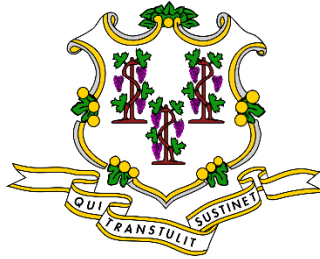


**STATE OF CONNECTICUT PROCUREMENT NOTICE**

# Request for Proposals (RFP) For Connecticut Department of Agriculture

RFP Name: Technical Assistance for CT FarmLink  
Program

## Issued By:

Connecticut Department of Agriculture

July 1, 2024

The Request for Proposals is available in electronic format on the  
State Contracting Portal by using the filter option to sort by  
Organization for the Department of Agriculture  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard>  
or from the Department's Official Contact:

Name: Holly Lalime  
Address: 450 Columbus Blvd. Suite 703, Hartford, CT 06103  
Phone: 860-918-4469  
E-Mail: [Holly.Lalime@ct.gov](mailto:Holly.Lalime@ct.gov)

The RFP is also available on the Department's website at  
<https://portal.ct.gov/doag/adarc/programs/farmland-preservation-overview/ct-farmlink>

***No bidders conference will be held.***

PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN

**Tuesday, July 23, 2024 by 4:00 p.m.**

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## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

### A. INTRODUCTION

- 1. RFP Name or Number.** 24DAG0101AA
- 2. Executive Summary.** The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) is in search of qualified entities to support the agency with administering the Connecticut FarmLink program (FarmLink). FarmLink provides outreach and assistance to farmland owners and farmland seekers in Connecticut to aid in the successful transfer of land between current and future farmers. The program hosts a website that allows farmland owners and farmland seekers to create profiles and communicate with one another with the goal of matching farmland seekers with available parcels of farmland for lease, standard sale, or partnerships.  
<https://www.ctfarmlink.org/>.

**Multiple awards may be granted under this RFP. Proposals should submit project with a budget which enables implementation of tasks to achieve the goals/outcomes for the identified amount of time.**

- 3. RFP Purpose.** FarmLink's goal is to aid in the connection of farmland owners and farmland seekers and facilitate the successful transfer of land in order to keep farmland in active agricultural production. This is accomplished by providing technical assistance to farmland owners looking to rent, sell, or lease their land and farmland seekers looking to start or expand an agricultural business.

Proposals should focus on a variety of priorities including providing technical assistance to farmland owners and seekers through a combination of website education, outreach and communication about CT FarmLink, workshops, social media and content development, farmland seeker preparedness assessments, onsite investigations of farmland properties, succession and farm transfer planning services, and business planning support.

Services may include:

1. Attending biweekly meetings, approximately twenty per year, organized by DoAg to facilitate communication among all members of the contracted CT FarmLink Team.
2. Attending bimonthly meetings, approximately six per year, organized by the New England Farm Link Collaborative, to facilitate communication among other farmland access service providers.
3. Developing and publishing monthly e-newsletters.
4. Maintaining a social media presence on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to promote new farmland owners and seekers through frequent posts and associated content creation.
5. Developing content/materials/training to improve farmland owner and farmland seeker preparedness.

6. Conducting on-site investigations of farmland properties and providing one-on-one consultations with farmers seeking farmland and with farmland owners seeking to sell, lease, and/or form partnerships with farmers.
7. Hosting events for farmland owners and farmland seekers to interact.
8. Conducting informational workshops for land trusts, municipalities, and agricultural nonprofits.
9. Creating an interactive tool to support connecting farmland owners and farmland seekers.
10. Providing business planning support services to farmland seekers.
11. Providing succession and farm transfer planning services, including farm family estate planning.
12. Assisting landowners and farmland seekers with lease agreements, options to purchase, and/or other land tenure agreements.
13. Identifying, developing, and executing an approach to achieve measurable outcomes as it pertains to successful matches between farmland owners and seekers, attendance, engagement, and knowledge gained at events, and outcomes of one-on-one meetings with farmland owners and/or seekers, and impact of technical assistance efforts.
14. Elevating equity, diversity, and inclusion work to address systematic inequities of farmland access and ownership.
15. Maintaining the established [FarmLink website](#)
  - a. Paying web hosting fees, conducting routine website maintenance and updates, and preventing and responding to cybersecurity issues.
  - b. Receiving and posting owner listings of farmland and applications from farmers seeking farmland; reviewing applications for completeness and compliance with program terms.
  - c. Posting relevant educational information and resources on farm business planning, farmland access, farmland restoration and farmland transfer.
  - d. Publishing articles highlighting FarmLink success stories or highlighting farmland profiles and farmland seeker profiles.
  - e. Monitoring website traffic through analytics and impressions.
16. Providing multilingual services.
17. Collaborating with the Department of Veterans Affairs, The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service, and the Labor Department to encourage and assist veterans in starting or expanding an agricultural business and to provide education and training opportunities to veterans concerning farming or agricultural operations.

All outputs (such as social media pages, websites, trainings, events, etc.) are property of the CT Department of Agriculture.

