



# NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL FOOD BUSINESS CENTER

United States Department of  
Agriculture – Agricultural Marketing  
Service

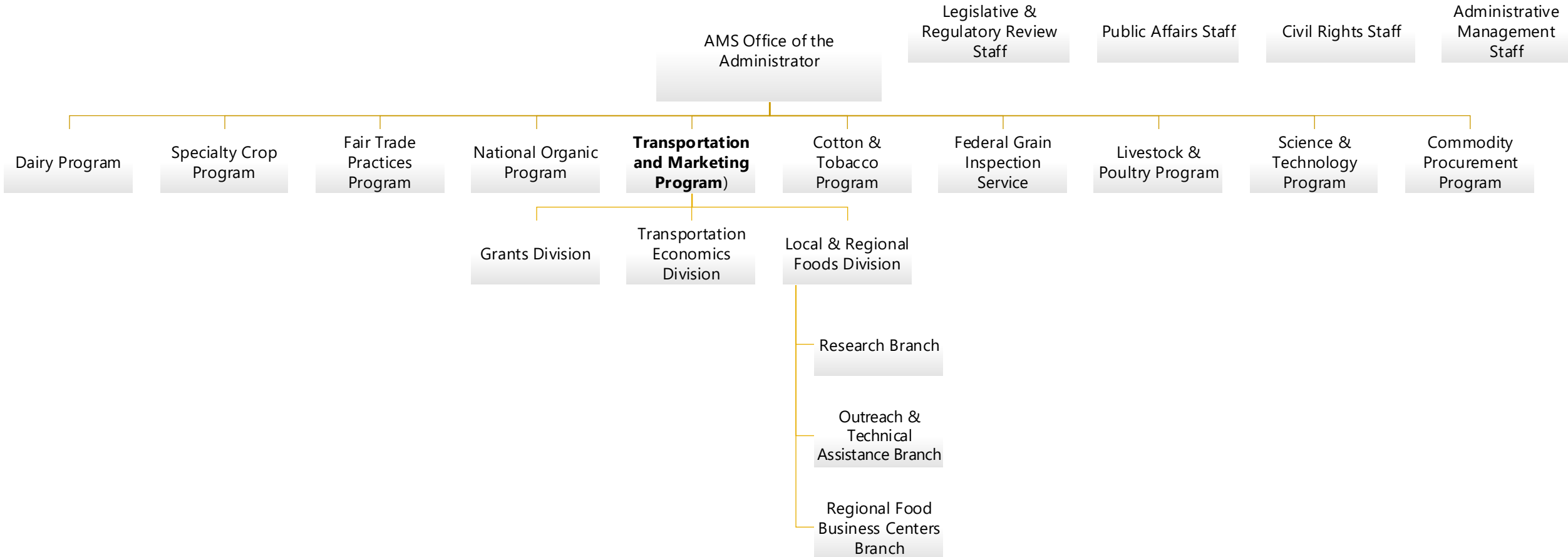


# Program Summary

- In September 2022, USDA announced **\$400 million** to fund the USDA Regional Food Business Center initiative.
- In May 2023, **12 organizations** were selected to lead efforts in their region and serve all areas of the country.
- The USDA Regional Food Business Centers support producers by providing **technical assistance and capacity building** to farms and food businesses to **increase their viability and access a variety of local and regional markets.**
- By strengthening connections between rural and urban areas, the Regional Food Business Centers **drive economic opportunities across the regions**, creating a more diversified and resilient food system.
- The USDA Regional Food Business Centers serve small and mid-sized food and farm businesses and prioritize work in **historically underinvested communities** in their region.



# Situating the RBFC Program within AMS





# Program Goals

Drive economic opportunities and success for small and mid-sized farm and food businesses

Develop targeted, region-specific value chain solutions

Maximize impact of locally driven investment

Collaborate with USDA team to ensure ongoing, regionally appropriate support and coordination

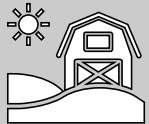
Complement, integrate and support other USDA programs

Foster a more diversified and resilient food system

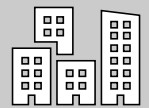
# RFBC Roles



**Coordination** - Act as regional hubs coordinating across geographic areas, with USDA, other federal, state, and tribal agencies with relevant resources, regional commissions, and the other Regional Food Centers. They also conduct outreach to underinvested communities and businesses.



**Technical Assistance** - Provide direct business technical assistance to small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses (producers, processors, distributors, and other businesses within the food supply chain) and food value and supply chain coordination.

