



State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION # RFI-2023-DPHS-02-WICFA

FOR

The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

February 16, 2023



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

1. Overview and Purpose

1.1. Overview

This Request for Information (RFI) is issued by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program (Department), to solicit information and ideas regarding a relaunch of the NH WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and feedback pertaining to the eligible population, design, implementation and redemption of benefits for the NH WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

The WIC Program is seeking information that addresses the following areas:

- Improving WIC participant access to local fresh produce through the initiation of the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP).
- Improving ease of use of FMNP benefits for the WIC participant, Market Managers, and the Farmers participating in the program.
- Success and failures of similar projects within the state and within the surrounding New England States, i.e. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Farmers Market.
- Third party processors/banks/software system providers that would be able to aid in transactions and payments to the farmers.
- Program design to include, but not limited to: providing nutrition education in coordination with the WIC Program, coupon/benefit delivery systems (paper or electronic), market management, fiscal operations and reporting, and training farmers.

1.2. Purpose

The primary objective of this RFI is to collect information and ideas on how best to implement the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program in New Hampshire. The WIC Program is seeking to gain information on the best way to design, implement and redeem benefits for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program with the insight of community stakeholders, including but not limited to local: WIC agencies, market managers, farmers, participants and third party processors/banks/software system providers.

2. Background Information

2.1. Department of Health and Human Services, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program



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The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program is associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC. Eligible WIC participants are issued an additional benefit to purchase local, fresh unprepared fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets in addition to their regular WIC benefits during the summer months. This additional benefit can be used to purchase eligible foods from farmers, farmers' markets, or roadside stands that have been approved by the State agency in compliance with federal regulations 7 CFR 248.

The FMNP is administered through a Federal/State partnership in which the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) provides cash grants to State agencies. As a prerequisite to receiving Federal funds for the FMNP, each applying or participating State agency must submit an annual State Plan describing how the State agency intends to implement, operate and administer all aspects of the FMNP within its jurisdiction.¹

The FMNP is allowed to provide an additional one-time benefit for fresh, local, unprepared fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets for women, children under five (5) years old and infants four (4) months or older who are actively enrolled in the WIC Program. Information is requested on the inclusion of one (1) or all eligible WIC participant categories (pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children under age five (5)).

Nutrition education to FMNP recipients is required. It is often provided through an arrangement with the local WIC agencies in conjunction with WIC program nutrition education visits. Other program partners may provide nutrition education and/or educational information to FMNP recipients. These educational arrangements help to encourage FMNP recipients to improve and expand their diets by adding fresh fruits and vegetables, including how to select, store and prepare the fresh fruits and vegetables they buy with their FMNP benefits.

3. RFI Explanation and Questions

3.1. RFI Is Not an RFP

- 3.1.1. This RFI is for information purposes only, and is not intended to result in a contract or vendor agreement with any community stakeholder. This RFI is not a Request for Proposals, Bids, or Applications. The State is seeking vendors, community partners, participants, and banking/processor/software providers input and feedback prior to finalizing business, functional, operational, and technical requirements for the publishing of a Request for Proposal (RFP).

¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/fact-sheet-2021>



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- 3.1.2. This RFI does not commit the State to publish a RFP or award a contract. The issuance of an RFP, as a result of information gathered from these responses, is solely at the discretion of the State. Should an RFP be issued, it will be open to qualified vendors, whether those vendors choose to submit a response to this RFI. This RFI is not a pre-qualification process.
- 3.1.3. Once information from this RFI is fully evaluated, and depending on funding and other factors, a Request for Proposals (RFP) may be published by the Department to select a vendor for specific work to be performed which could potentially result in a contract after the completion of the RFP scoring process. Nevertheless, the issuance of any RFP in the future does not commit the Department to award a contract.

3.2. RFI Questions

Interested stakeholders may respond to some or all the questions below. Responses to all questions are encouraged but not required. Your response can be brief (a few sentences) or longer (a few paragraphs).

Please be sure to label your responses appropriately to the question you are addressing.

3.2.1. Questions

- Q1. Provide recommendations on recruitment for interested Farmers' Markets and farmers to participate in the NH WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.
- Q2. Provide recommendations on training mechanisms for Farmers and Market Managers on WIC-FMNP rules and regulations:
- Q3. Provide recommendations on the best way to authorize Farmers' Markets and individual Farmers onto WIC-FMNP using a paper/coupon based system or an electronic solution, such as but not limited to a QR code, mobile application or EBT card.
- Q4. Provide recommendations regarding best practices on issuing the benefits to the WIC participants. This can include who in the community is best positioned to issue the benefits, either through in-person appointments or direct mail, as well as electronic solutions, paper based solutions or other feasible delivery models approved by the USDA.
- Q5. Provide recommendations regarding best practices on participants' redeeming benefits for the full nutritional value.



