



MIFFS is Seeking New Executive Director!

Position Announcement

Founded in 1998, Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) is a statewide membership based organization (501 (c)(3)) whose purpose is to improve Michigan's triple bottom line: our economy, our environment & the social wellbeing of our communities through sustainable agriculture initiatives. MIFFS has a history of fostering and managing effective collaborations that create and support more sustainable food and agriculture systems for producers and consumers in Michigan. An underlying assumption of our work is that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship, and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan's rural and urban communities.

MIFFS principal priority is to help small and medium-sized farms operate profitably, produce healthy food for all people and protect the environment for future generations. MIFFS has become a recognized leader and resource to establish and develop more sustainable food and farming for Michigan, nurturing successful partnerships that result in healthy people and communities. It has done this by addressing the issues farmers face, attracting resources, and developing partnerships among individuals and organizations. MIFFS uses a holistic or systems approach, enabling it to network effectively across the spectrum of farms, food, farm organizations, policy makers, educators, and communities. MIFFS currently manages a \$700,000 annual budget for its programs and operations.

For a full description of the position and its responsibilities, please visit: www.miffs.org/employment.asp. The Executive Directorship is a full-time position.

Ideal candidates for this position will:

- Provide visionary leadership to grow the organizational membership and support and grow programmatic funding.
- Have a passion for and competency in collaborative partnering, relationship building with all relevant stakeholder groups, including industry, government, educational institutions, NGO's, consumers, and funding partners.
- Be an effective manager of a dedicated support team that is comprised of a diverse professional staff, contractors and a volunteer Council (Board of Directors).
- Be able to leverage MIFFS strengths and industry position for maximum effectiveness in influencing and creating change.
- Understand the relationship of local efforts to effectively influence change in the Michigan food system.
- Be an excellent communicator dedicated to active listening, transparency, and accountability for and within the organization.
- Be comfortable with a flexible and dynamic work schedule that includes some overnight travel.



The executive director must be based in Michigan. The current headquarters is in East Lansing. MIFFS will consider proposals for an alternative basing location from exceptionally well-qualified candidates.

To apply, e-mail your résumé and cover letter to MIFFS Search Committee Chair, Joe Colyn, joe.colyn@originz.com, or mail to MIFFS Search Committee Chair, Joe Colyn, Originz LLC, 33 Lynwood Drive, Battle Creek, MI 49014-7911. E-mail applications are preferred.

Application deadline is January 30, 2012. Position start date is early May, 2012

Organizational Background

Founded in 1998, Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) is a statewide membership-based organization (501 (c)(3) whose purpose is to catalyze and support the development of sustainable food and agriculture systems. MIFFS has a history of fostering and managing effective collaborations that create and support more sustainable food and agriculture systems for producers and consumers in Michigan. An underlying assumption of our work is that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship, and profitability, reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan's rural and urban communities.

MIFFS is a recognized leader and resource in the movement to catalyze and develop sustainable agriculture and food systems in Michigan. We craft and strengthen linkages among individuals and organizations whose work yields vibrant and diverse communities that are economically prosperous, provide a desirable quality of life and support personal and organizational commitment to environmental stewardship. We strive to operate as a learning organization where we continually incorporate our learning from individual and collective experiences in order to build our flexibility and adaptability in response to a changing environment.

MIFFS supports community-based models for sustainable development and technologies; builds leadership capacity and collaboration in urban and rural communities; identifies and addresses public policy, institutional, economic, social and cultural barriers to the creation and adoption of more sustainable food and farming systems; and, shares ideas and experiences of model innovation projects in state-wide collaborations. Support for the MIFFS programs and operations come from a diversity of private and public grants and contracts as well as from a growing member and donor base.

MIFFS operates under the broad leadership of an eleven member Governing Council. Day-to-day leadership, management and direction of staff is provided by the Executive Director, who reports to the Council president. Currently, MIFFS has administrative and office support as well as several program leaders in the field. The Executive Director is also responsible for other duties as described below.



MIFFS is structured around four Program Areas with projects and activities clustered within each area. Each program area is either led by a staff member or standing committee of the Governing Council.

1. Growing Market Opportunities

- Linking farmers with and assisting them to supply sustainably produced products to larger markets such as retail stores, distributors, or food service accounts.
- Establishing accessible services for value-added and market differentiated product development through partnerships with the MSU-Product Center, The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, and other local, state, and national organizations.

