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**Vermont Foodbank**

**Vermonters Feeding Vermonters**

**2018 Request for Applications**

**(RFA)**

**Part 1 – InTroductioN**

In 2018, the Vermont Foodbank is piloting Vermonters Feeding Vermonters to increase the amount and quality of fresh, healthy food that we distribute. This is a program to purchase high quality fruits and vegetables directly from Vermont growers to distribute to Vermonters facing hunger. We are modelling this program after Mainers Feeding Mainers*,* a successful programrun for the past seven years by the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Maine.

Our goal is to purchase approximately 150,000 pounds of Vermont grown produce in 2018. We anticipate during this first year pilot, that we will be able to work with a total of 4-6 Vermont farms, distributors, food hubs, etc.

As you may know, we have spent the past several years working to increase our distribution of fresh produce, focusing on the intersection of hunger and health. This effort to make more fresh and healthy options available to those in our community facing hunger is part of a shift happening in food banks across the country.

**Part 2 –Procedures**

**Timeline:**

* **November 8, 2017:** Vermont Foodbank (VFB) releases a Request for Applications (RFA) to Vermont growers, distributors, food hubs, etc. (vendors).
* **November 27, 2017:** Vendor deadline to submit questions via VFB website. **\*\* Important note: We are unable to meet in person, take phone calls or receive emails to Vermont Foodbank staff or board members.**
* **December 8, 2017:** VFB will release all questions and answers to the public on the VFB website.
* **December 15, 2017:** Deadline for vendors to notify the VFB of *intention* to submit an application via VFB website.
* **January 3, 2018:** Deadline to submit completed applications via email to [vermonters@vtfoodbank.org](mailto:vermonters@vtfoodbank.org). No late applications will be accepted. (Note: This email address will not be an active email account that can answer questions – it should only be used for submitting an application.)
* **January 17- January 31, 2018:** VFB will notify all applicants of decision.
* **February 7, 2018:** Vendor agreements including products, quantities and prices finalized.
* **February/March 2018:** VFB begins purchasing products. (Note: this is the soonest the VFB would be able to purchase and receive products through this program).

**CLICK HERE FOR the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Webpage:**

<https://www.vtfoodbank.org/gather-food/vermonters-feeding-vermonters.>

\*Portions of this manual were adapted from the Intervale Food Hub’s Vendor Manual

**Partnership Requirements:**

1. Notify the VFB of intention to apply by **December 15, 2017** and submit a completed application to the VFB by the **January 3, 2018** deadline.
2. If selected, negotiate a final agreement with the VFB by **February 7, 2018** including price and quantity of select products.
3. Have an established Vermont agricultural business (i.e. a farm, distributor, food hub, etc.).
4. Confirm that all products were grown on Vermont farms.
5. Deliver a minimum of 2 pallets (3 pallets encouraged) at a time (of one or multiple crops) to the VFB locations in Brattleboro, Barre and/or Rutland. Note: No mixed pallets accepted. Each pallet must be of one crop type.
6. Deliver product that is safe for human consumption and free of any contamination.
7. Deliver product in transport vehicles that are free of contamination and maintain proper product temperatures.
8. Deliver product that meets VFB product labeling, grading and packaging standards (see below).
9. Follow all required state and federal regulations, including food safety and product labeling requirements.
10. Provide proof of liability insurance to VFB.
11. Meet quantity and pricing commitments and engage in appropriate communication to notify the VFB in the event of shortfall.
12. Agree to the VFB product refusal and crediting policy (see below).
13. Provide logo, contact information, business description, photos, website and links to social media.
14. Engage in VFB mutually beneficial outreach and marketing efforts, as opportunities arise.
15. Complete a year-end evaluation survey provided by the VFB about the impacts of this partnership.

**RFA Review Process**

A select team of VFB staff will review all submitted applications from vendors. The VFB review team will use the following criteria to decide which Vermont growers and suppliers are selected for this pilot program:

* Experience and history of producing/distributing large quantities of products via a wholesale market.
* Ability to provide large/palletized quantities of products at one time.
* Ability to deliver products to regional VFB warehouses in transport vehicles that are free of contamination and maintain proper product temperatures.
* Ability to meet VFB requirements including food safety, quality, packaging, and labeling standards.
* Ability to meet annual commitments.
* Competitive wholesale price point.

