



Southern Tier West
Regional Planning & Development Board

Robert C. Keis, Chairman
Richard T. Zink, Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
Food Aggregation Facility Study Project

Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board
4039 Route 219, Suite 200
Salamanca, New York 14779
(716) 945-5301 Office (716) 945-5550 Facsimile
Richard T. Zink, Executive Director

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board (hereinafter referred to as "STW") is inviting responses from qualified Consultants to provide services related to conducting a feasibility study concerning a Food Aggregation Facility in the southern tier region of New York State namely, within Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties.

B. Background of the STW local food project relating to a regional Food Aggregation Facility

STW has been working closely with the local food producers, schools, not for profit organizations and county agencies across our three county service area for just over a year. During this time, as part of a project funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), STW has conducted a survey of farmers, growers, food producers, and other local food entities (including farmers markets and other relevant entities). The survey captured several areas of information including food producer profiles, production methods and capacities, processing and sales/distribution networks, business growth needs, and level of interest in participating in a local food branding program.

STW has learned that there is substantial anecdotal evidence that producers would produce more, that there would be more producers, and that there would be increased markets, for locally produced agricultural products, if only there was a more defined market and functional assistance to bring products to market, such as would be provided by a Food Aggregation Facility.

STW has discussed this concept with numerous entities, both private sector and public sector across the three county service area. Throughout these discussions, there has been unanimity of support for the concept of creating and operating one or more food hub facilities in the three county service area, which could include processing capacity, packaging capacity, dry and frozen storage, and transportation capacity, and which potentially also would include other functionalities, such as a community kitchen, incubator space for local foods entrepreneurs, meeting space / classroom space for education about business development for local foods producers and about nutrition issues related to locally produced foods.

However, STW knows that (a) it should not proceed to develop such a facility unless it can document the feasibility and commercial viability of the facility, and that (b) it will need a comprehensive business plan to obtain grant and other funding for the creation and initial operation of such a facility. These are the questions STW aims to answer through the process of this RFP.

This Local Food Aggregation Facility Study Project aims to have the following benefits:

- The project will provide data related to agricultural products production levels and location, reviewed and verified by an independent consultant.
- The project will provide an independently-prepared (i.e., consultant-prepared) feasibility study of the viability of a (potentially multi-function) food hub facility or facilities, which also will make recommendations for the functional content of the facility (e.g., community kitchen, classrooms, etc.), the number of facilities, and the location(s) for the

facility or facilities. This will demonstrate the commercial viability of a facility to be created subsequent to the RBOG project, thus enabling the applicant and the local food network to develop the facility.

- The project will provide an independently-prepared (i.e., consultant-prepared) business plan for a (potentially multi-function) food hub facility or facilities. This business plan will (1) provide documentation to potential grant and loan funding sources of the food hub facility's business model adequate to secure funding sufficient for facility capital set-up costs and initial operating costs and (2) provide a strategic plan for the implementation (i.e., creation) and initial operations of the facility to be created.

C. Correspondence

All questions pertaining to this RFP shall be submitted *no later than 12:00 p.m. on January 31, 2013* via mail, facsimile or email to:

Richard T Zink, Executive Director
4039 Route 219, Suite 200
Salamanca, NY 14779
(716) 945-5301 x-203 Office
(716) 945-5550 Facsimile
Email rzink@southerntierwest.org

D. Submission of Proposals

Interested consultants shall submit their proposal to the STW offices by hand, email, mail or other courier type services no later than 3:00 p.m., local time, February 8, 2013 in a sealed envelope, with the company name and address on the outer envelope along with the words "STW Local Food Aggregation Facility RFP" clearly marked. If proposal is emailed the subject line should state "STW Local Food Aggregation Facility RFP" and be prepared in pdf format. If proposals are sent by mail or courier type services, only those proposals received on or before February 8, 2013 shall be considered. Lost or "blocked email" proposals are not the responsibility of STW.

Proposals shall be submitted to:

Richard T. Zink, Executive Director
4039 Route 219, Suite 200
Salamanca, NY 14779
(716) 945-5301 x-203 Office
(716) 945-5550 Facsimile
Email rzink@southerntierwest.org

STW intends to award a contract to the successful applicant within 5 days of receipt.

