



**Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program  
Program Review  
Request for Proposals**

Issued By:  
Connecticut Department of Agriculture  
[www.CTGrown.gov](http://www.CTGrown.gov)

The RFP is available on the Department's website at:  
[www.CTGrown.gov/grants](http://www.CTGrown.gov/grants)

PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN  
**August 29, 2022**

Point of Contact:  
Mrs. Jaime Smith  
[Jaime.Smith@ct.gov](mailto:Jaime.Smith@ct.gov)

## **Summary**

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) is seeking to contract with a consultant to conduct a comprehensive program review of the agency's [Farmland Preservation Program](#) (FLPP). Consultants will assess the Farmland Preservation Program creating a report and public presentation of findings. The report and presentation will contain recommendations that will inform program design and identify legislative gaps for Connecticut to consider in revising and revitalizing the farmland programs. Recommendations shall include program areas of need, gaps in service provision, and areas of success against other national programs. The information contained in the report shall be obtained through interviews of program stakeholders, surveys, focus groups, research, questionnaires or other impactful methods. DoAg is particularly interested in obtaining information regarding feedback on the efficiency of program procedures, customer service and partner engagement, and the effectiveness and impact of statewide efforts to preserve farmland against other successful national programs as a benchmark.

The consultant does not need to be an expert in farmland preservation, however, all money should be focused on program assessment efforts.

**The budget for this project is \$35,000.**

## **Purpose**

DoAg has the oldest FLPP in the history of the United States. The processes and procedures for preserving land have not kept pace with statutory and technological changes. With increasing state and federal responsibilities, more applications for consideration, and increased land stewardship obligations, it has become critical to streamline the process of preservation. Through the work under this request for proposal, DoAg seeks to improve the efficiency of the farmland preservation process and interactions with our farmland owners, paid contractors, easement holders, and program partners.

## **Goal**

The overall goal of the review is to understand overall perceptions and challenges through a survey and summary report which will inform DoAg and key stakeholders of needed improvements in program design and legislative gaps for DoAg to consider in revising and revitalizing the farmland programs.

The proposal submitted under this RFP should be designed to formulate common themes and provide recommendations for program improvements based on surveys, interviews and national best practices. Proposals for program reviews should focus on surveying or interviewing FLPP constituents (provided by DoAg), including but not limited to farmland easement holders, hired contractors and industry partners, to obtain feedback on program

procedures, customer service engagement and other important areas of the farmland program process.

### **Program Review**

The selected contractor will conduct a quantitative and qualitative program review to determine baseline information on the FLPP, including but not limited to, the following metrics:

1. Assemble a baseline understanding of how applicants, paid contractors, farmland easement holders and program partners perceive the farmland preservation program. Indicated below is some of the information that DoAg is interested in obtaining through the work of this program review:

*Farmland Applicants (65 applications are currently in the process; 40 previously rejected over the recent years)*

- Application experience
- Understanding and comprehension of the program
- What it means to sell their development rights
- Offer processes
- Responsibilities after closing
- Tax implications
- Overall timeline
- Demographic information
- Type of production
- Years farming
- How did farmers hear about the program and what incited them to apply?

*Paid Contractors (Less than 50)*

- Contracting process
- Fees paid and the payment process
- Timeline and expectations
- Follow up and accessibility

*Farmland Easement Holders (Currently, there are 401 available to solicit.)*

- Responsibilities after closing
- Tax implications
- Frequency of stewardship (DoAg must maintain relationships with easement holders and visit preserved sites to confirm site is being used for production agriculture per program guidelines.)
- Obligations associated with constructing or impeding within the easement boundaries
- Obligations associated with the sale of the land
- What is the use of the land currently?
- How has the amount of land in production changed as a result of the easement?

- Is there interest in dividing up a larger easements into smaller easements
- Is there interest in leasing/renting/selling land and the awareness of the CT FarmLink Program in recruiting owners/purchasers for the process

*Program Partners (Approx. 200 partners including land trusts, municipalities, other nonprofit organizations)*

- Engagement with the program
- Marketing of the program
- Management/administration of the program
- Outreach and education on the program

DoAg will provide the contact lists for each group to the successful bidder.

2. Provide a summary of challenges within each identified group.
3. Identify components of the process is working well for each constituent group.
4. Determine existing barriers that would prohibit the Department's desired goal of a 24 month turn around for properties to be preserved when using federal and local partner dollars.
5. Determine the positive impacts of selling and purchasing of development rights on farmland owners and program partners (measured in quantitative and qualitative metrics).
6. Solicit and obtain information regarding farmer and municipal awareness of the FLPP.

