**Attachment G: The Food Group Organization Overview and Project Manager Qualifications**

**Organization Overview**

**Mission: Fighting hunger. Nourishing our community.**

Founded in 1976, The Food Group (formerly Emergency Foodshelf Network) was formed when 15 food shelves in Hennepin County collaborated to pool resources and advocate for their needs. We’ve strategically grown to serve partners across 41 counties in the Twin Cities, greater Minnesota, and western Wisconsin. In 2014, we changed our name to The Food Group, which better represents both our values and innovative programming. In 2017, we acquired the programs of Minnesota Food Association (MFA) including operation of Big River Farms (BRF) in Marine on St. Croix, Washington County, MN. We remain focused on breaking down barriers for local hunger relief partners and community members seeking more equitable access to free and affordable nutritious food, year-round fresh produce, culturally specific foods, sustainable agriculture education, nutrition education and outreach services. Core values guiding our work:

* Food is a basic right for all individuals.
* Everyone deserves access to healthy food, where they live, that they can get to.
* Everyone deserves access to foods that are familiar to them and fit their cultural and dietary needs.
* Working collaboratively with other community organizations drives our mutual success.
* Operating in a way that supports equity, sustainability and fairness to all builds stronger communities.

**Overview of Big River Farms Program**

Big River Farms offers education in organic agriculture for farmers that have historically been underrepresented in farm ownership, including immigrants, people of color, and refugees. We provide beginning farmers in the program mentorship and guidance in managing their own 1/8 to 6-acre plots of certified organic land at Big River Farms, our 150-acre incubator farm near Marine on St. Croix, MN. Farmers have a guaranteed market for their produce via the Big River Farms Food Hub, which consists of wholesale contracts, a 165+ member CSA, and farmers markets. These markets are used as educational opportunities while farmers hone their skills to sell to additional markets. Big River Farms also provides educational programming on sustainable agriculture to 350+ youth and community members per year and hosts the annual Emerging Farmers Conference with 250+ attendees. Big River Farms strengthens our community by building a more sustainable and just food system.

**Project Manager: Amber Stenson, The Food Group Associate Director**

Ms. Stenson joined The Food Group as Associate Director, Programs in August 2017. She has 14 years of experience in non-profit program planning, budgeting, and program management. At the Food Group, Ms. Stenson oversees the staff that run Big River Farms and The Food Group’s Produce Programs. Before joining The Food Group, she worked at a non-profit international development organization, Water For People for eight years.

Her role in this project will be to:

* Facilitate partnership and program development to ensure goal alignment.
* Lead Big River Farms’ staff team to develop and implement program and operational plans that ensure sustainable land management and prioritize support to beginning farmers who are immigrants, refugees, and people of color.
* Coordinate activities of all funding, programs, and community partners to deliver desired outcomes.