

Request for Proposal

Westchester County Farm and Food Strategic Plan

The Westchester County Department of Planning is inviting proposals to develop strategic or action plan, which will be used to inform an update to its 2004 Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan. The Department of Planning is committed to broadening the scope of the 2004 plan to include the entirety of the regional and local food systems, and all of its components and connections. The plan update shall not be limited to just agriculture, food processors and food distributors but all of the ways that well managed land and the agroecosystem can benefit society and the environment, with a focus on engaging our community in this process and building community and economy around agricultural and ecological initiatives.

The development of the strategic plan subject to this RFP is the first step of the initiative. The strategic plan will allow the Department of Planning to understand the framework of a larger plan, where Westchester County is best suited to support and identify steps to be taken by the Department of Planning and its partners leading up to future plan development. Proposals should be e-mailed to Matthew Castro at mvc1@westchestercountyny.gov by **4:00 pm on July 18, 2025**.

Project Description

Westchester County has a rich agrarian history. As documented by the County's Historical Society, in 1790 the chief occupation of residents was farming, and during the early part of the nineteenth century this was primarily for subsistence. Crops included potatoes and other vegetables, fruit, corn, and wheat. Farms held dairy cows and poultry, and less even terrain provided for sheep grazing. Following the Revolutionary War, Westchester County farmers began to transport produce by way of ports along the Hudson River for sale at New York City markets. Farmers brought cattle by hoof directly to these markets. Over time the number of traditional farms within the county has declined, largely due to conversion to sprawling single-family residential developments.

The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, adopted in 2004 by the Westchester County Board of Legislators (BOL), characterizes the agricultural industry in Westchester as consisting predominantly of commercial horse boarding and other equine related activities, although the horticulture industry is also very prosperous. The Department of Planning initiated the process to update the 2004 plan by performing outreach and holding conversations with agencies, organizations and other partners from the local to national level – the intent of this outreach was to better understand and identify themes to be addressed within the plan update. The Department of Planning also identified a need to illustrate all of the ways that agriculture impacts community members, and include strategies for the county to promote agriculture and all its benefits and ensure an equitable, resilient and sustainable food system.

The Department of Planning intends for the plan update to be a multiyear project, beginning with the strategic plan subject to this RFP, that would satisfy New York State Agriculture and Markets requirements, provide a Food Systems Assessment, and include initiatives for the County and its partners to act on. The plan update will include a comprehensive description of the variety of benefits of agriculture throughout Westchester County, with a focus on local and regional food systems and the ability of agriculture to make connections between environment, public health, social and economic aspects of community. Overall, the plan update should yield focus more on program development for the County, with actionable goals and resources for its partners and municipalities.

Scope of Work

The purpose of this this RFP is to solicit consulting services for the Department of Planning's Farm and Food Strategic Plan. Despite agriculture and the food system's critical importance to Westchester County, the needs of the community continue to be reactive, as was demonstrated during COVID, rather than planning for a secure and resilient food system. Through its outreach the Department of Planning has drafted a report and gained an understanding of the issues to be addressed but requires a strategic plan and roadmap that will be used to better understand the role the County can play, allocate resources, identify the best methods to recruit support from partners, and frame out what the greater plan should address.

The Westchester Farm and Food Strategic Plan should identify a clear vision and coordinated approach, which will allow the Department of Planning to advocate for important components identified within the strategic plan. Specifically, the plan will need to focus on where county government assistance and intervention is most effective. The Department of Planning intends to work towards developing the initiative into a program, where applicable. For a larger scale effort to be successful, the strategic plan must develop a long-term strategy that will: document the basis and need for a larger plan update; provide a vision; identify data and dashboard needs; identify methods to address immediate needs; and identify those strategies involving public and private partnerships to coordinate efforts and leverage resources effectively.

Deliverables

Submissions for this RFP shall address elements detailed below. The Department of Planning is also requiring deliverables to assist with its program development as part of this initiative.

1. The Consultant shall deliver a comprehensive strategic plan for analyzing the agricultural industry and the food system in Westchester County and the region, which the Department of Planning will utilize for program development, and the pursuit of a County-wide Food and Farm Plan. (Basic Services)
 - a. The Consultant shall focus on Westchester County and its region, and avoid generalities and that may commonly be seen as part of a preamble in a larger agricultural plan.

