State of Maine

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources

**MAINE FARMS FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAM**

**PHASE 1 - Business Plan Development**

**Application Form**

Fall 2019

**RFP#201904076**

*Please note that under this request for applications (RFP) the Department prefers the following farm types:*

* *Dairy*
* *Vegetable and Fruit farms seeking to meet FSMA Requirements*
* *Wild Maine Blueberry*
* *Farms producing or raising product to distribute/sell into Wholesale Markets*

*No more than 10 Phase 1 – Business Plan Development grants will be available in Fall 2019.*

1. **Phase 1 Eligibility Criteria**
2. The Applicant must be a private, for-profit company that is owned by individuals, partners or corporations, that grows or produces agricultural products for commercial sale (excluding marijuana farms, except as permitted under 7MRS Ch.406A, Section 2231);
3. The Applicant must own and operate a Farm Business that has been producing agricultural products commercially in the State of Maine for at least two (2) years (24 months) at the time of application;
4. The Applicant must have ownership of the land that is being farmed, *or* be a partner or shareholder in a legal entity that owns the farmland;
5. If the Applicant has recently purchased farmland, they must provide evidence that they have had at least two years (24 months) of experience operating a commercial farm operation elsewhere in Maine;
6. The Applicant must have State of Maine certification or licensure as required for their type of agricultural operation, i.e. Nutrient Management Plan, Commercial Kitchen License, Milk License, etc.

**II.** **Requirements in Phase 1 Business Plan Development – Scope of Services**

 If the Applicant is selected for Phase 1, they must work with the Program Administrator to:

1. Allow the Program Administrator and Service Providers (as defined in the RFP) to examine the land, buildings, and equipment to be covered by the Business Plan.
2. Assess information/research needs to determine the feasibility of the proposed *Idea(s) for Change*
3. Assemble a list of service providers and training opportunities to address the identified information/research needs to develop a business plan that identifies changes in farm management practices and investments in equipment and property that would increase the vitality of the farm.
4. Develop a Services Package (defined in the RFP), budget and plan of work to: improve financial recordkeeping and management (~$2,000); address production and marketing research needs (~$2000); and investigate a barrier to progress that may be unique to the farm (~$2000). All such uses to be reviewed and approved by the Program Administrator prior to expenditure.

 The Selected Farm will work independently and utilize Phase 1 grant funds to:

1. Consult/contract/work with agricultural service providers to obtain expert advice, estimates, drawings, plans, research, technical and professional assistance that may be related to studying the feasibility of the proposed*Idea(s) for Change*.
2. Complete the *NxLevel Tilling the Soil of Opportunity*TM, business planning course taught by Jedediah Beach of FarmSmart. This course has on-line lectures, followed by ½ day group activities in Augusta. <https://www.farmsmartmaine.com/ag-business-planning-class.html>
3. Consult with certified business advisor(s) and/or business planning consultant(s) and other professional advisors, to improve the financial recordkeeping and marketing functions of the farm business; and conduct research.
4. Obtain appropriate training to improve crop/product recordkeeping, production systems and methods for the farm business.
5. Purchase financial and/or recordkeeping software and point-of-sales technology for the farm business, and obtain training on the use of any such software and technology to improve overall recordkeeping.
6. Submit Invoice/Advance Forms accompanied by Progress Reports to the Program Administrator to access Phase 1 grant funds.
7. **Scoring Weights are based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which**

 **each application meets the following criteria:**

Part A - Qualifications & Experience Form & All Required Attachments 40 Points

*Management Capacity (20 points)*

The management capacity of the applicant based upon the number of years farming and other

related experience and training; the applicant’s decision-making authority over the land and resources; and the applicant’s statements of purpose and readiness to apply to the Program.

*Physical Resource Base (20 points)*

The suitability and productivity of the farmland for its intended agricultural use, the physical condition of buildings and equipment, and other assets needed to maintain and increase productivity of the Farm Business.

Part B – Idea(s) for Change & All Required Attachments 60 Points

*Farm Financial Health & Ability to Transform (25 points)*

The ability of the applicant to describe the current financial condition of the Farm Business, including the current debt load relative to earnings, the assets and liabilities, and whether the debt load and access to new assets can be managed with the proposed ideas for change.

*Idea(s) for Change (25 points)*

The ability of the applicant to identify and propose ideas that will make fundamental changes on the farm that will improve viability, profitability, and capacity to pay back debt through the present or future cash flow of the business, while also attempting to make farming the primary source of the applicant’s income.

*Other Conditions (10 points)*

The degree of development pressure on the farm operation, the percentage of the operated farmland that is owned by the applicant, and the potential environmental and community economic development benefits derived from the proposed change.

To Apply

The completed application must be submitted to State of Maine Division of Procurement Services by 11:59 pm, local time, on **October 8th, 2019**, see the RFP#201904076 for details. **Applications not received at the Division of Procurement Services by the aforementioned deadline will not be considered for contract award.**

The Application shall be dated and signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the Applicant. Failure to complete and submit the appendix or attachment may result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s proposal, at the discretion of the Department.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to provide all information requested in the RFP package at the time of submission. Failure to provide information requested in this RFP may, at the discretion of the Department’s evaluation review team, result in a lower rating for the incomplete sections and may result in the application being disqualified for consideration.