**Ordering**

Using the annual agreements as a guide, the vendor will confirm deliveries with the VFB buyer based on availability and a mutually agreed upon schedule. Quantities will be agreed upon with VFB buyer for each delivery. Note: VFB must be notified of product availability by 12noon on Monday for the following week delivery. If a vendor is unable to meet their commitment, the VFB may need to seek out a replacement.

**Deliveries**

The VFB has three locations: Barre, Brattleboro and Rutland. The facilities are equipped with loading docks, fork lifts, and refrigerated, frozen and dry storage space.

**Receiving Hours**

All deliveries must be made to the agreed upon VFB facility during regular business hours and by the agreed upon date and time. Dates and times will be agreed upon with VFB buyer for each delivery.

**Receiving Policies**

All vendors must deliver to a VFB facility and must check-in product with VFB staff to ensure correct volumes are delivered and product quality meets quality, packaging and labeling standards. Upon delivery, the following requirements must be met:

* All product must be properly labeled on each case (vendor, quantity, pack date).
* All deliveries must come with a packing list or an invoice.
* Vehicles will be inspected for cleanliness during receiving. If there are signs of food safety hazards (signs of pests, co-mingling of meat and produce, etc.), deliveries may be rejected. A temperature check will be done for each delivery and must be within 35-50 degrees for produce.

**Product Refusal & Crediting**

Vendors are required to deliver according to VFB product quality standards (food safety, quality, grading, packaging and labeling). All products that do not meet these standards will be subject to refusal. Product may be refused by VFB staff upon delivery or within a 24-hour period after delivery. If product is refused, then the vendor may choose to replace the product with one that meets VFB product quality standards by an agreed upon delivery date, or VFB will request credit.

**Billing & Payment**

Vendors must invoice the VFB on the day of delivery. Invoices may be submitted upon delivery, by mail or by email. If an invoice is not submitted upon delivery, a packing list must be provided as a record of what has been received. Invoices must contain the following information:

* Date of billing
* Vendor name
* Vendor contact information
* Address for payment
* Product and quantity delivered
* Price per pound
* Total cost

The Vermont Foodbank operates on a 30-day billing cycle; all invoices will be paid within a 30-day period.

**Part 3 - PRODUCT QUALITY STANDARDS**

The Vermont Foodbank is committed to offering our customers the highest quality food – fresh, healthy and safe. All product supplied to the VFB must meet VFB product quality standards including food safety, grading, packaging and container labeling as outlined below.

**Food Safety**

Vendors selling product to the VFB are expected to use best practices to ensure food safety when handling and distributing products. Vendors must agree to deliver product that is safe for human consumption, free of any contamination, both in production and transport, and maintained at proper temperatures up to delivery. Vendors must follow all required state and federal food safety regulations.

The VFB does not require produce farmers to hold any food safety licenses. All produce farmers are encouraged to have a comprehensive food safety plan. Farmers may refer to *UVM’s Practical Food Safety for Produce Farms* and/or *USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices Audit Verification Program* to develop, implement and maintain a proper food safety plan.

**Quality Standards**

Crops sold to the VFB must be assessed for quality standards based on style, size, firmness and cleanliness. VFB has adapted U.S. Grade Standards provided by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to develop a set of product standards for VFB vendors. **The VFB requires product to meet the highest quality U.S. No. 1 grade standards, meaning a specific crop must be fresh and/or firm, fairly well shaped and colored, fairly clean, and free from rot, decay and damage.**

