

## 1. What is Discretionary Funding?

Discretionary funding is a duly-appropriated sum of money in the Town's expense budget allocated to an eligible not-for-profit organization by the Selectboard and approved at Town Meeting.

## 2. What Types of Organizations May Receive Discretionary Funds?

Discretionary funds may only be allocated to not-for-profit; community-based social services providers. In order to receive discretionary funds directly, an organization must be incorporated as a not-for-profit and registered with the State of Vermont., unless exempt and have a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN).

## 3. What Types of Organizations May Not Receive Discretionary Funds?

For-profit entities may not receive discretionary funds, except when the primary non profit contractor subcontracts with a for-profit entity as part of the delivery of services. Such subcontracts, however, must be only an ancillary part of the program to be funded, not the primary basis for the discretionary award, and must be approved by the contracting agency.

## 4. What are the Restrictions on the Use of Discretionary Funds?

All public funds, however awarded, must be used for a Town purpose. In general, a Town purpose is defined as an activity or service that is open to all members of the public, regardless of race, creed, gender, religious affiliation, etc., without restriction, and which does not promote a particular religion.

Programs and services provided by religious or religiously-affiliated organization must be able to demonstrate that the program is open to non-members, is not a religious program, and does not promote the religion.

Closed membership groups, which are those to which membership is restricted or subject to eligibility based upon prohibited factors, may generally not receive funding.

Groups that serve a particular population, for example, those age 65 and above in a particular community; are not considered a closed membership group, as long as the program is open and accessible to all seniors in the community. Similarly, tenant organizations in public housing may also receive funding, as long as they provide equal access to all residents of the public housing units they serve.

Funds may only be allocated for a public purpose and may not support political activities and private interests.

## 5. How to Apply for Discretionary Funding?

All organizations that wish to receive discretionary funding must submit a "Request for Special Appropriations" application to the Town Manager. The application elicits information about an organization's experience, qualifications, and integrity, and the project or service for which the organizations is requesting support. The form is available on the Town website by clicking on BOARDS & MEETINGS > SELECTBOARD then scroll down to FY25 Budget and "FY25 Discretionary Funding Policy-for applicants" or by emailing Duncan Wardwell, Assistant to the Town Manager, at:

[dwardwell@richmondvt.gov](mailto:dwardwell@richmondvt.gov). Deadline for submission is the end of the day, October 2, 2023.

Town of Richmond

**Request for Special Appropriations**

**Request for Fiscal Year: 2025**

Organization's Name: Richmond Farmers Market  
Address: PO Box 806  
City, State, Zip: Richmond, VT 05477  
Website address: [www.richmondfarmersmarketvt.org](http://www.richmondfarmersmarketvt.org)

**A. GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. Program Name: Richmond Farmers Market

2. Contact Person/Title: Stephanie Choate

Telephone Number: 802-363-2822

E-mail address: choate.stephanie@gmail.com

3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program: It's very difficult to track how many people attend the market, but we estimate 500-900 people come through each week. This year, we had a total of more than 80 vendors rotating throughout the year.

4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: 42 percent of residents

Please, attach any documentation that supports this number.

For two weeks in 2020 we invited market attendees to share their town of residence. Based on information collected, slightly less than half were from Richmond.

Percent of people served who are Town residents:

Estimated 42 percent, based on 2020 survey. In 2023, 17 of our 80 rotating vendors are from Richmond. One of our two anchor produce farms is a Richmond farm, two meat and dairy farms are from Richmond, and two of our prepared food vendors are from Richmond, one of them run by Richmond high school students. Many other vendors are either former Richmond residents or from close neighboring towns, including Huntington, Bolton, Duxbury, Hinesburg, Williston, Jericho and more.

5. Amount of Request: \$2,500

6. Total Program Budget: \$13850 Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond:

18%

7. Please state or attach the mission of your agency: We are dedicated to strengthening the direct connection between producers and consumers by providing an inclusive space for all members of the community to convene over and celebrate local food, artisanal crafts, music and more.