**Contents of Phase 1 Application includes:**

 **Part A** **–** Qualifications & Experience Form

 **Part B** **–** Idea(s) for Change

 **Part C** – All Required Attachments

**Submit application electronically to** Division of Procurement Services: Proposals@maine.gov. See RFP for submission instructions.

**RFP#201904076**

**Maine Farms for the Future Program**

**Phase 1 Application for Business Plan Development Grant**

Fall 2019

**Part A. Qualifications and Experience Form**

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| --- |
| **Farm Owner’s Name:** |
| **Farm Name:** |
| **Address:** |
| **Town:** | **Zip:** | **County:** |
| **Home Phone:** | **Other Phone:** |
| **Fax:** | **E-mail:** |
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| --- | --- |
| **Total acres farmland owned** |  |
| **Number of owned acres in agricultural production** |  |
| **Number of owned acres in sylvicultural production (timber, firewood, etc.)** |  |
| **Your first year farming this land** |  |
| **Is the farmland protected with a permanent agricultural conservation easement?**  | **Yes No** |
| **Do you lease additional farmland?**  | **Yes No** |
| **If “Yes” note how many acres are leased** |  |

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| **On the following two pages, please describe:*** + - 1. **Your farm management qualifications and capacity, including a description of the current agricultural activities carried out on the land including the type and quantity of crops, number of livestock, and/or acreage leased or used by others for agricultural purposes, the number of farm household members employed by the farm and the annual average number of non-family, full- or part-time farm employees.**
			2. **Your skills and needs pertaining to researching and developing a written business plan to make changes on your farm. Your plans for keeping the property in agricultural use and how a Business Plan might benefit the economic and environmental viability of your farm business.**
			3. **Your farm’s physical and natural resources and the current products and services, customer types and markets channels (retail, wholesale, CSA, etc).**
			4. **Special skills and/or unique management abilities that you and your employees have that make you/your farm especially able and qualified to investigate the Idea(s) for Change you are proposing in Part B of this Application.**
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|  |

**Production Capacity: List all large equipment and describe its current condition** (Good, Fair, Poor)

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| --- | --- |
| **Large Equipment** | **Condition** |
|  *Example: Tractor* | *Good* |
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**Production Capacity: List all buildings and describe its current condition** (Good, Fair, Poor)

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| --- | --- |
| **Buildings – Permanent & Temporary** (Type & Size) | **Condition** |
| *Example: High Tunnel 20 x 80* | *Fair* |
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| **Describe two (2) projects that you completed within the past 5 years that demonstrate your management capacity, experience, expertise, and ability to performing the functions described in the Scope of Services.** |
| **Project One**  |
|  |
| **Project Two** |
|  |

**Part B. Idea(s) for Change**

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| --- |
| **Complete each of the following statements to describe your Idea(s) for Change in farm management and marketing practices, investments in equipment and other property; and how such changes might increase the long-term, maintainable, farm profitability and net worth, and impact your quality of life.**Write 1-2 paragraphs for each statement. |

**My/Our long-term vision for the farm business is….**

**To achieve my/our vision, in the next 3-5 years I/we need to….**

**To make my/our farm more viable I/we need to…..**

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| **Describe the impacts that Business Planning would likely have on the your/the farm’s ability to: hedge against development pressure; increase number of farm employees; provide community benefits; and conserve the natural resources and other resources on the farm.** Write 1 paragraph for each element. |

**Development pressure\* on our farm/farmland is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (***choose either* **high, moderate, low** *and explain why***) because…..**

***\*****Development Pressure means the potential of the Farm Business to be put out of business due to increasing development of non-compatible land uses near the farm. This includes, but is not limited to, residential and industrial development, nuisance complaints and loss of agricultural infrastructure in the vicinity of the farm or food business. These, and other non-compatible land uses, create environmental, social, political or operational constraints on the farm operation and result in negative financial impacts on the Farm Business.*

**Our Idea(s) for Change will help the farm provide more employment opportunities and/or support regional agricultural infrastructure by….**

**Our Idea(s) for Change will enhance the farm’s importance to the local community by…**

**Our Idea(s) for Change will help the farm protect and improve the farm’s natural resources - water, soil, air, wildlife habitat, etc. - by…….**

**Part C. Required Attachments**

***Checklist***

\_\_\_ Attach a list of all current litigation in which you (the applicant) are named and a list of all closed cases that have closed within the past five (5) years in which you paid the claimant either as part of a settlement or by decree.  For each, list the entity bringing suit, the complaint, the accusation, amount, and outcome.  If no litigation will be included, write “none” here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Attach copies of any applicable certifications (Organic, etc.) or licenses (Maple Syrup, Commercial Kitchen, Mobile Vendor, etc.), licensure requirements or any specific credentials required to operate the farm business.

\_\_\_ Attach a Certificate of Insurance on a standard Acord form (or the equivalent) evidencing the Bidder’s general liability, professional liability and any other relevant liability insurance policies that might be associated with the proposed services.

\_\_\_ Attach copies of the farm’s the 2017 and 2018 IRS - Schedule F- Income Tax forms.

\_\_\_ Attach your 2017 and 2018 Balance Sheet financial statements.

\_\_\_ Attach United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources and Conservation Service or Farm Service Agency - soil map and aerial map of the farm showing its soil types and their classification by the USDA NRCS as *Prime, Statewide Important* or *Locally Significant Farmland*. See the USDA WebSoil Survey at <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm> Or contact the local Soil and Water Conservation District and/or USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Office serving your County. For a list of these offices go to: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/me/contact/local/>