

King County, WA and King Conservation District are seeking proposals from qualified firms with proven expertise to design a plan to implement priorities identified from an equitable and effective community engagement strategy for the 2024 Local Food Initiative.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Plan Design and Community Engagement for the 2024 Local Food Initiative

Issue Date: October 17th, 2023

Last Day for Questions: November 3rd, 2023

Proposal Due Date: November 17th, 2023

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Client Background

King County (KC) has been a leader in regional and agricultural planning for metropolitan areas for decades. KC Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) manages agricultural lands and programs throughout the county, including the Farmland Preservation Program, the Farmland Lease Program, the Local Food Initiative (LFI), and more.

The LFI was developed in 2014 and published in 2015. Over the past decade, KC has furthered local food system development in accordance with the plan through internal programs and partnerships. King Conservation District has been a key partner throughout the implementation of the first LFI. The LFI is a regional strategy with clear goals and actions designed to guide both public and private stakeholders to create a more vibrant, equitable, and sustainable local food system.

The first LFI focused on two goals: to expand the local food economy to ensure job growth and economic viability for King County food businesses and farms, and to improve access to healthy food for low-income families throughout the county. Over the past decade of implementation, some common barriers to achieving these goals have been seen. These barriers will likely emerge as areas of focus for the 2024 LFI and include: farmland access and affordability, technical and production support, food system infrastructure, markets and market access, climate change, and food insecurity.

King Conservation District (KCD) is a non-regulatory special purpose district that provides education, technical services, and financial assistance to landowners and homeowners in King County. Their mission is to promote the sustainable use of natural resources through responsible stewardship, and 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 (RFSP) based on the LFI and engagement with a wide range of local food system advisors and stakeholders. The program offers annual competitive grants, and longer term sustained strategic investments, to support the LFI. Major gaps in our region's food system were identified in the 2014 LFI. More support is needed in the production, distribution, processing, and storage of locally raised farm products. Significant barriers to land, water, capital, equipment, and markets prevent new farmers from starting farms and existing farmers from scaling up to a sustainable level. The RFSP works to lower economic barriers to these solutions through grant funding.

Project Background

King County and King Conservation District are embarking on a refresh of the Local Food Initiative, a regional strategy to grow the local food economy and increase access to healthy foods in low-income communities. Published in 2015, the [Local Food Initiative](#) has served as a roadmap for food policy and

action for stakeholders across the region and been the driving force behind innovative programs and projects. The refresh of the LFI presents an opportunity to build off our past success, learn from our failures, incorporate new policy and research, and integrate new voices and communities into the conversation.

One of the key differences between the 2014 LFI and 2024 LFI is the lenses with which the plan is developed. Climate change and equity are being incorporated into every step of the process. KC and KCD acknowledge that the impacts of structural racism in King County's food system have directly contributed to higher rates of food insecurity and lower rates of food and farm business ownership in Black, Indigenous and communities of color. As well, climate change is rapidly changing the ecological conditions and threatening food security and food and farm business viability in King County. The 2024 LFI will support anti-racism and a just transition to a carbon-zero food system.

These commitments are especially important in the context of King County's history as a productive agricultural region with dairies, livestock operations, row crops, and berry fields producing over \$110 million of agricultural products each year. Rich agricultural areas support hundreds of families and provide an abundant local food source for thousands. King County has the 4th largest farmer population in Washington State, with over 42,000 acres in its Agricultural Production Districts — areas designated for agriculture. These working farms in the urban and rural areas of the county support more than 40 farmers markets in King County, a vibrant restaurant scene, food trucks, grocery stores, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and local food and beverage culture.

KC and KCD staff have been working on the 2024 LFI since April 2023, with an official kick-off in August 2023. The anticipated end-date of the project is in December 2024. The plan development process is expected to take 15 months, 12 of which will be under the consultant contract. The King County Food Systems Advisory Council was formed in September 2023 to guide the process of developing and implementing the 2024 LFI and the RFSP. This group of 20 food systems stakeholders from across the food system and the county will drive the 2024 LFI process and make critical decisions on the consultant's work.

Requirements

The consultant successfully awarded the contract will have:

- Experience working with public agencies and local government on regional planning, policy development, or strategic planning work.
- Food system experience, including an understanding of the complexity of food system-level problems and the general barriers to individuals entering the local food economy.
- A deep commitment to equity and social justice, including experience leading racial justice work and employing anti-racist practices both in the firm itself and in the work produced.
- Experience engaging diverse communities across the region, especially multilingual and multicultural communities.
- An understanding of climate change and a commitment to ensuring a just transition to carbon-free and climate resilient systems.

