**PROPOSAL: NEW PROCESS IN LICENSING INNOVATIVE FOOD BUSINESSES**

Entrepreneurs who wish to start innovative food business in MN face unique challenges. Rules and regulations governing compliance and licensing new food business models, although straightforward for standard food businesses, are not easy to find or interpret.

Both entrepreneurs and regulators devote considerable time and money getting to the right information, and licensing these businesses.

One of the most significant reasons for the increased time and cost of licensing these new models is the **lack of a standardized process** to handle models that do not fit current regulatory categories.

Over the last several years, informal teams of regulators, local food enthusiasts and members of local non-profits have volunteered their time to help these food entrepreneurs with compliance and licensing issues.

These teams have been successful. The **Local Food Advisory Committee**, where regulators, business owners, local food enthusiasts, and members of non-profits meet in a collaborative environment, was created to address complex regulatory issues.

**Team Wabasha** was formed about a year ago, to help the Wabasha Farmers Market with compliance and licensing issues that had stalled progress for over 18 months. After only a two-hour meeting, most licensing and compliance issues were resolved to the satisfaction of both the market and regulators.

And the **City of Minneapolis** has instituted a similar process with great success. We look forward to learning from and partnering with Mpls to create a robust system state-wide.

We propose forming a Solutions Advisory Licensing Team (SALT) to create a state-wide process to help novel food businesses become compliant and licensed within a reasonable amount of time (less than 6 months).

In order to scale the process, to standardize it, to reach a state-wide audience and to impact the MN economy in a significant way, we are seeking funding for the following:

**A MDA “Food Business Innovation Coordinator” position backed up by a team of experts.**

* One *FTE Coordinator for Food Business Innovation* housed at MDA
* *SALT: Solution Advisory Licensing Team*
  + Regulatory specialists from MDA and MDH
  + Experienced business entrepreneurs
  + Representatives of economic development agencies
  + Food system advocates

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.