8. Funding will be used to:

X Maintain an existing program     Expand an Existing Program  
 Start a new program

9. Has your organization received funds from the Town in the past for this or a similar program?      In FY23 and FY24 we received \$1,500 from the town of Richmond. In FY22 we received \$400 from the town Recreation Department. In the past, the town of Richmond has been a market sponsor for generally \$200 - \$400 per year. These were one-time sponsorships from town departments, not part of the town budget.

If yes, please answer the following:

a. Does the amount of your request represent an increase over your previous appropriation? If yes, explain the reason(s) for the increase.

     Yes. We are asking for an additional \$1,000.

The cost of living has increased drastically in the last three years, and the market and all those involved are feeling increased financial pressure.

We are asking for an increase primarily to cover the rising administrative and programming costs that come with a strengthened farmers market. As more customers and vendors come to the market, more administrative time is needed from market staff. In order to keep the market secure and sustainable, we need to offer a competitive rate to cover the increased labor required. As the demand for workers and the cost of living continue to increase, we are feeling the pressure in our ability to retain a high-level manager and pay them a fair stipend for the service they provide to residents and visitors.

We have also seen skyrocketing EBT and other food security programs used at our market this year, due to increased pandemic benefits and rising financial hardship in our community. With two markets to go, EBT spending has nearly doubled over last year's figures and nearly tripled 2021's numbers. The market is a major resource for those using these important funding assets, and that means more work from market staff and more resources are required to keep up with the increased demand from those using benefits at the market.

We also want to maintain the free family-friendly programming and entertainment we provide for the entire community — live music, kids events, climate change awareness events, town group representation, and more. Musicians and other entertainment providers often need higher fees to keep up with the increasing cost of living, and we want to ensure that this community

asset remains strong as costs rise across the board.

With the extreme flooding this year and expected increase in extreme weather events, we also want to make sure we have adequate funding for conditions that come up due to these events, like additional signage and advertising if the market needs to change locations.

b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? \_\_\_\_

If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## **B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### 1. Statement of Need:

Identify the issue or need that the program will address (use statistical data to justify the need for the program). To what extent does this need, or problem exist in the Town of Richmond?

A strong farmers market is an asset to any town. We provide access to fresh, healthy foods for all locals, strengthening our agricultural economy and local food systems and connecting residents with local producers. In addition, we provide access to local produce for food-insecure Vermonters. Vermonters can swipe their EBT cards at the market and triple their benefits through the state's Crop Cash and new Crop Cash Plus program. In 2021, the farmers market secured grant funding to run a program to increase those benefits. In 2022 and 2023, the board committed to continuing the increase benefits program through a mix of Crop Cash and market funding. Eligible Vermonters can also use Farm to Family coupons at the market, using the state program that aims to get local produce into the hands of families who need it. Food security program use has risen steadily since 2019. In 2022 (our last year of complete figures), Vermonters in need used a total of \$7,184 in food security benefits — up from \$4,769 in 2021 and \$3439 in 2020 — largely due to expanded effort to raise awareness and the market's matching program. While we do not yet have complete figures for 2023, the trend has continued exponentially. With two markets still to go this year, EBT customer purchases in dollars are more than double (215 percent) 2022 levels, and almost triple (283 percent) 2021 levels. In addition, Crop Cash and Crop Cash Plus purchases are currently over triple (326 percent) 2022 levels, and over 7 times (712 percent) 2021 levels.

The market also provides economic opportunity for local businesses and entrepreneurs, creating a solid vending space for established small businesses and an incubator space for new ones. In 2023 we welcomed 16 businesses in their first year, including several from Richmond. This year, we have 17 Richmond-based businesses, including three farms and two prepared food vendors. Other vendors are former Richmond residents who still feel connected to the community, or vendors who chose the Richmond Farmers Market specifically because their products are for sale in Richmond stores. The market also draws nearly 60 percent of its clientele from other towns, many of whom visit other Richmond businesses after they visit the market. Local kids can also have a free booth at the market to flex their entrepreneurial skills. We had seven youth booths this year.

We also provide a safe, inclusive social space for residents. The opportunity to shop outside in a safely distanced environment has been crucial in the past several years, especially as Covid waves have resurfaced this summer.. Many families attend the market as a family outing, and others catch up with friends and neighbors while there. It's also a safe space for young Richmond residents to recreate, exercise on the playground while their parents shop, and try new healthy food. Many come with their parents, or even walk straight to the market after school. Fall afternoons at the market are full of kids! We also welcome many seniors who shop regularly at the market. People of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds gather and socialize at the market.

