



Request for Proposals

Regional Food System Program: Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Strategic Initiative Project

Released: January 20, 2021

Written questions deadline: February 1, 2021

Response Deadline: February 15, 2021

Submit Electronically to: mary.embleton@kingcd.org
Senior Program Manager
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Purpose of RFP

King Conservation District (KCD) seeks to identify a qualified consultant or team of consultants to lead and manage a comprehensive farm business support and technical assistance program in King County. This program will coordinate current service providers to assist farmers in accessing business planning and management opportunities and connecting to technical assistance to create viable farming operations. Local food businesses would be eligible to participate in this comprehensive programming if they could demonstrate they are sourcing products substantially from King County farms.

Proposals are requested from a consultant qualified to lead and manage a farm business support and technical assistance program that assists farmers decrease start-up and expansion costs; enhance recruiting, training, and technical assistance programs for new farmers, with consideration of diverse cultural and language needs; and increase sales of King County farm products (Goals identified in the King County Local Food Initiative).

Section 1: Instruction to Bidders

1.1 Proposal Submission

To be considered for this RFP, Proposers must follow the directions presented in this RFP, and must submit a proposal packet no later than 4:00 p.m. on February 15, 2021.

1.2 Questions and Interpretation of the RFP

No oral interpretations of this RFP will be made to any Proposer. All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing, and are due via email to mary.embleton@kingcd.org no later than 4:00pm February 1, 2021.

1.3 Proposal Content Requirements

The proposal shall be submitted electronically and contain the following items:

- A. A complete RFP package in pdf format.
- B. A Word file for the narrative and scope portions of the RFP.
- C. An Excel file including the budget pages in the RFP packet.

Section 2: Proposal Evaluation and Contract Award

3.1 General Approach

KCD will select a consultant based on the terms, conditions, and attachments set forth in this RFP. Proposers may be individual firms or teams as appropriate to meet the specific needs of the project. Proposers are solely responsible for all costs incurred in the development and submission of the response to this RFP or for any subsequent requirements of the consultant selection or contract negotiation process. All materials submitted in response to this RFP become the property of KCD.

3.2 Selection Panel

The selection panel will consist of KCD staff members and representatives from partner agencies and organizations, and other regional food system stakeholders. The panel will rank the applicants and recommend selection for KCD's board approval based on ratings from written proposals and interviews, if conducted.

3.3 Selection Process

Proposals are due no later than 4:00 p.m. on February 15, 2021.

Step 1

Evaluation of written statements of qualifications (SOQ) submitted by each Proposer resulting in a short-list of proposals which will be ranked and may be invited to an interview if deemed necessary.

Step 2

If interviews are conducted, Proposers will be evaluated and ranked on the interview.

Step 3

KCD's evaluation team will recommend the top ranked candidate to the Board of Supervisors to obtain approval to begin negotiations and, if successful, enter into an agreement with the selected Proposer. If the selected Proposer and KCD are unable to agree on the final scope and fee for deliverables for the contract, KCD reserves the right to terminate negotiations and initiate contract negotiations with the next highest rated Proposer.

3.4 Evaluation Criteria

A. Written Evaluation of Proposals

Each proposal will be evaluated and given a score based on the quality of response to each of the following topic areas.

Organization and Management Approach	15 Points
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Composition of the team, responsibilities and skills of each team member, and appropriateness of the team's experience related to the Scope of Work (SOW).2. Team's experience working together and ability to coordinate efficient and effective delivery of work products.	

King Conservation District Regional Food System Program
Request for Proposals: Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Strategic Initiative Project

3. Demonstrated understanding of an effective relationship with a client such as KCD.	
Qualifications and Related Experience <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrated experience leading and managing a collaborative team with technical assistance providers from multiple partners (agencies, non-profits) focused on farm business support, and farmer education and technical assistance. 2. Demonstrated experience providing farm business support and capital access services across a range of business types and stages of business lifecycles. 3. Demonstrated experience facilitating and delivering farm business support, farmer education, and communication between farmers and service providers (with a wide variety of backgrounds and range of interests, skills, and abilities) towards the goal of increasing the viability of new and existing farm businesses. Local food businesses would be able to participate in training and technical assistance if they could demonstrate they are sourcing products substantially from King County farms. 4. Experience within the team that reflects community relationships to enable the implementation of farm business support and technical assistance. 5. Demonstrated experience engaging with multilingual and multicultural farming communities. 6. Demonstrated experience and ability to conduct outcomes-based program evaluation and adapt services to improve results. Feasible and practical evaluation methodology that matches audience type and program goals should be used to measure program results. 7. Demonstrated experience coordinating programs of the size and budget similar to those described in this RFP. 	35 points
Approach to Scope of Work <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrated expertise, creativity, and effectiveness in proposed approach to SOW and in approach to ensuring participation by farmers, farmer cooperatives, and other farm organizations. 2. Demonstrated understanding of the diverse cultural and language needs of King County farm and food businesses. 3. Demonstrated understanding of program goals and how to work effectively with agencies, non-profits, farmers, and food businesses in King County. 4. Demonstrated understanding of barriers, needs, and opportunities associated with both new and existing farm businesses. 	40 points