**4. Commodity Codes.** The commodity codes for services that the Department wishes to procure through this RFP are as follows:

- 701315 Land and Soil Protection
- 701316 Land and Soil Preparation
- 701317 Land and Soil Management
- 701416 Crop Protection
- 701518 Forestry Conservation Services
- 771015 Environmental Impact Assessment
- 771016 Environmental Planning
- 771017 Environmental Advisory Services

86000000: Education and Training Services  
80000000: Management and Business Professionals & Administrative Services  
801220 Legal Review and Inquiry Services  
801218 Family Law Services  
801216 Business Law Services  
801015 Business and Corporate Management Consultation Services  
801016 Project Management  
801315 Lease and Rental Of Property Or Building  
801316 Sale of Property and Building  
801317 Escrow and Title Services  
801318 Real Estate Management Services  
801416 Sales and Business Promotion Activities  
811718 Agricultural Science Services  
951019 Agricultural Land

## B. INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Official Contact.** The Department has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for purposes of this RFP. The Official Contact is the **only authorized contact** for this procurement and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of the Department. Proposers, prospective proposers, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other Department employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the Department about this RFP is strictly prohibited. Proposers or prospective proposers who violate this instruction may be disqualified from further consideration.

Name: Mrs. Holly Lalime  
Address: 450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 703, Hartford, CT 06103  
Phone: 860-918-4469  
E-Mail: [Holly.Lalime@ct.gov](mailto:Holly.Lalime@ct.gov)

Please ensure that e-mail screening software (if used) recognizes and accepts e-mails from the Official Contact.

- 2. Registering with State Contracting Portal.** Prospective proposers must register with the State of CT contracting portal at <https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/Registration> if not already registered. Prospective proposers shall submit the following information pertaining to this application to this portal (on their supplier profile), which will be checked by the Department contact. Prospective proposers should register as soon as possible as it may take several days to complete all forms required for registration.

- Secretary of State recognition – Click on appropriate response.
- Non-profit status, if applicable
- Notification to Bidders, Parts I-V
- Consulting Agreement Affidavit (OPM Ethics Form 5) – Requires Notarization; available at: [Microsoft Word - OPM Form 5 Consulting Agreement Affidavit 3-28-14 \(ct.gov\)](#)
- OPM Gift Form 1 Gift and Contribution Certification [Form 6A \(ct.gov\)](#)

- 3. RFP Information.** The RFP, amendments to the RFP, and other information associated with this procurement are available in electronic format from the Official Contact, or from the Internet, at the following location:

Department's FarmLink Web Page:

<https://portal.ct.gov/doag/adarc/programs/farmland-preservation-overview/ct-farmlink>

State Contracting Portal (go to CT Source bid board, filter by Agriculture)

<https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard>

We recommend any proposer or prospective proposer interested in this procurement check the Bid Board for any solicitation changes. Interested proposers may receive additional e-mails from CT Source announcing addenda that are posted on the portal. This service is provided as a courtesy to assist in monitoring activities associated with State procurements, including this RFP.

- 4. Schedule.** Below is the current schedule. Dates after the due date for proposals ("Proposals Due") marked by \* are non-binding target dates only. The Department may amend the schedule as needed. Any change to binding due dates will be made by means of an amendment to this RFP and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, the Department's RFP Web Page.

- **RFP Released:** **July 1, 2024**
- **Deadline for Questions:** **July 8, 2024**
- **Answers Released:** **July 11, 2024**
- **Proposals Due:** **July 23, 2024**
- **(\* Anticipated Proposer Selection:** **on or after July 31, 2024**
- **(\* Anticipated Start of Contract:** **September 15, 2024**

- 5. Contract Awards.** The award of any contract pursuant to this RFP is dependent upon the availability of funding. The Department anticipates the following:

Number of Awards:	Multiple
Contract Term:	September 15, 2024 to August 31, 2026
Funding Source:	CT FarmLink

- 6. Eligibility and Minimum Qualifications of Proposers.** Private businesses, nonprofits, Council of Governments, and universities are eligible.

For a proposer to qualify for an award, a proposer must have the following minimum qualifications:

- a) In good financial standing.
- b) In operation for at least three years.
- c) Proof of financials may be requested during the contract process to verify compliance with eligibility requirements.
- d) Comply with the State of Connecticut guidelines for ethics and contracting.

Participating proposers may be located outside of the state but must have a consistent and dedicated presence in the State to conduct activities, all of which, shall be conducted in Connecticut.

Proposers must demonstrate enough dedicated staff to conduct the work. Subcontracting may be permitted.

- 7. Letter of Intent.** A Letter of Intent (LOI) is not required by this RFP.

- 8. Inquiry Procedures.** All questions regarding this RFP or the Department's procurement process must be directed, in writing, to the Official Contact before the

deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally – neither in person nor over the telephone.

All questions received before **4:00 p.m. July 8, 2024**, will be answered. However, the Department will not answer questions when the source is unknown (e.g. nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the RFP or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the Department may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. The Department may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written amendment to this RFP. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFP, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the amendment and noted as such.

The agency will release the answers to questions on the date(s) established in the Procurement Schedule. The Department will publish all amendments to this RFP on the State Contracting Portal and, if available, on the Department's RFP webpage.

**9. RFP Conference.** An RFP conference will not be held to answer questions from prospective proposers.

**10. Proposal Due Date and Time.** The Official Contact is the **only authorized recipient** of proposals submitted in response to this RFP.

Proposals must be received by the Official Contact on or before **July 23, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. through the online portal:**  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/ctdoag/requestforproposalctfarmlink20242026>

The time stamp will only be determined by the electronic time stamp of the receiving system. *Server time stamps will not suffice for proof of submission.* Respondents are strongly advised to submit the proposal early as difficulties with technology will not render a respondent's proposal as acceptable if submitted late.

Proposals received after the due date and time will be ineligible and will not be evaluated. The Department will send an official notice alerting late prospective proposers of ineligibility.