II. PROPOSAL CONDITIONS

A. Scope of Work

The scope of work will be divided into two components. The first will be the data component which will primarily be completed by STW staff. Under this component the consultant will work with STW to:

- Assist in formulating the surveys and data points to be gathered and analyzed from farmers (e.g. interviews, surveys and focus group discussions on topics such as outlets where growers currently sell; the quantity they produce/harvest; supply gaps; interest in planting and selling crops that are more desirable to institutions; options they're willing to consider to aggregate, process and source local produce; the economics of aggregating, processing, and sourcing local products, etc.).
- Assist in formulating the surveys and data points to be gathered and analyzed from institutional buyers (e.g. interviews, surveys and focus group discussions on topics such as produce needs/demand, processing requirements, the types of certificates of insurance required, the price point that would allow them to buy local produce, storage requirements, etc.)
- Assist in formulating the surveys and data points to be gathered and analyzed from already existing aggregation, processing, wholesale, and distribution channels (e.g. Sysco, and others) and infrastructure; explore their interest in sourcing county grown produce.
- Review and analyze existing data (e.g. produce, total arable land available, number of acres in production, etc.). Note: STW will work to gather the data necessary and share it with the consultant.

The second component will result in the generation of comprehensive summaries, creation of a business plan and analysis of the data and encompass the following:

- Presenting the data to stakeholders and with their input, determine the most appropriate model to incorporate county grown produce schools, hospitals, county facilities, restaurants, other businesses, and corporations. This study will explore different models (e.g. can we tweak current distribution system, or is it preferable to farmers and buyers to create a non-profit, business or other entity to coordinate aggregation, processing, sale, distribution, etc. of produce, fruit, and value added foods)
- Writing a comprehensive summary of the findings produced through the feasibility study synthesizes the data, research and all other findings
- Writing a business plan that includes a market analysis, marketing strategy, operational plan, growth strategy, risks, and pro forma.
- Based on recommendations and input from STW, determine most appropriate next steps.

B. Incurred Costs

This RFP does not commit STW to pay any costs incurred by Vendors in preparation of responses to this RFP. Consultants agree that all costs incurred by Consultants in developing this proposal are solely the Consultant's responsibility.

C. Proposal Submission

To be considered, all proposals must be submitted in the manner set forth in this proposal. It is the Consultant's responsibility to ensure that its proposal arrives on or before the specified time.

D. Interviews

Proposals may be so similar in quality that oral interviews may have to be arranged to assist in making the final selection.

E Project Staffing

STW will be responsible for working closely with the consultant on this project. The Project Lead, Kim LaMendola, is responsible for providing day-to-day project management and maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders. She will serve as the liaison between the consultant and STW and will ensure the project is completed on time and within budget.

F. Contract terms

STW will negotiate contract terms upon selection. Contractor must agree to abide by all federal certificates and assurances as funding for this program is partially from USDA RBOG program. The budget for the Food Aggregation Facility Study Project for the consultant cannot exceed \$20,500.

G. Timeline

The project must be completed by June 30, 2013. A project task timeline will be negotiated once a vendor is selected.

H. Proposal Contents (the entire RFP should not exceed 10 pages)

- Cover letter: include the firm or individual(s) name(s) that will be providing the requirements stated in this RFP.
- Scope of work: explain the process you will follow to accomplish the deliverables listed above, including major milestones and evaluation. Briefly describe your firm's project management process.
- Qualifications: describe overall services you can offer in response to the stated requirements and include experience working with some or all of the stakeholders (eg. growers; food service directors from schools, hospitals, county facilities, businesses, etc.; local government agencies, etc.).
- Cost detail: include an itemized estimate for deliverables; provide specific costs for individual features where applicable.
 - If the execution of work to be performed by your company requires the hiring of sub-contractors you must clearly state this in your proposal. Sub-contractors must be identified and the work they will perform must be defined. STW reserves the right to approve all sub-contractors assigned to the project.
 - The price you quote should be inclusive. If your price excludes certain fees or charges, you must provide a detailed list of excluded fees with a complete explanation of the nature of those fees.
- Client list and samples of related work/successes: Include a brief description of the role you/your firm played in each project.
- Provide at least two references for projects with similar deliverables to those outlined for this project. Indicate which services were provided to each customer.
- Include resumes for key personnel working on this project.

I. Evaluation of Proposals

STW shall evaluate proposals on a qualitative basis.

- Suitability of the proposal: the proposed solution meets the needs and criteria set forth in the RFP.
- Expertise in recommending and communicating appropriate solutions as evidenced by the proposal and references.
- Candidate experience: candidate has successfully completed similar projects and has the qualifications necessary to undertake this project.
- Value/pricing structure and price levels: the price is commensurate with the value offered by the proposer.
- Proposal presentation: the information is presented in a clear, logical manner and is well organized.