**PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING FOOD LICENSING FOR INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURS**

Economic upheavals and opportunities inspired by the local food movement have led unprecedented numbers of Minnesotans to start food businesses.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2010 to 2016: 74% in number of food business licenses issued. **Mostly:** \* retail food handler \* food manufacturer license types used by **small and mid-size food entrepreneurs***Source: MN Department of Agriculture* |  |



~ 1 new license from every 5 inquiries.

IF just 10% *more* inquiries get a license, that means

~130 more food businesses per year in MN

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Why some would-be food entrepreneurs give up:*Source: Food Enterprise Experiences Survey, Feb. 2017* |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Some innovativeenterprises become tangled in unclear regulatory language. | Wabasha Farmers’ Market took: 18 months+ involvement of farm groups +meeting with MDA staffto achieve licensing for innovative local produce distribution enterprise.*Source: Wabasha Farmers’ Market case study, June 2016* | Delays are especially costly to small businesses.How long until a food entrepreneur could proceed?*Source: Food Enterprise Experiences Survey, Feb. 2017* |

**SOLUTION: A SMOOTHER, MORE CONSISTENT REGULATORY PROCESS**

A new MDA “Food Business Innovation Coordinator” position backed up by a team of experts would create a brighter path to licensing of innovative business models, providing both consistent regulatory interpretation and timely decision-making.

* One *FTE for Food Business Innovation* housed at MDA
	+ 0.5 FTE = Coordinator
	+ 0.5 FTE = MDA regulatory specialists
* *SALT: Solution Advisory Licensing Team*
	+ Regulatory specialists from MDA and MDH
	+ Volunteer participants:
		- Experienced food business entrepreneurs
		- Representatives of economic development agencies/DEED
		- Food system advocates

The SALT Team will serve the innovative food entrepreneur while protecting food safety.

The Solutions Advisory Licensing Team would:

* Have authority to issue definitive interpretations of statute and rule
* Convey decisions back to MDA and MDH staff trainers and field-level staff for implementation in the field.

Continuous improvement feedback loop

This proposal supported by:

Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association Renewing the Countryside

info@mfma.org // (320) 250-5087 info@rtc.org