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# Policy and Advocacy: Community Food Access Program

**Nourish Colorado's Strategic Role in  
Transforming the State Food System**

## A GROWING ISSUE...

After more than six years of listening to and engaging with Double Up Food Bucks Partners, farm stands, food hubs, and farmers markets, Nourish Colorado recognized a growing problem: **small food retailers were disappearing, and farms and markets were struggling to afford necessary infrastructure.** Issues such as rapidly changing neighborhoods, inventory management, logistics, and pricing further compounded the challenges for neighborhoods struggling with food access. Nourish Colorado began to explore what we could do to support small, independent retailers, both urban and rural, who face strikingly similar challenges impacting their ability to feed communities across the state.

## WHAT WE DID

First, Nourish convened potential beneficiaries and existing partner networks, such as Double Up Food Bucks retail partners, policy-engaged partner organizations, and the Food Bill Action Team to formulate a clear goal: **how to utilize state dollars to alleviate the burden of operation, storage, and distribution costs for small food retailers.** One of the first steps was to define “small, independent” and “Colorado-owned” as terms to strengthen and build the case for policy support for local food providers in nutritionally insecure communities. These conversations informed Nourish Colorado in leading HB-22-1380 – Critical Services for Low-Income Households, which created the Community Food Access program. Strengthened by testimony from farmers, farmers markets, and independent retailers writing letters and publicly testifying about how the bill would impact them and their communities, the bill passed in 2022. The bill called for technical assistance, value chain coordination, and distribution subsidies to support small retailers and distributors, and also established the Small Food Business Recovery and Resilience Grant, offering \$50,000 Colorado Department of Agriculture grants to small food retailers and family farms for operational costs, equipment, and sales systems to accept food incentive payments. Additionally, an advisory committee and a statewide outreach strategy were recommended to ensure effective implementation and engagement with eligible grant applicants.



## Colorado Department of Agriculture: Grant Recipients



OVER 5 MILLION  
AWARDED TOTAL



AVERAGE AWARD SIZE  
OF EACH GRANT:  
\$42,000



58% OF AWARDEES  
ARE IN A RURAL  
AREA



45% OF  
AWARDEES  
IDENTIFY AS A  
BIPOC LED  
BUSINESS



42 OUT OF 64  
COUNTIES IN CO  
HAD AN AWARDEE

## EXPANSION

In 2023, Nourish Colorado was approached by a legislator impressed by the potential impact of HB-22-1380 in his community to lead HB12-1008. This expansion of the Community Food Access program includes \$10 million per year in refundable tax credits for small food retailers and small farms that make equipment purchases or incur distribution fees to thereby increase access to healthy food access in low-income and underrepresented areas of Colorado.

## A CONTINUATION OF SUPPORT & OUTREACH

Looking ahead, after the significant impact of the Small Food Business Recovery and Resilience Grant, Nourish Colorado is shifting focus to support outreach and technical assistance for small food retailers and farms for the tax credits. These resources are crucial to help grantees remain compliant, effectively utilize tax credits, and maximize the program's impact. Nourish Colorado will continue to explore long-term support from outreach and technical assistance providers, which is a key priority to maintain the program's momentum and continued success.

