



Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission  
Ellington Agricultural Center | P.O. Box 40627 | Nashville, TN 37204

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## Notice of Request for Expressions of Interest for Potential Sites to Host the Tennessee State Fair

Version 2 – Updated March 27, 2020<sup>1</sup>  
Extends submission deadline to June 1, 2020

### SUMMARY:

The Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission (Commission) is exploring potential sites for a proposed new location for the Tennessee State Fair. The Commission has determined that the current site lacks adequate facilities and is not a viable long-term home for the Tennessee State Fair. Consequently, the Commission is exploring sites that allow for future growth and event sustainability.

Expected requirements for a new Tennessee State Fair site include:

- Centrally-located within the state
- Easily accessible via Interstate
- Necessary infrastructure either in place or to be made available

The Commission is requesting Expressions of Interest from local governments, public-private partnerships, landowners or other interested parties for potential sites that would accommodate the construction and/or lease and operation of the Tennessee State Fair.

**DATES:** Interested parties wishing to make an Expression of Interest may do so in writing by June 1, 2020, extended from April 3, 2020.

### SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Electronic Submission of Expression of Interest.* Interested persons may submit information electronically to the following email address [boyd.barker@tn.gov](mailto:boyd.barker@tn.gov). Include “Tennessee State Fair Site Expression of Interest” in the subject line.
- *Submission of Expression of Interest by Mail, Hand Delivery or Courier.* Paper copies should be submitted to Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Ellington Agricultural Center, c/o Tennessee State Fair Site EOI, 440 Hogan Road, Nashville, TN 37220.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mr. Boyd Barker, Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission Technical Secretary, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, [boyd.barker@tn.gov](mailto:boyd.barker@tn.gov), (615) 837-5136

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<sup>1</sup> Original version released February 3, 2020.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

The Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission was established through T.C.A. § 4-57-101, et. seq., the Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Act.

The Tennessee State Fair has operated in Nashville, Tennessee for more than 150 years. While still holding true to its founding principles of being an agricultural and educational exhibition, the State Fair has developed into an annual event offering family attractions and proving wholesome fun for all ages.

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County has developed the current site for alternative uses, and the space and facility limitations significantly impede the potential growth, attendance and impact of the fair. In 2019, 105,148 people attended the Tennessee State Fair. A best use study of the site in 2008 indicated the range of potential attendance should be 350,000 to 500,000 people. This creates an opportunity for the Commission to consider sites that would allow for future growth, a renewed focus on promoting and advancing statewide agriculture, and event sustainability. The Commission desires a site that would function year-round for a variety of agricultural and community activities to ensure sustainability.

### ***Request for Expression of Interest:***

The Commission requests Expressions of Interest from local governments, public-private partnerships, landowners or other interested parties to identify potential sites for the Tennessee State Fair. This request for Expressions of Interest is the first step in the process to consider site options. The Commission will evaluate each EOI submission using 5 criteria (logistics and access; site area and infrastructure; workforce and volunteers; community assets; and site procurement, development and operating costs) to determine if it should be further evaluated as part of the location selection process. The Commission will also consider the quality of the proposal summary when assessing EOIs.

### ***Logistics and Access:***

A desirable site will be centrally-located within the state of Tennessee and in close proximity to the Interstate with adequate roadways to safely and efficiently sustain fair and event traffic. The site should be easily accessible to a critical population mass.

### ***Site Area and Infrastructure:***

A desirable site will have ample space for fair operations and suitable infrastructure either in place or to be made available. Needs for existing or developable facilities include air-conditioned exhibition space, grandstand, carnival area, RV campsites with full hook-ups, parking, and housing and show facilities for livestock and equine.

Appendices are included with current site specifications, a description of facilities needed to conduct current state youth livestock events and additional resources that describe recommendations from previous studies about facility needs to conduct a successful state fair.

*Workforce and Volunteers:*

The Tennessee State Fair has historically employed more than 200 people and utilized more than 550 volunteers. Employees work as department heads and in ticketing, sanitation, parking, livestock and general fair duties. Skilled volunteers such as Master Gardeners work in specific areas while other volunteers assist in the information booth, livestock activities and other duties. It is important that the potential site be in close proximity to a critical mass of potential employees and volunteers to successfully operate the Tennessee State Fair.

*Community Assets:*

Community assets such as adequate supply of medical support facilities, local law enforcement and area hospitality services (e.g., fuel, dining, and lodging) are important for hosting a large number of visitors to the state fair.

*Site Procurement, Development and Operating Costs:*

The need to invest upfront capital costs and sustain ongoing operational costs will be a factor in the site selection process. Lower costs and the potential of incentives or leveraged resources to offset costs will be considered. A plan for use of the site when not in use for the Tennessee State Fair to maintain the financial viability of the site is imperative.

