



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER ADAM H. PUTNAM

Request for Information for Merchant Services to implement an Electronic Benefits Transfer for a Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Process
RFI/FNW-16/17-53
Due Date: JANUARY 13, 2017 @ 12:00 P.M.

THIS IS **NOT** A REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE BID OR REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL AND NO CONTRACT WILL BE AWARDED IN RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness (FNW), hereby releases this Request for Information (RFI) to collect information on potential technology solutions in order to provide mobile electronic benefits transfer (EBT) processing for the “*Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)*”, the “*Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)*” and the *WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (WIC FVV)*. Pursuant to Section 287.012(21) Florida Statutes, FDACS is requesting information from qualified vendors concerning certain services. Please note that under Chapter 287.012(21) Florida Statutes, responses to this request are not offers and may not be accepted by FDACS to form a binding contract.

The table below includes program data for the state agencies in the Southeast Region who are interested in an electronic solution for these programs. In addition to the data below, WIC FVV redemptions average \$2 million dollars per month for the state of Florida.

Agency	FMNP program		SFMNP program	
	Number of recipients	Benefits issued	Number of recipients	Benefits issued
Alabama	7,496	\$149,920	57,988	\$1,739,640
Choctaw	967	\$29,010	687	\$34,350
Florida	17,662	\$353,240	2,468	\$98,720
Georgia	27,040	\$811,200	10,793	\$215,860
Kentucky	5,296	\$105,920	11,445	\$320,460
Mississippi	6,871	\$137,420	4,100	\$102,500
North Carolina	9,651	\$231,624	3,555	\$74,655
South Carolina	15,193	\$379,825	22,969	\$574,225
Tennessee	8,403	\$168,060	14,474	\$506,590

PURPOSE:

This Request for Information (RFI) is an information gathering effort to learn of information technology solutions available to take two separate but similar nutritional programs from a manual process to an electronic, mobile and paperless process that provides virtually real-time merchant services to all parties

involved. This new process would likely need to include a debit type of card (or its equivalent) for merchant service(s) type of transactions.

BACKGROUND:

The scope of this effort includes three nutritional programs,

1. WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program;
2. Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program;
3. WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers.

The FMNP was established to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants and to expand the awareness, use of and sales at farmers’ markets.

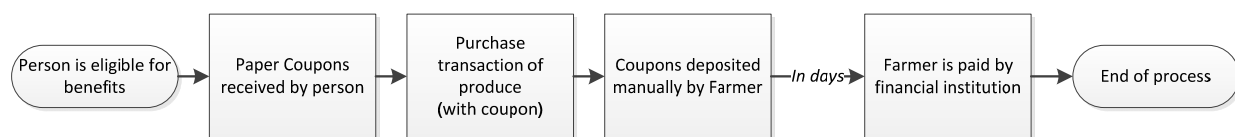
The SFMNP was established to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers’ markets, roadside stands and community-supported agriculture programs.

These programs are handled manually by exchanging paper coupons from the benefit recipients to the participating farmers (processed much like a check in financial institutions with rules associated), see Diagram 1 below. Additionally, the FMNP is managed by FDACS, and the SFMNP is managed by the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA). More information on the DOEA managed SFMNP is available at http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/farmers_market.php. The Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC is managed by the Department of Health (DOH). The Florida WIC program began electronic processing in 2013 and has a login page at <https://www.ebtedge.com/gov/portal/CardholderLogon.do>.

The WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV) provides WIC participants with the ability to purchase fruits and vegetables through their prescribed WIC food package. CVVs can take various different forms such as the paper-based voucher, an automated solution like one of the multiple card technologies currently in use in the commercial environment today or another electronic process, such as electronic coupons.

Diagram 1:

TODAY – FMNP/SFMNP PROGRAM (a simplified process flowchart):



DESIRED SOLUTION:

In the desired solution, there would be two types of EBT accounts to manage that includes the FMNP and the SFMNP mentioned above.