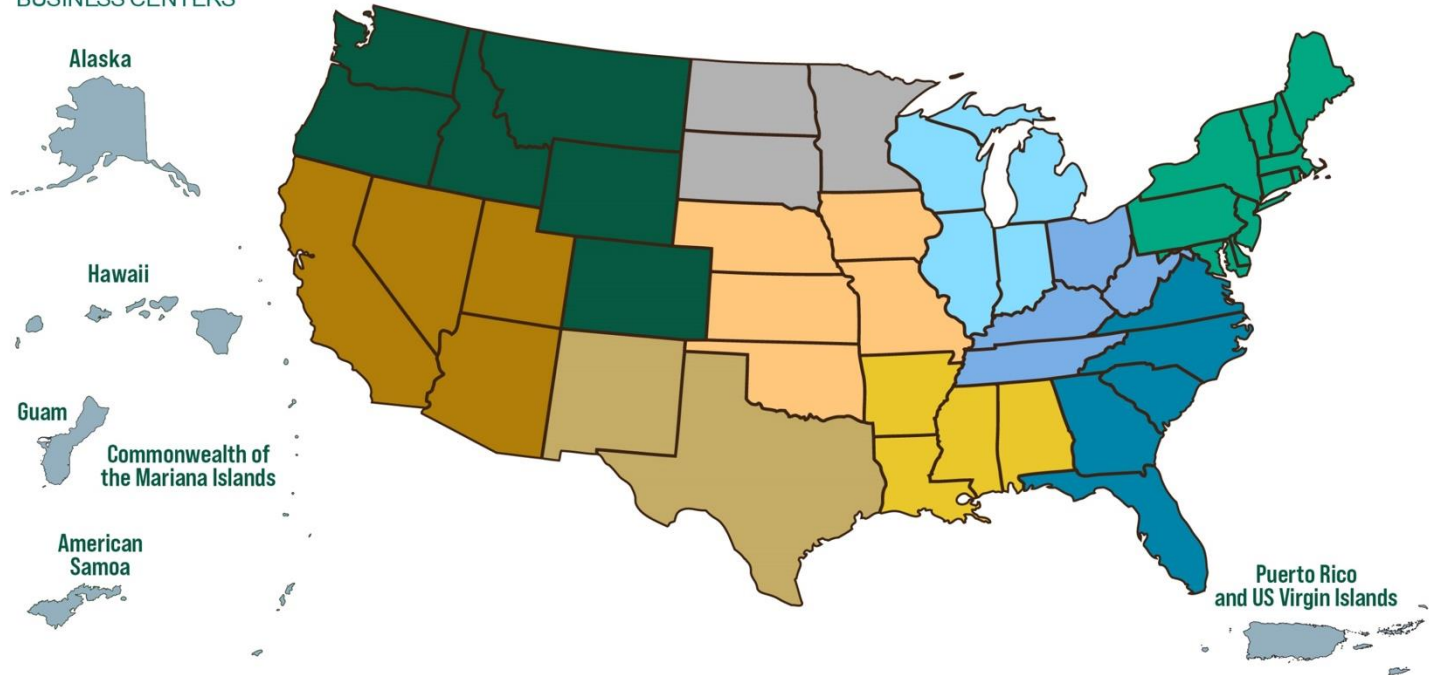


**Capacity Building** - Provide financial assistance through business builder subawards up to \$100,000 to support projects focused on emerging regional needs and businesses that are working towards expansion and other investment.

# Center Locations



## USDA Regional Food Business Centers Geographic Regions



★ National Intertribal Food Business Center - Intertribal Agriculture Council will serve tribes nationwide. ★

**Northwest and Rocky Mountain**  
Colorado State University

**Southwest**  
University of California  
(This Center will serve the Colonias counties in California and Arizona.)

**North Central**  
Region Five Development Commission

**Heartland**  
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

**Rio Grande Colonias**  
Texas A&M AgriLife  
(This Center will serve the Colonias counties in New Mexico and Texas.)

**Great Lakes Midwest**  
Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems

**Delta**  
Mississippi Delta Council for Farmworker Opportunities

**Appalachia**  
Rural Action, Inc.

**Northeast**  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation

**Southeast**  
Georgia Minority Outreach Network

**Islands and Remote Areas**  
Hawaii Good Food Alliance

*\*These boundaries are not rigid but for visualization purposes only. USDA anticipates collaboration with communities across state and county lines.*

