

Farmers Market EBT Advisory Group
December 12, 2013

Welcome from Jan Walters

Info on FNS RFP for EBT Technical Assistance from Rogelio Carrasco:

- Bidders had to identify markets and farmers that were eligible, recruit them to participate, provide tech assistance, take them through authorization process.
- Winning bidder was NAFMNP, over 20 years of experience dealing with farmers markets. Dealt with FNS on WIC and Senior FMNP. Using their expertise to carry out the SNAP mission in addition to WIC objectives.
- Kickoff meeting in early November. Still working on finalizing their plan. Will go live January 15th. Many details still to be resolved. Will create a website that eligible farmers and markets can go to, where they can find out if they're eligible, and sign up.
- Folks that want to participate in SNAP will have an avenue to do so.
- Generally speaking, NAFMNP will make materials available to folks at state and local levels.
- They'll do trainings and presentations at conferences.

Dave from Missouri Dept. of Social Services: Concerns on melding the programs - states deal with different vendors. Will NAFMNP plans meld with existing state plans? Can see that there will be competing programs.

Pam from West Virginia: Would like to have a strategy so that they aren't stepping on each others toes, and the states can still spend their money.

Rogelio: Info has been sent out to folks letting them know that its ongoing. State Depts. of Ag have received a letter that this contract has occurred. Each state is doing its own thing at the moment. Each state will have to work out how they will work with NAFMNP to draw down all funds.

Pam: I would think we'd want to find a way to get the state funds spent.

Rogelio: If the state wants to work with the contractor to use the state funds first, that can be done.

Pam: Some sort of coordination needs to happen. Apparently I'm not getting these letters.

Rogelio: State SNAP agencies should be receiving the letters.

Jan: I would like to know whether or not NAFMNP is allowed to hire administrative or support staff, I know in the past when I have tried to contact them, I don't get a response back. I don't know why that is happening, but I hope that they've hired support staff to deal with the increased calls and emails.

Rogelio: There will be an email address and phone number specifically for this. Right now there's a number, but it's still an adhoc solution. I'll be sure to let them know that that's a concern and be sure they stay on top of that.

Daniel in IL: National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs- where is this 20 year history coming from? Their 990 doesn't show any activity beyond 2010.

Rogelio: Not sure what a 990 says. They have experience running WIC FMNP for many years.

XXX: Can the site provide courtesy links to websites and nonprofits to be directly referred to state information?

Rogelio: That's something we can look into and talk about. Something that I can point out.

Diana in NC: Now with the new money coming down -- existing money and state agency -- two funding sources exist. We want to use state money before using new money, correct?

Rogelio: Yes.

XX: Should states do something to initiate the new contract? Or do we continue to do what we're currently doing?

Rogelio: The letter will discuss how the states should get in touch with the contractors, and how they can connect at conferences, etc. In terms of what states should do with the money -- in cases where states say they're not going to use the funds, they won't get used. In other states that wanted to use the funds but had challenges, by all means, use the state funds. Important thing is that markets enter the program, and that recipients have access to more, fresh, healthy foods.

At the end of the day, more SNAP recipients will be able to swipe their cards and walk away with local produce, and a farmer will benefit as well.

Laura Wendall: Will new farmers be eligible if there are no one else offering SNAP at the market?

Rogelio: Yes, the eligibility requirements are the same. Farmers only need to sell at one market where no one else is offering SNAP in order to be eligible. The important thing is to expand the footprint. If there are two or three farmers at a market that is not currently participating in SNAP, as long as they all submit their applications at about the same time, then multiple farmers can get machines.

XX: State office is often overwhelmed and farmers markets are a small issue for them. What's the best way for me to stay in touch with all that's happening with this -- I probably won't be in the loop with the letter you'll send out.

Rogelio: NAFMNP will have a new website separate from their existing one.

XX: My concern is that the NAFMNP might contact the state, and they might not do anything, and I want to be sure I'm able to connect.

Rogelio: Ask to be put on distribution lists. When we go public, we intend to be very public.

Jan: Will you send it to me, so we can get it out to this group?

Rogelio: Yes, we'll be distributing info as widely as possible.

Stacy: Intended timeframe for rollout? (January 16th) We have a lot of members that have been asking who to contact at NAFMNP for conferences. As the conferences are being planned, is there a point person that these organizations can talk to?

Rogelio: Amy Crone: Info@marketlink.org or [\(443\) 212 8084](tel:4432128084)

This is an interim/urgent contact person. If you can hold off, there will be benefits to waiting to January.

Pam: A lot of the conferences start in January, so we have a major farmers conference that goes on in February. It would be a perfect venue for this info.

Kay in Missouri: How many services will they be offering? Through purchasing, we had to a memorandum agreement with markets and then with FIS, and there's a limited # of service fees we can cover. Will we be in competition with the NAFMNP?

Rogelio: Yes, if these folks can offer a better deal than the current contractor, then it will spur other contractors to offer a better deal. If they come out and offer longer terms, I don't know that there's an easy answer for that.

Cory from IL: New \$4 million, was any of that able to be allocated for promotion of EBT at the market?

Rogelio: The \$4million is only for technology. We were able to get funding elsewhere to cover administrative costs.

Jan: The administrative fees you're talking about are those that NAFMNP will be spending, not administrative money that markets have access to, correct?

Rogelio: Yes

XX: Will Jan be the point person for this effort?

Jan: Yes, Rogelio has been very good about sharing info, to be sure that every time I'm notified about something, I send it out.

Jan: Is NAFMNP bringing on any staff with SNAP background and experience?

Rogelio: Yes, Diane Eggert is part of their team. Don Wambles, out of Alabama, Amy Crone, out of state of Maryland. That's their higher level team.

Jan: We talked about how they're gonna develop a website and have someone designated for marketing. Reiterating how do we get farmer and markets get to a point where they'll complete an application. We know that farmers may get an application and walk them through the application process.

Rogelio: I've been using the term full spectrum technical assistance. There's folks who need assistance all the way through. Also assistance after they get the equipment. Once you get down to administering SNAP program, that will be the market responsibility.

Karen: Is there a particular type of machine or merchant that they have to deal with?

Rogelio: They will definitely have some providers.

Jan: Hopefully they'll be using multiple vendors. There could be a vendor or two or out there, that offer proprietary equipment. We want to be sure people have the flexibility to use the equipment with different provider.

Karen from WA: Whether NAFMNP has identified what states will they be working in, will they be working with anyone from Washington State. What's the outreach strategy?

Rogelio: in terms of what states will be operating in, this is a nationwide effort -- in every state. Venture to guess that they don't have specific plans for each state yet. The only way that they can figure that out is by talking to the state. Online training, webinar, conference call, or other methods.

Frank from MA: Ask for clarification, back in November at the EBT conference, FNS has discussion with state agencies around the allocation of the specific funds. Definition of equipment expanded to include markets that have been awarded equipment in the past and are unable to use that equipment anymore. What equipment does it cover? Is it possible to support markets that have had connectivity problems so they could properly utilize the machines they have. The funds are restricted to new markets only.

Karen from WA: In Washington State, I know there are markets that got wired machines that need wireless.

Rogelio: This funding is only for markets that were previously eligible.

Jan: I hope that some of the merchant providers on the call - they're developing new, cheaper technology out there that could help these markets.

Rogelio: Exactly. There's new technology and providers all the time. Two paths: are you eligible path, and not eligible path. There will be options and resources available to you.

Next call is 3:00pm EST January 9th. Jan may not be available, and will find someone to moderate.