Scope of Work

The scope of work is divided into two pieces: community engagement and plan design. Consultants may choose to apply for the entire project or one of the two pieces (community engagement or plan design). Consultants who choose to apply for one piece are encouraged to apply as a team with another consultant who will work on the other piece. Please submit team applications as a single application, with proposal contents clearly defining the split of work between consultants. If a consultant chooses to apply independently for a piece of the project, KC and KCD reserve the right to place the consultant into a team if they are chosen for the contract.

Community Engagement

Task	Description	Deliverables
Food Systems Advisory Council Engagement	The King County Food Systems Advisory Council was formed to create and implement the LFI. Consultant will be responsible for planning and facilitating meetings with the FSAC throughout the planning process and working with the FSAC to prioritize community engagement actions and build consensus around policy and strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting design and facilitation • Community outreach plan revisions • Consensus building
Targeted Stakeholder Engagement	Consultant will be responsible for developing strategies to reach communities who are unlikely to respond to broader community engagement initiatives and are of particular importance to the local food system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to underrepresented communities • Public meetings • Priorities for food policy and action from underrepresented communities
Broad Community Engagement	Consultant will be responsible for creating and working with KC and KCD staff to implement a community-wide engagement strategy to receive feedback from residents of King County. Consultant will also need to develop strategies to educate and inform residents of the LFI, including methods such as providing translation services, stipends, and culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate community interest • Online community engagement plan to be implemented by KC and KCD staff • Facilitate public comment period

	appropriate communications.	
Record building	Consultant will be responsible for documenting their community engagement process and consolidating an outline of the process into a chapter for the final LFI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement chapter

Policy Design

Task	Description	Deliverables
Identify community priorities	Consultant will be responsible for distilling information from the community outreach phase into distinctly identified community priorities to target planning efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of specific community priorities • List of the 'big issues' to center policy action towards
Develop implementable policy strategy	Consultant will work with KC and KCD staff to develop strategies to address community priorities. Special care will be taken to craft policy and strategies feasibly implementable within King County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of plan strategy • Implementation guide for strategies
Write policy language	Consultant will work with KC and KCD staff to write the plan language included within the published LFI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final plan language for LFI
Design policy and strategy organization	Consultant will work with KC and KCD staff to incorporate plan language, implementation strategies, and issue papers into a logical organization for the published LFI document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LFI document
Facilitate public comment period	Consultant will be responsible for facilitating the public comment period after completion of the LFI in the last few months of 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comments and broad summary of concerns • Edits to LFI to incorporate comments
Record building	Consultant will be responsible for documenting their policy design process and consolidating an outline of the process into a chapter for the final LFI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods chapter

Client Responsibilities

KC and KCD staff will be leading this project and guiding consultant work through regular meetings and communications. KC and KCD staff will provide consultant with all necessary data, files, and contacts to be able to successfully complete their scope of work.

Evaluation Criteria

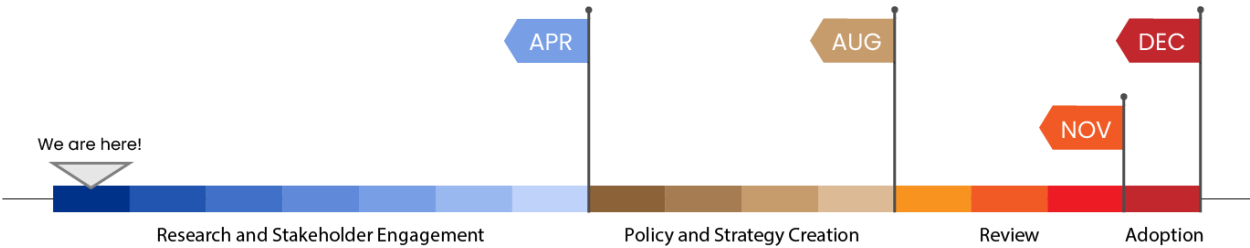
Each proposal will be evaluated and given a score based on the quality of response to each of the following topic areas:

