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**Fresh Food from Farmers of Color Fund (FFFC) and Experimental Station to provide grants to Farmers of Color to Increase Local Food Production and Expand Access to Healthy Food on Chicago’s South and West Sides**

WOODLAWN – Fresh Food from Farmers of Color Fund (FFFC) will be administered by Experimental Station to provide grants to farmers of color to expand food production, site infrastructure, and capacity for their businesses to further support access to fresh produce to residents on the South and West Sides of Chicago. In partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Experimental Station will distribute $650,000 to farmers of color committed to fostering farmers markets and providing access to locally grown produce on the South and West Sides of Chicago.

“The Department is thrilled to receive these special funds from the Governor’s office,” stated Stephanie Bess, Interim Associate Director, Office of Family Wellness, IDHS. “Access to fresh, locally grown foods is important to good health and wellbeing. This project has the potential to reduce food insecurity and improve health in communities hard hit by COVID 19. Our partnership will ensure funds are fairly and efficiently distributed with both short- and long-term benefits.”

Connie Spreen, Executive Director of Experimental Station, added that, “For 13 years, Experimental Station has hosted the 61st Street Farmers Market in Woodlawn. During this time, we have had the wonderful opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the challenges of local growers and producers. We have also established a tremendous amount of respect for their commitment to servicing community residents on the South and West Sides of Chicago. With the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on both residents and farmers, we are eager to provide these grants to further provide South and West Side communities with access to fresh produce.”

“Our local farmers remain eager and steadfast in the commitment to service our communities. COVID-19 has accelerated our need to efficiently manage the daily challenges of farming. The collaboration with Experimental Station is very encouraging as they share in our commitment to communities on the South Side” said Anton Seals, Executive Director of Grow Greater Englewood. “The grants will provide Black and Brown farmers the capital to innovate and sustain the long-term viability of local farm businesses.”

Farmers can submit proposals to increase scale and efficiency of the operation, capital investments, and purchases such as refrigeration units, food storage, online sales development, individually or in collaborative efforts with other farms.

"Funding farmers of color to provide fresh local food to communities is a win-win-win," according to Liz Moran Stelk, Executive Director of Illinois Stewardship Alliance. "Farmers can scale up and make infrastructure investments to meet skyrocketing demand for local food, families get access to fresh, healthy food, and our communities become more food secure and resilient. This is a program Illinois can be proud of."
Farms owned, led, or founded by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), are eligible to apply to the Fund.

The FFFC application is currently available at www.experimentalstation.org/fffc. The deadline to apply for a grant from the Fresh Food from Farmers of Color Fund is 11:59 PM CST September 7, 2020. All applications will be reviewed and funds awarded by September 30, 2020.

For more information or to apply, visit www.experimentalstation.org/fffc or contact Michelle E.L. Merritt at michelle@experimentalstation.org.

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