



NMSDC

National Minority Supplier
Development Council

NMSDC Acres Farming Liaison Specialist Consultant RFP

Proposals Due: July 26, 2024

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: *This request for proposal and accompanying documents contains information belonging to NMSDC which is confidential in nature. This information is only for the use of companies responding to the RFP and should not be disclosed to anyone other than the intended recipient. Any disclosure, distribution, or use outside of responding to the RFP is strictly prohibited.*

Introduction and Company Background

The NMSDC Acres: Cultivating Equity in Black Agriculture program was established in 2022 to address a significant disparity in the U.S. agricultural industry. Today, only 1.4% of farmers identify as Black or mixed race, compared to about 14% a century ago. Furthermore, these farmers represent less than 0.5% of total U.S. farm sales.

The Acres program, a collaborative effort between NMSDC, Cargill, UNFI, an HBCU educational partner, and other funding sponsors, aims to rectify this imbalance. It seeks to elevate Black MBEs in the agriculture industry by providing a pathway for Black farmers to achieve parity. This is accomplished by helping them obtain their NMSDC certification, enhancing their business acumen, and ultimately growing their capacity to land larger national contracts with NMSDC's corporate members.

After two successful cohorts, the Acres program has solidified its foundation and is poised to continue its positive upward trajectory. To assist in this journey, NMSDC is seeking a consultant to act as the **Acres Farming Liaison Specialist**. This consultant will play a pivotal role in the Acres program, which aims to rectify the significant disparity in the U.S. agricultural industry. The specialist will work closely with Black farmers, helping them obtain their NMSDC certification, enhancing their business acumen, and ultimately assisting in growing their capacity to scale and land larger contracts. The Acres Farming Liaison Specialist will:

- Serve as a critical support system for the Acres program and its Black farmer participants by acting as a primary contact for farmers, offering guidance and support as they navigate the NMSDC certification process and strive to expand their businesses.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders, including national and regional farming organizations, the Acres HBCU educational partner, and the Acres Program Director, to increase program reach and recruitment within the farming ecosystem.
- Play a key role in building relationships, facilitating communication, and ensuring the effective achievement of the program's objectives.
- Carry out various duties to support the Program Director and the overarching goals of the Acres program.

As a prospective vendor, you will be entrusted with the responsibility of the Acres Farming Liaison Specialist and your contributions will be vital in driving the success of the program and promoting equity in the agricultural industry.

You have been chosen to lead NMSDC in developing a comprehensive proposal for the overall management of Acres. This proposal will position NMSDC as a thought leader in the area of BIPOC agriculture and equity in agriculture, defining programs that yield

relevant and tangible results. The following Acres Farming Liaison Specialist Request for Proposal (RFP) provides background information on our organization and outlines the purpose of the engagement, the desired outcomes related to this program support role, specific timelines, and requirements for your proposal.

Project Overview

NMSDC is seeking a consultant to take on the role of Acres Farming Liaison Specialist responsible for being the main point of contact for all farming-related activities. We are confident in the solid foundation of the program and its effective execution towards our overarching goals. These include NMSDC's mission to bridge the racial wealth gap by boosting the number of certified Black farmers in the U.S. agricultural industry, expanding opportunities for capital access, market penetration, and technology adoption, and fostering the emergence of the next generation of Black farmers in agriculture. While we acknowledge the positive strides we've made towards our goals, we also recognize the need to enhance the program's infrastructure to sustain the growth necessary for maintaining the program's robust foundation and broadening our impact among Black farmers.

Cohort three will rely on our current two programmatic pillars while adding two new core pillars and other enhancements.

Learning Program: The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center will provide a 12-week focused curriculum designed to enhance the capacity of participants to pursue national contracts with NMSDC corporate members. This educational component equips farmers with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the agricultural industry successfully.

Strategic Business Support: Participants will receive strategic business support, including assistance with obtaining NMSDC certification and covered certification fees. Additionally, they gain access to growth-oriented capital opportunities tailored specifically for program farmers. This support aims to remove barriers and provide resources that enable farmers to grow their businesses.

Acres Alumni Society (new): The highly anticipated Acres Alumni Society will foster professional growth, camaraderie, and strengthen bonds among Acres graduates. This network will help participants deepen relationships and scale their businesses by creating a supportive community that extends beyond the program's duration.

Corporate Mentorship (new): Participants will have the opportunity for mentorship through a revamped and clearly defined program that will provide access to NMSDC's network of over 700 national and 1,000 local corporate members. This mentorship will be a transformative experience, empowering both mentor and mentee to guide, inspire,

and shape their businesses. It provides a platform for shared learning and collaboration, further enhancing the impact of the program.

