

Request for Proposals: Organic Market Research Study

Project Overview

The need for a consumer study examining barriers to local organic purchases was identified as a priority action in the [2014-18 New Brunswick Organic Strategic Plan¹](#), and noted at an organic sector meeting earlier this year as an activity for ACORN to focus on in 2017-18.

The objective of the study is to gather consumer data to inform the development of organic farms and food businesses in the region, as well as consumer education efforts. Specific research objectives will be finalized in consultation with the organic sector, but are likely to include:

- Consumer perceptions and preferences as to their understanding of what organic means;
- Products they prefer or would like to see available as organic and locally produced;
- How they would prefer to purchase them; and
- Their willingness to pay for these products.

Gaining a better understanding of existing and prospective customer perceptions of local organic products will provide detailed regional data on the emerging market opportunities that ACORN and partners can then use to support the sector, especially new entrants, in growing to meet those demands.

Deliverables will include:

- Sector consultations to ensure research will reflect the needs of the sector (by conference call)
- Consumer survey
- An engaging final report, including survey analysis, any relevant secondary research, and recommendations for the sector on next steps
- Presentation at 11th NB Organic Forum in Moncton of survey results and recommendations and facilitated group discussion on strategies to move forward in response to findings

Project Goals

The overall goal of this project is to identify emerging market opportunities for NB organic products in order to inform the development of new and existing organic farms

¹ acornorganic.org/media/projects/2014-2018_NB_Strategic_Plan.pdf



and food businesses in the region.

More specifically, ACORN hopes to:

- Gather consumer data on perceptions/understanding of organic food, product and access preferences, and willingness to pay for local organic products;
- Design the study with the intention that it will serve as a baseline upon which to measure future consumer education efforts and the sector's response to the study's recommendations;
- Engage the public as much as possible by promoting survey participation online and at public events;
- Present research to the sector with an engaging report summarizing findings and recommendations; and
- Provide the sector with an opportunity to gather and discuss results and recommendations with the lead researcher.

Project Scope

ACORN has secured funds to conduct this research in New Brunswick, but is actively exploring partnerships in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia to expand the scope of the study to all the Maritime provinces.

Publicly, this project will be bilingual, with survey and report presented in both English and French. ACORN will work with the successful consultant in English and has a separate budget for translation.

Project Roles & Responsibilities

ACORN staff will work closely with and complementary to the selected consultant to achieve the project's goals, as detailed below.

Project Coordinator

- Coordinate sector consultations to ensure diversity of sector represented
- Work with consultant to finalize research survey, as well as final report
- Develop and execute promotions and communications strategy for the study
- Work with graphic designer to produce promotional graphics to encourage participation in the study, as well as an engaging final report
- Oversee translation of consumer survey and final report
- Coordinate outreach opportunities for Organic Ambassadors at public events, markets, etc to encourage survey participation across the province

Consultant

- Lead sector consultations and consider sector and ACORN input in the development of a consumer market research study
- Prepare consumer survey and conduct other secondary research related to the industry, as relevant to inform the study
- Analyze the survey findings and compile all findings into an engaging final report, including recommendations for the sector on next steps
- Present survey results and recommendations at 11th NB Organic Forum and lead group discussion on strategies to move forward in response to findings

Timeline

The project will be executed from August 2017 to March 2018. Please note that some aspects of the timeline below are flexible.

Project start date: August 14, 2017

Round #1 sector consultations: Week of August 21-25, 2017

Round #2 sector consultations: Week of September 4-8, 2017

Survey launch: September 16, 2017 (start of National Organic Week)

Survey close: December 16, 2018

Final report text finalized: January 19, 2018

Final report shared with sector: February 19, 2018

Sector presentation: Week of February 19-23, 2018 (TBD)

Project completion: March 9, 2018

Budget & Payment Schedule

As outlined, the project is currently New Brunswick-specific but ACORN is actively pursuing funding opportunities to make it possible to extend the project to include Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The project scope will only be broadened if additional provincial support can be secured.

As a result, the proposed budget should include three different scenarios: 1) New Brunswick only; 2) Two provinces; and 3) All of the Maritimes. Sector presentations would be made in Truro and Charlottetown in addition to Moncton if the other provinces become a part of the project.

Budget shall not exceed \$14,000 inclusive of contractor fees, travel, and HST for a Maritime-wide project. ACORN's mileage rate is \$0.40/km.



Payment will be issued upon receipt of an invoice and expense claim at two intervals:

- 1) December 1, 2017: 50% contractor fees + 100% any expenses claimed to date
- 2) February 28, 2018: Remaining 50% contractor fees + 100% remaining expenses

Organization's Background

The Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN) is a registered non-profit cooperative. Started in 2000 by the region's organic farmers and processors, ACORN has effectively become the "Voice of Organics for Atlantic Canada," serving as a network from seed to farmer to consumer.

ACORN is active in a wide range of technical, marketing and training initiatives to promote and further develop the local organic market and agricultural sector. Activities include organizing an annual organic conference and trade show, maintaining a public listing of all certified organic operations in the region, compiling statistics on organic production, facilitating mentorship, hosting regional workshops, and coordinating crop or market-specific farmer-to-farmer networks (e.g. CSA Network).

Vision

ACORN aims to enhance the viability and growth of the Atlantic Canadian organic agricultural community through a unified regional network.

Mission Statement

ACORN promotes organic agriculture by:

- Facilitating information exchange between and amongst organizations and individuals;
- Coordinating non-formal education for producers through to consumers;
- Networking with all interested parties both regionally and nationally.

For more information, please visit acornorganic.org.

Principal Point of Contact

The project lead is ACORN's Outreach & Membership Coordinator, Tegan Renner. She will work closely with the selected consultant to guide the study, make final decisions on the project, and be responsible for all Project Coordinator roles outlined above.



Submission of Proposals

Full proposals should include:

- Cover letter
- Curriculum vitae
- Proposed project budget (including hourly rate)
- Three easily reachable references

To be considered, proposals must be received by August 2, 2017 by 12:00pm Atlantic. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their proposal is received in its entirety by the specified date and time.

Mail

P.O. Box 6343
Sackville, NB E4L 1G6

Email (PDF format)

tegan@acornorganic.org

This project is made possible in partnership with the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture & Fisheries and Government of Canada.