

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

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1. PURPOSE

This procedure describes the process used to implement the Food Innovation Team (FIT), a subcommittee of the Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force (FSDTF).

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to FIT members, FSDTF members, staff of the Food and Feed Safety Division (FFSD) of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), and others as defined in Section 6 – Responsibility.

3. BACKGROUND

Most food businesses in Minnesota receive a license to do business from MDA, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), or their delegated agencies (DAs) with relative ease. However, some food business owners (FBOs) may encounter delays in licensing due to a number of factors that may not be easily solved without assistance. The FSDTF is statutorily responsible (MN Statute 28A.21) for a number of duties related to assisting FBOs including providing advice and coordination to state agencies and serving as a source of information and referral for the public concerned with food safety. The FSDTF created FIT to help answer questions and assist FBOs in navigating Minnesota's food licensing and regulatory environment.

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4. DEFINITIONS

Data Privacy Warning – A warning or notice provided to individuals when an entity collects information from them.

5. ACRONYMS

DA – Delegated Agency
FBO - Food Business Owner
FFSD – Food and Feed Safety Division of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture
FIT - Food Innovation Team
FSDTF – Food Safety and Defense Task Force
PSIF - Pre-Screening Intake Form
MDA – Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MDH – Minnesota Department of Health
MFMA - Minnesota Farmers Market Association
MISA - Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
RTC - Renewing the Countryside

6. RESPONSIBILITY

Please note that the roles defined in this section are in reference to and are further described in the Procedures section below.

FIT Membership - may ask a food business owner (FBO) to fill out the Pre-Screening Intake Form (PSIF) to start the data collection process. FIT members will contribute to the finalization of FIT meeting agendas, request the presence of ad-hoc experts to assist in answering questions during meetings, make recommendations to the FSDTF regarding applicants for FIT membership, aid the FIT Chair in reviewing and generating recommendation reports, and aid the FIT Chair in establishing a reasonable case review timeline.

FIT Chair – will facilitate a recommendation from FIT, ensure data that is collected is recorded in an appropriate repository, ensure that individuals participating in FIT – including in FIT meetings – are aware of the Data Privacy Warning for information that is shared, develop agendas, distribute reports to interested parties, and schedule and FIT meetings.

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FIT Meeting Attendees & Ad-Hoc Experts – may be called upon on occasion to help clarify food safety issues. Meeting attendees and ad hoc experts will be made aware of the Data Privacy Warning for information that is shared in the FIT process.

FSDTF Chair – will communicate vacancies in FIT to applicable entities and will approve new FIT members.

FSDTF Membership - will provide recommendations on the final selection of members to FIT from pool of candidates.

MDA Food & Feed Safety Director or Designee – may request the presence of an ad-hoc expert(s) in FIT meetings on behalf of MDA, MDH, or DAs. Will convene FIT meetings on behalf of MDA, MDH, or DAs (upon their request) and aid the FIT Chair in developing the agenda. Will facilitate staff availability to assist in generating and distributing recommendation reports, aid the FIT Chair in developing a timeline, and will provide available resources necessary to accomplish this task.

MDA/MDH/DA Supervisors - may ask a FBO to fill out the PSIF to start the data collection process.

Members of food maker organizations - members of organizations such as the Minnesota Farmers Market Association (MFMA), Renewing the Countryside (RTC), the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), and others may ask a food business owner to fill out the PSIF to start the data collection process.

FBO - may request a FIT meeting and may request the presence of a particular ad hoc expert or individual(s) to be present during the FIT meeting.

7. PROCEDURES

7.1 Membership

- 7.1.1 If no current FIT members exist, candidates will be recommended and screened by the current membership of the FSDTF.
- 7.1.2 Initial membership will be approved by the chairs of the FSDTF.
- 7.1.3 When vacancies occur, individuals interested in becoming a FIT member will fill out a membership application. The application will be

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reviewed by members of the FSDTF and final candidates will be approved by the FSDTF chairs.