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- Q6. Provide recommendations regarding procedures for tracking the benefits from issuance to redemption at a Market or with a farmer, specific to an eligible WIC participant.
- Q7. Provide recommendations regarding what categories should be served by this Program and why within the allowable categories of WIC enrolled women and children (up to age five (5)).
- Q8. Provide recommendations on the FMNP benefit value and why. The Federal FMNP benefit level, whether for a household or individual, must be at least \$10 and cannot be more than \$30 per year. However, State agencies may supplement the Federal benefit level with State, local, or private funds.
- Q9. Provide recommendations regarding third party processors/bankers/software providers capable to process WIC-FMNP benefits electronically or through manual reconciliation and settlement and how farmers would be paid for WIC-FMNP benefit redemption.
- Q10. Provide recommendations regarding coordination efforts between the State and local WIC Program to ensure only eligible participants are issued benefits, while avoiding dual issuance of benefits.

4. Notices

4.1. Point of Contact

The sole point of contact for this RFI relative to the submission of requested information is:

State of New Hampshire
 Department of Health and Human Services
 Sara J. Kelly - Business Administrator IV
 Bureau of Contracts & Procurement
 Email: Sara.J.Kelly@dhhs.nh.gov
 Phone: (603) 271-9546

Other state personnel are NOT authorized to discuss this RFI before the submission deadline. The State will not be held responsible for oral responses to vendors regardless of source.

4.2. RFI Timetable

Request for Information Timetable		
Item	Action	Date
1.	Release RFI	2/16/23



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4.	Vendor questions due	3/2/23, 12:00 PM
5.	Departments' answers to Vendor questions posted	3/9/23
6.	Information Submissions due	3/16/23, 12:00 PM

All times are according to Eastern Time. The State reserves the right to modify these dates at its sole discretion.

4.3. Vendor Questions and Answers

4.3.1. Vendor Questions

- 4.3.1.1. All questions about this RFI, including but not limited to requests for clarification, additional information or any changes to the RFI must be made in writing, citing the RFI page number and part or subpart, and submitted to the Procurement Coordinator identified in Subsection 4.1.
- 4.3.1.2. The Department may consolidate or paraphrase questions for efficiency and clarity. Questions that are not understood will not be answered. Statements that are not questions will not receive a response.
- 4.3.1.3. The Department will not acknowledge receipt of questions.
- 4.3.1.4. The questions may be submitted by e-mail; however, the Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate and complete e-mail transmissions.
- 4.3.1.5. Questions must be received by the deadline given in Subsection 4.2, RFI Timetable.

4.3.2. Department Answers

The Department intends to issue responses to properly submitted questions by the deadline specified in Subsection 4.2, RFI Timetable. Oral answers given are non-binding. Written answers to questions submitted will be posted online at (<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/business/rfp/index.htm>). This date may be subject to change at DHHS' discretion.

4.4. RFI Amendment

The Department reserves the right to amend this RFI, as it deems appropriate prior to the submission deadline on their own initiative or in response to issues raised through Vendor questions. In the event of an amendment to the RFI, the Department, at its sole discretion, may extend the submission deadline. The amended language will be posted on the Department Internet site.

4.5. Information Submissions



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- 4.5.1. Information submitted in response to this RFI must be received no later than the time and date specified in Subsection 4.2. RFI responses must be addressed for delivery to the Sole Point of Contact listed in Subsection 4.1. Responses must be marked with **RFI-2023-DPHS-02-WICFA**.
- 4.5.2. Delivery of the Vendor's submission shall be at the Vendor's expense. The time of receipt shall be considered when a Vendor's submission has been officially documented by the Department, in accordance with its established policies, as having been received at the location designated in Subsection 4.1. The State accepts no responsibility for mislabeled mail. Any and all damage that may occur due to shipping shall be the Vendor's responsibility.

4.6. Non-Collusion

Community stakeholders shall ensure that their response does not preclude the Department from obtaining the best possible competitive proposal, if the Department publishes a Request for Proposals. The Vendor's required signature on the Transmittal Cover Letter for a submission in response to this RFI, guarantees they have been established without collusion with other Vendors and without effort to preclude the Department from obtaining the best possible competitive proposal, should the Department publish an RFP.

4.7. Property of Department

All material property submitted and received in response to this RFI will become the property of DHHS and will not be returned to the Vendor. The Department reserves the right to use any information presented in any submission provided that its use does not violate any copyrights or other provisions of law.

4.8. RFI Response Withdrawal

Prior to the Closing Date for receipt of submissions, a submission may be withdrawn by submitting a written request for its withdrawal to Sole Point of Contact identified in Section 4.1.

4.9. Public Disclosure

- 4.9.1. Any information submitted as part of a response to this RFI may be subject to public disclosure under RSA 91-A. In addition, in accordance with RSA 9-F:1, should an RFP be published by the Department, and a contract awarded, that information will be made accessible to the public online via the website Transparent New Hampshire (www.nh.gov/transparentnh/). Accordingly, business financial information and proprietary information such as trade secrets, business and financials models and forecasts, and proprietary



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formulas are exempt from public disclosure under RSA 91-A:5, IV.

