

**Request for Information  
Department of Agriculture and Markets  
Division of Agricultural Protection and Development  
Farmers' Market Development**

**Introduction and Background**

The Department is requesting information from prospective consultants as part of its effort to prepare a procurement for a comprehensive development program to aid new and existing community farmers' markets.

The Department's primary objective in issuing this Request for Information (RFI) is to identify potential qualified consultants. The Department is also seeking input on the proposed scope of services, proposed deliverables, and proposed qualifications of consultants.

Since 1988, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has been actively involved in establishing and promoting community farmers' markets as a means of connecting consumers with local farmers and as a vehicle for the operation of federal and state nutrition programs designed to improve the nutrition of at risk groups while supporting local farmers and the communities in which they live and work. From a modest start, the number of farmers' markets with farmers participating in the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program has increased to over 450 community farmers' markets located in all areas of the State.

Increases in the number of markets, as well as the number of farmers and the number of nutrition programs operating at those markets has necessitated hiring an outside consultant focused on assisting new markets with training and providing technical expertise on a wide range of relevant subject areas for new and existing markets. The consultant would work closely with the Department of Agriculture and Markets on issues related to market development; market promotion, including operating a farmers market at the New York State Fair; education of market managers, farmers and consumers; and assisting in the administration of federal nutrition programs such as the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, the New York State Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer Program and the WIC Vegetables and Fruits Check Program.

**Responders should note that this RFI will not result in the selection of a consultant and award of a contract for the Farmers' Market Development Program. It is anticipated that a separate solicitation to award a contract will be issued by the Department subsequent to the conclusion of this RFI process. Participation or lack of participation in this RFI process will neither benefit nor disadvantage prospective consultants in the solicitation.**

## **Proposed Scope of Services**

1. Work with communities across the state to develop new farmers' markets, creating access to local agricultural products for local consumers, including those consumers participating in federal and state nutrition programs.
2. Work with existing community farmers' markets to improve their markets effectiveness in meeting the needs of participating farmers and consumers.
3. Identify and prepare responses and programs to meet the needs of farmers, market managers and market sponsors.
4. Set up and operate a diversified farmers' market for the 12 days of the New York State Fair in Syracuse. This will include providing and setting up the physical structure, stocking and restocking the market with New York State agricultural products and staffing the market during the hours in which the Fair is open for the 12 day run of the Fair.
5. Update the publication "A Guide to Developing A Community Farmers Market". This publication is used as a reference by existing and prospective farmers market managers and sponsors and covers all aspects of establishing and operating a farmers market in New York State.
6. Set up and participate in 6 Farmers' Market Information Days across the State to train farmers and market managers in the operation of federal and state nutrition programs including the New York State Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, the WIC Vegetables and Fruits Check Program, and the New York State Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer Program for Food Stamps. This will include mailings to farmers and market managers, establishing an agenda and lining up appropriate speakers, arranging for facilities and developing handouts in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets staff.
7. Develop, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets, a consumer friendly, comprehensive, and up to date listing of farmers' markets currently operating in the State.

## **Proposed Deliverables**

1. Update Department of Agriculture and Markets personnel on activities taking place to establish new community farmers' markets and provide technical services to existing community farmers' markets. These updates should occur at least monthly by phone

and/or email. Technical services should include but not be limited to: advice on establishing a market including site selection, timing, recruiting farmers; hiring a market manager, insurance for new and existing markets, issues related to state and local permitting and compliance with ordinances, expertise on federal and state nutrition program including Electronic Benefits Transfer, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the WIC Vegetables and Fruits Check Program, promotion of a community farmers market and integrating a community farmers market into the community.

2. Maintain a website equivalent to [www.nyfarmersmarket.com](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com) and maintain an office staffed Monday through Friday during standard business hours, to answer questions and provide services to farmers, market managers, market sponsors, and consumers on issues related to community farmers' markets in New York State.

3. Plan, set up and operate of a full scale farmers' market for the 12 days of the New York State Fair. The market should be staffed during all appropriate hours during which the Fair is in operation and shall have a display and for sale a complete selection of fruits and vegetables commonly grown in New York State. Location within the Fair shall be arranged with the Department prior to the Fair. The consultant would be responsible for sourcing the produce and updating the produce as needed to ensure the freshness of the fruits and vegetables.

4. Work with the Department of Agriculture and Markets to update the publication "A Guide to Developing A Community Farmers Market".

The consultant would prepare and have printed a user friendly, comprehensive, up to date listing of farmers' markets in New York State. The consultant will print or have printed 5,000 booklets listing the approximately 450 current community farmers markets. The booklet will be printed in single color ink and will be approximately 15 pages in length.