**An acceptable submission must include the following:**

One (1) conforming electronic copy of the original proposal in pdf format.

The proposal must be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Screening Committee.

To submit the proposal please visit the  
<https://www.cognitoforms.com/ctdoag/requestforproposalctfarmlink20242026>  
pages for more information, copies of the guidance, and needed forms.

Proposals may only be submitted via the Cognito link.

**11. Multiple Proposals.** The submission of multiple proposals is an option for this procurement. However, prospective proposers will not be awarded more than one (1) award.

## II. PURPOSE OF RFP AND SCOPE OF SERVICES

### A. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

FarmLink was established in 2006 and is funded by the Community Investment Act. It was established by Connecticut General Statutes 22-261.

For more information on the program, please visit <https://www.ctfarmlink.org/>.

### B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

**Proposal Statement:** Proposals should include, at a minimum:

1. The method(s) of delivery and frequency focusing on some or all of the areas of service;
2. Examples of approaches and materials that may be developed specific to the target audiences; and
3. Collaborators, if any, that you may partner with.

#### **Deliverables**

Prospective proposers should develop, design, and execute activities and programs that provide support and/or educate the target audience about CT FarmLink. **These activities and programs may include, but are not be limited to:**

1. Attending biweekly meetings, approximately twenty per year, organized by DoAg to facilitate communication among all members of the contracted CT FarmLink Team.
2. Attending bimonthly meetings, approximately six per year, organized by the New England Farm Link Collaborative, to facilitate communication among other farmland access service providers.
3. Maintaining the FarmLink website
  - a. Paying web hosting fees, conducting routine website maintenance and updates, and preventing and responding to cybersecurity issues.
  - b. Receiving and posting owner listings of farmland and applications from farmers seeking farmland; reviewing applications for completeness and compliance with program terms.
  - c. Posting relevant educational information and resources on farm business planning, farmland access, farmland restoration and farmland transfer.
  - d. Publishing articles highlighting FarmLink success stories or highlighting farmland profiles and farmland seeker profiles.
  - e. Monitoring website traffic through analytics and impressions.
4. Developing and publishing monthly e-newsletters.
5. Maintaining a social media presence on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to promote new farmland owners and seekers through frequent posts and associated content creation.
6. Developing content to improve farmland owner and farmland seeker preparedness.
7. Conducting on-site investigations of farmland properties and providing one-on-one consultations with farmers seeking farmland and with farmland owners seeking to sell, lease, and/or form partnerships with farmers.
8. Hosting events for farmland owners and farmland seekers to interact.



9. Conducting informational workshops for land trusts, municipalities, and agricultural nonprofits.
10. Creating an interactive tool to support connecting farmland owners and farmland seekers.
11. Providing business planning support services to farmland seekers.
12. Providing succession and farm transfer planning services, including farm family estate planning.
13. Assisting landowners and farmland seekers with lease agreements, options to purchase, and/or other land tenure agreements.
14. Identifying, developing, and executing an approach to achieve measurable outcomes as it pertains to success matches between farmland owners and seekers, attendance, engagement, and knowledge gained at events, and outcomes of one on one meetings with farmland owners and/or seekers, and impact of technical assistance efforts.
15. Elevating equity, diversity, and inclusion work to address systematic inequities of farmland access and ownership.
16. Providing multilingual services.
17. Collaborating with the Department of Veterans Affairs, The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service, and the Labor Department to encourage and assist veterans in starting or expanding an agricultural business and to provide education and training opportunities to veterans concerning farming or agricultural operations.

All outputs (social media pages, websites, trainings, events, etc.) are property of the CT Department of Agriculture.

## C. SCOPE OF SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Organizational Requirements:** Participating proposers may be located outside of the state but must have a consistent and dedicated presence in the State to conduct activities, all of which shall be conducted in Connecticut.
  - Organizations must be in good business standing in the State of Connecticut to apply, be able to contract as a vendor and be in good standing with the IRS.
2. **Staffing Requirements:**
  - a) Organization must demonstrate enough dedicated staff to conduct programs. DoAg will not pay for normal organizational costs or other staff functions. Permissible staff costs will be limited only to those that are directly associated with the programs listed in this RFP.
  - b) Record keeping for staff time will be required for reimbursement.
  - c) Staff will be required to regularly communicate with the DoAg contract administrator through regular bi-weekly meetings. This should be included in the timetable submitted for the completion of work.
  - d) Desired staffing needs include a program coordinator, soil scientist, land transfer specialist, real estate attorney and someone knowledgeable in business and financial planning.
3. **Data and Technology Requirements:** Organizations are required to have access to appropriate video conferencing, and other relevant technology as needed. If technology is requested, this should be clearly connected and necessary to the projects. The organization should be clear and regularly provide the metrics to record and track data from activities to show the impact of events conducted towards meeting the goals of

DoAg.

- 4. Financial Requirements:** Organizations must practice industry-accepted general accounting practices. The State, at its discretion, may request balance statements, or annual reports. Organizations will be required to submit financial reports for reimbursement with invoices or proof of payment during the contract if awarded.
- 5. Budget Requirements,** A budget table shall include:
  - a) Justification of services and costs
  - b) Subcontractor costs if applicable
  - c) Total amount requested

#### **D. PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

The following performance metrics highlight key priorities that will be analyzed with providers collaboratively during the life of the contract. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of significant performance metrics of interest to DoAg. DoAg looks forward to working with providers to define additional important performance metrics.