Note: We require uniformity of size within each case pack. However, we are able to receive products within a range of sizes *across* case packs as specified in the crop standards below. The hope and intention is that this type of flexibility is mutually beneficial to both the VFB and its vendors.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Product / Crop** | **Bag / Box** | **Pack/Count** | **Weight** | **Standards/ Comments** |
| Acorn Squash | 1 1/9 box or Large Wood Gaylord | Well Filled Box | box, 40-50# | wash, short stem, ripe, unblemished, cured, similar size, free from freeze damage, 6 - 8 inches in diameter |
| Apples | 1 1/9 bushel box  or  cardboard gaylord | Well Filled Box | box, 40# | mature but not overripe, clean, fairly well-formed, and free from decay, internal browning, freezing injury and broken skins, also free from damage caused by bruises and brown surface discoloration |
| Beets/Red/Cut | 25# bag | Loose | 25# | wash, no sprouting, 1.5 – 4 inch in diameter, no cracking, tops clean trim |
| Broccoli | 1 1/9 bushel box | 14 ct bunched | box, 20-25# | no flowering, central heads 4 to 8 inches in diameter, no discoloration |
| Butternut | 1 1/9 bushel box  or  cardboard gaylord | Well Filled Box | box, 40-50# | wash, short stem, ripe, unblemished, cured, free from freeze damage, 8 - 14 inches long |
| Cabbage/Green | 1 ¾ or 1 7/8 bushel box | Well Filled Box | 40 - 50# | Evenly-trimmed bottom, nice outer leaves clear of blemishes, no decay, no cracking, 5 - 7 inches in diameter and 10 - 15 inches tall, 3 - 4 pounds |
| Cabbage/Red | 1 ¾ or 1 7/8 bushel box | Well Filled Box | 40 - 50# | Evenly-trimmed bottom, nice outer leaves clear of blemishes, no decay, no cracking, 5 - 7 inches in diameter and 10 - 15 inches tall, 3 - 4 pounds |
| Carrots (3# Bags) | 3# root bags | Well Filled Bag |  | no insect damage, straight well-formed, 1/2 - 2 inch in diameter, clean cut trim, 6 – 10 inch long carrots, clean, free of decay |
| Carrots | 25# bag | Well filled, loose aligned bag | 25# | no insect damage, 15% of bag forked or crooked carrots are okay, 1/2 - 2 inch in diameter, clean cut trim, 6 - 10 inch, clean, free of decay |
| Cauliflower | Tray pack covered in plastic or stacked in 1 1/9 bushel box | 14 Count | 18-25 | Well-trimmed, without discoloration, white or cream colored, heads 6 - 8 inches in diameter, no damage |
| Corn | 1 1/9 bushel box or mesh bag | 48 ct neatly aligned | box, 40 - 60# bag, 45 - 50# | corn free from smut, worm, insect, decay, well-trimmed, 6 - 9 inches, plump and creamy kernels |
| Onions, Yellow (3# bag) | Large mesh bag |  |  | free of dirt, thick outer layer, uniformed, well-cured, no sprouts, kept dry, 2 – 4.5 inch diameter |
| Onions, Yellow | 50# bag | loose | 50# | free of dirt, thick outer layer, uniformed, well-cured, no sprouts, kept dry, 2 – 4.5 inch diameter |
| Parsnip | 25# bag | neatly aligned | 25# | 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter and 8 to 12 inches long, relative uniform diameter from top to bottom, little thinning, trim tips |
| Peppers/Green | 1 1/9 bushel box | well filled | 25 – 30# | clean, 4 - 6 inches in length, blocky, 15% of bag slight discoloration |
| Potatoes (5# Bag) | pallet stacked | well filled |  | no insect damage, no decay, no sprouting, well-cleaned, 1.5 – 4 inches diameter |
| Potatoes, white | 50# bag or 1 1/9 bushel box | well filled | 50# | no insect damage, no decay, no sprouting, well-cleaned, 1.5 – 4 inches diameter |
| Summer Squash | 1/2 bushel Box | well filled | 20# | wash, short-stem, max length 9', no blemishes or bruises |
| Sweet Potato | 1 1/9 bushel box | well filled | 40 - 50# | firm, fairly smooth, fairly clean, fairly well-shaped, free from freezing injury, decay or insect damage, 3 - 10 inches in length and 3 - 4 inches in diameter |
| Turnips | 25# bag | loose | 25# | Well-washed, free of blemish, cracks and insect damage, well-trimmed, 1 3/4 - 4 inches in diameter |
| Zucchini | 1/2 Bushel Box | well filled | 20# | wash, short-stem, max length 9', no blemishes or bruises |

**Packaging**

The VFB has guidelines regarding packaging, including acceptable containers and appropriate case sizes. **All product delivered to the VFB must be in an acceptable** **container.** Acceptable containers include RPCs, wax and fiberboard boxes, plastic totes, plastic mesh and plastic vented bags, and bulk bins. Case sizes are specific to each product. VFB requires that produce farms over-fill cases by approximately 5% to offset weight losses during packing, storage and transit.