*Expressions of Interest Format:*

The length of the Expression of Interest should be no more than 5 pages using 12-point Calibri font. While the responder may determine how to best use the 5 pages, we recommend: SECTION 1 – Summary; and SECTION 2 through SECTION 6 a description of location with specific reference to the items requested by the State Fair Commission below.

1. Summary (SECTION 1)
2. Applicant description and its capabilities to support the location of the Tennessee State Fair at its recommended site (SECTION 2).
3. A description of how the potential site addresses the 5 site criteria categories (logistics and access; site area and infrastructure; workforce and volunteers; community assets; and site procurement, development and operating costs) (SECTION 3).
4. A map showing the location of the potential site, along with population, average household income and median age data within a 30, 60, 90 and 180 minute drive of the proposed site (SECTION 4).
5. A site description including ownership, total site acreage available for development; existing physical infrastructures, their size, vintage and current use; current activities; on-site tenants (if applicable); available utilities; and estimated costs as tenant (SECTION 5).
6. List any additional factors (assets/resources/partnerships) that would ensure the long-term success of the Tennessee State Fair and other agriculturally-focused activities at this site. (SECTION 6).

*Proprietary Information:*

Expressions of Interest will be considered public record of the Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission and, unless specifically exempted under the state public records act, responses will be

subject to future disclosure. Respondents should not include any proprietary or sensitive information and are advised to seek legal counsel prior to including such information.

Neither the Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission, nor the State of Tennessee or its subdivisions, are under any obligation to pay for costs associated with the preparation or submission of Expressions of Interest in response to this notice. The Commission reserves the right to respond or not respond to any portion, all, or none of the Expressions of Interest submitted in response to this notice. Responders whose submissions are deemed worthy of further consideration given the criteria expressed herein may be asked to provide additional information. The Commission's further consideration of certain responders' Expressions of Interest does not obligate the Commission, the State of Tennessee or its subdivisions to provide funds to such responders or to enter into contractual relationships with such responders.

Dated: March 27, 2020

Tennessee State Fair and Exhibition Commission

Dr. Robert Burns, Dean, University of Tennessee Extension – Chairman

Mr. Steven Gass, State Advisor to the Future Farmers of America (FFA) – Vice-Chairman

U.S. Congressman John Rose, President, Tennessee State Fair Association

Mr. Jeff Aiken, President, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation

Dr. Charles Hatcher, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture

Ms. Emily Pitcock, Executive Director, Tennessee Association of Fairs

Dr. Chandra Reddy, Dean, Tennessee State University

(Mr. Boyd Barker, Tennessee Department of Agriculture – Technical Secretary)

## **Appendix A – Specifications of The Fairgrounds Nashville**

The Tennessee State Fair and Exposition Commission has determined that the space and facilities at The Fairgrounds Nashville present limitations that significantly impede the attendance, growth and impact of the fair. Current site specifications are included to provide potential responders with a frame of reference when assessing the potential for alternative sites.

- 117 acres total
- 105,000 square feet of air-conditioned exhibition space used for creative arts, agriculture hall, marketplace, cafeteria, rabbit show
- 14,000 seat grandstand
- Parking for approximately 5,500 cars
- 25 acres of carnival rides, games, food, office space, living quarters and support vehicles
- 15 acres of independent midway (sponsors, food booths, entertainment and seating)
- 200 RV campsites with full hook-ups (before redevelopment began)
- 130,000 square feet of outdoor barns for livestock and equine activities
- 40 feet by 60 feet poultry barn

## **Appendix B – Facilities Needed to Accommodate Current State Youth Livestock and Equine Events**

According to the University of Tennessee Department of Animal Science, the facilities needed to accommodate current state youth livestock and equine events include:

- Indoor arena with dirt floor (150 feet x 300 feet floor and 4,500 seats), attached warm up area (120 feet by 200 feet) for livestock shows of all species, and 3-4 classrooms for educational programs and competitions
- Covered pen (ideally two – 105 feet by 300 feet)
- Outdoor pen (150 feet by 300 feet)
- Tie out and tack space for 400 beef/dairy cattle under cover (1,800 feet of tie space)
- Tie out space for 200 beef cattle to overnight outside (600 feet of tie space)
- 600 small animal pens for swine, sheep and goats
- 350 equine stalls
- Parking for pick-ups and livestock trailers

## **Appendix C – Additional Resources**

- 2008 Markin Best Use Study for Current Site - See *Markin Consulting Reports* at <http://www.thefairgrounds.com/about/announcements.asp>
- Convention Sports and Leisure International. *Feasibility Analysis of a Potential New State Fairgrounds in Manchester, Tennessee*. July 14, 2017. Available online at [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/agriculture/documents/fairs/TNSF\\_Study\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/agriculture/documents/fairs/TNSF_Study_FINAL.pdf)
- Holland, Rob. Center for Profitable Agriculture. CPA Info #222. *Estimating the Number of Parking Spaces per Acre*. May 2014. Available online at <https://ag.tennessee.edu/cpa/Information%20Sheets/CPA%20222.pdf>