

Sustainability Project Fund Applications

Applicant/Project Leader: McGill Food Systems Project

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Project Title: McGill Food Systems Project/Local Food Plus Intern

Budget Requested: \$3024

Project Group –

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Abbreviations: *sorry to confuse you all!*

LFD – Local Food Days
LFP - Local Food Plus
MFDS – McGill Food and Dining Service
MFSP - McGill Food Systems Project

Project Overview

McGill Food Systems Project Description

Since 2009, The McGill Food Systems Project (MFSP) has been actively shaping food procurement at McGill and creating a more transparent, connected and sustainable food system. By engaging stakeholders from the administration, student researchers and the larger community, the MFSP has had many successes in creating a more informed food system. In the fall of 2009, a student research group (Geography 302) analyzed best practices for food sustainability at well-regarded universities. The group determined that to improve food procurement and the McGill community's connection with their food, both an internal Food System Administrator as well as a third party certification, such as Local Food Plus (LFP), were necessary. The Food System Administrator position has been filled by Laura Rhodes since August 2010, and has been regarded as a great success.

Relationship with and relevance of Local Food Plus

In the summer of 2010 the MFSP contacted LFP, eventually leading to a plan to establish the program in Quebec with McGill as the entry point. LFP is a non-governmental organization that

is committed to creating local sustainable food systems that reduce reliance on fossil fuels, create meaningful jobs, and foster the preservation of farmland – and farmers. The LFP certification standards address issues of production, labour, native habitat preservation, animal welfare, and on-farm energy use, and leverages these standards to open new higher-value markets for Canadian farmers.

By undertaking the research and partnership building with farmers and distributors independently, the LFP program is catered to making sustainable options for purchasers at the point of decision, with a much lower price-point increase than other certifications. They also subsidize the costs of certification for farmers, to ensure that their limitations are also considered. By certifying farms as local and sustainable, LFP creates a system that is transparent and trusted, which helps institutions make better purchases, provides a system for tracking and measuring progress year over year, and provides consumers with a wealth of knowledge and connection to the places and people that are involved with their food.

In May 2011, McGill Food and Dining Services **signed a pledge** with LFP stating McGill's intent to establish a percentage that the unit will put towards the purchase of products from LFP certified farms starting in the fall of 2011. At the moment, it is anticipated that 10 or 15 percent will be commitment for the first year, increasing in increments of 5% over the coming years. Aramark McGill and the Université du Québec à Montréal are also expected to sign the pledge in the coming weeks. LFP has received a list of existing suppliers (farms) which are expected to meet their certification, and has prioritized these farms for certification this summer. These farms and their produce are expected to be integrated into MFDS's local food days throughout the coming year. At the same time, the MFSP is developing programs for the 2011-2012 academic year to increase student engagement with the food they are eating in dining halls, specifically on local food days.

Project Need

First impressions are crucial in any new partnerships. The success or failure of the LFP launch in Quebec is highly dependent on how McGill is able to successfully bring together all the necessary stakeholders for its commitment to the program. The MFSP and LFP have identified the need for an intern to integrate the LFP program with McGill Food and Dining Services, and to make McGill a model institution for the program in Quebec. As this summer is a critical time for the LFP program to be integrated at McGill, SPF funding will go to support a paid internship at the MFSP this summer. The role of the intern is to focus on the four elements outlined below, with the **overarching goal of ensuring the longevity of the program and the continued momentum of the food sustainability movement at McGill.**

The relevance of this project (funding for an MFSP internship) is based on four critical elements:

1. The percentage commitment to purchasing LFP certified food by McGill Food and Dining Services provides the incentive of a stable market for farmers to engage in the program. With MFDS opening their dining halls in September 2011, the certification of local and sustainable

farms must happen in the coming weeks and months. LFP will be dedicating accredited certifiers to the farms of most interest to McGill, UQAM and Aramark. However, certification is normally simplest during the off season for farmers. As this is busiest time of year for farmers, it is crucial that a **MFSP intern support the streamlining of the certification for high priority farms (approximately 15+ farms, through onsite visits) for McGill before the semester begins**. This will also support the MFSPs goal of building meaningful relationships with farmers, in order to encourage their participation in the on-campus events surrounding local food days.

