is over one mile away, awarded funds to purchase equipment that will allow the store to

increase availability of fresh produce and other affordable, culturally appropriate food offerings in response to Erie's growing immigrant community.

The Best Route (Pottstown): A mobile market awarded funds to renovate a wash/prep and storage facility, update its van with a branded wrap, and conduct a marketing campaign. The market is entering its second season and makes stops at community centers, housing developments and other existing hubs to increase the accessibility of its products.

Bravo Supermarket (Easton): A new supermarket on the south side of Easton, awarded funds to purchase an 86-foot reach-in retail refrigerator and freezer for produce, dairy, eggs and meat. Bravo Supermarket is one of the first local investments on the south side in many years, and its opening will encourage further economic development of the area.

DAT Place Convenience Store (Aliquippa): A corner store expanding into a 4,000-square-foot building to dramatically increase the availability of fresh and affordable foods to this neighborhood in Aliquippa, an area where most residents buy their groceries at the local dollar store. Awarded funds will be used to furnish the new space with retail equipment.

Dylamato's Market (Pittsburgh): A market awarded funds for renovation and equipment to double its healthy food retail space, expand its commercial kitchen, and update its facade to increase the business' visibility to the community and become ADA compliant. Dylamato's has been serving the Pittsburgh community for eight years and is the only non-convenience store retailer in its neighborhood. The nearest supermarket is two miles away.

Ewe View Farm (Needmore): A vegetable farm with a mobile market making 11 stops in rural Bedford, Franklin and Fulton Counties. Awarded funds will be used to construct a cold storage shed and wash/pack station, purchase a freezer and conduct marketing. These improvements will allow the business to aggregate local meat, bread, mushrooms and coffee from nearby businesses to complement the produce, eggs and honey already being sold. Marketing will help this business increase its visibility to the wider community.

The Farm Store (Pottsville): A new farm-to-market grocery store that supports Schuylkill County farmers and makers was awarded funds to purchase retail equipment for the brick-and-mortar location and a refrigerated truck for its home delivery service. The opening of The Farm Store is an important development for downtown Pottsville, as it has not seen a grocery store in this area for six years.

Farmer Girl Eb (Pittsburgh): An urban farm-to-market awarded funds for a walk-in refrigerator and a delivery van. These purchases complement the business's relocation to a new site, which will provide long-term stability for the market. In the short term, funds will enable Farmer Girl Eb to activate the new location with a pop-up farmers market, as well as stock the new store as soon as their building is connected to utilities. The delivery van will allow the business to formalize its delivery service to seniors, as well as more efficiently transport produce from Farmer Girl Eb's farm to the store.

Grow Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh): A nonprofit focused on urban agriculture and education that operates five farm stands in and around Wilkinsburg. The organization was awarded funds to use toward the construction of its Garden Dreams Community Agriculture Hub. The entire project involves renovating

and connecting two existing buildings adjacent to conserved growing space to create a classroom and community kitchen, and to expand the existing wash/pack space and cold storage capacity.

Larkin's Market (Erie): A corner store in a residential neighborhood of Erie, opened September 2024. Larkin's sells healthy grocery items and is one of the only WIC vendors in the area. Awarded funds will be used to purchase additional equipment for merchandising fresh produce and other healthy grocery items in the retail space, closing the distance between community residents and access to affordable foods.

Palace Life Supermarket (Erie): An African food and clothing store that opened September 2024. The store was awarded funds to purchase equipment such as a walk-in cooler, a deep freezer and a produce merchandiser to expand the selection of fresh meat and produce. Palace Life serves the growing African community in the neighborhood, providing essential products that reflect the community's traditions and dietary needs.

Trawka's Mom & Pop Grocery (Erie): A neighborhood meat and grocery market that will be using funds to purchase new produce, meat and dairy coolers, ensuring long-term access to these products. The store has been in operation for over 80 years and is a critical source of groceries in its community.

