



## **Request for Proposals**

### **Purpose/Scope**

Weekly distribution of food assistance boxes—sourcing and aggregating product from local area farms and delivering to Thurston County food assistance organizations.

### **Please submit proposals to:**

Thurston Economic Development Council

Attn: Tina Sharp

tsharp@thurstonedc.com

(360) 218-2662

### **PROPOSALS DUE:**

**SEPTEMBER 17, 5 P.M.**

### **About the EDC**

The Thurston Economic Development Council (EDC) is the state-designated lead economic development organization in Thurston County. The EDC is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors and is the parent organization to the Thurston Economic Development Council Center for Business & Innovation (CB&I), a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The EDC/CB&I's combined mission is to create a vital and sustainable economy throughout the county and region that supports the livelihood and values of our residents.

### **Request Summary**

We are actively seeking the professional services of a business entity that can provide food aid relief to those who have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through weekly distribution of up to 150 boxes of local farm food to an established list of at least 5, and no more than 15, food assistance organizations located within Thurston County that serve Thurston County residents experiencing food insecurity.

Applying businesses must also be able to demonstrate their ability and experience to procure, aggregate and deliver food from predominantly Thurston County farms.

Applying businesses must be able to start services as early as the last week of September 2021 and provide this service for up to 15 weeks, with the possibility of additional weeks extending into 2022.

This contract has the dual purpose of combating COVID-19 induced food insecurity and expediting the recovery of for-profit agriculture businesses whose market access has been negatively affected by the pandemic.

### **Proposal Expectations:**

*Each proposal must contain the following components:*

1. Notice of Intent to Bid
  - Applicant Business Name
  - Federal tax ID number
  - Contact Person
  - Physical Address
  - Mailing Address
  - Website
  - Email
  - Phone
  - Date
  - Signature
2. A brief statement about why you believe your business is a fit for this proposal, highlighting your relevant experience, and confirming that you meet or exceed the minimum RFP requirements.
3. Business entities submitting proposals must provide an explanation of how they will accomplish the requested services. Please respond with specific, concise plans, limiting your word count on narrative answers to 250 words per answer.
  - a. Provide a budget detailing costs for an average of 150 boxes of local farm-sourced food to be delivered once a week for a duration of 15 weeks to an average of 10 locations dispersed throughout Thurston County.
  - b. With a total budget estimated at \$100,000, demonstrate how at least 60% of your costs will go to producer payments, thus achieving the objective of providing a new market for local farm producers whose traditional markets have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - c. Please also address your pricing structure. Specifically, describe how you intend to balance the value of providing as much and as high a quality food possible to the recipient organizations with the value of providing farmers with as decent of a price possible for their products.

### **Eligibility**

Businesses registered in the state of Washington providing farm product aggregation and distribution services.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Priority scoring will be given to the following considerations:

- Clear demonstration of the ability to perform the requested tasks within the prescribed budget.
- Businesses that welcome new farm suppliers/members/participants, and so spread the benefits of the funding “as widely as practically possible” across farms (funding is not intended to benefit small groups of hand-selected producers).
- Businesses recognized by the Washington Secretary of State as a farmer-owned cooperative.
  - In the instance of a cooperatively owned business, ownership or membership is composed of 50% or more Thurston County farms, and/or;
  - Food supplied through the businesses for the purposes of this program consists of 50% or more supplied by Thurston County farms

### **Background**

Thurston County received \$28.2 million in American Rescue Act funding on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The County will receive a similar amount in addition at approximately the same time next year. Of these funds, \$100,000 has been allocated by the Board of County Commissioners to purchase food from local and Thurston County farmers for distribution to eligible food aid organizations.

The Thurston EDC is administrating this funding through the Thurston Strong pandemic recovery and response coalition. This coalition consists of public agencies and private organizations that have worked to create a rapid coordinated response to the significant disruption of the region’s economy created by COVID-19. The EDC is the principal fiduciary for this effort.

While this pool of funds is not yet finalized, it is anticipated that it will be within the next two weeks. In anticipation of the finalization, it is our intention with this RFP to ensure that the resources and activities required by submitting businesses have the opportunity to make strategic plans and take efforts that are in alignment with their agricultural processes and seasons. Once the program is fully funded, respondents to this RFP will become fully considered as active for consideration.

### **Selection Process & Timeline**

The Thurston EDC’s Regional Agriculture Development Team will evaluate all proposals received and, if needed, will conduct either Zoom-based or in-person interviews with applicants.

The selected applicant will be announced by Sept. 23, 2021, and contracts signed by Sept. 27, 2021.

**Questions**

Vendors may send any questions that they have about the project to Tina Sharp, Regional Agriculture Development Manager at the Thurston Economic Development Council via email at [tsharp@thurstonedc.com](mailto:tsharp@thurstonedc.com).

All questions should be submitted by Sept. 14, 2021. Answers will be provided via email no later than Sept 16, 2021.