

Release date: February 20, 2024

Request for Proposal (RFP)
Veggie Van Mobile Farmers' Market Operator Partnership

Introduction

Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County (CCE) is seeking proposals from qualified farmers or farming organizations to operate a Veggie Van pilot program in collaboration with our organization. The Veggie Van program aims to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce and other agricultural products in underserved communities within Herkimer County. This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles, supporting local agriculture, and addressing food insecurity.

The Veggie Van program follows successful models of other extension associations in New York State that funds farmers to travel (in all types of vehicles, not just vans!) to underserved communities on a mutually agreeable schedule during the growing season (June – October). The program includes the following incentives for participating farmers:

- financial stipend for each market session
- all proceeds from sales
- marketing materials and a marketing campaign managed by CCE
- nutrition programs implemented at market sites by CCE staff

In return, participating farmers agree to manage procurement of fresh produce and other agricultural products, provide their own transportation, and participate in CCE marketing and educational efforts.

Scope of Work

The selected farmer or farming organization will be responsible for the following tasks:

1. Procurement of Fresh Produce and Agricultural Products:
 - a. Cultivate or source a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, and other agricultural products from local farms and producers.
 - b. Ensure that all products meet quality standards and adhere to food safety regulations.

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2. Operation of Veggie Van:
 - a. Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) certification (more information at <https://agriculture.ny.gov/farming/selling-products-farmers-market>).
 - b. Coordinate and operate the Veggie Van at designated locations within Herkimer County, targeting underserved communities, including but not limited to rural areas, food deserts, and low-income neighborhoods.
 - c. With CCE staff, develop a schedule for Veggie Van operations, taking into account factors such as seasonality, community events, and customer preferences.
 - d. Set up and manage the Veggie Van infrastructure, including tents, tables, signage, as needed.
3. Marketing and Outreach:
 - a. Participate in promoting the Veggie Van program through various channels, including social media, local newspapers, community organizations, and CCE's network.
 - b. Engage with community members to raise awareness about the benefits of consuming local produce and encourage participation in the Veggie Van with CCE nutrition staff.
4. Customer Service and Engagement:
 - a. Provide exceptional customer service to Veggie Van patrons, including assisting with product selection, answering questions, and accepting various forms of payment (FMNP coupons, cash, credit/debit cards, SNAP/EBT, etc.).
 - b. Collect feedback from customers and stakeholders to continuously improve the Veggie Van experience.
5. Reporting and Evaluation:
 - a. Maintain accurate records of Veggie Van activities, including sales data and customer demographics.
 - b. Submit regular reports to CCE detailing operational performance, achievements, challenges, and proposed solutions.
 - c. Participate in periodic evaluations and meetings with CCE staff to assess the effectiveness of the Veggie Van program and identify opportunities for enhancement.

Requirements

- ✓ Vendor shall complete and sign an outside Vendor Contract.
- ✓ Vendor shall comply with the requirements set forth in the Insurance Schedule.

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- ✓ Demonstrated experience in farming, agriculture, or related fields.
- ✓ Ability to cultivate relationships with local farmers, producers, and community partners.
- ✓ Strong organizational and logistical skills, with the capacity to manage Veggie Van operations efficiently.
- ✓ Commitment to food safety practices and compliance with relevant regulations.
- ✓ Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- ✓ Flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and community needs.
- ✓ Access to reliable transportation for Veggie Van setup and travel within Herkimer County.

Proposal Submission

Interested parties are invited to submit proposals addressing the scope of work outlined above. Proposals should include the following:

1. Overview of the proposing entity, including relevant experience and qualifications.
2. Approach to sourcing and procuring fresh produce and agricultural products.
3. Operational plan for managing the Veggie Van, including scheduling, logistics, and staffing.
4. Ideas for marketing and outreach strategies to promote the Veggie Van program and engage with the community.
5. References from previous clients or partners, if available.

Proposal Deadline: April 1, 2024

Please submit proposals by email to CCE Herkimer at Herkimer@cornell.edu.

For inquiries or additional information, please contact our office at 315-866-7920.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal, in whole or in part, and to negotiate changes in scope, terms, or conditions with the selected applicant. Thank you for your interest in partnering with us to bring fresh, locally sourced foods to the communities of Herkimer County.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County
Garet Livermore, Executive Director

Cc: Cameron Burke, Association Team Leader

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