King Conservation District Regional Food System Program
Request for Proposals: Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Strategic Initiative Project

5. Demonstrated understanding of how to provide assistance to farmers on a variety of farm business planning and management needs with a goal of increasing farm business viability and increased farm sales in King County.	
Cost Estimates 1. Appropriate allocation of hours and expenses for each task. 2. Clarity and completeness of pricing structure, fees, overhead, profit, and hourly rates. 3. Value provided to KCD related to other proposals and similar work done in the region.	20 points
Overall Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concise, clearly written and complete or thorough proposal, prepared as instructed. 	10 points
Maximum Written Proposal Score:	120 points

B. Oral Interviews (Optional)

If an award is not made based on written evaluations alone, oral interviews may be conducted with the top-ranked proposers. Final award would then be made based on the total of the written evaluation and oral interview scores.

Expertise and Technical Capabilities 1. Demonstrated knowledge and understanding regarding providing farm business support and technical assistance services described in this RFP. 2. Demonstrated understanding of an appropriate client relationship. 3. Demonstrated capacity and experience to handle all aspects of the SOW described in this RFP.	20 points
General Presentation 1. Demonstrated clarity in approach to scope. 2. Demonstrated ability to present information and suitable technical capabilities. 3. Demonstrated ability to respond to questions, level of knowledge, and appropriateness of response.	20 points
Maximum Oral Presentation Score:	40 points
MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SCORE (if interviews conducted):	160 points

Section 3: Project Specifications and Scope of Work

3.1 General Information

A. Project Background

KCD is a non-regulatory special purpose district that provides education, technical services, and financial assistance to landowners and homeowners in King County. Our mission is to promote the sustainable use of natural resources through responsible stewardship. Our purpose is to protect water quality, conserve soil, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and promote the retention and economic viability of working agricultural and forest lands.

In 2015, KCD established the Regional Food System Program based on the King County Local Food Initiative (LFI), and engagement with a wide range of local food system advisors/stakeholders. The program offers annual competitive grants, and longer term sustained strategic investments, to support the Executive's LFI.

Regional Food System Program Overview

Major gaps in our region's food system were identified by the King County Kitchen Cabinet in 2014 in their LFI. More support is needed in the production, distribution, processing, and storage of locally raised farm products. Significant barriers to land, capital, equipment, and markets prevent new farmers from starting farms and existing farmers from scaling up to a sustainable level.

KCD's Regional Food System program supports efforts across King County to develop a food system that is sustainable, resilient, and equitable. Through a combination of grants and strategic initiatives, KCD focuses on improving production, consumer demand, and equitable access to healthy, local food.

Looking Forward

Since 2015, KCD has funded successful start-up farm cooperatives, community-based site redevelopments, expanded organizational capacity, and other grass-roots tools for improving the regional food system. Through that process, KCD and its food system working group of external partners, have identified four primary areas for Strategic Initiative investments over the next 5 years:

- Working Farmland Access - connecting future farmers to land and current farmers to expanded land opportunities.
- Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Coordination - such as agronomic, business planning, access to capital, marketing, conservation, education coordination, and food safety.
- Consumer Demand - such as institutional purchasing, direct market support, buy local campaign.
- Infrastructure Support - including shared processing, packing, storage, refrigeration, distribution, as well as access to loans for farm structures and equipment, and associated assessments for regional infrastructure needs.

B. Project Focus

This RFP is focused on the Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Strategic Initiative area.

Since 2015, KCD has been investing in coordinated efforts to help farmers address the economic success of their farm businesses. Work includes maintaining formal coordination between agencies and non-profits, helping landowners ready underutilized farmland for production, supporting new and beginning farmers in their unique journeys to establish/expand successful farm businesses, and facilitating lasting land matches. This work requires partners to work closely with participants to understand unique barriers to advancing

goals of the LFI, and assembling project teams offering tailored technical assistance, training, and access to cost-sharing resources to support participants.

The ultimate goal of this work is to facilitate education and the diversity of technical assistance to farm businesses across King County and thereby bring more land into production, increase the number of farmers farming in King County, increase farm sales, and ultimately, increase the economic viability of the county's farm businesses and farming communities.