- b. The Consultant shall utilize the results of the Department of Planning Stakeholder Outreach Report, which was used to better understand county needs, to inform the direction of the strategic plan.
2. Strategic Plan components (Basic Services) shall consist of, but not be limited to:
 - a. Executive summary. Providing a summary of the plan components, which can be used to engage elected officials and County Executive staff.
 - b. Vision Statement. Capturing what the agriculture and the food system within Westchester should aspire to be.
 - c. Mission Statement. Defining the core purpose of the plan and its intent to support the well-being of all county residents.
 - d. Westchester County's Role. The plan shall define the role of the county and identify specific areas where the county as a government body is able to contribute, facilitate, fund or other.
 - e. Core Focus Areas. Identifying those relevant topics and the applicable partners.
 - f. SWOT Analysis for existing Westchester's agriculture.
 - g. Recommendations, including identification of the responsible party(ies), time frame, and priority level.
 - h. Strategies, which may include an "Implementation Matrix" for key recommendations and those immediate actions the County and its partner can take to set up for success.
3. The Consultant shall identify the need for, and structure of, a Westchester County Agriculture and Food Council. (Basic Services)
4. Fiscal Strategy. Outlining budgetary needs, funding sources and infrastructure investment needs. (Additional Services A)
5. Any usable graphics or figures as separate files, which can be utilized for County marketing materials or when advocating for plan needs. (Additional Services B)
6. Spatial and useable mapping data (i.e. GIS), which relate and support the strategic plan. (Additional Services C)

7. An Arc GIS Story Map and/or ESRI Hub or similar ESRI tool approved by the County, which can be used to demonstrate the history of agriculture in the county, its connectivity to the local and regional community and economy and a depiction of any usable information that can help connect residents and organizations with their place in the food system. (Additional Services D)
8. A framework or guidelines for use by partners to disseminate research, create alignment of metrics and data, and otherwise facilitate greater coordination and unity between stakeholders and measure success. One example could include the use of white papers that would allow others how to adopt specific agroecosystem practices, or ways a municipality could facilitate a farmers market. (Additional Services E)

County Responsibilities

The County will provide the approved consultant with the following:

1. Access to the results of Department of Planning Stakeholder Outreach Report, which are compiled by topic and provide information to be contemplated by the strategic plan.
2. Access to its survey results from the Food and Transportation Study, and other applicable County documents.
3. Access to available GIS and geospatial data.

Consultant Qualifications

- All final (i.e., non-draft) documents shall comply with the most current standards set forth in both, (a) Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and (b) the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), pursuant to the goals and objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the County's Digital Content Accessibility Policy.
- The consultant will be required to hold the quoted price for one hundred eighty (180) days from the deadline for submitting quotes.
- The consultant understands that due to County contracting, an executed contract may not take place until 2026. All quotes should include cost escalation.
- Appropriate Insurance shall be required.
- Agriculture in Westchester County. The selected Consultant shall demonstrate knowledge of the unique conditions and issues facing Westchester County, knowledge of issues and conditions regarding the

local agriculture industry, urban agriculture, food security, and experience conducting agricultural and other comprehensive planning.

- Agriculture in the metropolitan region and New York State. The selected Consultant shall demonstrate knowledge of the conditions and issues facing agriculture in the New York City metropolitan region and New York State agriculture. The selected Consultant shall also demonstrate prior experience working in New York State.
- Knowledge of Land Use Planning Practices and Laws in New York State. The selected Consultant shall demonstrate knowledge and experience in the land use planning practice and New York State land use laws.
- Knowledge of various types of funding sources, processes, requirements and time frames.
- Knowledge of State-of-the-Art Community and Urban Agricultural Programs. The selected Consultant shall demonstrate knowledge of state-of-the-art practices in community agriculture and urban agriculture, including strategies to build capacity and implement successful local and regional projects and programs.
- Knowledge of Food Systems and Public Health. The selected Consultant shall demonstrate an understanding of food systems analysis and the link between agriculture and locally grown agricultural products and public health, particularly in areas with obstacles to access.
- Experience in GIS and Statistical Analysis. The selected Consultant shall demonstrate experience and expertise in statistical analysis and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as an analysis and presentation tool.

Proposal Submission

Proposals must include (1) project narrative with citations, (2) timeline and scope of work, (3) cost, (4) references.

- The consultant shall provide a detailed proposal with a proposed cost, divided into discrete line items based on the Deliverables above.
 - *Basic Services – Westchester Farm and Food Strategic Plan*
 - *Additional Services ‘A’: Fiscal Strategy*
 - *Additional Services ‘B’: Graphics and Marketing Materials*

- *Additional Services 'C': Data*
- *Additional Services 'D': GIS Story Map and/or ESRI Hub*
- *Additional Services 'E': Partnership Framework or Guidelines*
- A project narrative demonstrating experience with the aforementioned criteria.
- All proposals shall be e-mailed to the following address by **4:00pm on July 18, 2025:**

Matthew Castro
Principal Environmental Planner / District Manager, Westchester County SWCD
Westchester County Department of Planning
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White Plains, NY 10601
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(914) 995 - 4423

If you have any questions and need further information or clarification, please contact Matthew Castro at Westchester County Planning Department at (914) 995-4423.