

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program



Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

Request for Proposal

Growing the Organic Workforce: Creation, Adoption, and Promotion of Organic Inspector and Reviewer Certificate Modules

Submission Deadline:

August 4th, 2025, at 5 pm PT

Send submissions and questions to:

TOPP@tilth.org

1. Summary

The six “Regional Leads” of the USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) are seeking a consultant to develop a standardized curriculum (“certificate modules”) for future organic inspectors and reviewers, gain recognition of this curriculum, partner with institutions to adopt the educational modules, and conduct outreach to increase awareness of careers as organic inspectors and reviews. Interested parties must submit a proposal addressing the criteria outlined below by August 4th, 2025, at 5pm PT to: TOPP@tilth.org.

2. Background

The USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) was launched in the fall of 2022 to provide technical assistance and support for transitioning and existing organic farmers, and to a limited extent processor/handlers. TOPP is a collaborative national effort involving partners working together towards a common goal of transitioning conventional producers to organic production. The TOPP network covers six regions: the Mid-Atlantic/Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Plains, Northwest, and West/Southwest. In each geographic area there is one “Regional Lead” responsible for program coordination and forming partnerships with organizations to serve transitioning and existing organic farmers. Find more information about the TOPP on [USDA’s website](#) and on the [TOPP website](#). TOPP is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), overseen by the National Organic Program.

Collectively, the six regional leads are seeking a consultant to support the “Workforce Development” component of TOPP. The regional leads recently worked with a consultant to explore a large challenge facing the continued success of the organic sector—a shortage of qualified inspectors and reviewers. Through a survey, interviews and additional research, the consultants, Nexight Group, identified challenges and developed recommendations to support the growth of the organic sector by addressing the shortage of inspectors and reviewers. The findings of this work are outlined in the 2025 report entitled “[Workforce Development Needs Assessment for the Organic Industry](#).”

This Request for Proposals (RFP) describes the project envisioned, timeline and evaluation criteria to provide a fair evaluation for all candidates.

3. Project Information

The primary objective of this project is to implement several recommendations that are outlined in the 2025 report entitled “[Workforce Development Needs Assessment for the Organic Industry](#)” which was prepared for the Transition to Organic Partnership Program by the Nexight Group. More specifically, the consultant will:

Create

- Develop a standardized baseline curriculum (“certificate modules”) that covers the

essential skills and training required for entry-level organic inspector and reviewer positions in the crop and livestock scopes by leveraging existing trainings and resources.

- Ensure the certificate modules are developed for adult education considering the audience, their needs, and learning styles. Include assessments that focus on practical application of the material.
- As a component of the certificate modules, create a guide and best practices for the inclusion of mentorship and apprenticeship by leveraging existing trainings and resources.
- During the development of the curriculum engage key stakeholders including accredited certification agencies (“certifiers”), the Accredited Certifiers Association (ACA), the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA), and the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) to ensure buy-in, recognition, and approval of the certificate modules as adequate training for inspector and reviewer positions.

Promote and Implement

- Develop and conduct an outreach campaign to community colleges, land grant universities, technical colleges, and other post-secondary institutions to offer the certificate modules and encourage its adoption by those institutions.
- Create a strategy for how to support institutions in their implementation of the certification modules. Provide this support as the project timeline and funding permit.
- Develop and implement an outreach and marketing campaign to increase awareness of career opportunities in organic inspection and reviewing among the current, emerging, and future workforce.

Project Timeline

The project will begin on or before September 1, 2025, and will be completed by August 31, 2026, with the possibility to extend it for three additional months (with additional funding).

4. Budget

We estimate the total costs of the project to not exceed \$100,000. Pricing should be reasonable for the activities outlined in the proposal. Please clearly articulate the rationale for costs, and we will consider proposals with an alternate budget that exceeds our estimate if well justified.

5. Proposal Guideline and Requirements

This is an open and competitive process to vendors within the United States, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Proposal Timeline

- Proposals will be accepted until August 1, 2025, at 5 pm PT, late proposals will not be considered.
- Proposals will be evaluated immediately thereafter; we may require interviews (via videoconference).

- The start date of the project and announcement of our chosen consultant will be on or before September 1, 2025.
- All other candidates will be notified once a candidate/firm has been chosen.
- The completion and delivery dates of the project and its phases will be mutually agreed upon prior to signing a contract.

Proposal Guidelines

Proposals must address the following:

- Executive summary
- Company Overview and Team: describe your company, length of business, your relevant experience. Provide links to your agency website and online portfolio. Identify your firm's organizational capacity to conduct the activities outlined above within our timeframe. Describe the team who will work on this project. Include name, title/role, and brief background/experience of each. Provide contact information.
- Communication and Project Management: describe your preferred method of communication and frequency with the Regional Leads and workflow. Describe your project management process including how you will track project status.
- Project description: based on the elements included in the Project Description section, describe your proposed strategy, methodology, and plan to undertake the work.
- Timeline: describe the project timeline and associated milestones. Detail the time required for each major step or phase of the project. This will be evaluated and will be part of the contractual agreement, a realistic time frame for completion is essential.
- Budget: provide a summary of pricing for the proposed services and products along with a justification.
- References: provide a list of three references who can speak to services requested in this RFP. Please include contact information and a brief description of work done for those clients.
- Terms and Conditions: include any contract terms and conditions.

6. Evaluation Criteria

TOPP Regional Leads will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- The proposal meets the needs and criteria set forth in the RFP.
- The proposal is presented in a clear, logical manner, is well organized and has the appropriate information as described in the RFP.
- The candidate has successfully completed similar projects and has the qualifications necessary to undertake and be successful with this project.
- The candidate has familiarity with the food and agriculture sector.
- The candidate firm has an appropriate number of staff and the necessary expertise to be successful.
- The candidate firm illustrates the best suitable plan direction for this project based on guidance given in the RFP.
- The price is appropriate for the value being offered.

7. Questions and contact information

Please send your proposals and questions to topp@tilth.org

The six TOPP Regional Lead organizations will collectively oversee the project through a committee structure. One of the six organizations, Oregon Tilth, will serve as the primary point of contact and liaison between the vendor and the TOPP committee. Oregon Tilth will also oversee the contract with the vendor and process invoices. The Regional Leads will pool resources and agree upon terms via a MOU. The six organizations have successfully used this model on other collaborative projects such as the creation of a website and a needs assessment.