While providers are welcome to propose or provide additional metrics towards meeting CT FarmLink goals, ultimately DOAG is looking for an outcome which results in multiple matches between farmland owners and seekers along with activities that increase engagement between farmland owners and farmland seekers to enable the successful transition of farmland. The proposal shall demonstrate alignment with at least one or more of the following goals (not in order of priority) :

1. Increased traffic by unique views to the [ctfarmlink.org](http://ctfarmlink.org) website by 10% each year.
2. Increased farmland owner profiles on the [ctfarmlink.org](http://ctfarmlink.org) website.
3. Increased engagement between farmland owners and seekers.
4. Increased impressions and engagement on social media platforms and newsletters.
5. Implement recommendations from [DOAG's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group](#) and [Farmland Access Working Group](#) as it pertains to farmland access.
6. Participants in technical assistance trainings report satisfaction and planned implementation with services.
7. Participants in technical assistance report greater knowledge and preparedness in farm business planning and/or farm succession/transfer planning.
8. Participants in farmland mixer events report successful connections.

Please see Section VI, Appendix H for baseline data on FarmLink metrics from 2023.

A proposer should be very clear and concise in demonstrating the number and types of activities that align with DoAg's goal. Activities that do not work towards these goals or are not clearly tied to meeting this goal will be rated less successful.

DoAg, at its discretion, may negotiate activities with the awarded proposer during the contract phase.

#### **E. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT/DATA REPORTING**

As part of the State's commitment to being more outcome oriented, DoAg seeks to actively and regularly collaborate with providers to enhance contract management, improve results, and adjust service delivery and policy based on learning what works. Reliable and relevant data is necessary to ensure compliance, inform trends to be monitored, evaluate results and performance, and drive service improvements.

### III. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION OVERVIEW

#### A. SUBMISSION FORMAT

- 1. Required Outline.** All proposals must be submitted through the online portal presented in Section IV Required Proposal Outline. If the proposal is not received through the portal, it will not be evaluated.
- 2. Cover Sheet.** Proposers must complete and use the Cover Sheet format provided by the Department in the Section VI.
- 3. Table of Contents.** All proposals must include a Table of Contents that conforms with the required Proposal Outline.
- 4. Executive Summary.** Proposals must include a high-level summary, not exceeding one (1) page of the main proposal and cost proposal.
- 5. Attachments.** Attachments other than the required appendices or forms identified in the RFP are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required appendices or forms must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions will result in disqualification.
- 6. Style Requirements.** Submitted proposals must conform to the following specifications:
  - Paper Size: 8.5"x11"
  - Page Limit: 6 pages, (not including additional supporting appendices)
  - Font Size: 12
  - Font Type: Times New Roman
  - Margins: 1 in
  - Line Spacing: 1.5
- 7. Pagination.** The proposer's name must be displayed in the header of each page. All pages, including the required appendices and forms, must be numbered in the footer.
- 8. Packaging and Labeling Requirements.** Not required for this RFP.
- 9. Declaration of Confidential Information.** Proposers are advised that all materials associated with this procurement are subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Privacy Act, and all rules, regulations and interpretations resulting from them. If a proposer deems that certain information required by this RFP is confidential, the proposer must label such information as CONFIDENTIAL prior to submission. In the proposal submission, the proposer must reference where the information labeled CONFIDENTIAL is located in the proposal. *EXAMPLE: Section G.1.a.* For each subsection so referenced, the proposer must provide a convincing explanation and rationale sufficient to justify an exemption of the information from release under the FOIA. The explanation and rationale must be stated in terms of (a) the prospective harm to the competitive position of the proposer that would result if the identified information were to be released and (b) the reasons why the information is legally exempt from release pursuant to C.G.S. § 1-210(b).

**10. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement.** Proposers must include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the last three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the proposer and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a proposer tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for their personal or corporate benefit. The Department will determine whether any disclosed conflict of interest poses a substantial advantage to the proposer over the competition, decreases the overall competitiveness of this procurement, or is not in the best interests of the State. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a proposer must affirm such in the disclosure statement. *Example: "[name of proposer] has no current business relationship (within the last three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85."*

## **B. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

- 1. Evaluation Process.** It is the intent of the Department to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of proposals received in response to this RFP. When evaluating proposals, negotiating with successful proposers, and awarding contracts, the Department will conform with its written procedures for Agency Form Contract procurements (“[Department of Administrative Services General Letter 71](#), issued pursuant to [Title 4, Chapter 58 of the CT General Statutes](#)”) and the State’s Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85). Final funding allocation decisions will be determined during contract negotiation.
- 2. Review Committee.** DoAg will designate a Review Committee to evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. The contents of all submitted proposals, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Review Committee. Only proposals found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Proposals that fail to comply with all instructions will be rejected without further consideration. The Review Committee shall evaluate all proposals that meet the Minimum Submission Requirements, further explained below, by score and rank ordered and make recommendations for awards. Attempts by any proposer (or representative of any proposer) to contact or influence any member of the Review Committee may result in disqualification of the proposer.
- 3. Minimum Submission Requirements.** To be eligible for evaluation, proposals must (1) be received on or before the due date and time; (2) meet the Submission Format requirements in Section III Proposal Submission Overview; (3) follow the Required Proposal Outline further described below in Section IV; and (4) be complete. Proposals that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submission requirements will not be reviewed further. The Department will reject any proposal that deviates from the requirements of this RFP.
- 4. Evaluation Criteria.** Proposals meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Review Committee will use to evaluate the technical merits of the proposals. Only the criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals. Proposals that are thorough, clear, concise, lack jargon with well-defined terms, and well planned will be the most successful.

