PART 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Purpose

King Conservation District (KCD) seeks a consultant or consultant team to develop improved vendor information management systems that benefit both King County farmers markets and farmers, and help ensure public trust in farmers markets and the integrity of market-vendor relationships.

In late 2016 and early 2017, KCD staff actively engaged with regional planning efforts of the King County Kitchen Cabinet, and sought out and received input from over 50 food system practitioners on priority needs for a robust and comprehensive regional food economy. Working with our Advisory Committee Working Group, we identified four strategic initiative funding areas that address multiple stakeholder needs, and leverage stakeholder input for greater impact. One of these funding areas was Farmers Market Manager Support.

A number of recurring issues related to farmers markets were raised during outreach efforts and ranged from increasing participation of farmers, increasing operations capacity for market managers, ensuring product integrity, and ways to reduce time and costs for farmers participating at farmers markets and for managers operating markets. These issues were reiterated by members of the King County Farmers Market Manager's Forum and the Farmers Market Integrity Project Advisory Team.

B. Context

Farmers markets face a host of organizational and management challenges that are better addressed by working together. In the past, farmers market organizations (especially smaller ones) could function efficiently with evolving protocols, ad hoc record keeping, volunteers who were the market's "institutional memory," and a highly relationship-based approach to working with farm vendors. As a result, farmers markets have their own individually normed, customized management practices. While the unique character and deep community connections of farmers markets is one of their greatest assets, the variability also presents enormous information management challenges for managers and farm vendors.

Application System

Due to the way markets have evolved, each farmers market has its own timeline of when applications are accepted, what information is required, and how farmers can apply. Some have short paper applications while others have in-depth online systems. In the winter and spring, farmers apply to get into farmers markets. If they have already sold at a market, they likely know the application process and what to do. If they are a new farmer or there is a new farmers market without a webpage clearly delineating the application and process, connecting becomes much harder. If there are language, literacy, or technology

barriers between farmers and markets, communication can be very challenging and sometimes unsuccessful. Without a coordinated application system, farmers are faced with multiple application processes, requiring duplicative information and different permits, and waste a lot of time and resources to navigate different market application processes.

Farmers Market Integrity Project

In 2014, in response to national media questioning the "trust" and "authenticity" in farmers markets, and supported by a three-year USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program grant, a group of market managers, led by the WSU Small Farms Program with Seattle and other King County markets, farmers, representatives from the WSFMA, and WSDA Organic Program, formed an Advisory Team with the goal of ensuring public trust in farmers markets and the integrity of market-vendor relationships. The Farmers Market Integrity Project has continued its work beyond the end of the USDA grant in late 2016.

The working model includes shared information, clear and consistent protocols among markets, training for farmers and market organizations, third-party verification, and agreed upon consequences for non-compliance. The Advisory Team is working with its partners toward the following project components:

▪ Creating a Common Vendor Application form so that markets have confidence that they are asking the information they need and farmers will only have to provide farm, product, and license/permit details once. The key questions have been developed and shared with market managers.

▪ Conducting "desk audits" to verify information provided by farmers in the application with minimal time and expense. This practice has been tested with farms with the help of and in response to questions from King County Market Managers.

▪ Inspecting farms as needed based on information provided to markets, desk audits, and what products managers are seeing at the market. This has been piloted and at least a dozen farm inspection visits conducted over the last three seasons through this project.

Therefore, creating a coordinated application process and common vendor application that can be adopted by farmers markets will make applying to markets easier for farmers and will provide markets with more thorough and consistent vendor applications. Other benefits, include:

- Reducing redundancy
- Increasing accuracy and completeness
- Saving time for farmers (farmers will only have to provide farm, product, and license/permit details once)
- Saving time for market managers (streamlining information management)
- Increasing confidence in information provided by farmers
- Supporting compliance for legally required permits and licenses
- Making farmers markets a more attractive market option
- Creating easier ways for farmers markets to find farmers – and farmers to find markets through an online application system.

PART 2 – SCOPE OF SERVICES

A. Program Deliverables

Funding from the KCD Strategic Initiative will be invested in a Pilot Project to create improved vendor information management systems that benefit both King County farmers markets and farmers.

Deliverables include:
(1) Create a coordinated application process across King County Farmers Markets that increases:
   a. Consistency and common standards among farmers market application processes, and
   b. Brings consistency to market policies and enforcement protocols (e.g. signage standards and requirements, etc.).

(2) Develop a standard template for farm application information that helps reduce/remove barriers for the diversity of farmer applicants, including:
   a. Ways to provide assistance to achieve compliance with various market protocols (e.g. how to apply for a scale license, or health department requirements in King County, etc.),
   b. Addresses the needs of low tech and ESL farmers, and
   c. Ensure it is created so that it reduces liability for all parties.

(3) Develop and evaluate a financial model for the vendor information management system, including:
   a. Obtaining at least three bids for build-out of existing farmers market sales systems, including analysis and recommendations to the Advisory Team,
   b. Build out costs and annual maintenance costs for future
      i. website,
      ii. application, and
      iii. database.
   c. Viable revenue sources for ongoing operation.

(4) Survey King County farmers markets and farmers selling at their markets to find out willingness to pay for a range of fee options (subscription, pay per use, pay for basic application information versus full farm visit reports, etc.).

B. Minimum Qualifications
1. Experience:
   The successful applicant will have:
   - Strong knowledge of farmers market operations and management in King County and more broadly throughout the Puget Sound region.
   - Knowledge of market integrity models around the US, common vendor applications, and experience developing policies and protocols for farmers market operations and management.
   - Ability to provide leadership to and strategic communication with the Farmers Market Integrity Project Advisory Team.
   - Proven ability to collect data, track opportunities, barriers, and metrics.
   - Experience working with web designers, technology companies on web-based applications for form management.

2. Equipment:
The successful candidate will need to provide their own transportation and data management systems (e.g., computer).

Format for Responses

Proposers shall submit:
1. Qualification summary – Describe how the minimum qualifications for experience are met or exceeded. Include examples of work related to subject matter. Please limit your response to 10 pages (5 double sided).
2. 12-point font. Appendices and References additional and as needed.

3. Provide a general budget for each task. Please include an average hourly rate for all anticipated staff. Total proposal cost may not exceed $50,000 over two-year implementation of the pilot project.

Evaluation Process

An evaluation committee, appointed by KCD, will review all timely received proposals and score them according to the numerical criteria listed below.

Evaluation Criteria	Percentage
Strong knowledge of farmers market operations and management in King County and more broadly throughout the Puget Sound region.	20%
Knowledge of market integrity models around the US, common vendor applications, and experience developing policies and protocols for farmers market operations and management.	20%
Demonstrated ability to provide leadership to and strategic communication with the Farmers Market Integrity Project Advisory Team.	20%
Proven ability to collect data, track opportunities, barriers, metrics.	15%
Experience working with web designers, technology companies on web-based applications for form management.	15%
Cost.	10%

Tentative Schedule (The dates listed here are subject to change)	
RFQ Issued	3 January 2018
Proposals due to King Conservation District	19 January 2018
Evaluations completed and Contractor notified	29 January 2018
Work to begin	February 1, 2018
Work complete	December 31, 2019

Dollar Range for Services

Overall cost will not exceed $50,000 for work February 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019. For specific questions, prospective contractors may contact Mary Embleton at mary.embleton@kingcd.org.