We also provide free entertainment for all ages, bringing local bands to perform every week. Many of these performers are Richmond residents. We have also provided childrens' activities like juggling and crafts, and a cider press and fall events for families, a grain milling demonstration, and more. The social and entertainment aspects of the market boost Richmond's desirability as a whole — we often see the farmers market listed as an asset of the town in real estate listings.

In addition, we provide a space for other local groups and community organizations to reach out to residents and share their missions through our free Community Booth offering. In 2023, we hosted the Richmond Climate Action Committee, the Community Senior Center, the Richmond Free Library, Richmond Cub Scouts, community organization Walk to Shop, WIC's Farm to Family program, DCF Foster Parenting representatives, FEMA, an electric car show, and more. In recent years, we've also held a First Responder Day, giving locals a chance to connect with the Richmond Police Department, Fire Department, and Richmond Rescue. We've also hosted UVM's Expanded Food & Nutrition Program, a locally organized e-bike test ride program, Richmond Racial Justice Committee, Spectrum Youth and Family Services, the Richmond Historical Society, the Williston-Richmond Rotary, the Richmond Housing Committee, a community art project with Radiate Artspace, Richmond's ARPA fund representatives, PTOs and school boards, Halloween on the Green, and voter awareness groups.

## 2. Program Summary:

a. Identify the target/recipients of program services. Specify the number of Town residents your program will serve during the fiscal year and explain the basis upon which this number is calculated. Indicate any eligibility requirements your program has with respect to age, gender, income or residence.

Our target recipients are all residents of Richmond and surrounding towns, plus any tourists or visitors. All are welcome!

Exact numbers are extremely tricky, but if we estimate on the low end that 5,000 unique people come through the market during the course of our 20-week season and 42 percent of those are Richmond residents, the market serves 2,100 residents. That's in addition to the Richmond businesses, local kids who have a Youth Booth, and Richmond organizations who have a Community Booth.

The market has no eligibility requirements, whether to attend or vend. We do occasionally have to waitlist or turn away vendors if their products overlap too much with an existing

vendor.

b. Identify what is to be accomplished or what change will occur from participating in the program. How will people be better off as a result of participating in the program? Describe the steps you take to make the project known to the public, and make the program accessible and inclusive?

Town residents who attend or vend at the market can benefit from all the benefits we provide for the community listed above — access to fresh, local food; economic opportunity for and connection to local businesses and entrepreneurs; a safe, inclusive social space for all; free entertainment and events; and a space for local organizations and groups to share their missions with residents.

We promote the market each week through an email list, social media channels, signage, direct connection with town groups and residents, newspaper articles, flyers in local businesses and especially places intended to reach those with EBT benefits, and Front Porch Forum.

### 3. Program Funding:

a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e., funds will provide “X” amount of units of service.)\_

Town funds will be used to cover our fixed operating costs and entertainment that we provide for free for the town Richmond. Our operating costs are the non-negotiable, bare-bones costs of running the market: manager stipends; insurance; the town’s park use fee; farmers market membership fee; website and domain name costs; EBT equipment processing fees; administration costs for the markets various programs and events; and supplies such as signs. We’ve cut everything we possibly can from these. Vendor fees cover most of these costs, but always fall short of the total cost of operating the market. The difference must be made up through fundraising. Entertainment includes live music every week, in addition to programming and events for children and for residents of all ages.

In addition, we hope to use town funds to ensure we can provide at minimum a \$15/hour stipend for our manager. Our main source of funding — vendor fees — is somewhat variable, and this support would help us retain skilled, driven individuals even in a challenging season. A market cannot happen without a manager. Our manager is the face of the market, and by extension, of Richmond, to both attendees and vendors. As the demand for workers and the cost of living continue to increase, we are feeling the pressure in our ability to retain a high-level manager and pay them a fair stipend for the service they provide to residents and visitors. Increased funding from the town would help us to stabilize this area of our budget and make the market more secure.

b. List the other agencies to whom you are submitting a request for funds for this program and the amount requested. How would this program be modified should revenues be lost?

