



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
NEW YORK STATE FARMERS' MARKET RESILIENCY DATA COLLECTION PROJECT

Buffalo Place is accepting proposals for market survey/interviews services as part of a New York Department of Agriculture and Markets Farmer's Market Resiliency grant.

I. COMPANY & INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Buffalo Place Inc., together with its affiliate organization, Buffalo Place Foundation, is the not-for-profit corporation founded to manage the 24-block Downtown core surrounding Buffalo's pedestrian mall. Incorporated in 1971 as Downtown Buffalo Management Corporation, Buffalo Place has been staffed since 1983 to provide a variety of services to the Downtown community. Although the organization has been involved in a number of activities to date, most have focused on maintenance, promotion, access, security, and planning. We strive to make Downtown Buffalo clean, safe, and fun.

Buffalo Place Inc. oversees the Downtown Country Market. The Downtown Country Market has operated for 41 years in the heart of Downtown Buffalo. The market runs on Thursdays, between 10am-2:30pm for 20 weeks (June through mid-October). Buffalo Place took over administration of the market in 1983 from former civic organization Working for Downtown. With short sojourns to adjacent blocks to avoid construction, the market location has been on Main Street between Eagle and Court Street. This had been the busiest pedestrian crossing point Downtown, but neighboring retail buildings have gone vacant, resulting in much less sidewalk activity.

The 2023 market season began June 8th and runs through October 12th. Buffalo Place oversees the Double Up Food Bucks initiative at the Market in partnership with Field & Fork Network. Double Up Food Bucks matches fruit and vegetable purchases when a SNAP/EBT card is used. At its peak in the early 2000's, the market attracted 30 vendors and Buffalo Place kept a waiting list of interested vendors who could not fit in the available space. Eight total vendors are participating in the 2023 season. They are a mix of farmers and producers of other items including roasted nuts, sauces, cider, and soap.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVE, SCOPE OF SERVICES NEEDED

Buffalo Place Inc. has been awarded a New York State Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant for the Downtown Country Market. This is a first time grant for the State of New York, offered in partnership with the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets. The grant was awarded to several Farmers' Markets across New York State to enhance food system resiliency.

We are seeking data to guide an operational redesign of the Downtown County Market. Our objective is to become a viable, successful market for both the farmers and vendors, the Downtown population including employees, residents, and visitors. Data from the project will be used to provide useful, actionable information to guide refocus of the Market and secure its ongoing operation into the future. Data will also build constructive contacts with customers and vendors to encourage increase in customer and vendor participation and sales (traditional business to consumer and Double Up Food Bucks). In an effort to procure data to assist with operational adjustment decision-making, Buffalo Place was approved to contract for service the administration of surveys with several audiences in Western New York.

We are particularly interested in receiving proposals from Minority-Owned, Women-Owned and Veteran-Owned businesses to help us meet our New York State goals. This project has a goal of 15% of grant funds to Minority Owned Businesses, 15% to Women Owned Businesses and 6% for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOB).

III. PROJECT COMPONENTS

The project will include three concurrent project components. Companies responding to this RFP can opt to respond to any of the individual components, or up to all three components. Please be sure to include which components you are including as a part of your proposal.

Component 1 – Interviews with Farmer Vendors: We are looking for information from current and former Downtown Country Market vendors, and other Farmer Vendors at other local markets. Consultant will help conduct qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews of farmer vendors to gather firsthand information. Buffalo Place is looking for insights on:

- How to secure additional farm vendors, the lack of whom we consider our most serious problem
- Considering alternate market locations on Main Street in Downtown, or alternate days and times of market to ensure success
- Viability of providing new services to attract more farmers, such as delivery service or farm share distribution, or coordination with other farmer/grower groups to attract new farmers to the market

Component 2: Survey of Downtown Residents and Employees – We are looking to gain insight from Downtown residents and downtown employees to learn more about how to rejuvenate the Downtown Country Market operation. Survey questions will be developed in coordination with Buffalo Place staff. Buffalo Place has an extensive database of contacts and will work with selected consultant to reach out to downtown residents and businesses. Information hoped to be gathered from the survey include:

- Information about how the market is perceived by Downtown residents and employees
- Information on post-COVID workforce patterns, including information on who is working downtown, hybrid work schedules, etc
- Recommendations for how the market can be reconfigured to respond to the needs of customers
- Strengths and weaknesses of the market
- Needs of customers in the area, both residents and employees
- Considering alternate market locations on Main Street in Downtown, or alternate days and times of market to ensure success
- Viability of new services to attract new customers, such as delivery service or farm share distribution

Component 3: Survey of Nearby Residents – We are looking to gain insight from nearby residents in neighborhoods just beyond the Central Business District, particularly in neighborhoods which have less access to fresh food. While Buffalo Place has extensive knowledge about the Downtown district, we are looking for a consultant with knowledge of the neighborhoods and a clear plan for distribution to assure adequate responses from these other neighborhoods. We are hoping to learn if there is a way the Downtown Country Market can provide a resource to those neighborhoods and any market adjustments that can help meet the needs of the neighbors.

IV. BUDGET DETAILS

The budget breakdown is as follows:

Component One – Interviews with Downtown Farmers: \$10,000

Component Two – Survey of Downtown Residents and Employees: \$15,000

Component Three – Survey of Nearby Residents: \$7,500

V. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Outline of qualifications and experience of project team
2. Overview of existing company data collection processes and protocols
3. Workplan and Schedule
4. Explanation of company data review techniques
5. Overview of previous successful Western New York data collection projects
6. Project costs breakdown and billing method outline
7. References of clients on similar projects
8. Details of any appropriate certifications/listings, such as M/WBE, etc

VI. PROJECT TIMELINE:

In order to inform adjustments to the operations of the Downtown Country Market, we anticipate project will begin in October and selected company shall complete data collection, review, and provide recommendations to Buffalo Place Inc. by January 12, 2024.

VII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Weighted scoring will be used to select an agency for the data collection project. Review of submissions will be performed by Buffalo Place personnel. Review criteria will include:

Qualifications and experience of project team	25%
Demonstrated understanding of scope of work and suggested approach to project	35%
Capacity to perform work within scheduled and budget	30%
References and testimonials	10%

VIII. QUESTIONS

Questions may be submitted via email to Jackie Jonmaire (jjonmaire@buffaloplace.com) on or before Tuesday, September 19, 2023. Questions will be answered within two (2) business days of receipt.

IX. DEADLINE FOR RECEIVING BIDS

Proposals are due on or before the end of business (5pm) on Tuesday October 3, 2023 Email or mail completed copies of your proposal to Jackie Jonmaire (jjonmaire@buffaloplace.com), Manager of Marketing, Buffalo Place Inc. 671 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203

X. TIMELINE FOR PROPOSAL SELECTION

Buffalo Place will select the most advantageous proposal based on evaluation factors set forth in this RFP. Each proposal must satisfy the objectives and requirements detailed in this RFP. Successful respondents shall be determined by an evaluation of the total content of the proposal submitted. Buffalo Place reserves the right not to select any of the proposals for award.

All applicants will be notified of decision made by Buffalo Place on or before Friday, October 13, 2023.

Thank you for your interest in working with Buffalo Place Inc.