

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
LOUDOUN MADE LOUDOUN GROWN MARKETPLACE
TECHNICAL AND MARKETING SUPPORT**

ABOUT US:

The Loudoun County Department of Economic Development (DED) is a full-service economic development organization under the structure of the Loudoun County government dedicated to recruiting new business, growing existing industries and improving the county's business climate. DED has adopted the following statements as guiding principles:

DED Vision: Our vision is a diverse and globally competitive Loudoun economy.

DED Mission: To strengthen and diversify Loudoun's economy by providing world class and innovative customer-focused services to attract, grow and retain targeted businesses of all sizes.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

Loudoun County has been awarded a grant through the USDA Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program. The overall goal is to determine the effectiveness of the Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketplace e-commerce platform (<https://loudounfarms.org/marketplace/>). As part of this project, Loudoun County seeks a qualified consultant to provide technical and marketing support for the Loudoun Made Loudoun Grown Marketplace. The Consultant will work with DED to increase the number of participating vendors using the platform, assist participating vendors with the management of their platform storefronts, and partner with the DED Marketing Team to develop/implement a consumer marketing plan that increases product sales and engagement of consumers on social media channels and related marketing materials. Specific tasks include:

Task 1

The consultant will serve as DED's technical liaison with the Marketplace platform host. The consultant will ensure that DED and Marketplace vendors are assisted in how to use the platform, made aware of changes to the platform, and provide technical support related to upgrades to the platform as needed. The consultant will provide regular updates to the DED project manager and incorporate DED staff as appropriate.

Task 2

The consultant will offer technical support to participating farms to build their storefronts on the platform to improve product selection. Our goal is to have 100 active storefronts on the Marketplace. There are currently 67 farms signed up for the platform, 34 farms have active storefronts, the remainder are at various stages of the on-boarding process. Services may include, but are not limited to orienting the business user to the features within the technology and how they are best used within our local market to support their direct-to-consumer sales and marketing efforts such as; best practices taking and uploading product photos, setting inventory quantity and unit of measure, optimal naming conventions to ensure searchability, reviewing pickup and delivery customization options, ensuring that the businesses' USP/Story within the business bio is optimized for our local market, attracting customers via social media and how that dovetails into Loudoun

Farms social media, using customer lists to keep customers engaged, etc. The consultant will be the main point of contact with the platform host. The consultant will work with vendors to implement best practices to market their own products and storefronts and integrate the site with their other social media platforms to help drive customers to the Marketplace.

Task 3

Working with DED's Marketing and Communications Team, the consultant will develop a marketing and outreach plan to promote the Marketplace, and to convey the overall benefits to our consumers and our farmers. The consultant will provide content for weekly e-newsletters and social media posts with product updates, vendor highlights and/or links to vendor sites.

Task 4

The Consultant will evaluate Marketplace data and coordinate with the DED on a twice-monthly basis. Monthly reporting and related outcomes to be provided include:

- Vendors – Existing vendors and new ones using the Marketplace platform as a result of the technical and marketing support.
- Current sales and increased sales for participating Marketplace vendors.
- Consumers – current number and increased number of consumers visits to the platform, increased number of completed sales.
- Platform and Promotion – Collect survey satisfaction results from vendors and consumers using the platform.
- Current and increased number of social media channels used to promote the platform.

TIMELINE:

RFQ Released: April 5, 2021

Responses Due: COB April 15, 2021

NEXT STEPS:

Interested parties should send their responses via email to the contact listed below and may include links to websites or other sources for viewing respondent's portfolio. Please make sure you address the two categories and the budget questions listed below, but otherwise please let us know who you are, what you offer, and how you would approach such a project. Please make sure to indicate any areas outlined above that you cannot fulfill and whether you utilize any partnerships or sub-contracting in your work.

After receiving responses, DED plans to narrow the selection to at least three respondents for further discussion before making a final decision. All decisions and final timelines are subject to the purchasing and procurement rules of Loudoun County, but our goal is to have a contract in place by early May.

SCHEDULE AND BUDGET:

The projected timeline for the project is May – October 2021, and February through October 2022. The project budget is approximately \$50,000.

It is requested that all respondents include in their response all-inclusive pricing with set costs for the two-year period.

CONTACT:

Any questions relative to this request and all responses should be directed to John Magistro, Business Development Officer – Agriculture and Business Services at john.magistro@loudoun.gov.