

## **2017 Trends and Models Influencing VT's Direct Markets Research Project**

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) seeks proposals from consultants to conduct a market research project exploring trends and models influencing Vermont's direct markets (farmers markets, CSAs and farm stands) as described below.

### **Project Background**

Consumer habits and preferences related to food buying are changing and direct-to-consumer markets need to better understand these trends to inform their business decisions. From a trend of Americans eating more food away from home (over 40% according to the USDA Economic Research Service) to the popularity of recipe and ingredient services (e.g. Blue Apron and Hello Fresh), what does that mean for local foods and direct markets? Many retailers are hyper aware of these trends and capitalize on them in order to meet consumer demand, yet for many direct market farmers, doing the work of both producing and marketing does not leave them much time to research consumer trends and adjust their marketing.

### **Project Description**

This project will look to organizations, such as GrowNYC, which provides the vendors at their Greenmarket farmers markets with strategic marketing support, which helps the farmers understand how to display their products, where to place their signage, and more. The project will utilize the body of retail anthropology research in order to attract consumers and provide information about market trends to our direct markets. We will also interview direct market farmers and farmers market leaders with marketing innovations to assess how they see direct markets changing, how they're measuring those changes, and what information they gather to inform their business decisions. Lastly, this project will research innovative direct-to-consumer models nationally to inform Vermont's direct market farms and farmers markets on trends and new models they may adopt into their business and marketing strategies in order to meet consumer demands.

**Project Activities:** The consultant, working in collaboration with the project team, will act as the project coordinator to:

- Interview direct market farmers and farmers market leaders to assess changes in the market, measurement strategies, and how these inform their business decisions
- Analyze consumer trends and retail anthropology research
- Research innovative national direct-to-consumer models that address consumer trends
- Create a report and recommendations based on the interviews, models, and market research

**Project Timeline:** mid-January to August 15, 2017

- Proposals are due by close of business on **Monday, January 16, 2017**.
- We anticipate awarding the contract by the end of January and anticipate a first meeting with the contractor in early to mid-February.
- A draft report of the work will be completed by August 1, 2017, with all final work due by August 15, 2017.

**The deliverables for this project are as follows:**

- Identify 25 potential direct market farmers and farmers market leaders to interview. With support from the project team, narrow down to a minimum of 12 to interview. Develop a report of findings from the interviews.
- Develop a factsheet/report of findings from the consumer trends/retail anthropology research.
- Develop a factsheet/ report of findings from the national innovative models research.
- Compile a final report on all aspects of the project.
- Follow-up with key interviewees and stakeholders to share the report and solicit their feedback on their relevance and common usage.

**The chosen consultant must be available to complete the aforementioned deliverables within this time period while routinely checking in (every four-six weeks) with the project team.**

**\$9,600 is available for tasks associated with this bid.**

**Bidders will be evaluated based on the following criteria:**

- Experience conducting sound research on local food systems
- Familiarity with direct-to-consumer markets
- Capability to accomplish the outlined tasks within the available project budget and timeline
- Clear writing skills and experience communicating research outcomes to key stakeholders

Please respond by email to Erin Buckwalter at [erin@nofavt.org](mailto:erin@nofavt.org) with any questions and your interest in this project. Each bidder must describe their ability to accomplish the above described deliverables and activities within the required budget and timeline. Proposals are due by COB **Monday, January 16, 2017**.