**Container Labeling**

All containers (excluding 25# plastic bulk root bags) delivered to the VFB must be properly labeled. At a minimum, labels need to include the vendor name, product (beets, carrots, peppers etc.), packing date and the net weight (50 pounds, 24x1/3 pound bags, etc.).

**Part 4 – PRODUCTS DESIRED and APPROXiMATE QUANTITIES**The following table details the specific crops and estimated quantities of Vermont Grown produce that the VFB intends to purchase in 2018. In total, we anticipate purchasing approximately 150,000 pounds of Vermont grown produce. These are estimates only and may change.

Note: The VFB anticipates wanting to purchase a variety of storage crops (marked with an asterisk below), some of which were grown in 2017 and will be available starting in February/March of 2018. Please indicate on your application what quantities and which months these and other crops are available.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CROP | APPROX QUANTITIES |
| Apples\* | 15 – 20K |
| Beets/Red/Cut\* | 4 – 6K |
| Broccoli | 2 – 3K |
| Cabbage/Green | 8 – 12K |
| Cabbage/Red | 4 – 6K |
| Carrots\* | 10 – 15K |
| Cauliflower | 5 – 7K |
| Corn | 5 – 7K |
| Onions, Yellow\* | 4 – 6K |
| Parsnip\* | 2 – 4K |
| Peppers/Green | 4 – 6K |
| Potatoes\* | 15 – 25K |
| Summer Squash | 4 – 6K |
| Sweet Potato\* | 10 – 15K |
| Turnips\* | 2 – 4K |
| Winter Squash : Butternut\* | 4 – 6K |
| Winter Squash : Acorn\* | 4 – 6K |
| Zucchini | 4 – 6K |

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**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Town/ State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Physical Location if different: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Additional Contact Person:**

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Title:**

**Email:**

**Cell Phone:**

**Other Phone:**

Preferred communication methods:

* Phone
* Email
* Text

**Primary Contact Person:**

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Title:**

**Email:**

**Cell Phone:**

**Other Phone:**

Preferred communication methods:

* Phone
* Email
* Text

**Check one:**

* Vermont farmer/producer
* Distributor
* Food Hub
* Other:

1. **Briefly describe your business history:**
2. **Describe your experience producing/distributing large quantities of products via a wholesale market:**
3. **Please describe how you would deliver/transport the product to the VFB?**
4. **Please provide detailed information regarding your current wholesale business.**
5. **List 3-5 wholesale buyers of your product.**
6. **List approximate pounds/quantity of wholesale product grown/sold/distributed each year:**
7. **List specific crops you specialize in/grow/distribute large quantities of:**
8. **If you are a distributor and/or foodhub and plan to source crops from one or more farms, please list the names of the likely farms here. Note: All produce purchased by VFB through this program must be grown on Vermont Farms.**
9. **If applicable, describe your current or past relationship with the VFB.**
10. **Any additional information that you want to share:**

**Partnership Requirements Checklist**: (initial or check all requirements you are able to meet)

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* Engage in VFB mutually beneficial outreach and marketing efforts, as opportunities arise.
* Complete a year-end evaluation survey provided by the VFB regarding the impacts of this partnership.

**Crop Specific Proposal**

Please provide the following information for each crop/product that you are interested and able to sell to the Vermont Foodbank. Refer to the quality standards for case pack, units and other specification requirements. If your proposal is accepted, final quantities and price will be negotiated with you in a letter of agreement. To the best of your ability, please provide estimates that are as accurate as possible.

**The VFB requires product to meet the highest quality U.S. No. 1 grade standards, meaning a specific crop must be fresh and/or firm, fairly well shaped and colored, fairly clean, and free from rot, decay and damage.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Type of Case Pack (Bag, Box or Gaylord)** | **Approx weight each case pack**  **(LBS only)** | **What is the min # and max # of pounds of product available? (overall total)** | | **Price per pound** | **What is the max # of pallets of this specific product that you can deliver to the VFB at one time?** | **What months of the year is this product available to the VFB? (i.e. Jan, Feb, March, etc.)** | **What is your available frequency of deliveries?**  **(weekly, bi- weekly, once per month, etc.)** | **What VFB Location(s) are you able to deliver this product to? (Brattleboro, Barre, Rutland)** | **Notes / Comments** |
| Min # | Max# |
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**Additional comments, questions, suggestions, etc.:**