

# Vermont Farm Show

## Request For Proposals

### *Revisioning the Vermont Farm Show (event)*

#### PROJECT DETAILS

The [Vermont Farm Show](#) Board of Directors seeks a contractor to organize and oversee a broad, statewide stakeholder engagement process to include:

- community-based, information gatherings
- stakeholder surveying
- focus group conversations
- evaluation and synthesis of information collected

The outcome of a contract will be to provide clear recommendations for creating a Vermont Farm Show event or events that meets many of Vermont's agricultural, food system, and eater interests and needs.

A process to envision a future event(s) must include all sizes and types of market farmers, homesteaders, foragers, etc. and those traditionally underrepresented in the farming community (e.g., migrant farm workers, new Americans, global majority, etc.). The stakeholder engagement process should not only include producers and farm workers but also state agencies, businesses, non-profits, youth organizations, and educational institutions to name a few stakeholder groups.

A viable candidate to meet the needs of this RFP will have experience in or access to sub-contractors with experience in:

- monitoring and evaluating
- community and event organizing
- meeting facilitation including mediation skills

Proposals, no more than two-pages in length, should be sent to the Vermont Farm Show via email ([vermontfarmshow@gmail.com](mailto:vermontfarmshow@gmail.com)) by September 15<sup>th</sup> and include:

- evidence of the necessary experience and/or connections to take on this stakeholder engagement and information gathering, analysis, and synthesis process
- a projected timeline, detailing steps to be taken along the timeline
- a projected budget
- list of references and past clients
- any additional information that would be helpful for the Vermont Farm Show Board to know

#### COMPANY INTRODUCTION

The Vermont Farm Show has existed for nearly 100 years and holds its non-profit agricultural exemption under section 501(c)(5) of the Internal Revenue Code. It has been the organization's purpose to serve:

"...the betterment of conditions of those engaged in the pursuit of agriculture or horticulture, the improvement of the grade of their products, and the development of a higher degree of efficiency in their respective occupations." And "...(1) to hold, conduct, and operate an annual Vermont Farm Show to provide an opportunity for coordinating, unifying, correlating, and promoting the agricultural interests of Vermont; (2) to organize and conduct meetings at which various agricultural individuals and organizations can meet together; (3) to display and exhibit farm equipment, supplies, and Vermont farm and home products for the education and instruction of agricultural actors; and (4) to engage in any and all lawful activities incidental to and in pursuit of the foregoing purposes [...]."

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The organization is at a point in its existence that it must evolve to be relevant to the changing landscape in agriculture, the food system, and the climate. It is hard for the Vermont Farm Show Board to project where it wants the organization or event to be in 5-10 years. It is the Board's hope that through a broad and diverse stakeholder engagement process, the next 5-10 years will become clearer for both the organization and the event.

To learn the history of the Vermont Farm Show, visit: <http://www.vtfarmshow.com/history.html>

Beyond the stakeholder engagement and information gathering effort outlined in this RFP, the Vermont Farm Show Board is entering a second endeavor to assess the organization's governance and operating structures to ensure that it can be effective and financially viable to support an event that truly meets the farming and food system needs of the state.

#### **PROJECT OBJECTIVES & TIMELINE**

Vermont's agricultural landscape is changing, the climate is changing, the demographics of those in agriculture are changing, and the global food supply is becoming more vulnerable to political and environmental instability. Evidence indicates that eater interest in locally produced foods, home-scale production, hunting, fishing, and foraging is on the rise. Food insecurity coupled with food system insecurity is real and ever-present. And, who farms in Vermont and how they farm is increasingly diverse.

Vermont has a strong and rich history anchored in land and home-based economies, working landscapes, agriculture, and native lifestyles that have lived in reciprocity with the land. We have educational programs dedicated to agriculture and natural resource management/stewardship, organizations and associations serving the interests of many types of farmers, home growers, foragers, hunters, eaters, and farm and food system supporting businesses. Additionally, there are many different types of farm and food gatherings, large and small, in the state that are successful in their own way.

While the Vermont Farm Show was initially created to serve as an entity that held an annual event for all producer associations in the state of Vermont, the Vermont Farm Show Board is not confident this is the event that is needed now. Many have expressed that the Vermont Farm Show event, last held in 2020, was beginning to feel outdated and exclusive.

The Vermont Farm Show's Executive Committee has taken on the task of assessing the future of the organization and its signature event. It is this Committee's aim to have a set of recommendations for a future Farm Show event and/or events to present to the full Vermont Farm Show Board by May of 2025.

#### **PROJECT SCOPE & SPECIFICATIONS**

The stakeholder engagement and information gathering activities are expected to include a variety of information collection methods to hear from a significant number of diverse perspectives and voices in Vermont's farming and food landscape. It is anticipated that the information collection could take up to 5 months. In support of these activities, the Vermont Farm Show Board will leverage its connections across the state to assist the contractor in successful community-based event organization, focus group coordination, information dissemination, and management of costs.

The evaluation and synthesis of information collected should be complete in no more than two months upon completion of the stakeholder engagement process. A report of recommendations from the contractor for the future of the Vermont Farm Show event and/or events would be due to the Vermont

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Farm Show Board Officers no later than April 25<sup>th</sup> 2025 via slide deck presentation and in writing. The slide deck presentation of recommendations will occur in person and virtually. It is the expectation that the presentation be recorded for future viewing.

Through the entire process, it is the Vermont Farm Show's Executive Committee's expectation to inform, be engaged in, and remain informed of the planning, coordinator, and execution of the stakeholder engagement process, public communication, hiring of sub-contractors, and the projected spending of funds on all aspects of the effort.

#### **PROPOSED OUTCOME & COST SUMMARY**

At the end of this contract, it is expected that formal recommendations for a Farm Show event and/or events that meets Vermont's diverse farm and food interests and needs are presented to the Vermont Farm Show Executive Committee.

These recommendations are expected to be presented to the Vermont Farm Show Executive Committee via a slide deck presentation and in writing. Specifically, although not in an effort to pre-prescribe recommendations, the recommendations presentation and report could include the following information / sections:

- time of year
- location of event
- number of days the event takes place
- one event annually or multiple
- virtual elements vs in-person elements
- financial stability options e.g.
  - state agencies / private / non-profit partnership
  - sponsors, entry fees, vendor fees
- highlights, e.g.
  - workshops, lectures, panels, demonstrations
    - who and what topics
  - vendors (of what type)
    - service providers
    - equipment
    - food / farmers market
  - meetings of associations or other types of groups
  - product competitions, awards, etc.
- no event – is a new Farm Show necessary, if not, does the organization have a unique purpose to exist

The Vermont Farm Show has allocated less than \$40,000 to support both the above-described stakeholder engagement and information gathering, analysis, and synthesis processes and a second process to assess the organization's structure and governance if this process determines that there is a need for the Vermont Farm Show as an event(s) and an entity.

Costs included in a contract to meet the goals of this RFP are anticipated to include the contractor, space rentals, food, travel, focus group participant stipends, among other costs. The Vermont Farm Show

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Executive Committee has the expectation that the hired contractor will leverage in-kind support as much as is possible e.g. spaces for community gathering, food, volunteers, etc.

**The Vermont Farm Show looks forward to hearing from you and thanks you for your time and consideration.**

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