3.5 Scope of Services

A. Overview of Services Requested

KCD is soliciting consultant(s) to manage a comprehensive farm business support and technical assistance program in King County to coordinate current service providers to assist farmers in accessing educational opportunities and connecting to technical assistance to get farmland into production, increase farm sales, and increase the economic viability of local farms.

A comprehensive farm business support and technical assistance program that fits the unique needs of King County would consist, at a minimum, of the following tasks:

Activity / Task	Description	Outputs/Outcomes/Data Collection
Task 1: Partner Coordination		
Establish the network of partners	<p>*Identify and create a coordinated network of organizations providing business and capital access support services to the farm and food sector. The network represents the geographic, economic, and racial diversity of organizations and agencies providing farm business support services.</p> <p>*Organization and agencies within the network also reflect the racial, scale, economic, and geographic diversity of the farming community in King County.</p> <p>*Cultivate relationships and manage communications among internal and external network partners. Coordinate logistics for meetings, trainings, and events.</p>	Outcome: e.g. farm business support organizations are working together to provide efficient and effective business education and technical assistance services through a comprehensive farm business support and technical assistance program.

King Conservation District Regional Food System Program
Request for Proposals: Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Strategic Initiative Project

Task 2: Farm business support/Training		
Develop relevant and useful farm business support and curricula/training series	<p>Work with the network of providers and community partners to develop a series of trainings/curricula that address barriers facing farm businesses. Topics could include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Business planning (e.g. business formation, setting strategies and goals, and managing production, personnel, legal, financial and marketing risks) *Access to capital (e.g. financial readiness, building credit, traditional farm financing opportunities, alternative farm financing opportunities, revolving loan funds, social investing, KIVA, etc.) *Marketing (e.g. identifying market opportunities and market readiness, marketing budget, advertising, social media, e-commerce platforms, direct sales, etc.) Logistical (e.g. accounting, record keeping, insurance, exit strategy – farm transition planning) 	<p>Output: e.g. # of trainings; # number of farmers trained; increased access to capital for farm businesses; revenue growth for farm businesses; farm jobs created or retained.</p> <p>Outcome: e.g. Increased farmer knowledge about running a successful farm business and specific actions taken resulting from trainings as measured through pre- and post-survey evaluations.</p>
Task 3: One-on-One Assistance		
Provide individualized business support and resource navigation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provide one-on-one business development support (e.g. financial readiness and business coaching, technical assistance in marketing, advertising, social media, e-commerce, business planning, financial management, and others as needed.) *Work with network partners to help farm businesses identify resources available to them. *Provide navigation of laws, rules, and regulations. *Track progress and advocate for farm businesses navigating barriers to creating viable farming operations. 	<p>Output: e.g. # one-on-one coaching conducted.</p> <p>Outcome: e.g. Demonstrated improvement in farm business support and management as measured by # farm businesses getting new loans, accessing new markets, increasing sales, etc.</p>

Task 4: Develop Data Collection and Evaluation Plan		
Lead partnership planning efforts and conduct regular evaluation	*Design and implement data collection methods. *Evaluate progress and impact at regular intervals.	

3.6 Other Consultant Responsibilities

The consultant shall manage the contract so that all tasks are met, and contract terms and conditions are satisfied within the given budget and schedule. The consultant shall ensure that the KCD Program Manager is informed in a timely manner about the status of contract deliverables.

The consultant shall submit invoices not more frequently than monthly. Invoices shall be itemized by tasks with subtotals. Task hours shall be billed in quarter hour increments, and hours itemized by staff and billing rate.

3.7 Time of Performance

The anticipated contract term will be from March 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022. The contract period may be extended in increments of one (1) year for up to a total of four (4) additional years in accordance with KCD's best interest, and at the sole option of KCD.

3.8 Budget

The total budget for the one-year contract shall not exceed \$150,000. The District anticipates a similar yearly funding level in the future, budget permitting.

3.9 Consultant Qualifications

KCD desires a consultant or consultant team with experience and expertise in:

1. Leading and managing a collaborative team with technical assistance providers from multiple partners (agencies, non-profits) focused on providing farm business support, farmer education, and technical assistance services.
2. Facilitating communication between farmers and farm service providers (with a wide variety of backgrounds and a range of interests, skills, and abilities) towards the goal of increasing the viability of new and existing farm businesses.
3. Farm business laws and legal instruments.
4. Integrating diversity, equity, and social justice goals in programming and goal setting.
5. Engaging with multilingual and multicultural farming communities.
6. Conducting outcomes-based program evaluation and adapt services to improve results. Feasible and practical evaluation methodology that matches audience type and program goals should be used to measure program results.
7. Coordinating programs of size and budget similar to those described in this RFP.