<b>Evaluation Criterion Title</b>	<b>What would a top score look like?</b>
Organizational Profile, and Experience (in Appendices)	Proposer has articulated a history of providing services to the identified target populations within their proposed service area.
Budget	Proposer has accurately demonstrated justifications for costs and activities listed; budget is thorough, clear, and accurate and takes reasonable costs into consideration
Work Plan	The activities proposed and the methods to achieving the outcomes sought are clear, creative, connected and shall achieve the objective.
Timeline	Proposer demonstrates a reasonable timeline for accomplishing goals and tasks.
Innovation	Proposer has presented concept(s) that fulfill a need while simultaneously are innovative in their approach towards achieving the programs goal(s).

- 5. Proposer Selection.** The proposer selected will be notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Department. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Pursuant to Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Order No. 3, any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful proposers will be notified by e-mail or U.S. mail, at the Department's discretion, about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The Department reserves the right to decline the submission of all proposers when it is determined there is an insufficient number of prospective proposers, or otherwise in the best interests of the Department.
- 6. Debriefing.** Within ten (10) days of receiving notification from DoAg, unsuccessful proposers may contact the Official Contact and request information about the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the ten (10) days. If unsuccessful proposers still have questions after receiving this information, they may contact the Official Contact and request a meeting with the Department to discuss the evaluation process and their proposals. If held, the debriefing meeting will not include any comparisons of unsuccessful proposals with other proposals. The Department will schedule and hold the debriefing meeting within fifteen (15) days of the request. The Department will not change, alter, or modify the outcome of the evaluation or selection process as a result of any debriefing meeting.
- 7. Appeal Process.** Proposers may appeal any aspect the Department's competitive procurement, including the evaluation and proposer selection process. Any such appeal must be submitted to the Official Contact. A proposer may file an appeal at any time after the proposal due date, but not later than thirty (30) days after an agency notifies unsuccessful proposers about the outcome of the evaluation and proposer selection process. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the thirty (30) days. The filing of an appeal shall not be deemed sufficient reason for the Department to delay, suspend, cancel, or terminate the procurement process or execution of a contract. More detailed information about filing an appeal may be obtained from the Official Contact.
- 8. Contract Execution.** Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFP is subject to the Department's contracting procedures, which may include approval by the

Office of the Attorney General. Fully executed and approved contracts will be posted on State Contracting Portal and the Department website. Proposers if awarded must be prepared to enter into a contract with the Department for work to begin on August 15, 2024. As a result, negotiations will be limited and restricted to a defined period of time as will be specified by the State at its sole discretion.

## IV. REQUIRED PROPOSAL OUTLINE

### A. Cover Sheet

### B. Table of Contents

### C. Executive Summary

### D. Main Proposal

### E. Attachments (clearly referenced to summary and main proposal where applicable)

### F. Declaration of Confidential Information

### G. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement

### H. Statement of Assurances

#### A: Cover Sheet

The Respondent must use a Cover Sheet capturing the following information:

- RFP Name or Number:
- Legal Name and D/B/A:
- FEIN:
- Street Address:
- Town/City/State/Zip:
- Contact Person:
- Title:
- Phone Number:
- E-Mail Address:
- Authorized Official:
- Title:
- Signature/eSignature:

*Legal Name* is defined as the legal business name of the organization submitting the proposal.

*Contact Person* is defined as the individual who can provide additional information about the proposal or who has immediate responsibility for the proposal.

*Authorized Official* is defined as the individual empowered to submit a binding offer on behalf of the proposer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto.

## **B: Table of Contents**

Proposers must include a Table of Contents that lists sections and subsections with page numbers that follow the organization outline and sequence for this proposal.

## **C: Executive Summary**

The page limitation for this section is one (1) page briefly describing how the Proposer meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the Proposal Overview and a brief overview of why the Respondent should be selected for the activities highlighted in the scope of services.

## **D: Main Proposal**

**\*\*\*Please note the maximum total page length for this section is six (6) pages.** (all appendices and other attachments should be referred to in Section C indicate page limits and are separate from the proposal limit listed here.) DoAg will not read answers longer than six (6) pages in this section.

Application Submission Details Should Include:

### **1. Project Narrative**

Explain how the Proposer will implement the needs identified in Section II B, Deliverables while simultaneously working towards the CT FarmLink goals as identified in Section II D, Performance Measures

### **2. Work Plan and Timeline**

The purpose of this section is for the proposer to explain the tasks, participants, time estimates, and schedule for implementation of activities. Possible areas of inquiry may include, but are not limited, to the following:

- a) Start Date
- b) Timetable / Schedule
- c) Tasks, Deliverables
- d) Methodologies
- e) Measurable Objectives

### **3. Data and Technology**

The provider should indicate information on their technological capabilities and how they will measure and track the success of their work. DoAg is interested directly in the proposer's information management and performance measurement systems for activities.

- a. How will the proposer identify target audience satisfaction?
- b. What are the evaluation/outcome measures collected to show impact.

### **3. Subcontractors**

If any subcontractors for the provision or delivery of a service will be used the proposer should clearly identify for what purpose, what activities and the costs associated with use.

## **E: Attachments**

Only required attachments and page limits are permitted. Any additional attachment(s) or pages that exceed the identified limit will not be evaluated. See the Proposal Checklist in Appendix C for a list of relevant attachments and page limits. Further, the required

attachments must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFP. Failure to abide by these instructions may result in disqualification.

