

**Request for Information  
Department of Agriculture and Markets  
Division of the New York State Fair  
Electronic Ticketing**

The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets is seeking information from vendors, service providers, and people with expert knowledge of electronic ticketing regarding a total solution (both hardware and software) for electronic ticketing and reporting for the annual New York State Fair. A turn-key solution which allows for future growth and incorporation of new technologies is desired.

This Request for Information (RFI) is **not** a solicitation of actual bids. A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be developed and bids will be solicited at a later date. All responders to this RFI will be sent the RFP, once it is available. Your response to this RFI may be as short as a request to be included on the bidders list if you believe you can provide the desired services, or you may answer one or all of our questions. Your response to this RFI will not advantage or disadvantage you upon eventual solicitation of the RFP or the evaluation of bids.

**Requirements Overview**

The ideal solution would:

- 1) Have the ability to create single and multi-day, special event, and complementary tickets locally and through multiple channels and locations;
- 2) Be compatible with other ticket barcodes schemes;
- 3) Accommodate special discount ticket prices based on promo code or date;
- 4) Provide the ability to scan and authenticate tickets at entrance gates (a system that would activate a turnstyle, thus allowing a patron to enter is desirable);
- 5) Ensure that patrons do not enter the Fairgrounds without being counted;
- 6) Be web-based with the ability for a patron to purchase and print tickets at home;
- 7) Allow the Department to gather demographics from the online buyers;
- 8) Provide the ability to include coupons as Fair patrons print tickets at home;
- 9) Create advance sale tickets that can be vended through local merchants;
- 10) Offer reporting on all ticket transaction and patron information;
- 11) Provide customizable reports for special purposes and ad-hoc reporting;
- 12) Have the capacity to save historical information for analysis over time.

Responses are requested in electronic format only.  
Please forward your response by March 10, 2010 to:

Carrie Lindemann, Purchasing Agent

Division of Fiscal Management  
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
10B Airline Drive  
Albany, New York 12235

Questions about this RFI must be submitted by February 23, 2010

**in writing** to

Carrie Lindemann, Purchasing Agent  
Email: Carrie.Lindemann@agmkt.state.ny.us  
FAX: (518) 485-7750

Responses to questions will be posted  
by February 26, 2010 on the  
Department's website under "Funding Opportunities"

<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/RFPS.html>

## **Background**

The New York State Fair promotes and highlights New York State and its agriculture, commerce, arts and sciences to residents of the State of New York. The mission of the NY State Fair is to:

- Provide an educational forum for agriculture and commerce;
- Enhance the image of New York's agriculture and commerce;
- Provide affordable, quality entertainment and educational opportunities for the people of New York;
- Contribute to the efforts of the State, industry, associations and private business in the promotion and marketing of agriculture and agri-business; and
- Be creative and innovative in providing opportunities for economic growth to produce revenues and provide jobs.

The annual State Fair contributes extensively to the economy of the Syracuse area. The Fair adds an estimated \$200 million in revenue to the local economy every year. During Fair-time, all hotels and motels in the area are booked to capacity.

The annual 12 day NY State Fair is held at the end of August through Labor Day. Approximately 81,000 persons enter the gates each day during the Fair.

### **Attendance and Ticketing**

The 2009 NY State Fair ran from Aug. 27 through Sept. 7. Total attendance was 971,273 compared to 927,871 attendees in 2008 (5% increase), and paid attendance increased by nearly 7 percent. In fact, the Fair set a new record for overall paid attendance of 558,267.

In 2009, much of the increase in paid admissions stemmed from a jump in advance-sale tickets, which give Fairgoers a 40-percent discount. The number of tickets sold in advance for the 2009 Fair rose by 44,945 this year, a 21 percent increase, from 209,374 tickets in 2008 to 254,319 tickets in 2009, making 2009 the third-biggest year for advance-sale tickets in 17 years.

At present, pre-printed advance tickets are sold at the Fair's Box Office and at approximately 100 retail outlets. The Fair has advance sale tickets printed and distributes them to the Box Office and to the retail outlets, several months before the start of the Fair. During the twelve days of the Fair, pre-printed tickets are purchased at the Fair's Box Office and at one of the ticketing stations located at eight of the nine entrance gates to the Fair. Tickets are presented by Fairgoers and manually collected at one of the nine entrance gates. Several times during the day, the tickets are collected from the gate locations and counted and verified by an outside accounting firm. On the back of each ticket is a coupon provided by a sponsor.

### **Description of the Ideal Solution:**

#### ***Marketing***

The ideal electronic ticketing solution would assist with marketing events at the State Fair, utilizing such methods as database marketing, e-mail blasts, direct mail, point of purchase, Internet, and other avenues. The Department should exclusively own all customer data and have exclusive rights to any and all customer communications. The Department would also like the ability to extract data to perform its own analysis.