- 7.1.4 Candidates may be recommended by current FIT members.
- 7.1.5 FIT members must fit these categories:
 - 7.1.5.1 MDA staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.2 MDH staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.3 MDA DA staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.4 MDH DA staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.5 Local food maker community (1)
 - 7.1.5.6 Local food farming community (1)
 - 7.1.5.7 Local/regional food systems expert or college/university-based (1)
 - 7.1.5.8 Food safety expert, non-agency (1)
- 7.1.6 FIT members receive no compensation
- 7.1.7 FIT members serve for 2 years. FIT members may re-apply for another 2-year term.

7.2 Meetings

7.2.1 Meeting Requests

7.2.1.1 When an FBO has encountered a barrier to licensing that has not been able to be resolved through regular channels, the FBO may submit a request to the FFSD Director or their designee to convene FIT to review the case in an attempt to move the licensing process to resolution.

7.2.1.1.1 FBOs may also request a FIT meeting through FIT members, who will then forward the request to the FFSD Director or their designee.

7.2.1.2 MDA, MDH, or DAs may request a review by FIT to ascertain if, in fact, the FBO is unable to be licensed or if there are other unexplored avenues to licensing.

7.2.1.3 FIT meetings are called at the discretion of the FFSD Director or designee; with input from MDH, DAs, or local food organizations such as MFMA, RTC or MISA.

7.2.2 PSIF Completion

7.2.2.1 Once a decision to convene FIT has been made, the FBO will fill out a PSIF (which will include a Data Privacy Warning about the data they choose to provide) with assistance from a

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FIT member. The information on the form contains details about their business model and product process.

7.2.2.2 The Chair of the FIT sub-committee will review the form for completion.

7.2.2.3 The PSIF will be used to develop an agenda as described in Section 7.3.

7.2.2.4 Data collected using the PSIF will be recorded on a spreadsheet for future reference and analysis. Note that recipes are not needed in most circumstances. If for any reasons the recipes for a particular food product is needed, the recipes will not be recorded.

7.3 Agenda Development

7.3.1 After a FBO fills out a PSIF and is approved for consideration by FIT, the FIT Chair, in conjunction with the MDA Director or their designee, will develop a preliminary agenda.

7.3.2 The agenda will be developed to address issues raised in the PSIF.

7.3.3 The agenda will be circulated to the FIT membership for additions/corrections/etc.

7.3.4 The draft agenda will be finalized at least 24 hours before a scheduled FIT meeting. The first action item during the FIT meeting will be to approve the agenda.

7.4 Meeting Logistics

7.4.1 Since FIT meetings are open to the public, an announcement of an upcoming FIT meeting will be made via approved channels, including the FSDTF website.

7.4.2 FIT meetings may take place in person or via conference call or web-enabled video call.

7.4.3 Meetings will take place in connection with meetings of the FSDTF (typically earlier on the day of regularly scheduled FSDTF meetings). However, FIT meetings may take place as needed under extenuating circumstances.

7.4.4 The FBO or FIT members may request to the FIT Chair that an ad hoc expert attend a particular meeting.

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7.4.4.1 A list of ad hoc experts from each meeting will be maintained by FFSD to refer to for future meetings when their expertise is needed.

7.5 Data Privacy

- 7.5.1 Anything discussed during a FIT meeting would be subject to open meetings laws and will be open to the public. Note that recipes are not needed in most circumstances. If for any reasons the recipes for a particular food product is needed, the recipes will not be recorded.
- 7.5.2 Those attending a FIT meeting (members of the FIT, regulators present, ad-hoc meeting attendees present, and any others) will be required to sign-in.
- 7.5.3 All involved parties in FIT, the FBO, and meeting attendees will be provided with a Data Privacy Warning that informs the person that any information they choose to share will be used and shared with those that are involved in the FIT process and are public records.

7.6 Recommendation Reports

- 7.6.1 At the conclusion of a FIT meeting, a recommendation report will be generated by the FIT chair (with assistance from other FIT members and FFSD Director's staff) and provided at the FSDTF that directly proceeds the FIT meeting.
- 7.6.2 The Task Force will then accept or modify the report.
- 7.6.3 The report will then be sent by the FIT chair (with assistance from other FIT members and FFSD Director's staff) to the various regulatory agencies and organizations that participated in the FIT meeting.
- 7.6.4 The information in the report will be used to build a database/repository for future reference.
- 7.6.5 The information in the report may be used to develop guidance documents for reference by FBO's.
- 7.6.6 The nature of the recommendations included in the recommendations report may include the following:
 - 7.6.6.1 FIT may suggest modifications to an FBO's business model in keeping with safe food practices. Regulatory agencies will only

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participate in these types of discussions if allowed by their internal policies.