### **1. Budget (2 pages maximum)**

The purpose of this subsection is to gather information about how the proposer developed the proposed budget and cost allocations. This shall include:

- a. Narrative/Justification
- b. Line-Item Budget Form
- c. Subcontractor Costs if applicable

The Proposer should be careful to make sure the budget is clear and fully explained through the narrative.

### **2. Organization Description and History: (1 page maximum)**

Provide a general overview of your organization including its history and prior experiences. Proposers should highlight the credentials of organization to accomplish the goals of the RFP by referencing items such as:

- a. Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values
- b. Entity Type / Parent Organization / Years of Operation
- c. Functional Organization
- d. Current Range of Services
- e. Qualifications
- f. Relevant Experience

References may be requested.

### **3. Staffing Plan Strengths and Qualifications of Agency & Staff: (1 page maximum)**

Proposers should provide information on the quality and quantity of the key staff that will be associated with this project. Do not account for your organizational staff that are operational who will not be associated with the goals of this project. The staff highlighted should be staff that will be paid for their work on this project directly:

- a. Key Personnel / Managers
- b. Qualifications
- c. Job Descriptions—who are they and what will they do to meet the goals of this RFP?
- d. Staff Training / Education / Development if necessary, to complete work
- e. **OPTIONAL:** Organizations may submit an Organizational chart of 1 page that does not apply to the page limits.

### **F: Statement of Assurances**

Sign and return Appendix B.



## V. MANDATORY PROVISIONS

### < A. AGENCY FORM CONTRACT, Appendix A & B

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the provisions of Appendix A and B of the State's "Agency Form Contract":

1. Exhibit A, Deliverables Document, of the form contract is maintained by the Department and will include the scope of services, contract performance, quality assurance, and required reports.
2. Exhibit B, Price Schedule, will include terms of payment, budget, and other program-specific provisions of any resulting form contract.

A sample of Appendix A and B are available from the Department's Official Contact upon request. The appendices of the standard contract may be amended by means of a written instrument signed by the Department, the selected proposer (contractor), and the Attorney General's Office.

Note:

If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Department and the resulting contract has an anticipated value in a calendar year of \$50,000 or more, or a combination or series of such agreements or contracts has an anticipated value of \$100,000 or more, the proposer must inform the proposer's principals of the contents of the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice (pursuant to C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2)).

### < B. ASSURANCES

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly gives the following assurances:

1. **Collusion.** The proposer represents and warrants that the proposer did not participate in any part of the RFP development process and had no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFP prior to its issuance. The proposer further represents and warrants that no agent, representative, or employee of the State participated directly in the preparation of the proposer's proposal. The proposer also represents and warrants that the submitted proposal is in all respects fair and is made without collusion or fraud.
2. **State Officials and Employees.** The proposer certifies that no elected or appointed official or employee of the State has or will benefit financially or materially from any contract resulting from this RFP. The Department may terminate a resulting contract if it is determined that gratuities of any kind were either offered or received by any of the officials or employees from the proposer, contractor, or its agents or employees.
3. **Competitors.** The proposer assures that the submitted proposal is not made in connection with any competing organization or competitor submitting a separate

proposal in response to this RFP. No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the proposer to induce any other organization or competitor to submit, or not submit, a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition. The proposer further assures that the proposed costs have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other organization or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition. Nor has the proposer knowingly disclosed the proposed costs on a prior basis, either directly or indirectly, to any other organization or competitor.

- 4. Validity of Proposal.** The proposer certifies that the proposal represents a valid and binding offer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFP and any amendments or attachments hereto. The proposal shall remain valid for a period of 180 days after the submission due date and may be extended beyond that time by mutual agreement. At its sole discretion, the Department may include the proposal, by reference or otherwise, into any contract with the successful proposer.
- 5. Press Releases.** The proposer agrees to obtain prior written consent and approval of the Department for press releases that relate in any manner to this RFP or any resultant contract.

## < C. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly agrees to comply with the following terms and conditions:

- 1. Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.** The State is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. The State is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.
- 2. Preparation Expenses.** Neither the State nor the Department shall assume any liability for expenses incurred by a proposer in preparing, submitting, or clarifying any proposal submitted in response to this RFP.
- 3. Exclusion of Taxes.** The Department is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the federal government and the State. Proposers are liable for any other applicable taxes.
- 4. Proposed Costs.** No cost submissions that are contingent upon a State action will be accepted. All proposed costs must be fixed through the entire term of the contract.
- 5. Changes to Proposal.** No additions or changes to the original proposal will be allowed after submission. While changes are not permitted, the Department may request and authorize proposers to submit written clarification of their proposals, in a manner or format prescribed by the Department, and at the proposer's expense.
- 6. Supplemental Information.** Supplemental information will not be considered after the deadline submission of proposals, unless specifically requested by the Department. The Department may ask a proposer to give demonstrations, interviews, oral presentations, or further explanations to clarify information contained in a proposal. Any such demonstration, interview, or oral presentation will

be at a time selected and in a place provided by the Department. At its sole discretion, the Department may limit the number of proposers invited to make such a demonstration, interview, or oral presentation and may limit the number of attendees per proposer.