2. Small and Midsize Farm Owner/Operators

- Increasing access of Michigan's farmers to services, information, and markets that will help them be more successful and more sustainable.
- Michigan Family Farms Conference – the largest conference in the Mid-West United States that networks small/midsize farm operators and links them to existing services and sustainable farming practices.
- Continue to invest in programs supporting the success of minority and immigrant farmers and their communities in Michigan.

3. Local Food Connections

- Provides opportunity for communities to link to their regional farms. Includes work in the areas of farmers markets, farm to school, directing farm fresh product into the emergency food system, farm to restaurants, etc.
- Organize and co-host the annual Meet-the-Buyer reception at the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable EXPO, a venue for farmers to build mutually beneficial relationships with buyers.
- Identification and action on relevant policy issues.

4. Agricultural Stewardship and Sustainable Production

- Provide farmer training and technical assistance through direct and collaborative programming.
- Link growers to markets through Meet the Buyers, MI MarketMaker, Farmers Markets and other programs.
- Addressing challenges to on-farm processing and other value-added opportunities.
- Identify and influence policy issues related to agricultural stewardship, and profitable, sustainable production.

MIFFS principal priorities over the next two to three years are to continue to build effective programs within these areas and secure sustainable funding to implement them. In addition, the organization is taking swift and bold steps to move itself into a stronger position as an organization with statewide impact recognized representation of small and medium size farms. We are currently developing stronger capacity in communications,



fund development, and evaluation. The new Executive Director will be expected to participate fully in these efforts and direct these new capacities to the benefit of the organization and ultimately to the benefit of the food and agriculture community in Michigan. Performance will be evaluated formally on an annual basis, with an initial review six months from the start date.

Executive Director Job Description

Professional Qualifications:

The MIFFS Executive Director will work in a dynamic workplace with a talented and highly motivated staff and a Governing Council that tend to “go the extra mile” in helping to bring about an agriculture and food system that provides a sustainable quality of life in Michigan. In keeping with its culture, MIFFS seeks an Executive Director with heart, patience, resilience and a passion for positive economic and social change. Ideal candidates for this position will:

- Provide visionary leadership to grow the organizational membership and support and grow programmatic funding.
- Have a passion for and competency in collaborative partnering, relationship building with all relevant stakeholder groups, including industry, government, educational institutions, NGOs, consumers, and funding partners.
- Be an effective manager of a dedicated support team that is comprised of a diverse professional staff, contractors and a volunteer Council (Board of Directors)
- Be able to leverage MIFFS strengths and industry position for maximum effectiveness in influencing and creating change.
- Understand the relationship of local efforts to effectively influence change in the Michigan food system.
- Be an excellent communicator dedicated to active listening, transparency, and accountability for and within the organization.
- Be comfortable with a flexible and dynamic work schedule that includes some overnight travel.

Specific Responsibilities:

- Manage the organization including hiring and evaluating staff, office and program functions, budget, fiscal, and strategic planning, grant procurement and oversight.
- Report to and implement policies developed by the MIFFS Council.
- Act as primary spokesperson for MIFFS activities and programs.



- Assist MIFFS constituents and partners with opportunities and knowledge transfer.
- Guide the design of an asset development plan and the creation of a strategic and diversified fund-raising capacity for MIFFS.
- Build an enhanced evaluation capacity for current and future programming.
- Oversee organizational marketing plan including membership enhancement strategy, communications and other outreach efforts.
- Review organizational structure and help development efficiencies and improvements.
- Perform other duties as required to assure the continued success of MIFFS.

Professional Requirements:

Candidates will have attained an advanced degree in a relevant academic field or the equivalent experience. Successful candidates will have an understanding of food and/or sustainable agriculture systems, innovations and policies and will possess expertise in the following areas:

- Leading a non-governmental organization
- Raising funds for a non-profit organization
- Management functions
- Developing and maintaining effective business relationships

Compensation, Benefits Package:

This is a full-time position with a starting salary in the \$50,000-\$65,000 range.

MIFFS believes in supporting a meaningful and sustainable quality of life for its staff. As such, the organization encourages its full-time staff to use the ample vacation time they are provided and to work with other staff and the Council to ensure a flexible and desirable work schedule.

Selection Process:

The Search Committee anticipates that the selection process will consist of two rounds of interviews. The first round will consist of a traditional interview scenario with the Committee and possibly other members of the Council. Those applicants who advance to the second round will be asked to prepare and deliver a brief presentation that will be given to Committee and Council members, as well as other interested parties. Details on the presentation topic will be provided to the finalists prior to the second round of interviews.