A summary of the functionality needed in a proposed solution(s), or system(s) include the following for both programs where not indicated otherwise:

1. The ability to establish and assign an individual recipient either a FMNP or a SFMNP electronic benefits transfer (EBT) account using a debit type of card (or equivalent means)

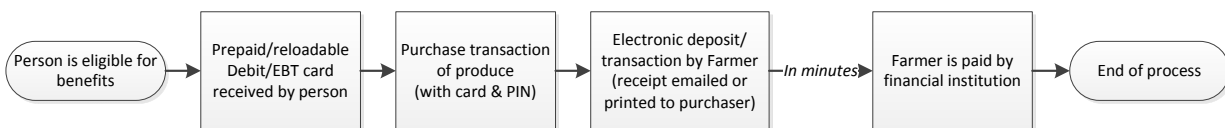
for the identification of that account. These would be two separate cards since the benefits recipients are of two different citizen groupings.

2. The ability to record participating farmers and ability to uniquely identify each to the system.
3. Inquire of benefit balances that are specified by an identification number and/or personal identification number (PIN) by the benefit recipient.
4. The ability to process EBT monetary redemptions for the FMNP and SFMNP by the participating and authorized farmer, resulting in the sale of the produce/products to the benefits recipient.
5. The ability to interface with appropriate EBT and accounting programs to enable authorized farmers to report their redemption activity electronically and receive credit for that activity.
6. The ability for the farmer to receive the electronic transactional payment directly into their individual financial institution or possibly their reloadable debit card account.
7. The ability to potentially interface or partner with the Florida DOH's WIC computer EBT identification card, since the benefits recipient for FMNP should also be an eligible WIC client.

These two accounts would closely follow the same basic steps of the process shown in Diagram 2 below.

Diagram 2:

FUTURE - FMNP/SFMNP PROGRAM (a simplified process flowchart):



The requested information for a solution should include the following detailed functionality at a minimum:

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) EBT Solution

1. An application or webpage application that will accommodate FMNP requirements for processing.
2. The application will need to work utilizing cellular data and/or over Wi-Fi to accommodate farmers' market sites in remote locations.
3. To handle transactional processes that are equivalent to and/or in support of the current WIC data systems required to support this new FMNP EBT process.
4. Provide appropriate messages to users of the system/solution.
5. Generate reports on devices to support required FMNP EBT reporting and interactions. Required reporting includes real time benefit issuance data and real time benefit redemption data.
6. A plan to develop and present necessary FMNP EBT training for the new software through written materials, in-person training and WebEx presentations as appropriate.
7. Facilitate the external interfacing systems to accept and respond to EBT transaction processing requests
8. The availability of providing technical assistance and support after the implementation of such a solution.

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) – EBT Solution

1. An application or webpage application that will accommodate requirements for SFMNP processing.
2. The application will need to work utilizing cellular data and/or over Wi-Fi to accommodate farmers' market sites in remote locations.
3. To handle transactional processes required to support this new SFMNP EBT process.
4. Provide appropriate messages to users of the system/solution.
5. Generate reports on devices to support required SFMNP EBT reporting and interactions. Required reporting includes real time benefit issuance data and real time benefit redemption data.
6. A plan to develop and present necessary SFMNP EBT training for the new software through written materials, in-person training and WebEx presentations as appropriate. The availability of providing technical assistance and support after the implementation of such a solution.

Technical requirements and support for both programs include the following:

1. Security and encryption configured for the process as recommended and/or required by law, regulation or rule.
2. Merchant and settlement reporting to accommodate for EBT financial reconciliation reports.
3. List recommended mobile devices and/or equipment needed by parties involved to complete the transaction(s).