United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern PA (Scranton and Carbondale): Two farmers markets awarded funds to purchase refrigeration for their indoor facilities and to conduct a bilingual, SNAP user-focused marketing campaign. The addition of cold storage will enable more farms from rural parts Lackawanna, Wayne, Wyoming, Luzerne and Susquehanna counties to participate in the farmers markets as vendors will be able to drop products off outside market hours.

"Thanks to the PA FFFI grant, The Best Route has expanded its mobile market and is building a new onsite processing kitchen. This investment allows us to meet growing community demand—not only by increasing access to fresh, affordable produce, but by offering value-added products that make healthy eating easier and more accessible for families across our region." — The Best Route

"The FFFI funding will more than double the space we have for local produce during the Pennsylvania growing season, and will triple the quantity of fresh produce we carry throughout the year. Without this funding, we would have struggled over several years to slowly equip our expanded bakery, storage and retail spaces." — Dylamato's Market

The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative is accepting applications for its next round of funding from August 15 to November 1, 2025. The program is open to new or expanding grocery stores and other food retail outlets or enterprises with a direct connection to retail working to increase or improve access to fresh, healthy and affordable foods in under-resourced areas across the Commonwealth. Applicants can seek up to \$50,000 to support their projects. To learn more and apply please visit <https://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/hffi/pa>.

About the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (PA FFFI)

In 2001, The Food Trust published a report that mapped grocery access in Philadelphia and found that the city's lower-income communities also had the lowest supermarket access and the highest rates of diet-related deaths. The report spurred the Philadelphia City Council to request The Food Trust to convene the Food Marketing Task Force, a group of high-level representatives from the public health, economic development and grocery retailing

sectors, to identify the challenges to operating supermarkets in underserved areas and propose policy recommendations to address these challenges.

Out of these recommendations came Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative (PA FFFI), the first Healthy Food Financing Initiative in the country. The US Department of Treasury and the USDA have since replicated the program at the national level, as have several other states such as Massachusetts, Kansas, Virginia, and California. Whereas the original PA FFFI focused on supermarkets specifically, the program has since broadened to include a diversity of fresh food retailers including farmers markets, corner stores, mobile markets and food hubs.

About The Food Trust

Founded in 1992, The Food Trust works with neighborhoods, institutions, retailers, farmers and policymakers across the country to ensure delicious, nutritious food for all. Backed by three decades of research and evaluation, our holistic, community-centered approach to nutrition security weaves together three core programming elements — access, affordability and education — as well as a focus on advocating for public policy solutions. Today, The Food Trust works with partners across the country to develop and implement Healthy Food Financing Programs that offer financing and technical support to grocery stores and other healthy food retail in under-resourced neighborhoods. Learn more at www.thefoodtrust.org.

Program Partners

The Food Trust is a national nonprofit dedicated to ensuring delicious, nutritious food for all. Headquartered in Philadelphia, The Food Trust provides leadership and technical assistance for partners across the country. As the Food Access Organization (FAO) for the PA FFFI, they ensure that applicants meet program eligibility requirements.



The Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development (DCED) is the state agency overseeing the PA FFFI. They will be a key partner in ensuring that the Commonwealth's goals are being met in improving food access and supporting local farmers and local food.



Bridgeway Capital provides patient, flexible capital and business education to ignite small business growth, develop communities, increase access to healthy foods, and expand social services. We invest in inclusive economic opportunities that create a vibrant region where all can thrive. Bridgeway is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) by the U.S. Treasury Department and is a member of the Opportunity Finance Network.



Finanta is a private, independent non-profit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) whose mission is to provide capital in places where it is not usually available. We seek to create positive change in a community by providing entrepreneurs with access to business development loans for projects that generate jobs, create affordable housing and help to revitalize communities.

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Reinvestment Fund is a catalyst for change in low-income communities. We integrate data, policy and strategic investments to improve the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods. Using analytical and financial tools, we bring high-quality grocery stores, affordable housing, schools and health centers to the communities that need better access—creating anchors that attract investment over the long term and help families lead healthier, more productive lives.



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