2. On June 13th the Quebec Minister of Sustainable Development will be visiting McGill. The purpose of this meeting is to both showcase the current initiatives and propose future partnerships with the province. McGill and LFP are looking to propose a financial partnership with the government to promote the province wide launch of LFP, with McGill as a focal point. Identified as a priority for certification, the intern will ensure the **Macdonald Horticultural Center produce be certified and showcased** at this meeting, which will provide a tangible and symbolic statement of McGill's role as a food sustainability leader.
3. To date, the largest challenge that the MFSP has yet to overcome is finding and engaging first year students in such a way that they feel Local Food Days (LFDs) are their own to explore and share with their peers. To address this challenge, the intern will host a number of staff (certifiers and senior leadership positions) from LFP to give education and leadership workshops on the issue of local and sustainable food for (up to 30) first year students living in residence. With minimal coordination the LFP workshop would provide a high value experience for these students based on the organization's well-founded educational resources. This workshop will take place in the early fall of 2011 with the expectation that the MFSP members can work with **these students to take ownership of organizing LFD Events which will ideally result in a sense of personal investment and pride in LFDs**. The MFSP will follow up with these students on a monthly basis to ensure their successful integration with the planning of LFDs.
4. In October 2011, McGill will host the official launching of the LFP official partnerships in the province in Quebec. **The intern will ensure that this event will engage the larger student body, through targeted outreach to student societies and relevant student groups**. This event will provide the opportunity for the student community become aware of the significance of LFP, its relevance for food and sustainability in Quebec and the successful collaboration between students and the administration that made these partnerships possible.

Qualifications of Intern

LFP and the MFSP have decided after discussion that the intern for this integration period should be Sarah Archibald. Sarah is a McGill student in the faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, majoring in International Agriculture. Her work with the MFSP over the past 18

months has given her a thorough understanding of the McGill Food System, and strong relationships with senior leadership at McGill Food and Dining Services. Through her studies and extracurricular interests, Sarah has developed both hands-on agricultural skills and a great understanding of sustainability issues in agriculture more broadly. She has a strong personal relationship with the Horticultural Center at Mac, many McGill and Quebec based agricultural groups, and was recognized by a Catalyst Award in 2011 for her collaboration with the administration. Sarah's commitment to sustainable agriculture, environmental awareness on campus and larger goal for institutional change lead her to strive for the success of this program.

Brief outline of Timeframe:

May: Certification of Macdonald Campus Horticultural Center, initial contact with other priority farms.

June: Event with Quebec Minister of Sustainable Development showcasing Hort Center produce. Ideally the potential for a Quebec wide LFP movement will be explored.

June-August:

- Farm Certification: facilitating the paperwork for farms to be certified through on site visits and meetings.
- Creation of a network of certified farms to supply MFDS dining halls, meeting regularly with chefs to ensure integration with menu and purchasing.
- Conversations with MFDS, chefs and staff to promote LFP integration, to answer questions and help facilitate integration of the program.

August-September: Planning and coordination of workshop by LFP for resident students.

October: Official launch of program at McGill: large event (coordinate with sustainability fair) – Potential event at Mac Campus Farm. Follow up with residence students for future LFP events.

Key Stakeholders:

McGill Food and Dining Services: MFDS is committed to LFP, but will need a strong network of farmers to establish and implement the percentage of their food buys that are certified local sustainable. Aramark has indicated strong interest in the program but needs a large capacity of farms to be certified before fully committing.

Other institutions: After LFP decided to expand to Quebec, the MFSP helped the organization engage other institutions and has recently formed a strong relationship with UQAM.

Quebec Government: With the success of the June 13th Ministers visit, there is hope that LFP will become a province-wide program in the next year.

McGill Food Systems Project: The intern will work closely with MFSP to enhance the projects of student engagement, student applied research, knowledge transfer.

Farmers: Farmers growing food that is purchased by McGill will benefit from the LFP certification. The intern will facilitate the integration of the program by helping farmers with the paperwork - during their busy growing season- and explaining the program.

Local Food Plus: LFP has a strong platform for working with institutions and farmers. However, an intern who is familiar with the McGill food system will greatly facilitate the

integration of the program into McGill cafeterias. The benefits of LFP will be transmitted to the community and McGill will act as a model institution for Quebec.

III. Financials

Detailed expenses:

Expense Description	Estimated Cost	Timeline
Salary for intern	\$3024	May-October 2011
	14 weeks * 18 hours/week *\$12/hour	