7.6.6.2 FIT may suggest or request interpretations of Minnesota Statute or Rule.

7.6.6.3 FIT may suggest changes to Minnesota Statute or Rule to the FSDTF.

7.6.6.4 FIT may recommend business resources to entrepreneur.

7.6.6.5 FIT does not guarantee licensing or determine if or when a specific license may be issued.

7.7 Timeline for Case Review

7.7.1 Once the FBO fills out the PSIF, the form will be reviewed by the MDA FFSD Director or designee. The FBO will be contacted within 2 weeks to notify the FBO of their place on the next regularly scheduled FIT meeting.

7.7.2 The recommendation report and referral to an appropriate licensing authority will be generated by FIT members and will be provided to the FSDTF at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The recommendation report will be offered to the FBO within two weeks after the conclusion of the FSDTF meeting and will also be made available online at the FSDTF website.

7.7.2.1 The recommendation report findings will be used to identify trends, information gaps, and to identify training needs that the FSDTF may help to provide.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS (includes References, Attachments)

- Attachment 1: Data Privacy Warning
- Attachment 2: Pre-Screening Intake Form
- Attachment 3: FIT Membership Application
- Attachment 4: FIT Meeting Sign-In Sheet
- Attachment 5: Recommendation Report Template

9. EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED

N/A

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10. SAFETY

N/A

11. CIRCULATION

This document will be circulated to the following: MDA FFSD Division Director and applicable FFSD staff; MDH Food, Pools, and Lodging Division Director and applicable MDH staff; FSDTF members; and FIT members. The current version will be stored electronically on the FFSD document control site and a current copy will be maintained on the FSDTF website.

APPROVAL/DOCUMENT HISTORY

Document History		
Version #	Status (I, R)	Change History
1		
Approved By:		Date
Approved By:		Date

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Document: FFSD.SOP.XX.XX.Attachment1	Page 1 of 1
Version #: 1	Effective Date: MM/DD/YYYY
Title: Attachment 1: Data Privacy Warning	

The following Data Privacy Warning will be provided to all food business owners, Food Innovation Team (FIT) members, Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force members, and FIT meeting attendees:

Data Privacy Warning

The Food Innovation Team (FIT) regularly requests data from food business owners (FBOs) interested in participating or gaining food business licensing guidance from FIT through the Pre-Screening Intake Form (PSIF), during FIT meeting proceedings, and as part of the regular processes of FIT. The information provided for these FIT activities will be used before, during, and after FIT meetings to answer licensing questions from FBOs. Information provided is public information and will be discussed at a meeting that is open to the public. If you have information that you want protected, please contact the Food and Feed Safety Division Director, Dr. Benjamin Miller (benjamin.miller@state.mn.us or (651) 201-6027) before filling out this form and submitting it to FIT.

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Title: Attachment 2: FIT Pre-Screening Intake Form	

To be completed by the Food Business Owner with assistance by a FIT Member.

Data Privacy Warning:

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Category	General Information		
Name of Food Business Owner		Date license issued	
Name of Business		Jurisdiction	
Location of business		Agency issuing license	
Current Business model	Details:		
Current Product Process	Details:		
Current License Number			
Are you operating under the Cottage Food Law?	_____ Yes _____ No		
	Notes:		

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Proposed Business Information	
Proposed Business Model	
Proposed Product Process	
Proposed Sales Process	
Possible issues with Proposed Model	

Regulatory Agency Contact History			
Entity contacted	Name of contact	Date of Contact	Outcome of contact
Local inspector: _____ Yes _____ No			
Supervisor: _____ Yes _____ No			
MDH: _____ Yes _____ No			
MDA: _____ Yes _____ No			
Other: specify organization or group:			

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FIT Contact History

How did you contact FIT? Email, phone call, other:	FIT Contact Information Used	Date of Contact	Name of Contact	Participants
How did you hear about FIT?				
Notes:				
FIT Contact # _____	Purpose of Contact:			
Notes:				
Results:				
FIT Contact# _____	Purpose of Contact:			
Notes:				
Results:				

FIT Meeting

Details:	Date of Meeting	Name of Contact	Participants

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Title: Attachment 3: FIT Membership Application	

This Food Innovation Team (FIT) Membership Application should be filled out by individuals interested in becoming FIT members.