- 7. Presentation of Supporting Evidence.** If requested by the Department, a proposer must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, data reporting capabilities, financial standing, or other information necessary to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in this RFP. The Department may make onsite visits to an operational facility or facilities of a proposer to evaluate further the proposer's capability to perform the duties required by this RFP. At its discretion, the Department may also check or contact any reference provided by the proposer.
- 8. RFP Is Not An Offer.** Neither this RFP nor any subsequent discussions shall give rise to any commitment on the part of the State or the Department or confer any rights on any proposer unless and until a contract is fully executed by the necessary parties. The contract document will represent the entire agreement between the proposer and the Department and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations, or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties. The State shall assume no liability for costs incurred by the proposer or for payment of services under the terms of the contract until the successful proposer is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by the Department and, if required, by the Attorney General's Office.

#### < D. RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE STATE

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a proposer implicitly accepts that the following rights are reserved to the State:

- 1. Timing Sequence.** The timing and sequence of events associated with this RFP shall ultimately be determined by the Department.
- 2. Amending or Canceling RFP.** The Department reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP on any date and at any time, if the Department deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of the State.
- 3. No Acceptable Proposals.** If no acceptable proposals are submitted in response to this RFP, the Department may reopen the procurement process, if it is determined to be in the best interests of the State.
- 4. Award and Rejection of Proposals.** The Department reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, for misrepresentation or if the proposal limits or modifies any of the terms, conditions, or specifications of this RFP. The Department may waive minor technical defects, irregularities, or omissions, if in its judgment the best interests of the State will be served. The Department reserves the right to reject the proposal of any proposer who submits a proposal after the submission date and time.
- 5. Sole Property of the State.** All proposals submitted in response to this RFP are to be the sole property of the State. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFP shall be the sole property of the State, unless stated otherwise in this RFP or subsequent contract. The right to publish, distribute, or disseminate any and all information or reports, or part thereof, shall accrue to the State without recourse.

- 6. Contract Negotiation.** The Department reserves the right to negotiate or contract for all or any portion of the services contained in this RFP. The Department further reserves the right to contract with one or more proposer for such services. After reviewing the scored criteria, the Department may seek Best and Final Offers (BFO) on cost from proposers. The Department may set parameters on any BFOs received. If awarded, the Department will notify the proposer of the time limits for contract negotiation and signature. Work must start timely on July 1 and by submitting a proposal, Contractors agree to the criteria of the RFP and to limited negotiations.
- 7. Clerical Errors in Award.** The Department reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards resulting from its clerical errors. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a proposer and subsequently awarding the contract to another proposer. Such action on the part of the State shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the State since the contract with the initial proposer is deemed to be void *ab initio* and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the State and the proposer.
- 8. Key Personnel.** DoAg reserve the right to approve any additions, deletions, or changes in key personnel, with the exception of key personnel who have terminated employment. DoAg reserve the right to approve replacements for key personnel who have terminated employment. DoAg reserve the right to require the removal and replacement of any of the proposer's key personnel who do not perform adequately, regardless of whether they were previously approved by DoAg.

## < E. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the proposer implicitly agrees to comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1. Freedom of Information, C.G.S. § 1-210(b).** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) generally requires the disclosure of documents in the possession of the State upon request of any citizen, unless the content of the document falls within certain categories of exemption, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-210(b). Proposers are generally advised not to include in their proposals any confidential information. If the proposer indicates that certain documentation, as required by this RFP, is submitted in confidence, the State will endeavor to keep said information confidential to the extent permitted by law. The State has no obligation to initiate, prosecute, or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information pursuant to a FOIA request. The proposer has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. While a proposer may claim an exemption to the State's FOIA, the final administrative authority to release or exempt any or all material so identified rests with the State. In no event shall the State or any of its employees have any liability for disclosure of documents or information in the possession of the State and which the State or its employees believe(s) to be required pursuant to the FOIA or other requirements of law.
- 2. Contract Compliance, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46a-68j-21 thru 43, inclusive.** CT statute and regulations impose certain obligations on State agencies (as well as contractors and subcontractors doing business with the State) to ensure that State agencies do not enter into contracts with organizations or businesses that discriminate against protected class persons.

**3. Consulting Agreements, C.G.S. § 4a-81.** Proposals for State contracts with a value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, excluding leases and licensing agreements of any value, shall include a consulting agreement affidavit attesting to whether any consulting agreement has been entered into in connection with the proposal. As used herein "consulting agreement" means any written or oral agreement to retain the services, for a fee, of a consultant for the purposes of (A) providing counsel to a contractor, vendor, consultant or other entity seeking to conduct, or conducting, business with the State, (B) contacting, whether in writing or orally, any executive, judicial, or administrative office of the State, including any department, institution, bureau, board, commission, authority, official or employee for the purpose of solicitation, dispute resolution, introduction, requests for information or (C) any other similar activity related to such contract. Consulting agreement does not include any agreements entered into with a consultant who is registered under the provisions of C.G.S. Chapter 10 as of the date such affidavit is submitted in accordance with the provisions of C.G.S. § 4a-81. The Consulting Agreement Affidavit (OPM Ethics Form 5) is available on OPM's website at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics\\_forms](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics_forms)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** A proposer must complete and submit OPM Ethics Form 5 to the Department with the proposal.

**4. Gift and Campaign Contributions, C.G.S. §§ 4-250 and 4-252(c); Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Orders No. 1, Para. 8 and No. 7C, Para. 10; C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2).** If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with an anticipated value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, the proposer must fully disclose any gifts or lawful contributions made to campaigns of candidates for statewide public office or the General Assembly. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The gift and campaign contributions certification (OPM Ethics Form 1) is available on OPM's website at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics\\_forms](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/ethics_forms)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The successful proposer must complete and submit OPM Ethics Form 1 to the Department prior to contract execution.

