



## NEWS RELEASE:

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Contact:

Valerie Venecia, 915-546-2177

[vvenecia@epcounty.com](mailto:vvenecia@epcounty.com)

Laura E. Gallegos, 915-283-9645

[l.gallegos@epcounty.com](mailto:l.gallegos@epcounty.com)

March 9, 2023

## **County to Begin 2023 Healthy Food Financing Initiative Application Cycle**

*Virtual Information Session to be held March 10, 2023 at 12:00 p.m. (MST)*

The County of El Paso, in partnership with the Center for Community Impact at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston) School of Public Health El Paso Campus, PeopleFund Community Development Financial Institution, and the Small Business Development Center, is preparing to launch its fourth application cycle of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI). Each fiscal year, the HFFI program offers up to \$500K in grants and \$500K in low interest loans to projects that increase the availability of healthy, affordable foods in underserved areas of the County.

The 2023 application window will take place March 1-April 30, 2023. In preparation for the application period, the HFFI partners will be hosting a virtual information session with the El Paso Small Business Development Center (SBDC) on Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. (MST).

Participants may register, free of charge at: <https://utsa.ecenterdirect.com/events/36310>.

The HFFI program and information session may be of interest to food retailers, food hubs, farmers markets, mobile markets, and real estate developers. HFFI projects can be capital intensive in nature, and generally demonstrate a plan to accelerate the construction, establishment, rehabilitation or expansion of food retail or food retail infrastructure. Both businesses and non-profit organizations are eligible and strongly encouraged to attend a virtual or in person information session.

“HFFI provided the necessary funding to complete our Farmer's Stand (Bodega Loya) with all the amenities we wanted and needed,” said Marty Loya, Owner of Bodega Loya Farm Stand, 2020 HFFI Award Recipient. “What we have created is a long-lasting location to provide fresh produce to our customers in and around our community. We are excited with the results we have been seeing and all the great people we are meeting and working with.”



UTHealth Houston's El Paso campus serves as the food access partner for the HFFI program.

"El Paso is making an important investment to improve access to healthy and affordable food," said Gabriela Gallegos, JD, MPP, an associate professor of Management, Policy and Community Health at UTHealth Houston. "Through the HFFI program, food retailers can get funding for large and small projects that make healthy food affordable to El Pasoans across the County."

Both businesses and non-profit organizations are eligible and may learn more about the HFFI program and how to apply during the 2023 cycle at: <http://hffi.epcounty.com>. Businesses and non-profits are strongly encouraged to attend the virtual information session. Stay tuned for in-person information sessions to be hosted within each County Precinct.

[The El Paso County Economic Development Department](#) administers programs that seek to enhance the business operating climate and promote heritage tourism throughout El Paso County. These efforts serve to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

###

 [@epcountyecon](#)

500 E. SAN ANTONIO, ROOM 312, EL PASO, TEXAS 79901-2427, PHONE: (915) 546-2177,  
EMAIL: [economicdevelopment@epcounty.com](mailto:economicdevelopment@epcounty.com)