The NMSDC programs team is looking for an Acres Farming Liaison Specialist that will bring a wealth of industry knowledge and a strong commitment to promoting equity in agriculture. Their expertise in business development, contract negotiation, and stakeholder communication will be instrumental in helping Black farmers grow their businesses and achieve parity in the agricultural industry. The selected individual will assist the program by executing the following:

- **Liaison:** Act as a primary point of contact between Black farmers, our HBCU educational partner, and Program Director.
- **Certification Assistance:** Assist in guiding Black farmers through the process of obtaining their NMSDC certification.
- **Program Promotion:** Develop and implement strategies to promote the Acres program to potential participants and partner organizations.
- **Business Development:** Provide resources and support to enhance the business acumen of Black farmers.
- **Partnership Development:** Identify and establish partnerships with organizations that can provide additional resources or support to the Acres program.
- **Feedback Collection:** Collect and analyze feedback from program participants to continually improve the Acres program.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensure that resources are effectively allocated to meet the needs of program participants and achieve program goals.
- **Training and Education:** Assist in the organization of training sessions, 1:1 and group farmer meetings and educational programs for Black farmers to enhance their skills and knowledge.
- **Program Development:** Contribute to the continued growth and success of the Acres program.

Company Background

Founded in 1972, NMSDC is the longest-operating business growth engine for the broadest group of systematically excluded communities of color (Asian-Indian, Asian-Pacific, Black, Hispanic, and Native American), and our impact goes far beyond supply chain. It's about upward mobility for the emerging majority of Americans, an equal shot at participating in the American experiment of free-market capitalism and entrepreneurship. Our work is about correcting the unequal access to wealth-building opportunities.

Our Mission and Vision

NMSDC's mission is to serve as a growth engine for NMSDC certified minority businesses and enable our members to advance economic equity.

We create connections between minority business enterprises (MBEs) and corporations, MBEs and the public sector, and MBEs and other MBEs, to help them benefit from each other, stoking entrepreneurship and growing wealth for these systemically excluded communities.

Our vision is to be the leading organization for driving socioeconomic equity and generational wealth in communities of color.

We build capacity and capabilities through our programs and other educational offerings that help close that wealth gap, the key to creating a more united and prosperous society for all.

Our Impact and Network

For over 50 years, NMSDC has been advocating access to the American dream for MBEs. Our success is historic and unmatched: over 17,000 MBEs connected to more than 1,700 corporations, resulting in \$482.1 billion in economic output annually, sustaining 1.8 million jobs, with \$136.4 billion in total wages earned. We are the nation's largest, most impactful, and successful nonprofit advocacy organization for MBEs, proving growth for MBEs is growth for all.

We are supported by [23 Regional Affiliates](#) nationwide which are the backbone of our gold standard certification program, working in the field locally to ensure our certified MBEs reach their full potential.

Proposal Guidelines and Requirements

Timeline

The following tentative timeline will govern the RFP process:

Date	RFP Process Component
July 11	RFP Issued
July 26	Proposals Due
July 29 – August 2	NMSDC Evaluates Proposals
August 5-9	Top Finalists Present to NMSDC
August 19	Tentative Contract Start Date

NMSDC reserves the right to adjust the timeline at any time and for any reason but will notify all those who submit a proposal of the change. NMSDC may at any time choose to discontinue this RFP process without obligation to firms.

Proposal Components/Deliverables

Please be sure to include the following in your submission:

- Information about your experience with BIPOC agriculture programs/projects and your successes in that ecosystem.
- A brief explanation of how you will help the NMSDC Acres program achieve the goals outlined in this proposal.
- A brief description of your approach to developing working relationships with subcontractors, clients and third-party representatives (our funders).
 - Include an outline of your team structure (if applicable).
- A list of farming organizations and farming advocates that you have working relationships with.
- A sample scope of work; to be finalized during contract negotiations.
- All costs associated with your services and how they will be billed.
- At least two examples of project/program management contracts or tasks that you've worked on.
 - Please include a minimum of two references.
- Any special awards, certifications, experience with this work.
- NMSDC certification status; if not NMSDC certified, please demonstrate how your organization cultivates and maintains a culture of inclusion and belonging, and its principals and workforce should be diverse. It will be vital for the consulting firm to share NMSDC's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

Evaluation Guidelines

All proposals will be evaluated by the NMSDC's programs staff. The factors that will be taken into consideration are (in no particular order):

- Alignment with NMSDC goals and values.
- Completeness of proposal.
- Costs and associated value.
- Samples and references.

The evaluation process is not designed to simply award the contract to the lowest bidder, but to select the proposal with the best combination of attributes, including price, based on the evaluation factors.

Finalists will be required to present their proposal to members of NMSDC's programs team via video conference call the week of August 5, 2024.

NMSDC may choose not to disclose reasons for the rejection of a proposal.

Pricing

NMSDC is a nonprofit and holds a 501(c)3 tax exemption certificate. Please be sure to apply any nonprofit/charitable/pro bono discounts where applicable. Sales tax should not be applied.

Proposals should include a breakdown of the applied pricing system(s) such as whether work is priced per by the hour, by the month, or some other way. Should be based on 10-15 hours per week for 18 month period.

If optional services are proposed, these should be clearly marked, listed, and priced separately.

Questions

If you have questions regarding the RFP, please compile those and submit one document/email that contains all questions by the date/time listed under Timeline.

Contact Information

All communications and submissions must be directed to:

Brandi Wiggins

Program Manager

brandi.wiggins@nmsdc.org

The preferred method of communication is email.