

Request for Proposal

Introduction

In March of 2017, the Arthur Morgan Institute of Community Solutions purchased a 128 acre farm just outside Yellow Springs, Ohio. The goals were to protect and restore the Jacoby Creek wetland, to educate the public about regenerative land use, and to promote the local food economy. The farm will host the non-profit's office, educational activities, the production of biological soil amendments, and a barn event venue. Around 65 acres have been set aside for wetland restoration and 45 will be available for farmland rentals. Community Solutions values strong local food systems and recognizes the many challenges that small and mid-size local food growers face. One common issue is affordable, secure, and long-term access to farmland. We aim to provide a place for prospective farmers to earn a living, and in turn we will see that our land is cared for and our community has greater access to fresh healthy food.

Purpose

Community Solutions will lease land to farmers interested in managing their own organic farm business.

Eligibility

This RFP is open to experienced farmers looking to start or expand a certified organic farming business that includes sales to local markets.

Deadline

We accept applications on a rolling basis. We will notify applicants when we have received their application, if we have follow up questions, and when we have made a formal decision regarding their acceptance. Because we are considering many applications and establishing the terms of the lease, this process may take several months. We will prioritize early applicants and those who are ready to begin farming in 2018.

Disclaimer

Community Solutions reserves the right to reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability. Final acceptance of any proposal will be conditional upon signing the lease. Acceptance of a proposal will not create any rights on the proposer's part, including and without limitation, rights of enforcement, equity, or reimbursement.

Land Overview

The land is less than a mile west of the 4,000 person town of Yellow Springs. Prior to purchase, the land was farmed conventionally in corn and soybeans for many years. In 2017, the entire farm was planted in a cover crop mix. There are 6 fields available (see map and photos). The 4 adjacent fields in the north are 21, 4.6, 3.1, and 2.1 acres. The 2 adjacent fields in the south are each 6.7 acres. Each field is bordered by a hedgerow of trees. The land is rolling, with several large flat areas, and no steep slopes. Some areas are low elevation and prone to puddling, while others are higher elevation. The soil is mostly clay, with organic matter averaging 2%. The northern fields are accessible via an easement on a shared gravel driveway. The southern fields will be accessible via an easement on a separate shared driveway that is not yet built. The main campus has utilities, but neither water nor electricity has yet been extended to the fields. Fencing and storage is also not yet in place. We are willing to explore all of these once we know the specific needs of the farmers. We hope to build a bike path that would connect the farm to the west side of town.

Housing Overview

There is not yet housing available on the farm, though we are interested in exploring this possibility. Yellow Springs has some housing options for rent, including apartments on the western side of town. There are also houses for sale, including several by an affordable housing agency called Home Inc., which sells to income-eligible applicants. More and cheaper housing may be available in Fairborn, a larger town 7 miles to the west.

Market Overview

In the future, Community Solutions intends to open an organic seed & feed, where in addition to selling various seeds, amendments, and livestock feed, we would like to sell goods from local organic farmers. We also hope that some farmers may be interested in forming a cooperative. The Yellow Springs Farmer's Market is very popular for a town of its size and the surrounding towns have farmers markets of their own. Several area restaurants already buy ingredients from local farmers and a food hub in Cincinnati is looking to expand to the Dayton area. There are a handful of established local organic farms who produce mainly vegetables, chicken, pork, beef, and eggs.

Responsibilities

The farmer will:

- Agree to and pass a background check.
- Sign a lease. Prices and terms to be determined.
- Be responsible for all farming tasks and expenses.
- Operate the farm using organic methods.
- Abide by the terms of the lease. Failure to abide by the terms will result in default and we may terminate the lease.

Proposal

Please answer the following questions on a separate page. Limit your answers to no more than 2,000 total words (4 pages single-spaced), but feel free to attach supporting documents (i.e. resume, detailed business plan, photos of your current or prior farm).

Name(s):

Current Address:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

1. Do you have farming experience? (where, when, how long, what types, what responsibilities)
2. Do you have business management experience? (where, when, how long, what responsibilities)
3. What agricultural products would you produce on the land?
4. What percentage of your products would be sold to local markets?
5. How many acres would you prefer to lease?
6. What fixed infrastructure would you need for your operations? (i.e. fencing, irrigation, electricity, storage, road access for vehicles and equipment)
7. When would you prefer to begin your farming operation?
8. Do you have access to the necessary equipment and funds to start your farm business?
9. Do you have a business plan of how you intend to sell your products and earn a profit? How would you summarize your plan and what do you hope to achieve?
10. How would your farming practices maintain or improve the soil?
11. Would you be willing to collaborate with agricultural educators and researchers from time to time? (i.e. a class of students visiting the farm or a scientist interested in collecting data)
12. Have you been to Yellow Springs before?
13. Why are you interested in this farming opportunity?
14. Why do you think we should consider you for this farming opportunity?