Organization and Management Approach <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.3. Demonstrated understanding of an effective relationship with governmental clients.4. Demonstrated commitment to record building and process documentation.	20 Points
Qualifications and Related Experience <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Demonstrated experience working with a collaborative team including partners from public and private sectors.2. Demonstrated experience with food and agriculture issues.3. Demonstrated experience facilitating conversations between stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, interests, and levels of knowledge.4. Demonstrated experience engaging with communities at the county scale.5. Demonstrated experience engaging with multilingual and multicultural communities.6. Demonstrated experience crafting policy in response to community input.7. Demonstrated experience developing implementable and effective policy and strategies.8. Demonstrated commitment to anti-racist practices within the team and in previous projects.9. Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to sustainable practices within the team and in previous projects.	40 points
Approach to Scope of Work <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Demonstrated expertise, creativity, and effectiveness in proposed approach to SOW.2. Demonstrated understanding of the diverse cultural and language needs of King County farmers, food businesses, and residents.3. Demonstrated understanding of program goals and how to work effectively with agencies, non-profits, farmers, and food businesses in	40 points

<p>King County.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated understanding of potential barriers, needs, and opportunities associated with the SOW. Demonstrated understanding of how to build consensus and generate community priorities that incorporate feedback from diverse stakeholders. Demonstrated integration of climate and equity concerns into proposed approach to SOW. 	
<p>Cost Estimates</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate allocation of hours and expenses for each task. Clarity and completeness of pricing structure, fees, overhead, profit, and hourly rates. Value provided to KC/KCD related to other proposals and similar work done in the region. 	15 points
<p>Overall Proposal</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Concise, clearly written, and complete or thorough proposal, prepared as instructed. 	5 points
Maximum Written Proposal Score:	
	120 points

Timeline

2024 Local Food Initiative Process



October 17th, 2023	RFP issued
November 17th, 2023	Last day to submit proposals
December 6th, 2023	Award announced
December 11th, 2023	Contract start date
Dec. 2023 – Apr. 2024	Community outreach and engagement phase
May 2024 – Aug. 2024	Policy and strategy creation phase
Sep. 2024 – Nov. 2024	Public comment, review, and document design phase
December 2024	2024 Local Food Initiative publication
December 13th, 2024	Final day of contract

Budget and Contract

KC and KCD wish to negotiate a contract with a “not to exceed” dollar total based on a clearly defined scope of work. The selected consultant will be required to enter into a standard professional services

contract outlining roles and responsibilities, scope, timelines, and expectations of the parties. The maximum budget for this project is \$150,000 total. This total comprises both the community engagement and plan design aspects of the project, with \$100,000 and \$50,000 budgeted for each, respectively. If KC and KCD choose to split the project between multiple consultants or consultant firms, the team of all consultants on the project will be responsible for developing an itemized budget inclusive of the entire project.

In this “not to exceed” contract, the consultant is responsible for determining team or sub-contractor wages and travel and supply costs. There will be no avenues to receive additional funding for the work. KC and KCD encourage consultants to reach out for assistance in developing the proposal budget if necessary.

Proposal Format

Consultant Qualifications

Firm must be located in western Washington and available to regularly travel throughout King County. Diversity within the consultant team is encouraged. As well, KC and KCD desire a consultant or consultant team with experience and expertise in:

1. Conducting community outreach across a large and diverse community, such as King County.
2. Facilitating communication between farmers, consumers, processors, and other food systems actors (with a wide variety of backgrounds and a range of interests, skills, and abilities).
3. Broad, systems-based planning.
4. Agriculture and climate change in King County.
5. Agricultural, small business, farmland, food access, and climate policy.
6. Integrating diversity, equity, and social justice goals in outreach and planning.
7. Integrating climate and sustainability goals in outreach and planning.
8. Engaging with multilingual and multicultural communities.
9. Coordinating projects of size and budget similar to those described in this RFP.
10. Forward-thinking goal setting and implementation-minded policy design.

Proposal Contents

The following information should be contained in the proposal package, with the total package not to exceed 10 pages including tables and figures:

1. **Cover Letter** - A cover letter not exceeding two (2) pages shall be provided stating why the Consultant is best suited to provide the desired services to the County. The letter shall identify the contact person, project manager and key staff members assigned to the project along with descriptions of their relevant experience.
2. **Draft Work Plan** - A detailed draft Work Plan shall be provided. The Consultant must describe how they intend to accomplish the define scope of work.
3. **Budget** - A detailed budget including such things as hourly rates of all key individuals assigned to the project, a financial breakdown for individual task, and anticipated travel charges.
4. **Statement of Qualifications** -The firm’s qualifications with emphasis on related work experience shall be described. Please take care to include all food systems experience.

Agreements

Payment will be based on meeting project milestones over the duration of the project. KC and KCD reserve the right to award partial payments and create teams across applicants. 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 KC and KCD staff are 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 tasks with subtotals. Task hours shall be billed in hour increments, and hours itemized by staff and billing rate.