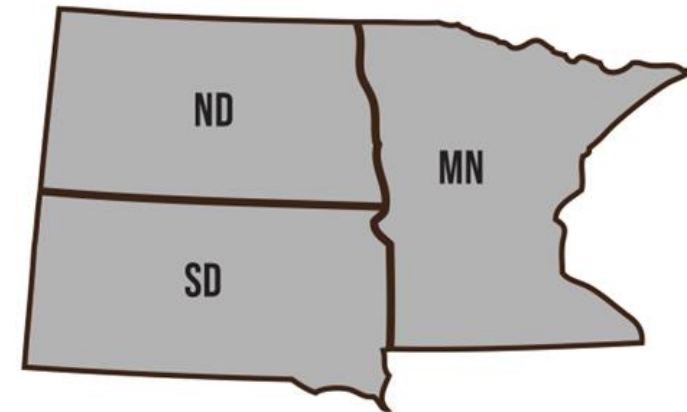
# North Central RFBC

## Priorities:

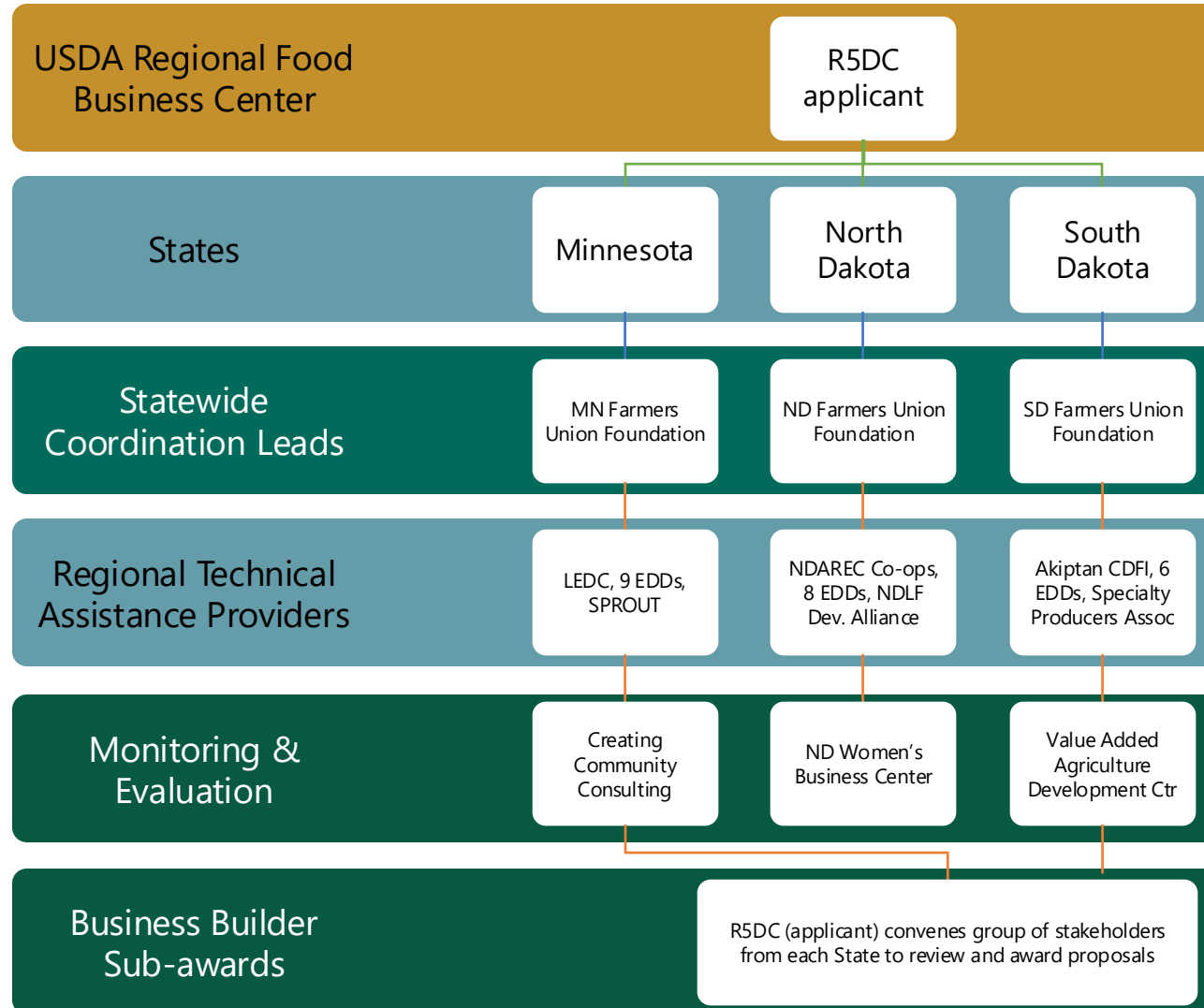
1. Centralizing efforts from 35 different partners to deliver food value chain services to underserved communities, businesses, and people
2. Helping direct culturally specific strategies and outcomes from expertise through Native CDFI's, Latino Economic Development professionals and small/mid-sized food value chain businesses
3. Learning how grassroots partners can efficiently transform an industry on a multi-state level that creates long-term system impacts

