

Governor Ivey Awards Grants to Provide Healthy Foods to State's Underserved Areas

Press Releases

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MONTGOMERY— Governor Kay Ivey on Wednesday awarded a total of \$300,000 in grants to provide primarily low-income persons and senior citizens with improved access to healthy and fresh foods.

Governor Ivey awarded seven grants to help businesses and non-profit organizations establish the means by which neighborhoods and communities with limited access to grocery stores can more easily obtain fresh fruits and vegetables and other grocery items. The governor presented the grants in a ceremony at the State Capitol.

Grant recipients will use the funds for projects that range from reopening a grocery store to building and equipping mobile food trucks, delivery vehicles and produce stands to serve both rural and urban communities.

The grants were made possible by the Alabama Healthy Food Financing Act. Governor Ivey, then serving as lieutenant governor, was a staunch supporter of the bipartisan legislation when it was passed by the Legislature in 2015. The first-time grant program allowed businesses and non-profits to apply for a matching grant. The state made \$300,000 available for the program.

“Better access to healthy foods in underserved communities will help children develop properly, help senior citizens stay healthy and help reduce long-term health-care costs for those that opt for this type of diet over eating unhealthy foods,” Governor Ivey said. “I am pleased to support these projects and encouraged that these grants will expand access to fresh, healthy foods in several communities.”

The program was created to reduce the number of food deserts in Alabama. A food desert, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is an urban area where at least 33 percent of the population lives a mile or more – or 10 miles in rural areas – from a store that offers fresh produce at affordable prices.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is administering the grants.

Those awarded grants, grant amounts and a brief description of the projects are:

- **Africatown Community Development Corp.** in Mobile – \$50,000 to construct an open-air market with multiple rental booths. The corporation was created about 20 years ago to preserve, restore and reinvigorate the Africatown area.
- **Children of the Village Network Inc.** in Sumter County – \$25,000 to buy a cargo van for a mobile food pantry in a county that only has two grocery stores. Children of the

Village Network also works with the West Alabama Food Bank, another grant recipient, on projects.

- **City of Birmingham**– \$50,000 to build a market stand adjoining the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority’s central station. The city is collaborating with the Transit Authority and the Alabama Farmers Market on the project.
- **Jones Valley Teaching Farm** in Birmingham – \$17,850 to construct a produce stand at Woodlawn High School in downtown Birmingham. The Jones Valley Teaching Farm, established in 2007, is an urban teaching farm for students. It produces more than 13,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables annually.
- **Peoples Piggly Wiggly** in the town of Cherokee – \$50,000 to renovate and upgrade equipment to reopen a grocery store. The need for the store is in response to the closing of the town’s only grocery store in 2017, requiring residents to travel about 40 miles round-trip to obtain a full-line of groceries including fruits, vegetables and meats.
- **West Alabama Food Bank Inc.** of Northport – \$47,150 to purchase and retrofit a truck for use as a mobile grocery store to serve residents in Bibb, Fayette, Franklin, Greene, Hale, Marion, Pickens, Sumter and Tuscaloosa counties.
- **Wright’s Markets Inc.** of Opelika – \$60,000 to customize two vans and expand its Wright 2 U Online Shopping and Delivery program in Lee and Russell counties.