WIC Cash Value Vouchers (CVV)

1. Establish authorization for the processor to transact business with the WIC EBT provider.
2. Connect with the WIC EBT system through wireless remote network access using appropriate internet protocols.
3. Read and validate the WIC EBT card number of a participant's card.
4. Process a dollar balance inquiry.
5. Process the redemption of a product for a dollar value.
6. Produce the appropriate transaction messages to be exchanged with the WIC EBT provider to validate the redemption.

Responses to this RFI should include estimated costs to implement the proposed system as outlined above. Cost estimations should include those costs necessary in order to procure, modify and implement all software and/or hardware components required of the system. Technical infrastructure components (i.e., database and/or application servers, as well as database and/or application software) should all be identified but need not be priced. "Cloud sourcing" where software, services, data storage and/or hardware are held/managed by the vendor are an option provided initial and recurring costs to the FDACS are clearly identified. All recurring costs, on an annualized basis, must be identified.

A list of additional helpful information is available at the following web site links:

- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/wic-farmers-market-nutrition-program-fmnp>;
- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/regulations>;
- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FMNPRegulations-7CFR248.pdf>;
- <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Food-Nutrition-and-Wellness/Administering-Your-Nutrition-Program/WIC-Farmers-Market-Nutrition-Program/WIC-Farmers-Market-Nutrition-Program-FAQ>;

- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/ebt-rules-regulations>;
- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/general-electronic-benefit-transfer-ebt-information>;
- <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access-florida-food-medical-assistance-cash/welcome-ebt>.

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE RFI:

1. This is a **RFI** only and should not be construed as an intent, commitment or promise to purchase any of the proposed services presented by vendors.
2. FDACS will not be obligated to any vendor as a result of this RFI. FDACS is not obligated for any cost incurred by vendors in the preparation of their response to this RFI. FDACS will not pay for any information herein requested nor be liable for any costs incurred by the vendor. For economy of presentation, special bindings, colored displays, promotional materials and the like are not required, but if they are presented, FDACS will not be responsible for this cost.
3. This RFI is being submitted strictly for the purpose of gaining knowledge of services available on the market for the provision of these services, related services and options available.
4. The vendor is required to provide prices or cost estimates for any solutions proposed. The figures provided are not binding to the company.
5. The pricing and costs will assist FDACS in developing our initial strategy and planning for these services, related services and desirable options.
6. From the information collected through this RFI, FDACS will review all information and options related to the services and desirable options.
7. All information obtained shall become the property of FDACS, upon receipt, and will not be returned. FDACS cannot guarantee that it will not be compelled to disclose all or part of any public record under the Florida Sunshine Law.
8. FDACS also invites vendors to submit any pertinent information that FDACS should consider, including topics that were not included in this RFI.
9. FDACS requests that all vendors submit replies that are short, clear, concise and complete.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- A. Listed below are the important actions and dates/times by which the actions must be taken or completed. If FDACS finds it necessary to change any of these fixed dates/times, an addendum will be issued.

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
December 7, 2016	RFI advertised and released.
January 4, 2017	Written questions due to FDACS's purchasing director by 2:00 p.m. Questions can be faxed to (850) 617-7190, or emailed to Salena.Yarbrough@FreshFromFlorida.com. No questions will be received after this date.
January 6, 2017	FDACS's written response to any questions reviewed will be posted as an addendum.
January 13, 2017 @ 12:00 p.m.	Responses to the RFI <u>must be received</u> by FDACS by this date and time. Responses will be opened at FDACS's Purchasing Office, SB-8, Mayo Building, 407 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0800.

- B. Number of Copies

One (1) original and three (3) duplicate copies of the response must be completed and submitted to the purchasing office in accordance with the response deadlines stated herein. The original must contain an original signature of an official of the potential service provider who is authorized to bind the service provider to the response (in blue ink).

NOTE: Responses are due by January 13, 2017 @ 12:00 p.m. at the following location:

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Attention: Salena Yarbrough
SB-8, Mayo Building
407 South Calhoun Street
Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0800