Lead Organization:  
Regional Five  
Development  
Commission (Staples,  
MN)

Partners: 35 Key Partners



# Organizational Chart







# Technical Assistance Services

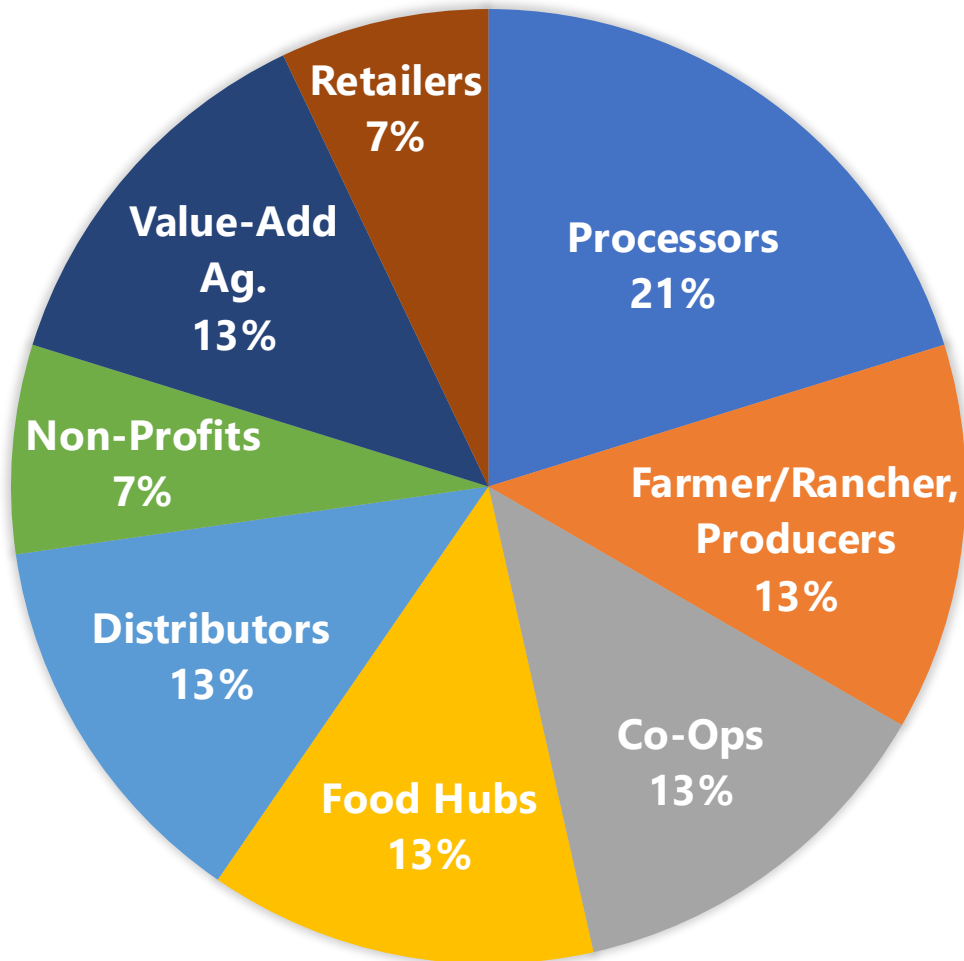
- Regional food business technical assistance providers offer direct technical assistance to small and mid-sized food and farm businesses, including grant writing services and grant administration.
- This assistance helps businesses improve their operations, access new markets, and overcome challenges in the food supply chain.
- The Center also provides support for food value and supply chain coordination, fostering collaboration and efficiency among different businesses in the food system.



