Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Program Overview

What is the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative?
The Fresh Food Retailer Initiative (FFRI) is a $7 million citywide program to encourage supermarket/grocery store development in low-income, underserved communities of Orleans Parish. By providing financing for capital, real estate and related expenses, the program will enable vendors to open, renovate, or expand retail outlets that sell fresh fruits and vegetables. FFRI will provide traditionally underserved neighborhoods in New Orleans with better access to fresh foods, quality employment opportunities, and opportunities for revitalization. The program is supported by the City of New Orleans and administered by Hope Enterprise Corporation (HOPE) in partnership with The Food Trust (TFT). The FFRI program is partially funded by Disaster Community Block Grants (D-CDBG).

Project Eligibility

What stores are eligible?
Eligible stores should be located or plan to locate in a site within Orleans Parish that will benefit a low- or moderate-income (LMI) community. A project can benefit an LMI community by locating within an LMI census tract/trade area or by providing/retaining jobs for LMI individuals. In addition, the site should be located in an underserved area, defined as an area of below average supermarket density or grocery sales. Finally, the store must demonstrate a commitment to providing fresh fruits and vegetables (suggested shelf space: 15% of store or 24 linear feet of shelf space, whichever is greater). Additional information on eligibility can be found in the Program Guidelines.

Can an existing grocery store apply?
An existing grocery retail outlet may apply if it plans to substantially improve the store’s ability to stock and sell a variety of non-prepared foods, or food products intended for home preparation, consumption and utilization.

Is there a minimum store size?
There is no minimum store size, as long as the store demonstrates a commitment to providing fresh fruits and vegetables and meets other program guidelines. Also, it is suggested that a significant section of the store be dedicated to the sale of fresh produce.

What is the environmental review process?
Since the FFRI program is partially funded by Disaster Community Block Grants (D-CDBG), all projects considered must be environmentally reviewed and classified as Exempt, Categorically Excluded, in need of an Environmental Assessment (EA), or in need of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A loan agreement can ONLY be executed upon completion of the environmental review process, which will range from two weeks to several months, depending on the activities associated with the project and if any actions may have an adverse environmental impact. The City of New Orleans will lead this review process. Once an application for FFRI funding is submitted, a project is considered a federal undertaking, and the applicant should be careful to avoid any choice-limiting actions that may hinder potential financing.