**PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING FOOD LICENSING FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

Economic upheavals and the lure of the local food movement have inspired 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**.

Way more people are interested in starting food enterprises than the number who succeed.



~ 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

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| Survey by U of MN and farmer organizations found 80% of respondents were able to proceed with a food enterprise in <1 year, while 20% took a year or more. |  |

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| Surveys by MDA found about 80% of food license applicants received satisfactory to very helpful information and a timely response to their requests. About 20% were not satisfied with either response or timeliness.  |  |

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| 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. | Delays are especially costly to small business |

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

A new MDA “Food Business Innovation Coordinator” position backed up by a team of experts would clear the path to licensing, 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 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 coordinator and 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.

This proposal supported by:

Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association Renewing the Countryside

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