# Business Builder Sub-Awards

- Once a year open application period
- Maximum awards \$50,000 (No match), 2-year implementation period
- Review committee comprised of 5 individuals from each State
- Eligible applicants: small to mid-sized value chain businesses (producers/growers, aggregators, distributors, processors, and food access points)
- Eligible uses: staff time, business planning activities (market analysis, feasibilities, EIA's) software implementation, equipment, marketing, and more.
- Priority is given to:
  - Applicants within or serving priority distressed zip codes
  - Minority or underserved applicants (Veterans, women, BIPOC, disabled, low-income, other)
  - Groups or consortiums of small to mid-sized value-chain businesses
  - Those that are receiving or have received Technical Assistance from TA providers
  - Those seeking to expand markets to institutions
  - Those meeting a specific market bottleneck or meeting ACTION PLAN goals
  - Equitable geographic distribution across each State.

# 2024 Business Builder Sub-Awards Awardees



- Just over \$600,000 announced, evenly distributed across North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota
- In all, 15 existing businesses, 5 in each of the three states, were awarded funding.
- 7 of the 15 awards are directed at businesses operating or substantially serving distressed communities in the region.
- 20% to new businesses.
- 53% to purchasing special equipment (food safety, processing, storage, packaging).

# Partner Summit



In-person, two-day summit in Fargo, ND



Intercultural Development Inventory Assessment



USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Jennifer Lester Moffitt



Panel Discussions



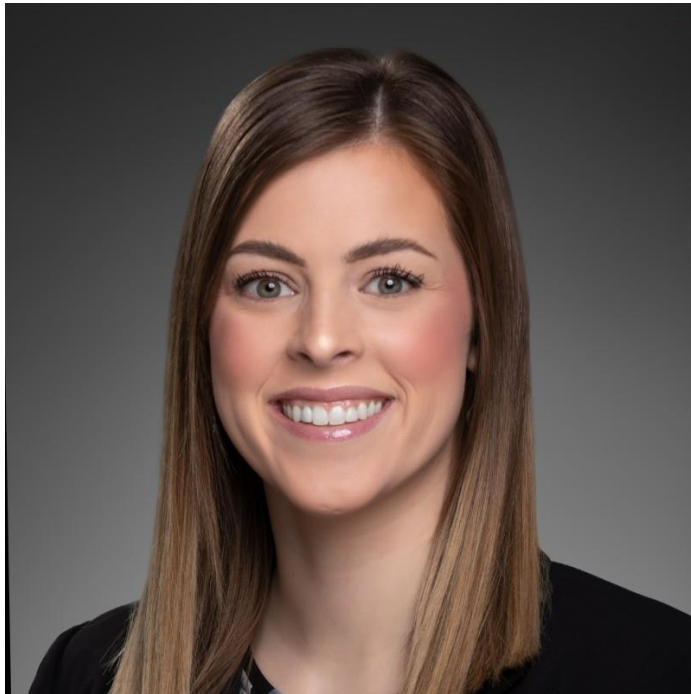
Breakout Sessions



Keynote Speakers

# Panel Speakers

Dr. Sophie Johnson, Community Development  
Manager, South Eastern Council of Governments, Sioux  
Falls, SD



Mitch Calkin, Program Manager, Lake Agassiz  
Regional Council, Fargo, ND



# Panel Speakers

Felicity Merritt, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, Souris Basin Planning Council, Minot, ND



Levi Welbourn, Regional Food Systems Coordinator, Latino Economic Development Center, Minneapolis, MN



# South Eastern Council of Governments





# South Eastern Council of Governments







# Lake Agassiz Regional Council

## USDA Rural Energy for America Program

- LARC received \$250,000 in technical assistance grants to help with energy audits, technology assessments, and grant writing
- Renewable Energy Systems and/or Energy Efficiency Improvements
- Inflation Reduction Act allows up to 50% cost share if criteria met:
  - Zero GHG emissions at project level
  - Located in "Energy Community"
  - Energy efficiency improvements
  - Tribal entities