#### ***Distribution***

Ideally, the vendor would support existing and new distribution channels, which could include a primary box office, secondary box offices, Internet access, outlets and other methods of distribution. The following elements are desired:

- o Selling of multiple tickets in one transaction
- o Outbound telemarketing campaigns
- o Transfer and escalate calls back to the venue if a call center is used
- o Group sales opportunities
- o Custom stock

- o Custom envelopes
- o Venue specific promotional inserts included with tickets
- o Venue determined brand/advertising of “print at home” delivery
- Internet
  - o Venue (determined) branded site
  - o Control of all customer touch points
  - o All ticket options available in one transaction
  - o Web design support
- Outlets
  - o Choose specific partner(s) and location
  - o Add/eliminate locations based on need and venue sponsorships
  - o All ticket options available in one transaction
  - o Established Ticket Network

### ***Ticket Barcodes and Ticket Processing***

The Department desires a system that will generate barcoded tickets and support the scanning, authentication and voiding and re-issuing of tickets with all the information stored in an enterprise-level, industry standard database. The ideal solution will provide for a process to handle the capturing and authenticating of the ticket information in the event the system fails during an event admission cycle.

Ideally, the barcode on the ticket would activate a turnstyle allowing the patron to enter the fairgrounds. This would eliminate entry without a ticket, ensuring that each patron has entered legitimately. The Department is also interested in alternative solutions that would ensure all patrons have been authenticated before entry.

### ***Internet Web Site***

The Department employs an advertising agency to design and update its “Great New York State Fair” ([www.nysfair.org](http://www.nysfair.org)) web site. The provider would be required to work with this agency to create a ticket site that is consistent with the branding of this site. If tickets are to be purchased from a private label site, the sales process would need to include a separate link, or be altered so the appearance of the NY State Fair brand is present throughout the sales process.

It is desired that the private label site provider’s technologies (for example pop-ups or streaming video) should enable the NY State Fair to promote attractions, as well as sell and maintain advertising and sponsorship space on the private label site, and on the ticket sales pages.

## ***Training/Support***

The ideal solution should provide training and twenty-four (24) hour off-site user support as questions or problems arise. The following is desirable:

- Dedicated staff for initial training;
- Additional support after “go live” as needed;
- Emergency escalation process for support;
- Vendor provided “user meetings”; and
- On-going “webinars” for additional training

## ***Hardware***

The Department is upgrading its current facilities at the NY State Fair to enable electronic ticketing. To help us assess what we need, we are asking the following:

Would you, as a turn-key provider, require the Department to host servers, or do you host all software applications? If you host the software application, how would the Department be protected from system failures and security breaches?

What are the customary requirements for servers, routers, communication equipment, including software / firmware and any application specific devices customarily expected of each party, and the customary financial responsibility for each?

## ***Costs***

What should the NY State Fair expect to pay for a turn-key solution?

- Professional services, including process design, product configuration and product customization.
- Hardware, assuming that the NYS State Fair **does not** have any of required equipment (except for PC's for software only installations). Please share the typical costs associated with purchasing the hardware required to implement the solution.
- Costs associated with training end users and IT support staff as well as the cost of any product documentation and reference materials.
- Support and maintenance costs associated with maintaining the solution over the next five years, including network connectivity, hosting, and similar types of costs.
- Costs (if any) to Fair and describe (vendor/provider, data transmission capacity or bandwidth, service, etc.) all telephone, networking, and/or Internet connections which will be required to install and operate a system at the New York State Fair in Syracuse.
- Any other costs associated with the solution that does not fall into any of the categories provided above.

## **Revenues**

The NY State Fair seeks to increase its revenues using the ideal solution, including consideration of per ticket revenues, convenience fees, branding and sponsorship opportunities and more. We are looking for typical examples of fees and details on the distribution of those fees between the provider and the Fair.

- Remote Revenues: What income could the Fair earn from the sale of tickets at retail locations, telephone center and Internet web site;
- Convenience Fees: What is the industry standard for ticket buyer convenience fees (per ticket and per order); and
- Additional Revenue Opportunities: What other revenue opportunities could there be for the Fair that are associated with an electronic ticketing solution?
- Additionally, are some fees fixed and some variable (for example, does the Fair have an opportunity to increase convenience fees to cover unreimbursed event costs such as credit card fees?).

## **Settlement Process**

The ideal solution would remit payments and ticket sales proceeds to the Fair on a daily basis. What is the industry standard, and what can the Department expect in terms of customary monetary control functions which may include but are not limited to event settlements and funds distribution, deposit procedures, maintenance of an escrow account established specifically for the Fair's ticket sale proceeds, and various other guarantees provided to assure the Fair will have absolute, total, and timely control over all proceeds?

***The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets would like to thank all responders in advance for their assistance.***