5. Develop plan and host 6 Farmers' Market Information Days, (FMIDs) in the spring of 2011 in consultation with staff from the Department of Agriculture and Markets. This will include developing an agenda, mailings, arranging for speakers, securing facilities, and preparing and printing appropriate handouts. The FMIDs should be supplemented by multiple webinars hosted by bidder in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets covering subjects presented at the face to face sessions.

### **Proposed Qualifications**

1. Have experience in administering federal nutrition programs in conjunction with community farmers' markets.

2. Have at least 5 years experience working with community farmers' markets statewide in the areas of training of market managers and farmers, market formation and development, and other topics related to the ongoing operation of successful farmers' markets in New York State.

3. Have at least the indicated number of years working with the following nutrition programs:

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program – 5 years  
Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program – 5 years  
NYS Farmers' Market Wireless EBT Program – 5 years  
NYC Health Bucks Program – 3 years  
NYS WIC Fruit and Vegetable Check Program – 1 year

4. Have at least 5 years experience in setting up and running statewide training sessions for farmers and market managers.

5. Have firsthand experience in setting up and administering a functioning farmers' market.

### **Response Requirements**

Responses to this RFI **MUST BE RECEIVED** in the Department's Albany Office not later than 4:00 P.M. local time on **May 12, 2010**. Responses received after the scheduled date and time will not be accepted. To ensure that each response is handled correctly upon receipt, responder shall clearly mark each package of materials submitted with the following: **"Market Development RFI."** This marking may appear either on the shipping container or on a secured package inside the shipping container. Responses shipped or mailed shall be addressed to:

Market Development RFI  
Lucy Roberson, Director  
Division of Fiscal Management  
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
10B Airline Drive  
Albany, New York 12235

Responses may be hand delivered to the receptionist in the Department's Offices at 10B Airline Drive, Albany, New York. Responses will not be accepted via FAX or email.

## Questions Concerning the RFI

Prospective responders with questions concerning this RFI should present those questions in writing to:

Jonathan Thomson  
Division of Agricultural Protection and Development  
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
10B Airline Drive  
Albany, New York 12235  
FAX: (518) 457-2716  
Email: [jonathan.thomson@agmkt.state.ny.us](mailto:jonathan.thomson@agmkt.state.ny.us)

All questions shall be submitted in writing (facsimile or e-mail will be accepted) to Mr. Thomson by 4:30 P.M. local time on April 30, 2010. Responders should note that all clarifications are to be resolved prior to the submission of a response. A list of questions about the RFI, answers to those questions, as well as any addenda to the RFI, will be posted in the "Funding Opportunities" section of the Department's website, [www.agmkt.state.ny.us](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us), along with the electronic version of this RFI. Questions and answers will be posted on the website by May 2, 2010. If you are unable to access the website, please contact Mr. Thomson to arrange for alternate delivery. All questions and answers shall be incorporated into this RFI as a formal addendum.

## Response Format

Responders are requested to submit responses in the following format:

1. Experience and qualifications.  
Describe your organization's general business background and experience with projects of similar nature.
2. Proposed scope of work.  
Provide comments on the proposed scope of work, including any changes or additions that would improve the project.
3. Proposed deliverables.  
Provide comments on the proposed deliverables, your organization's ability to provide the noted deliverable and any changes or additions that would improve the project.
4. Proposed qualifications.  
Provide comments on the proposed qualifications and your organization's ability to meet the qualifications as described.

## **General Conditions, Terms and Limitations**

The issuance of this RFI and the submission of a response by any Responder, or the receipt and/or acceptance of such response by the Department does not obligate the Department in any manner.

The Department reserves the right, without liability to any Responder or any other party for their expenses incurred in the preparation of responses hereto or otherwise (i) to amend, modify, or withdraw this RFI, (ii) to revise any provisions of this RFI, (iii) to request supplemental statements or information from any Responder, (iv) to extend the deadline for submission of responses, (v) to cancel this RFI, in whole or in part, and/or (vi) to amend, modify, withdraw or cancel the anticipated issuance of a solicitation the selection of a consultant for a comprehensive development program to aid new and existing community farmers' markets.

Responses will be prepared at the sole cost and expense of the Responders. The Department shall be entitled to retain and use for the project any responses received without compensation to any Responder for any information submitted or utilized by the Department, including, but not limited to, any concept, element or idea disclosed in or evident in the submission or subsequent meetings with Responders.

Nothing contained in this RFI shall limit the Department in its solicitation or manner of selection of a consultant for this project or future projects, not limit the Department's discretion in any way in formulating and/or adopting a solicitation and/or a project plan.

The Department is subject to the Freedom of Information Law ("Foil"). Responders submitting any privileged, confidential or proprietary information must mark each page so designated, in a clear and conspicuous manner.