



**Agricultural Marketing Service**

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# News Release

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## **USDA Seeks Reviewers for Grant Programs** *Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program and Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program*

**WASHINGTON**, March 24, 2015 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today announced it is seeking reviewers to evaluate grant applications for the [Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program](#) (FMLFPP) and the [Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program](#) (FSMIP).

The FMLFPP grants are funded by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) to strengthen rural American communities by supporting direct farm-to-consumer markets and local food enterprises, and to improve access to fresh, high quality products. FSMIP is a competitive, matching grant program that supports applied research to explore new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products and improve the efficiency and performance of the U.S. agricultural marketing system.

Prospective FMLFPP reviewers are expected to have operational knowledge of direct-to-consumer or local/regional marketing venues, as well as a background in local agriculture, agricultural retail or farm-to-table marketing. Reviewers will apply their knowledge and expertise to comment on and score the grant applications.

Selected FMLFPP reviewers' work will run approximately six weeks between June 1 and July 11, 2015. A mandatory half-day training webinar will take place in late May. Reviewers will be organized into teams of 3 and follow a pre-set scoring rubric. Individuals will review 15 to 20 proposals, each requiring 1 to 3 hours to complete, and participate in an online group review to reach a consensus score and summary comments. Reviewers will receive a stipend.

FSMIP reviewers can include individuals from the federal government, state universities and colleges, state departments of agriculture and other appropriate state agencies. Reviewers are expected to have general knowledge of food/agricultural marketing, applied economics and/or experience working with and advising farmers and ranchers on some aspect of marketing. FSMIP also seeks reviewers that have specialized knowledge on topics such as food safety, consumer economics, foreign market development, labeling, post-harvest handling and transportation. The [FSMIP website](#) contains a complete list of the types of expertise sought. Reviewers will apply their knowledge and expertise to score and comment on a subset of the grant applications.

FSMIP reviewers will have 4 to 5 weeks beginning in June to review up to 10 applications, each consisting of a 10-page narrative plus supporting materials. Reviewers serve in 3-member teams to

evaluate proposals grouped together by a common topic or theme. Criteria for evaluating applications are pre-determined and outlined in the [FSMIP Request for Application](#). FSMIP will schedule a conference call for selected reviewers to provide a general orientation. Team leaders will receive additional training once the review process is underway. Reviewers will receive a stipend.

Applicants for FY2015 FMLFPP or FSMIP grants are not eligible to serve as reviewers. Reviewers will not evaluate proposals for which they – or their organizations – have a conflict of interest. Reviewers must sign a confidentiality agreement to refrain from sharing information about the process, the applications, and the outcomes during and after the evaluation period.

If you are interested in serving as a reviewer, please visit the [FMLFPP reviewer webpage](#) or the [FSMIP website](#). Reviewer applications are due no later than April 27, 2015. AMS will contact selected FMLFPP reviewers in mid-May while FSMIP reviewers will be contacted in early June.

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