



DIVISION FOR BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP



For Immediate Release

**Contact:**

Zacary Smucker-Bryan, Food Finance Institute Program Manager  
432 N. Lake St., Madison, WI 53706  
608-890-0780 | [zacary.smuckerbryan@uwex.edu](mailto:zacary.smuckerbryan@uwex.edu)

## New training to support food hubs through national network

MADISON – A new training program to promote the financial sustainability of food hubs not just in Wisconsin but across the country will be available in 2017, thanks to \$500,000 federal grant to the Food Finance Institute.

A regional food hub is a business or organization that manages the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail and institutional demand.

The program will create a national network of at least 100 trained food hub managers and 60 technical assistance providers to offer the financial management skills and resources needed by food hubs.

“This grant recognizes the strength of our expertise in financing food and agriculture enterprises. It is an important opportunity for us to enhance the financial viability of food hubs, and the farm and food businesses they do business with,” said Tera Johnson, founder and director of the Food Finance Institute, part of the University of Wisconsin Extension.

This effort is complementary to FFI’s new Edible-Alpha online training platform. Edible-Alpha™ is a curated open-source food business consultant community and digital learning center for food and value-added farm enterprises and the people who fund them. Edible-Alpha.org is devoted to disseminating best practices in the profitable management and financing of food and value-added farm businesses in the form of blog posts, videos, podcasts, training modules and other materials.

Over the past three years, Johnson also has helped over 50 food and farm enterprises improve their financial performance and raise the money they need to grow.

The food hub training program has been made possible as part of a larger U.S. Department of Agriculture effort. In September, it announced more than \$56 million in Local Food Promotion Program grants to strengthen local and regional food systems, support farmer's markets and fund organic research. Since 2009, the USDA has invested more than \$1 billion to help revitalize local economies and provide fresh, healthy food to all Americans.

To learn more about the FFI's training and consulting programs, including Edible-Alpha™, go to [www.foodfinanceinstitute.org](http://www.foodfinanceinstitute.org).

### **About Food Finance Institute**

The Food Finance Institute is a project of the University of Wisconsin Extension's Division of Business and Entrepreneurship. Directed by Tera Johnson, the institute is a collaborative network of food entrepreneurs, finance expertise and investment resources focused on Wisconsin's food sector. This is a sector whose growth is being propelled by the passion for local food and consumer demand for unique and healthy foods. FFI's mission is to make sophisticated financial technical assistance available to every growing food and value-added farm enterprise through consulting collaborations, practitioner certification and industry-specific resources. To learn more, visit [www.foodfinanceinstitute.org](http://www.foodfinanceinstitute.org). You also can follow Edible-Alpha on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

### **About the USDA**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues based on public policy, the best available science and effective management. The USDA is committed to helping organic agriculture grow and thrive through grants, crop insurance, microloans and other programs. To learn more, visit [www.usda.gov/organic](http://www.usda.gov/organic).