



NOTICE TO RESPONDENTS
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)
RFI No. OCS-LBR 903-04-21

The **Office of Community Services (OCS)**, administratively attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), is seeking qualified service providers (a.k.a. “local agencies”) to operate the Seniors’ Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for the State of Hawai’i for the 2021 and 2022 seasons, subject to continued federal funding.

The purposes of this request for information are to seek:

- Feedback on the proposed changes that affect the scope of work,
- Information about provider interest and capacity, and
- Suggestions for methods and/or formulas to determine future SFMNP allocations statewide.

The Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awards grants to state agencies to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey and fresh-cut herbs) through participating farmers at their respective farms and at participating farmers’ markets through the Senior Farmers’ Market Program (SFMNP). Program guidelines include:

- Eligible Service Population - Individuals who are 60 years old with household incomes of not more than 185% of the U.S Federal Poverty Guidelines applicable to Hawaii.
- Nutrition education must be provided to enhance the consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Period of Performance: The SFMNP will provide clients with vouchers for use between April 1 and November 30 in each of the years 2021 and 2022. OCS intends to extend services to clients to the latest deadline permissible under the applicable federal regulation, which permits November 30 as the deadline. OCS extended the program to November 30 in FFY 2020 because of the interruptions in services caused by the coronavirus. OCS expects such interruptions to be present in 2021 and probably 2022 as well, and therefore will use the November 30 deadline for both 2021 and 2022.
- Federal and state procurement guidelines and regulations apply. The program operates under regulations set out at 7 CFR Part 249.

OCS has managed SFMNP since Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011. In FFY 2020, OCS providers operated the SFMNP on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii Island. For FFY 2020, the program projected a total of approximately 100 farmer-suppliers and nearly 9,000 SFMNP client-participants contracting with three local agencies operating in the State's four counties.

More information about the USDA Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program is available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program-sfmnp>

SFMNP Caseload and Funding

- **Caseload.** USDA assigns "caseloads" to each state. The caseload assigned reflects the number of people who can be served by each state. Once the caseload is assigned, OCS allocates the caseload to each county based partly on the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimate (SAIPE) distribution for Hawaii. OCS reserves the right to amend the caseload assignment to a county.

OCS is open to considering adjustments of the current caseload allocation methods, and OCS seeks suggestions from potential providers on alternative allocation methods and formulas to determine future SFMNP allocations throughout the state.

- **Funding.** USDA provides food and administrative funding for SFMNP to OCS. USDA allows the state to retain a portion of the administrative funding. Currently, the remaining administrative funding and all of the food funding is allocated to the provider(s) according to the SAIPE distribution for Hawaii. The food coupons for each SFMNP participant are limited by USDA regulation to \$50.00 per year. USDA regulations also require that administrative costs incurred by OCS and the local agencies must not exceed 10% of the entire grant.

Proposed Scope of Work

SFMNP uses a coupon system that allows participants to exchange coupons for eligible foods at farmers' markets and roadside stands.

- **Service Activity**
 - Printing coupons
 - Issuing coupons to each participant with instructions and list of participating vendors
 - Reimbursing authorized farms and farmers' markets for coupons taken by them from participants for eligible foods

- **Outreach/Training**
 - The local agency providers conduct community outreach activities to the general public by providing information to the eligible population, resulting in program interest. (in accordance with 7 CFR §249.2)
 - The local agency providers recruit farmers to participate in SFMNP
 - The local agency providers authorize an appropriate number of SFMNP farmers using criteria provided by OCS.
 - The local agency providers conduct annual farmer training sessions; OCS provides training materials relating to:
 - Eligible food choices
 - Proper SFMNP redemption procedures
 - Equitable treatment of SFMNP participants
 - Civil rights compliance
 - Proper storing of SFMNP coupons
 - Guidelines for cancelling SFMNP coupon
 - The local agency providers execute a written agreement with each farmer and farmers' market and maintain on file a signed SFMNP Farmers/Grower agreement form; in a departure from previous years, these contracts will be two years in length, rather than only one year (7 CFR §249.10)
 - Local agencies are subject to monitoring by OCS and by USDA auditors.

- **Intake and Eligibility** (7 CFR §249.6)
 - The local agency providers shall utilize the OCS universal application form and must use a consistent intake process to determine each participant's eligibility according to USDA guidance and any other additional requirements from OCS to ensure services are provided only to those who qualify.
 - Applicants must be at least 60 years old
 - Household income is less than 185% of the U.S Poverty Rate for Hawaii
 - The local agency providers must notify applicants within 15 days after application whether they are eligible or not, or whether they will be placed on a waiting list.
 - Participants may designate an authorized representative (proxy) to apply for certification and/or make purchases on their behalf.
 - Data Safeguarding – Records must be retained by the providers for a minimum of 3 years.
 - Local agency providers will distribute nutrition education material approved by OCS to participants.

- **Reporting**
 - Local agency providers must submit monthly program progress and fiscal reports within 15 calendar days after the last day of each month. The final fiscal and program report for the total contract period is required 30 calendar days after the last day of the contract period. (7 CFR §249.6)

Tentative term of local agency providers' contracts with OCS: February 2021 – December 2022

Please submit written comments or questions on this RFI by **Thursday, October 15, 2020** to:

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Participation in this Request for Information is optional, and a response is not required in order to respond to any subsequent procurement by OCS.