



Local Food and Farm Council

Meeting Minutes

March 22, 2024

Location		No. of Presenters	Start Time	End Time	Recorder
via Zoom Video Conferencing		0	9:04 a.m.	10:17 a.m.	Jacquette Maynard
This Council is composed of the following agencies, farmers, and restaurateurs:	University of the Virgin Islands (UVI)	Department of Agriculture (VIDA)	Department of Education (VIDE)	Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR)	Economic Development Authority (USVI EDA)
	Farmer (TBA)	Farmer (TBA)	Farmer (TBA)	Restaurateur (TBA)	Restaurateur (TBA)
Present:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-chair: Dr. David Hall – President (UVI) Member: Dr. Usman Adamu – Dean and Director of the School Agriculture (UVI) VIDE Designee: Mr. Harith Wickrema – President of Island Green Living Honorary Farmer Member: Ms. Abeba Sellassie – The B-Hive Farm Collective Honorary Farmer Member: Dr. Nate Olive – Ridge to Reef Farm Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Edmon Titre – New Breed Farm Honorary Farmer Member: Mr. Royce Creque – Greenridge Guavaberry Farm 				
Absent:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-chair: Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., – Commissioner Nominee (VIDE) Member: Wayne L. Biggs, Jr., – Chief Executive Officer (EDA) Member: Jean-Pierre L. Oriol – Commissioner (DPNR) Member: Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington – Commissioner DPNR Designee: Dr. Nicole F. Angeli – Director of Fish and Wildlife DPNR Designee: Dr. Sennai Habtes – Bureau Chief, Fisheries VIDE Designee: Dr. Renee Charleswell – Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction Local Food and Farm Coordinator: Ms. Sommer Sibilly-Brown – VI Good Food Coalition 				

I. Welcome, Member Introductions, and Charge

- The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Dr. Hall, Co-Chair of the Local Food and Farm Council.
- Dr. Hall warmly welcomed all members and expressed gratitude for their presence and engagement.

II. Meeting Minutes: March 8, 2024

- No corrections or changes were observed in the minutes.
- Dr. Hall abstained from the vote due to his absence from the previous meeting.
- Dr. Usman Adamu motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Harith Wickrema.

III. Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund (PPPIF) Funding Application Package

Dr. Hall addressed the Council regarding the Public-Private Partnership Fund. He indicated that he was not present at the previous meeting but was briefed on the significant discussion about the funding application, eligibility requirements, and the availability of the funding. He stated that Director Biggs was expected to provide confirmation of the fund's arrival at the EDA; however, due to his absence, there were no updates at the meeting, and he noted that it was essential to confirm receipt of the funds before proceeding with any public events.

- **PPPIF Cover Letter:** The first document reviewed was the cover letter, which outlined the purpose and objectives of the fund, along with the application deadline and contact information.
- **PPPIF Funding Details:** The funding details document was discussed, including the application deadline and award ranges. It was observed that the deadline needed adjustment to align with the cover letter.
- **Eligibility Requirements:** Considerable attention was devoted to examining and refining eligibility criteria across various categories. A significant point of contention arose regarding the potential inclusion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within these criteria. Some members voiced concerns about potential divergence from the fund's original purpose, primarily to support farmers and fishers directly engaged in production activities. There was apprehension that extending eligibility to NGOs might further deplete the funds. Conversely, a minority of Council Members advocated for the inclusion of NGOs, citing potential benefits to the broader food industry. Dr.

Hall emphasized the fund's initial intent to support individuals directly involved in production, noting the availability of alternative funding sources for advocacy groups compared to farmers and fishermen. Given the complexity of the matter, it was agreed that additional clarification and discussion were necessary. Dr. Hall proposed revisiting the meeting minutes and formalizing a vote on the inclusion of NGOs in the eligibility requirements.

- **Decision:** The consensus among present members was that item 4, referring to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), should be removed from eligibility requirements.

→ **Funding Application:** Dr. Olive proposed the idea of implementing a word limit for open-ended responses, suggesting a limit of 500 words. Concerns were raised regarding the potential limitations this might impose on applicants' ability to convey their needs effectively. It was determined that applicants should be allowed the opportunity to respond freely without the word limits.

Dr. Olive further raised a query about the identification of applicant types, particularly in cases where individuals may fall under multiple categories, such as sole proprietors seeking equipment funding. It was suggested and agreed that applicants should be allowed to select all applicable options to avoid confusion under section 6, Type of Investment Requested.

→ **Funding Application Deadline Extension:** There was a discussion regarding extending the application deadline to accommodate sufficient time for applicants after the town hall meetings. The initial deadline of May 1st was considered too short, with suggestions to extend it to May 30th to allow for broader participation. Ultimately, it was decided that the application deadline would be May 30th, with a funding decision date of July 1st. Concerns were raised regarding the feasibility of making decisions within one month, considering the expected volume of applications. It was acknowledged that decision-making might extend beyond the initial timeframe, and flexibility in the timeline was deemed necessary.

→ **Review and Determination Subcommittee Formation:** Dr. Hall proposed the formation of a subcommittee to review applications and make recommendations to the council. The subcommittee would meet separately to expedite the applicants' decision-making process.

→ **Conflict of Interest Policy:** Dr. Hall introduced the conflict of interest policy to address concerns about impartiality in decision-making among the Council members. The policy aims to prevent conflicts between personal/financial interests and the duty to act in the council's and applicants' best interest.

- Dr. Hall proposed an official vote on the Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Dr. Olive raised a procedural question about voting.
- Despite procedural challenges, Dr. Hall requested a formal motion for approval.
- Dr. Adamu made the motion for approval, which Harith Wickrema seconded.
- No objections were raised, and the Conflict of Interest Policy was officially approved.

IV. Town Hall Meetings

Dr. Adamu provided the dates for the upcoming Town Hall Meetings:

- Monday, April 8th (St. Thomas)
- Wednesday, April 10th (St. Croix)
- Tuesday, April 23rd (St. John's) Pending confirmation for April 23rd, efforts are underway to secure approval.

Dr. Hall emphasized the importance of Council members' presence and requested confirmation of their availability at the Town Hall Meeting. The proposed start time would be between 5:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The members underscored the significance of Town Hall Meetings as pivotal forums for engaging potential applicants and disseminating information about the PPIF Program. To optimize participation, suggestions were proposed to synchronize the availability of the funds to the EDA and the funding application process with the Town Hall Meeting schedule.

V. Update on the Director of Sustainability (VIDE)

Mr. Wickrema provided an update regarding the selection process for the Sustainability Director position. He shared details regarding the candidate's qualifications and the formal appointment process. The appropriate timing and method for announcing the appointment and plans for the selected individual's presence at the upcoming Town Hall Meetings were discussed.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next virtual LFFC meeting will be held on Friday, April 5, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.