

Background on Farmbudsman Program

The Farmbudsman program was officially launched in April 2013 to serve Solano and Yolo counties by assisting farmers, ranchers and agriculture-related businesses with various permitting processes, including assisting with agricultural permitting and standards as required by regulatory agencies. Both counties entered into an operating agreement with Solano Community College Small Business Development Center to administer the program. On July 1, 2016, Yolo County notified Solano County that they would be withdrawing from the joint county program; however, Solano Community College Small Business Development Center continued to administer the program for Solano County. On June 30, 2017, Solano Community College announced that they would no longer be hosting the Small Business Development Center. With no host agency in Solano County, Humboldt State University Sponsored Programs Foundation's Northern California (Norcal) SBDC, as a lead SBDC center, contracted with Solano County to administer the program in July 2017 and until a new host agency was found. Currently, Solano SBDC is transitioning from being administered by Norcal SBDC to the new Solano SBDC host agency, the Workforce Development Board of Solano County.

The roots of an agricultural ombudsman concept can be traced back several years, including the incorporation of the position into the General Plans adopted by Solano County in 2008 and Yolo County in 2009. The Solano and Yolo Counties Economic Summit held in November 2011 was the impetus to bring the Farmbudsman program to fruition. Summit attendees identified the establishment of an agricultural ombudsman, aka Farmbudsman, as a key opportunity to enhance the value of agriculture within the two counties and decrease actual and perceived regulatory obstacles on agriculture-related businesses seeking to expand, enhance and/or maintain their operations.

On January 24, 2012, presentations were made to the respective meetings of the Solano County Board of Supervisors and Yolo County Board of Supervisors on the outcome of the Joint Economic Summit. Both Boards concurred with the concept of developing a public-private partnership to facilitate the establishment of an agricultural ombudsman program to serve existing and future agriculture-related businesses in both counties.

Between July 26, 2010, and June 21, 2012, the Yolo Agriculture and Food Alliance hosted a series of study sessions with interested stakeholders from the agriculture communities in Solano and Yolo counties, including representatives from the Farm Bureaus of the respective counties, to facilitate the development of the desired attributes of a Farmbudsman program and the public-private partnership to support the Farmbudsman program. Ultimately, it was determined that partnering with SBDC could leverage federal, state and local resources for the Farmbudsman program. In addition to providing Farmbudsman-related services, the SBDC can provide resources that will enhance the agriculture entrepreneur's business skills and to expand, enhance and/or maintain business operations.

On January 15, 2013, the boards of supervisors in Solano and Yolo counties adopted a joint operating agreement with the Solano Community College Small Business Development Center to establish a Farmbudsman program that served both jurisdictions. Solano Community College SBDC administered the program through June 30, 2017, until they notified Solano County that

they would no longer host the SBDC. On July 1, 2017, Solano County entered into an operating agreement with Humboldt State University Sponsored Programs Foundation's Northern California Small Business Development Center (Norcal SBDC), a lead SBDC center, to administer the program until a new SBDC host in Solano County could be found.

In June 2017, Norcal SBDC issued a request for proposals (RFP) seeking eligible organizations able to provide quality small business assistance services in Solano County following Solano Community College's decision to no longer host a SBDC. Two proposals were submitted in response to the RFP; however, neither submittal met the RFP stated requirements.

In August 2018, Norcal SBDC released a new solicitation seeking an eligible organization to host the SBDC in Solano County, and in December 2018, the Solano Workforce Development Board (WDB) was awarded the contract. Transition activity is currently underway and the Solano SBDC office will be relocating from the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce to the WDB location in the Cordelia area and administration of the Farmbudsman position will transition to the WDB as the new host agency for the Solano SBDC.