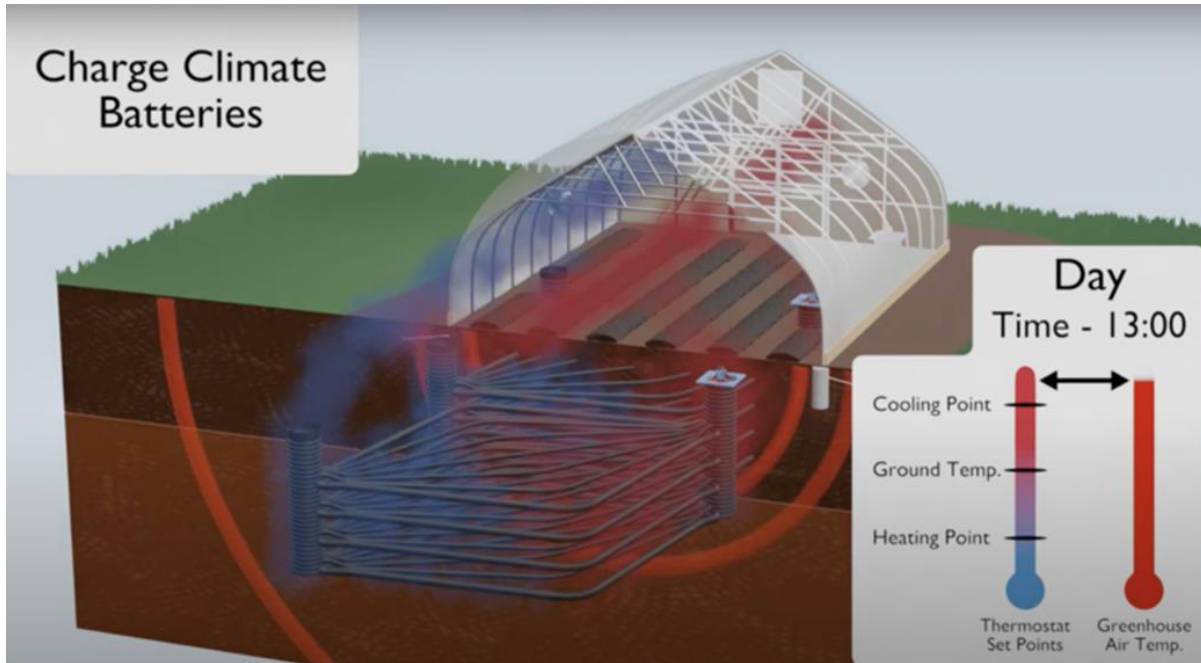
## Energy Efficiency Improvements

- HVAC
- Windows
- Insulation
- Refrigerators
- Freezers
- Grain dryers



*Cando Grocery HVAC replacement*

## Renewable Energy Systems



# Souris Basin Planning Council

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY CORPS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



- My Background
  - Local Food Systems → Economic Development
  - Unique Perspective, Different from most TA providers
- Role
  - Bridge between TA providers and local food businesses

# Souris Basin Planning Council

## BUSINESS BUILDER GRANTS

Spring 2024 Application Cycle  
ND Partners Q&A Session

Felicity Merritt  
April 10, 2024



## Regional Food Business Center Begins Operation

**Date:** Mon, 04/22/2024 Broadcast: 01

**Remark:** The first of several USDA led Regional Food Business Centers is now in business, and accepting grant applications to help small and mid-size farm and food businesses to grow. (Rod Bain and Felicity Merritt of the North Central Regional Food Business Center)

**Duration:** 00:00:59.376

**Author:** RBAIN





# Latino Economic Development Center

## **Latinx Farmers Market in Minneapolis:**

- Partnered with the City of Minneapolis and the Minnesota Farmers Market Association; LEDC to host the first ever Latinx market showcasing diverse small businesses and food vendors to the Minneapolis community.
- Guaranteed our farmers payment through the Sanneh Foundation, funding \$15,000 for farmers' produce that will then be donated and distributed to the community for free, and taking any leftover produce to provide to refugee communities.
- Advocating for Latinx/BIPOC small businesses owners to become strong and impactful competitors in the market by provide hands on technical assistance and training.



# Latino Economic Development Center

## **LEAFF Program:**

- The LEAFF program through the Good Acre, was developed to help small scale emerging farmers survive the loss of their typical markets due to the pandemic; now serves as a state funded farm to food shelf program, providing technical support and local emergency assistance funding for farmers.
- This program guarantees our farmers a set dollar amount of produce and support by the program, that also provides cultural relevant food systems for local communities.
- With our farmers through the program, we have been able to serve and support underserved farmers and provide compensation with market prices for over 100 different crops.

## **Emerging Farmers Conference:**

- Serves as an innovative conference that primarily serves the needs and provides resources for underserved emerging farmers (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Disabled, Veteran, Women farmers) to support building local economic development and building new networks of farmers, advocates, educators, and government officials.



**REGION FIVE**  
Development Commission

# CONTACT

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[regionfive.org/rfbc](https://regionfive.org/rfbc)