

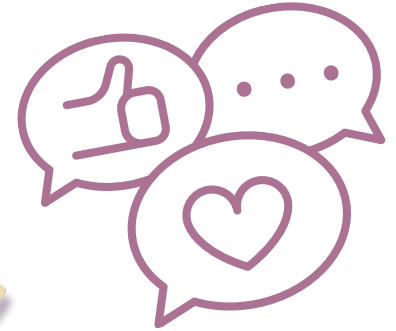


RFSI ARIZONA

RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE

Community Input

Summary



- 01 Listening Sessions
- 02 Public Comment Survey pt. 1
- 03 Public Comment Survey pt. 2
- 04 Top Priorities
- 05 Recommendations & Grant Writing Supports



pshand@azda.gov ljames@azda.gov
rachelgomezacosta@pinnacleprevention.org



bit.ly/azrfsi

Funding for Arizona's RFSI program was made possible by a grant/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.





Community Input Summary: Listening Sessions

Two virtual **Listening Sessions** were held September-October of 2023 with the purpose of hearing the needs and wishes of local food producers, distributors, community stakeholders, and community members to help inform a state-wide approach and priorities for Arizona's Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program.



9/28/2023
 88 registered
 60 attendees



Passcode: 8*ka90Q7
 10/10/2023
 91 registered
 54 attendees

Discussion questions:

- What middle of supply chain needs exist for you now?
- What do you need for this program to work for you?
- **What** are the biggest gaps in middle-of-supply-chain for food access in Arizona?
- **Where** are the biggest gaps in the middle-of-supply-chain for food access in Arizona?

What was shared:

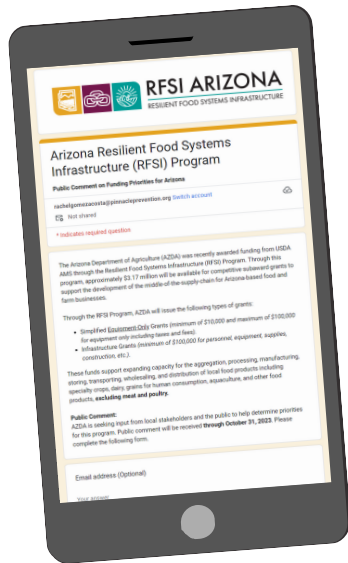
- Cold storage and refrigerated transportation needs are significant
- Equity- prioritizing applications from more remote regions of the state and BIPOC producers/food hubs
- Food hub collaboration- prioritizing applications that center the aggregation and distribution of produce from smaller-scale producers across the state. Agreement around statewide impacts
- Commercial, shared/commissary kitchens to produce value-added local products, and processing equipment/facilities are needed
- Simplified Equipment Grant - should be prioritized, as this is a significant need of Indigenous producers in the state
- Grant-writing support - culturally relevant partners and space will be especially supportive of Indigenous producers

(there are) "lots of hubs starting to work together but it's clunky and stressful without infrastructure...would love to see a bigger statewide impact with multiple partners"

"It's difficult for smaller growers and farmers to afford a refrigerated vehicle to transport produce, as well as the time it takes to load the truck, transport product, and unload, and even find the customers. This grant can help food hubs fill the gap"



Community Input Summary: Survey, pt. 1



Between September and October of 2023, the Arizona Dept. of Agriculture opened a **Public Comment Survey** to seek input from local stakeholders and the public to help determine priorities for this program.

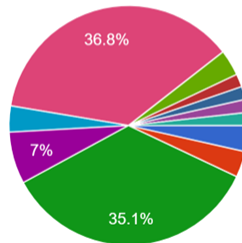
57 comments were received

Eleven of Arizona's 15 counties were represented in the public comment.