Farmers markets often operate on a shoestring budget where boards must fundraise in order to bring in enough money to make the market happen. This is a serious investment of time from volunteers and success is by no means certain. Several towns have struggled to keep their markets going due to a lack of volunteers and funding — we have heard that Jeffersonville is in danger of losing its market next year, and Essex has struggled to maintain a market. Richmond's market very nearly ended in 2018 due to a shortage of volunteers and funding capacity. We were able to pull the market together and have since strengthened it, but support from the town would go a long way toward making the market a more secure and dependable presence.

We apply for grants through the state and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) and the Vermont Farmers Market Association as they come up, but these grants are often one-time offerings and are not always available. We also seek out sponsorships from town businesses who are promoted on our website and marketing. We also hold a silent auction each year, and put out calls for direct donations from customers.

Representatives from NOFA and from the VT Agency of Agriculture have strongly urged us to form a fiscal relationship with our town. They said support from a market's town is one of the best ways to create a stable and strong market. Other towns have this relationship with their farmers markets. For example, the Jericho Farmers Market receives annually \$4,000 from the town of Jericho and \$1,000 from the town of Underhill, covering the majority of its expenses.

### **C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

1. Describe your agency's capability to provide the program including its history, previous experience providing this service, management structure and staff expertise. \_\_\_

Richmond's market was founded in 2003 and is one of the longest running markets in the state. We have an unpaid 5-member volunteer board of directors with a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. Board members are elected by vendors in a vote during our annual vendor meeting. The market employs a manager who is paid a stipend and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the market.

2. How will you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you will assess program outcomes. Your description should include: what (what kind of data), how (method/tool for collecting the data), from whom (source of data) and when (timing of data collection).

The board holds annual review and budget meetings to review the successes and problem areas of each year. We also hold an annual vendor meeting where vendors share feedback, ideas and reviews.

Vendor revenue and EBT spending figures are also collected for each week to give an idea of market attendance, as well as trends and changes from year to year.

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessments conducted in the past two

years.

The market collects aggregate vendor revenue, which is a good representation of how many residents and visitors are utilizing the market. Vendor revenue in 2022 increased by 43 percent over 2021's figures. Vendor revenue in 2021 was up 78 percent over 2020. While we do not yet have complete 2022 revenue totals, we expect numbers to hold steady or increase, largely due to the sustained efforts of market managers, board, and volunteers to build community and vendor connections.

The market itself does not bring in revenue — this is revenue brought in by our vendors. Any money raised goes directly back into the market or programs for residents, such as our expanded EBT benefit program.

Food security program spending increased by more than a third in 2022 over 2021, totaling \$7,184 between EBT purchases, Crop Cash, Farm to Family, and the market's own matching initiative.

Currently this 2023 season, with two markets left to go, EBT customer purchases in dollars are more than double (215 percent) 2022 levels, and almost triple (283 percent) 2021 levels.

In addition, Crop Cash purchases are up 35 percent from 2022 levels and nearly triple (296 percent) 2021 levels. This does not include NOFA's new Crop Cash Plus program, which can be spent on food items besides hot prepared food. When we do include CCP, 2023 total Crop Cash purchases are over triple (326 percent) 2022 levels, and over 7 times (712 percent) 2021 levels.

4. Does your organization have a strategic plan and a strategic planning process in place? Not a formal strategic plan - If yes, please attach your plan.

The strategic plan should include a mission statement, goals, steps to achieve the goals, and measures that assess the accomplishments of the goals.

5. What is the authorized size of your board of directors? 5  
How many meetings were held by the board last year? Four formal meetings : an end-of-season review, a budget meeting, an annual vendor meeting, and a vendor selection meeting. We had approximately 8 total meetings this year for various issues that arose.

I, the undersigned, confirm the information contained herein is accurate and can be verified as such. I understand and agree that if the requested funds are approved, the disbursement of funds are subject to all conditions established by the Richmond



Selectboard.



Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date 10/2/23

Stephanie Choate, Richmond Farmers Market Board President \_\_\_\_\_ Print

Name of Applicant and Title