### **Statement of Work**

Proposals for program reviews should focus on obtaining robust data gained through interviews and surveys and other means as determined and budget allows, to identify the overall perceptions and challenges within each stakeholder category: farmland applicants, paid contractors, farmland easement holders, and program partners. Successful program reviews will align with the following expectations:

1. Work with DoAg and key farmland preservation stakeholders (provided by DoAg) to inform assessment questions and methods. Work with select stakeholders to determine which assessment method will result in the best response for each of the following key partners in the farmland preservation process:
  - a. 65 farmland applicants
  - b. 50 paid contractors
  - c. 401 farmland easement holders
  - d. 200 program partners

2. Using tools and questions informed by DoAg and key farmland preservation stakeholders, design and disseminate a survey or questionnaire to farmland easement holders, program partners and hired contractors in the state.
3. Conduct in-depth conversations or interviews through individual meetings or focus groups with no less than 25 selected individuals throughout the state representing the diversity of farmland applicants, paid contractors, program partners and farmland easement holders.
4. Create a comprehensive, easily understood report of all data collected with an executive summary section that can be used separately from the report. Provide access to all survey, questionnaire or interview responses, focus group materials etc. in an online drop box or SharePoint website. The executive summary shall indicate key program recommendations to impact and inform policies and processes, legislative briefings, white papers and other produced materials for the program.

### **Deliverables**

The successful bidder as indicated above, will produce two deliverables as a result of the program review:

The first deliverable shall be a report with an executive summary.

The second deliverable shall be a public presentation of the report and findings to relevant stakeholders which may include state agencies, members of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Committee and Working Lands Alliance, municipal partners, and farmers.

All raw data shall be shared with DoAg.

### **Submission Requirements**

To be considered for this funding opportunity, please submit a brief proposal of **no more than five (5) pages of narrative** including the information specified below.

1. A statement detailing your approach to accomplishing the metrics outlined in the Program Review section.
2. A brief statement explaining your interest in engaging with a farmland preservation program review and any relevant experience working with the agricultural industry or relevant experience conducting program reviews for other state, municipal or nonprofit agencies.
3. A work plan and timeline detailing:
  - Timetable of tasks and anticipated completion dates

- Deliverables
  - Methodologies
  - Measurable Objectives
  - Your expertise, skills, and qualifications
4. A detailed budget and budget justification. This is **NOT** included in the 5-page narrative limit (applicants may use and attach an excel spreadsheet)

**Submit the completed proposal by email no later than Monday, August 29, 2022 before 4:00pm by emailing to Mrs. Jaime L. Smith, [Jaime.Smith@ct.gov](mailto:Jaime.Smith@ct.gov)**

Questions need to be submitted by August 22, 2022 date and answers will be posted publicly on the Department's website by August 23, 2022.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

DoAg will designate a Review Committee to evaluate proposals submitted. The contents of all submitted proposals will be shared with the Review Committee. They will evaluate the proposals for the following criteria:

- Concise, clear messaging: a direct, succinct, and easy to understand proposal and a scope that contains clear definitions for the reader.
- How well the proposal grasps the objective and lays out a plan to accomplish the activities outlined in your scope.
- Innovation, creativity, and design of the plan to reach the intended audience and incentivize them to respond.

*Please note that while the review panels are confidential, once a contract is awarded and executed for this work, the process and all related documents including proposals are subject to FOIA. Please do not put any proprietary information that is unique to your data collection or business model in your narrative that cannot be made public at the end of this process.*

### **Timeline**

Planning for this program review can begin as soon as possible upon execution of a contract by the State of Connecticut. The anticipated contract start date is October 1, 2022. The proposal shall recommend a reasonable timeline for program reviews with the work being concluded no later than January 31, 2023.

### **Anticipated Timeline**

- Start no later than October 1, 2022
- Data, analysis, and public presentation due December 1, 2022

- Final Report and Invoice due January 2, 2022

**Budget**

Proposals up to \$35,000 shall be considered for funding. Funding will be allocated by DoAg at its discretion across its funding priorities and based on submissions received.

No cost overages or additional components to this survey will be allowed under the bid. Please note, this is not a “lowest cost proposal opportunity.” DoAg is looking for a best fit in a provider who can accomplish a review that best meets the needs of the State. Price and efficiency are important and critical components of a successful proposal, however, winning proposals will exhibit these as well as a high-quality, comprehensive approach. The successful proposal will be determined by a review panel that measures quantity, efficiency and a qualitative approach.

**Eligible Entities**

Any private businesses, individual consultants, research groups, universities or nonprofits in good standing are eligible to submit a proposal.

**Please submit a proposal by email to [Jaime.Smith@ct.gov](mailto:Jaime.Smith@ct.gov) by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, August 29, 2022.**

**No late submissions will be accepted. Submission time stamps are determined by the state email provider, not the applicants. The Bidder should apply and submit a head of the deadline to avoid any issue with submission.**