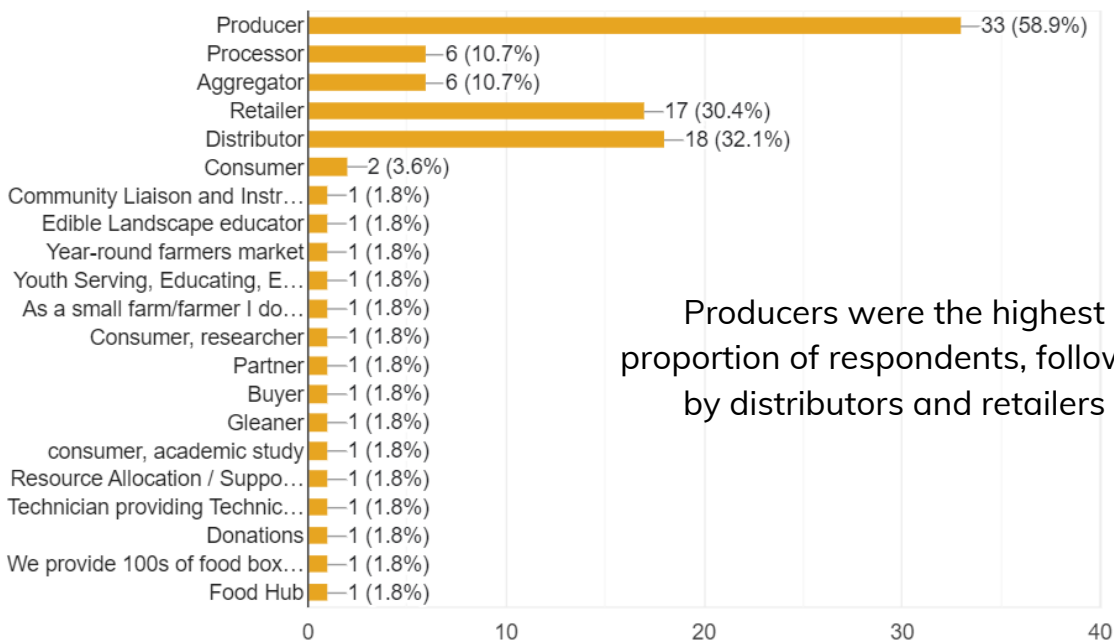
Responses were not received from participants in Apache, La Paz, Graham and Greenlee counties.



- Academic
- Aggregator
- Business Association
- Farm or Commodity Organization
- Food Business / Entrepreneur
- Government
- Non-profit Organization
- Retailer
- Information Technology & Agriculture
- U of AZ Mohave County Cooperative Extension-AZ Healthzone
- Farm & Food Business
- Aggregator, Producer, Distributor and Processor



Many sectors of the food system were represented in the public comment. The highest proportion of responses came from Farm or Commodity Organizations, followed by non-profit organizations.

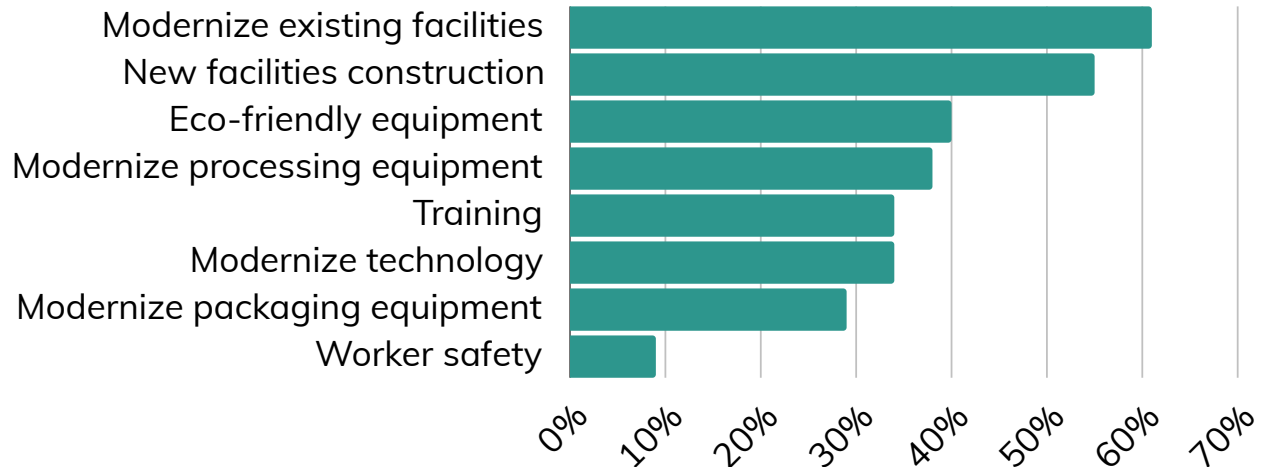


Producers were the highest proportion of respondents, followed by distributors and retailers