Data Privacy Warning:

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General Information				
Last Name		First Name		Date: MM/DD/YYYY
	Street address	City	State	Zip Code
Home Address				
Business Address				
	Name of organization	Position	From Date	To Date
Affiliation 1				
Affiliation 2				
Affiliation 3				
Other				

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FIT Membership Type (check one)	<input type="checkbox"/> MDA Staff <input type="checkbox"/> MDH Staff <input type="checkbox"/> MDA Delegated Agency Staff <input type="checkbox"/> MDH Delegated Agency Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Food Maker Community <input type="checkbox"/> Local Food Farming Community <input type="checkbox"/> Local/Regional Food System Expert or College/University Based <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Regulatory Agency Food Safety Expert
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	Related Experience	Position	From Date	To Date
Sector				
Industry				
Details				
Reference	Name, Phone, Email:			
	Related Regulatory Experience	Position	From Date	To Date
Pertinent Regulatory Agency	Details:			
Reference	Name, Phone, Email:			
How did you hear about FIT?				
Why are you interested in serving in FIT?				

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<p>Explain how your past related experience will make you a suitable candidate for membership in FIT.</p>		
FIT Meetings		
<p>Are you available to meet during regularly scheduled FIT meetings (typically 6 meetings per year)?</p>	<p>_____ Yes _____ No</p> <p>Explanation (if needed):</p>	
Privacy		
<p>Have you read and understood the Data Privacy Tennessee Warning (provided below)?</p>	<p>_____ Yes _____ No</p> <p>Explanation (if needed):</p>	<p>Date read: _____</p>

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Title: Attachment 5: FIT Recommendation Report Template	

Data Privacy Warning:

The Food Innovation Team (FIT) regularly requests data from food business owners (FBOs) interested in participating or gaining food business licensing guidance from FIT through the Pre-Screening Intake Form (PSIF), during FIT meeting proceedings, and as part of the regular processes of FIT. The information provided for these FIT activities will be used before, during, and after FIT meetings to answer licensing questions from FBOs. Information provided is public information and will be discussed at a meeting that is open to the public. If you have information that you want protected, please contact the Food and Feed Safety Division Director, Dr. Benjamin Miller (benjamin.miller@state.mn.us or (651) 201-6027) before filling out this form and submitting it to FIT.

FIT Website Notification:

Please note that all information contained in this form is subject to public information requests. The information contained in this form will be included on the FIT website with the exception of items under the “General Business Information” category.

Date of FIT Meeting: [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Meeting Participants:

- FIT Members:
 - Name
 - Name
 - Name
- Ad-Hoc Experts:
 - Name
 - Name
 - Name
- Business Members:
 - Name
 - Name
 - Name
- Other:
 - Name
 - Name
 - Name

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Title: Attachment 5: FIT Recommendation Report Template	

General Business Information (Do not include this section in public-facing online database)	
Name of business:	
Location of business:	
Referred by:	<input type="checkbox"/> MDA <input type="checkbox"/> MDH <input type="checkbox"/> FIT member <input type="checkbox"/> MDA Delegated Agency <input type="checkbox"/> MDH Delegated Agency
Current license(s), registration(s), and/or exemption(s): (Please include date of issuance.)	
Why was this business referred to FIT?	
Current business model:	
Key issues examined by FIT:	
Other issues:	
How was the issue resolved?	
Description of resolution:	
Other notes:	
Who resolved the issue (name(s) and organization(s)):	
Date of resolution:	
Licensing authority representative (name and organization):	
Recommendations / Lessons Learned	
Internal (FIT):	
Licensing agency:	
Rules / Statutes:	