**Nondiscrimination Certification, C.G.S. §§ 4a-60(a)(1) and 4a-60a(a)(1).** If a proposer is awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract, the proposer must provide the Department with *written representation* or *documentation* that certifies the proposer complies with the State's nondiscrimination agreements and warranties. A nondiscrimination certification is required for all State contracts – regardless of type, term, cost, or value. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The nondiscrimination certification forms are available on OPM's website at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/nondiscrim\\_forms](http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/nondiscrim_forms)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The successful proposer must complete and submit the appropriate nondiscrimination certification form to the awarding Department prior to contract execution.

## VI. APPENDIX

### A. ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS / DEFINITIONS

BFO	Best and Final Offer
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CHRO	Commission on Human Rights and Opportunity (CT)
CT	Connecticut
DAS	Department of Administrative Services (CT)
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (CT)
IRS	Internal Revenue Service (US)
LOI	Letter of Intent
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
OPM	Office of Policy and Management (CT)
OSC	Office of the State Comptroller (CT)
POS	Purchase of Service
P.A.	Public Act (CT)
RFP	Request For Proposal
SEEC	State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)
U.S.	United States

- *contractor*: a private organization, CT State agency, or municipality that enters into a form contract with the Department as a result of this RFP
- *proposer*: a private organization, CT State agency, or municipality that has submitted a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP
- *prospective proposer*: a private organization, CT State agency, or municipality that may submit a proposal to the Department in response to this RFP, but has not yet done so
- *subcontractor*: an individual (other than an employee of the contractor) or business entity hired by a contractor to provide a specific action as part of a form contract with the Department as a result of this RFP
- *The Department*: The Department of Agriculture

### B. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES

The undersigned Respondent affirms and declares that:

#### 1) General

- a. This proposal is executed and signed with full knowledge and acceptance of the RFP CONDITIONS stated in the RFP.
- b. The Respondent will deliver services to the Department the cost proposed in the RFP and within the timeframes therein.
- c. The Respondent will seek prior approval from the Department before making any changes to the location of services.

- d. Neither the Respondent of any official of the organization nor any subcontractor the Respondent of any official of the subcontractor organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with the State of CT or the Federal Government.
- e. Neither the Respondent of any official of the organization nor any subcontractor to the Respondent of any official of the subcontractor's organization has received any notices of debarment or suspension from contracting with other states within the United States.

Legal Name of Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signatory

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **C. PROPOSAL CHECKLIST**

To assist prospective proposers in managing proposal planning and document collation processes, this document summarizes key dates and proposal requirements for this RFP. Please note that this document does not supersede what is stated in the RFP. Please refer to the Proposal Submission Overview, Required Proposal Submission Outline, and Mandatory Provisions (Sections II, III, and IV of this RFP) for more comprehensive details. It is the responsibility of each respondent to ensure that all required documents, forms, and attachments, are submitted in a timely manner.

### **D. KEY DATES**

<b>Projected Timetable of Activities to Accomplish Outcomes</b>		
The Department reserves the right to modify these dates at its sole discretion.		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
1		
2		

### **E. BUDGET GUIDELINE**

The Contractor may use and attach an excel format. Please at least include the following listed below. Budgets and the narrative justification of items should be kept to no more than two pages. The budget is not included in the proposal page limit.

<b>Proposed Budget</b>				
The Department reserves the right to modify or accept portions of this table at its sole discretion.				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Proposed Amount</b>	<b>Total</b>
1				
2				
3				

**F. Proposal Content Checklist:**

- Cover Sheet**
- Table of Contents (1 page)**
- Executive Summary:** high-level summary of proposal and cost, not to exceed 1 page in length
- Main proposal body answering all questions with relevant attachments.**
- Proposed budget** Limited to no more than 2 pages
- Statement of Assurances included therein**
- IRS Determination Letter** (for nonprofit proposers)
- Two years of most recent annual audited financial statements; OR any financial statements prepared by a Certified Public Accountant** for proposers whose organizations have been incorporated for less than two years
- Forms listed therein for registering on the State Contract Website.**

*\*If awarded Proposers maybe required to submit any other form as required by the Attorney General to contract with the Department.*

**G. Formatting Checklist**

- Is the proposal formatted to fit 8 ½ x 11 (letter-sized) paper?
- Is the main body of the proposal within the page limit?
- Is the proposal in 12-point, Times New Roman font?
- Does the proposal format follow normal (1 inch) margins and 1 ½ line spacing?
- Does the proposer's name appear in the header of each page?
- Does the proposal include page numbers in the footer?



### H. Baseline Data Information



# CT FARMLINK

## 2023

## Successes

[CTFarmLink.org](http://CTFarmLink.org)



A clearinghouse for the transition between generations of landowners with the goal of keeping farmland in production. There is a new generation of farmers who want to be tomorrow’s stewards of the land today, but they need land to work.

**26**

On-Site  
Investigations  
Conducted







**2**

Farmland  
Mixers  
Hosted

**7**

Informational  
Workshops  
Held

### WHAT WE DID:

-  8 Newsletters, 50.9% Open Rate
-  111 farm seeker profiles published
-  23 farm listings published
-  7 articles for Weekly Ag Report created
-  Grant Guide developed
-  “Before You List Your Farm” checklist created



A partnership between Connecticut Farmland Trust and the CT Department of Agriculture funded through the Community Investment Act