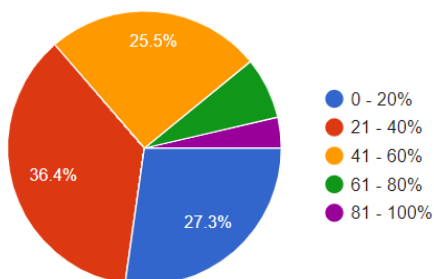
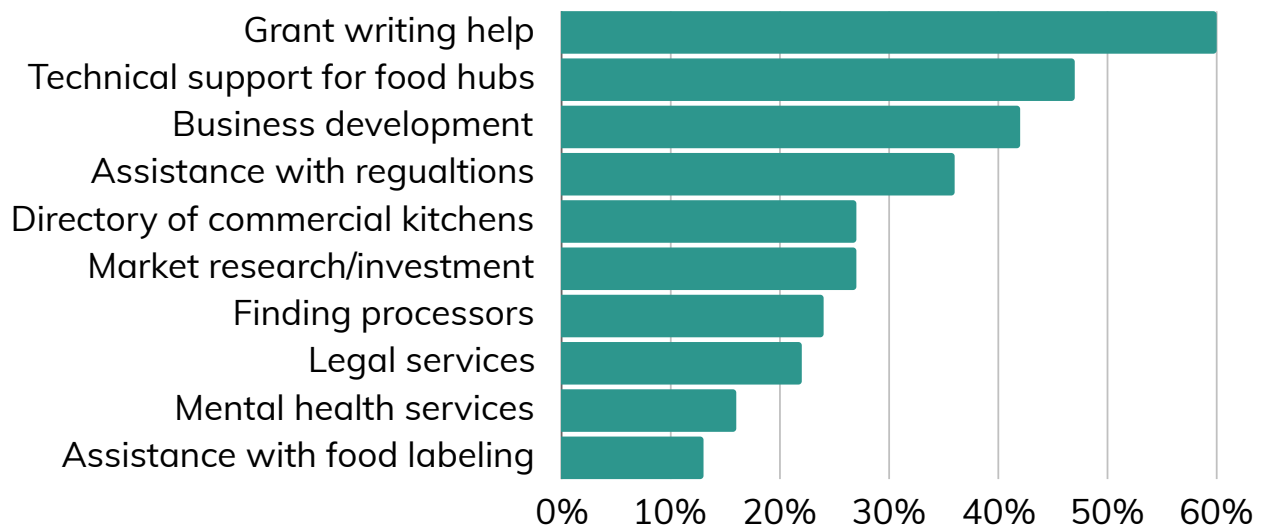


Community Input Summary: Survey, pt. 2

Top responses to the Public Comment Survey question: Which of the following improvements would make the biggest impact?



Top responses to the Public Comment Survey question: Besides direct investments, which of the following areas would be most helpful for agriculture and food business development in Arizona?



Sixty-three percent of Public Comment Survey respondents reported that Simplified Equipment Only grants should receive less than 40% of the funds.



Community Input Summary: Top Priorities

Based on feedback shared within the Listening Sessions and Public Comment Survey, the following have been identified as top priorities for 2024 RFSI funding requests in Arizona

Aggregation - facility to maintain cold chain while aggregating product in preparation for distribution to consumer (mentioned 11 times)

Food Hub Coordination - shared and coordinated “drop points” for cold storage, processing, aggregation, and distribution to consumers; supporting logistics and collaboration to move food regionally and state-wide (mentioned 11 times)

Labor - food safety training, workforce development, processing, aggregation, and distribution staffing (mentioned 8 times)

Administrative Support - licensing/insurance support, paperwork and funding application support, crop planning (mentioned 4 times)

Transportation & Distribution



vehicles, especially refrigerated, and shared distribution resources (staff, equipment such as a pallet lift) to minimize the amount of duplicated miles and labor hours spent moving food from production locations to consumer

mentioned 26 times



Cold Food Storage

refrigerated storage resources (walk-in, high volume capacity, shared, and geographically accessible) to ensure continuous cold chain

mentioned 25 times

Kitchens & Food Processing



shared, licensed food processing and preparation space to wash, chop, slice, mill, and produce value-added local goods (changing or transforming a product from its original state to a more valuable state)

mentioned 21 times



Community Input Summary: Recommendations

Simplified Equipment-Only Grant (SEO)

- Approximately \$1 million in funds could be allocated for SEOs
- Prioritize BIPOC and Indigenous producers
- Prioritize rural/remote areas that have a particularly difficult time getting food to market channels and where collaborative food hub projects are challenging
- Prioritize projects with shared use and greater regional impacts
- Refrigerated vehicles (approx. \$90k each), cold storage, and processing equipment are the highest needs

Infrastructure Grant (IG)

- Approximately \$2.2 million in funds could be allocated for IGs
- Cap projects to allow for funding to be distributed more broadly across the state
- Prioritize collaborative projects that have wider regional and statewide impacts
- Prioritize modernization of existing facilities to maximize funding impacts and maintain realistic project implementation timelines
- Shared facilities for storage, washing/processing, aggregation, and distribution, and licensed kitchen/processing facilities are the highest needs

RFSI Grant Writing Supports

Virtual Office Hours

Tuesdays

10-11 AM

1/2/2024-2/27/2024



Writing Workshops

1/18/2024 - Chandler

1/24/2024 - Sells

1/25/2024 - Tucson

2/01/2024 - Flagstaff

2/5 & 2/7 - Virtual