

Mardag Foundation | Food Access Grant Program | LOI Scoring Rubric

Grantmaking focus:

Mardag Foundation’s Food Access Grant Program supports organizations and programs that ensure access to food and address inequities in the food system.

Mardag’s Food Access Grant Program will consider proposals that address systems change and/or direct service work to eliminate barriers and increase access to culturally relevant, healthy, affordable food for low-income immigrant/refugee or Native American/Indigenous children, youth and families in the East Metro and Greater Minnesota.

The Food Access Grant Program will consider proposals that address one or more of the following:

- Extent to which the work empowers immigrant/refugee or Native American/Indigenous communities in reclaiming ownership and control of the food system – the right to grow, sell, access and eat food that is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate and grown with integrity for the well-being of the people, land and animals
- Extent to which the work strives to provide culturally relevant food options in areas with lower access

Section 1: Overview & Proposed Work

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant clearly describe their current focus, key initiatives or programs, and the communities they serve? Strong proposals will show how the organization positions itself within broader food systems change efforts and how its work advances equitable access to culturally relevant, healthy, and affordable food in the East Metro and/or Greater Minnesota.

Score

Description

5

The organization exemplifies these criteria and provides strong responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response provides a cohesive explanation of the organization’s work, who the organization works with, and why the work matters. It clearly situates the organization within broader food systems efforts and advancing equitable access to culturally relevant, healthy, and affordable foods in the East Metro and/or Greater Minnesota, demonstrating strong alignment and purpose.

4	The organization exemplifies some of these criteria and provides good responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization describes its programs and communities clearly, though some elements may not be fully developed or connected. The role within the broader change efforts is present but may be more implied than explicitly articulated.
3	The organization generally aligns with the criteria and provides adequate responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response offers a basic description of key initiatives, programs, and general understanding of the organization.
2	The organization may align with some of the criteria and provides minimal responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The information provided is fragmented, vague, or overly general, making it difficult to understand the organization's focus or whom it serves. Little connection is made to advancing broader food systems change efforts.
1	The organization does not meet or does not clearly describe how it meets these criteria. The response does not clearly explain the organization's work, communities, or relevance to broader food systems change efforts.
Comments or Questions	

Section 2: Vision & Approach

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant articulate a compelling long-term vision for eliminating barriers and increasing food access? Strong proposals will demonstrate how their work addresses inequities faced by low-income immigrant, refugee, and/or Native American/Indigenous children, youth, and families. The applicant should also show how their work is informed by, formed with, and directly benefits communities most impacted, and how guiding principles or frameworks such as food justice, food sovereignty, climate justice, or sustainable agriculture shape their approach.

Score	Description
5	The organization exemplifies these criteria and provides strong responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization articulates a compelling long-term vision and clearly explains how it works to eliminate

barriers and increase access to culturally relevant, healthy and affordable food. The response demonstrates authentic connection to communities most impacted and shows how stated values or frameworks actively guide decisions and practices.

4

The organization exemplifies some of these criteria and provides good responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization describes a meaningful vision and references community benefit and guiding principles, though some relationships between vision, practice and impact could be more explicit.

3

The organization generally aligns with the criteria and provides adequate responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response expresses aspirations or values but provides limited explanation of how they shape actual work or partnerships. Community connection is mentioned but not clearly integrated into the organization's approach.

2

The organization may align with some of the criteria and provides minimal responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization shares high-level intentions or language about impact, but it is unclear how this translates into practice or benefits communities most impacted.

1

The organization does not meet or does not clearly describe how it meets these criteria. The response does not clearly articulate a long-term vision or how the work contributes to a resilient arts and culture ecosystem. Little to no connection is made to community influence, benefit, or guidance practices.

**Comments
or
Questions**

Section 3: Organizational Readiness & Capacity

Scoring Description: To what extent does the applicant demonstrate organizational readiness and capacity to carry out this work? Strong proposals will describe leadership, staffing, financial health, and infrastructure in ways that convey both current strengths and areas for growth. The applicant should show how funding will support continued growth, strengthen organizational infrastructure, and expand their ability to sustain long-term systems change in food access and equity.

Score	Description
5	<p>The organization exemplifies these criteria and provides strong responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response clearly describes leadership and a readiness that inspires confidence in the organization's ability to carry out the work. Information shared thoughtfully identifies how funding will strengthen infrastructure, support sustainability, and build capacity to lead change over time.</p>
4	<p>The organization exemplifies some of these criteria and provides good responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The organization provides a clear overview of its structure and readiness, though some elements may lack detail or connection to future growth. The use of funding to strengthen capacity is described but may not be fully developed.</p>
3	<p>The organization generally aligns with the criteria and provides adequate responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The response offers general information about leadership or operations but does not fully convey how the organization will sustain its work. Connections between funding and long-term capacity building are present but remain broad.</p>
2	<p>The organization may align with some of the criteria and provides minimal responses to the corresponding LOI questions. The description of leadership and financial position is minimal or fragmented, making it difficult to understand readiness to implement work.</p>
1	<p>The organization does not meet or does not clearly describe how it meets these criteria. The response does not provide enough detail about organizational leadership, capacity or financial context to determine readiness. It's unclear how funding would support the organization's ability to carry out or sustain the work.</p>
Comments or Questions	