3.1 Format for Responses

Limit the proposal to 10 pages of text, with consecutively numbered pages, and using 11-pt. type or larger. The cover letter, table of contents, budget, and appendices are **not** included in the 10-page limit. All pages shall be

numbered, including resumes and appendices, and listed in a table of contents. Proposals shall contain and be organized in the following format:

A. Cover Letter with Proposers signature: Include the name, phone number, and email of a contact person. The cover letter shall be no longer than one single-sided page.

B. Table of Contents: Include all appendices

C. Written Proposal (limit to 10 pages)

I. Organization and Management

Description of your proposed project team, including the following:

1. Composition of the team, including principals, staff, and any sub-consultants, with responsibilities, skills, area of expertise and years of experience for each team member; appropriateness of the team's experience related to the Scope of Work; and an organization chart of the team.
2. Team's experience working together and ability to coordinate efficient and effective delivery of work products.
3. Management approach.
4. Demonstrated understanding of an effective relationship with a client such as KCD.

II. Qualifications and Related Experience

Describe at least three projects relevant to the Scope of Work which your organization or team members have implemented that demonstrate:

1. Experience leading and managing a collaborative team with technical assistance providers from multiple partners (agencies, non-profits) focused on farm business support, education, and farm technical assistance services.
2. Experience providing business support and capital access services across a range of business types and stages of business lifecycles.
3. Experience facilitating communication between farmers and farm service providers (with a wide variety of backgrounds and a range of interests, skills, and abilities) towards the goal of increasing farm business viability and increased sales of King County farm products.
4. Experience engaging with multilingual and multicultural farming communities.
5. Experience and ability to conduct outcomes-based program evaluation and adapt services to improve results, including use of practical evaluation methodologies that matches audience type and program goals to measure program results.
6. Experience coordinating programs of size and budget similar to those described in this RFP.

For each project, include the following information:

- Name of the client, whether the proposer was the prime or the sub-consultant, the total fee, contract completion date, proposer's project manager, and client contact information.
- A brief description of the project, including goals, objectives, and strategy.
- How results were measured.

- Include work samples of relevant materials proposed to work on this contract. Work samples should be marked "Work Samples" and labeled with the project title, client name, name of consultant or team member who completed the work, and the type of work performed (e.g., "business plan development", "marketing support", etc). Please limit Work Samples to TWO per example project. Attach all work samples in the appendices section. The page limit for related project experience does not apply to work samples.

III. Approach to Scope of Work

In this section, the proposer shall provide a vision and describe a methodology for carrying out the programs described in the Scope of Work of this RFP and demonstrate the following:

1. Expertise, creativity, and effectiveness in proposed approach to Scope of Work and in approach to ensuring participation by farmers (and local food businesses, as appropriate).
2. Understanding of program goals and how to work effectively with all members of the farmland services partnership in King County, including agencies, non-profits, farmers, and local food businesses (as appropriate).
3. Understanding of barriers, needs, and opportunities associated with farm business support for both new and existing farmers.
4. Understanding of how to provide assistance to farmers on farm business support that will result in both increased viability of farms in King County and increased sales of local farm products.

This section of the proposal shall include the following:

- Your vision of the project.
- How you will work with a collaborative partnership of agencies and non-profits to lead, manage, and deliver farm business support services and technical assistance that will increase the viability of King County farmers and increase sales of local farm products.
- Methods you would use, including partnerships with other agencies, to accomplish the work and meet project goals. Particularly how you would ensure that partnerships and participation in planning, curricula development/training, reflects the racial, scale, economic, and geographic diversity of the farming community in King County.
- Measurements of success or effectiveness for the project.

D. Proposed Budget (2-page maximum)

Proposals shall include the Proposer's budget by task, the names of team members assigned to each task (where known or appropriate), each team member's labor rate (including overhead and profit) or direct payroll costs, and the number of hours to be spent on each task by each team member. Budgets should include:

1. Appropriate allocation of hours and expenses for each task.
2. Clarity and completeness of pricing structure, fees, overhead, hourly rates.
3. Value provided to KCD related to other proposals and similar work done in the region.

E. Appendices

King Conservation District Regional Food System Program

Request for Proposals: Farm Business Support and Technical Assistance Strategic Initiative Project

1. Resumes: Submit one-page resume for each proposed team member in a key role, including the prime and sub-consultants. The resumes shall list relevant/related professional experience in chronological order with dates.
2. List of three (3) references who are familiar with your work, as relevant to the scope of work, and include a contact name, phone number, and email address for each.
3. Work Samples: Work samples should be marked "Work Samples" and labeled with the project title, client name, name of team member who completed the work, and the type of work they performed (e.g., "one-on-one technical assistance"). Limit work samples to a maximum of two per project example from the "Qualifications and Related Experience" section.
4. Other, as determined needed or related.