- 4.9.2. Insofar as a Vendor seeks to maintain the confidentiality of its confidential commercial, financial or personnel information, the Vendor must clearly identify in writing the information it claims to be confidential and explain the reasons such information should be considered confidential. This should be done by separate letter identifying by page number and RFI section number the specific information the Vendor claims to be exempt from public disclosure pursuant to RSA 91-A:5.
- 4.9.3. Each Vendor acknowledges that the Department is subject to the Right-to-Know Law New Hampshire RSA Chapter 91-A. The Departments shall maintain the confidentiality of the identified confidential information insofar as it is consistent with applicable laws or regulations, including but not limited to New Hampshire RSA Chapter 91-A. In the event the Department receives a request for the information identified by a Vendor as confidential, the Department shall notify the Vendor and specify the date the Department intends to release the requested information. Any effort to prohibit or enjoin the release of the information shall be the Vendor's responsibility and at the Vendor's sole expense. If the Vendor fails to obtain a court order from a court of competent jurisdiction enjoining the disclosure, the Department may release the information on the date the Department specifies in their notice to the Vendor without incurring any liability to the Vendor.

4.10. Non-Commitment

Notwithstanding any other provision of this RFI, this RFI does not commit the Department to publish an RFP or award a Contract. The Department reserves the right to reject any and all RFI submissions or any portions thereof, at any time and to cancel this RFI and to solicit new or additional information under a new RFI process.

4.11. Liability

Vendors agree that in no event shall the State be either responsible for or held liable for any costs incurred by a Vendor in the preparation or submittal of or otherwise in connection with their submission.

4.12. Request for Additional Information or Materials

During the period from date of RFI Response submission to the date of RFP publication, if that should occur, the Department may request from any Vendor additional information or materials needed to clarify information presented as part of their submission. Such a request will be issued in writing.



5. RFI Response Submission Outline and Requirements

5.1. Overview

- 5.1.1. Vendors are expected to examine all documentation and other requirements.
- 5.1.2. Submissions must conform to all instructions, conditions, and requirements included in the RFI.
- 5.1.3. Vendors are requested to address all RFI Questions in Subsection 3.2., and agree to the conditions specified throughout the RFI. All Factors to Consider in Section 4 that are applicable should be incorporated into the Vendors answers to the RFI Questions.
- 5.1.4. Submissions should be received by the date and time specified in the RFI Timetable, Subsection 4.2.
- 5.1.5. Fax or email copies will not be accepted.

5.2. Outline and Detail

5.2.1. Submission Contents – Outline

- 5.2.1.1. Each Submission shall contain the following, in the order described in this section (Each of these components must be separate from the others and uniquely identified with labeled tabs.):
 - 5.2.1.1.1. The Transmittal Cover Letter must be:
 - 5.2.1.1.1.1. On the Vendor organization's letterhead;
 - 5.2.1.1.1.2. Identify the name, title, telephone number, and e-mail address of the person who will serve as the Vendor's representative for all matters relating to the RFI;
 - 5.2.1.1.2. Table of Contents - The required elements of the Submission shall be numbered sequentially and represented in the Table of Contents.
 - 5.2.1.1.3. Executive Summary - The Vendor shall submit an executive summary to:



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- 5.2.1.1.3.1. Provide DHHS with an overview of the Vendor's organization;
- 5.2.1.1.3.2. Demonstrate the Vendor's understanding of the potential solutions described in this RFI and any anticipated problems associated with each;
- 5.2.1.1.3.3. Show the Vendor's overall design of the potential solution(s); and
- 5.2.1.1.3.4. Specifically demonstrate the vendor's familiarity with the potential solutions' elements, and the Vendor's solutions to the problems presented.
- 5.2.1.1.4. Answers to RFI Questions
 - 5.2.1.1.4.1. The Vendor is asked to answer all questions and include all items requested in Subsection 3.2.
 - 5.2.1.1.4.2. Responses must be in the same sequence and format as listed in Subsection 3.2.
- 5.2.1.1.5. Description of Organization - Vendors must include in their submission a summary of their company's organization, management and history and how the organization's experience demonstrates the ability to meet the needs of requirements in this RFI. At a minimum, the Vendor must respond to:
 - 5.2.1.1.5.1. General Company Overview.
 - 5.2.1.1.5.2. Ownership and Subsidiaries.
 - 5.2.1.1.5.3. Company Background and Primary Lines of Business.
 - 5.2.1.1.5.4. Number of Employees.
 - 5.2.1.1.5.5. Headquarters and Satellite Locations.
 - 5.2.1.1.5.6. Current Project commitments.



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- 5.2.1.1.5.7. Instances of whether proposed solutions were implemented.
- 5.2.1.1.5.8. Mission Statement.
- 5.2.1.1.5.9. Programs and activities of the organization.
- 5.2.1.1.5.10. Number and type of people served.
- 5.2.1.1.5.11. Programmatic accomplishments.