

Recommended Award: Exhibit "A"

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| Applicant Name: | Field & Fork Network | REDC Region: | Western New York |
| Project Type: | Agricultural Business Development | County: | Erie |
| Industry: | Agriculture | Locality: | Williamsville |
| Amount Requested: | \$166,912 | Start Date: | 8/1/13 |
| | | Finish Date: | 4/1/14 |
| RECOMMENDED OFFER | | | |
| Recommended Total Award: | | \$166,912 | |
| Total Project Cost: | | \$174,912 | |
| % of Project Cost Recommended: | | 95 % | |
| REGIONAL IMPACT MEASUREMENTS | | | |
| Number of Jobs Retained: | | N/A | |
| Number of Jobs Created: | | N/A | |
| Average Salary of Jobs: | | N/A | |
| Indirect Jobs Created | | | |
| Other Impact | | | |
| PROJECT DESCRIPTION | | | |
| <p>Across the State and across the Country, Regional Food Hubs are being established in an effort to connect local growers to Regional wholesale markets. The agricultural footprint of every Region is unique and for that reason there is not a one size fits all blue print for Regional Food Hubs.</p> <p>The "Ready to Grow" project proposes to take the first and most fundamental step in establishing a Regional Food Hub in the Western New York Region. Field & Fork Network will execute the "Ready to Grow" project by leading a market analysis and feasibility study for the establishment of a Food Hub in the Western New York Region. Following this study and analysis Field & Fork will take the lead on establishing a business plan that will be used to create the path to a Western New York Food Hub.</p> <p>The Central focus of this Regional Food Hub effort will be on Erie and Niagara Counties, however, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, Wyoming, Genesee and Orleans Counties will experience a great benefit as well.</p> | | | |
| OTHER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS RECEIVED | | | |
| ESD: | \$0 | NYPA: | \$0 |
| IDA: | \$0 | Farm Credit Northeast: | \$8,000 |
| PREVIOUS STATE ASSISTANCE OFFERED OR PROVIDED | | | |
| TYPE | AMOUNT | STATUS | |
| | \$ | | |

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The applicant has provided extensive evidence backing the economic impact of a Regional Food hub in Western New York and has also shown why Field &Fork is the most capable organization to lead the Region in taking the first step toward a Regional Food Hub.

The applicant has provided this Board with a study done by the USDA which shows that fruit and vegetable farms utilizing Food Hubs to sell into local markets hire 13 people for every 3 that farms not selling into local markets hire. The applicant has also provided background on 5 different Regional Food Hubs in other Regions of New York State that are currently yielding very positive results.

A perfect example, provided by the applicant, of a comparable Region now realizing the benefits of a Regional Food Hub, is that of the “Finger Lakes Fresh, Food Hub”. Finger Lakes Fresh is a Regional Food Hub procuring locally grown food from Central New York for Regional distribution. With the support of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Finger Lakes Fresh broke ground on June 27, 2013. Finger Lakes Fresh now employs 14 people and is projecting increasing employment to 40 people in the short term. Finger Lakes Fresh is also projecting revenues of \$2.4 million by the time they enter their third year in operation. With very similar weather patterns and a very similar agricultural foot print, Finger Lakes Fresh is a very strong example of the positive economic impact a Food Hub can have on the WNY Region.

This application has been further strengthened by the tremendous local support it has received. This Board has received letters of support from notable Regional Agriculture experts like Dr. Samina Raja from the University at Buffalo Department of Urban and Regional Planning. Dr. Raja is considered an authority on local food supply and she has endorsed Field & Fork as a very capable agent for the initiation of a WNY Food Hub. This project has also been supported by Assembly Member Crystal Peoples-Stokes. Assembly Member Peoples-Stokes has been a strong advocate of the buy local food movement as a sponsor of the “Buy from the Backyard Act” which mandates State Agencies to purchase at least 20% of all of their food products from New York State producers and/or processors. Assembly Member Peoples-Stokes has also given her endorsement to Field & Fork to lead the charge in this necessary endeavor. Field & Fork has also enjoyed the support of Farm Credit North East in the form of an \$8,000 grant to help get this project off the ground.

The Western New York Regional Economic Development Council has made the WNY agricultural industry a priority in its strategic plan for the economic advancement of the WNY Region. This applicant has provided extensive evidence that taking the first and most fundamental step toward a Regional Food Hub in WNY will have an enormous impact on the Agricultural foot print of Western New York.

This project also plays a big part in State and Regional Smart Growth goals which call for the preservation of farmland throughout the State and the Region. This project will lead to long term sustainability of the farms currently operating in the Region.

As stated in the project description, it is important to remember that this project will provide great benefits to Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, Wyoming, Genesee and Orleans Counties along with the two Counties of central focus, Erie and Niagara.