



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS  
LOUDOUN MADE LOUDOUN GROWN MARKETPLACE  
CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT

ABOUT US:

The Loudoun County Department of Economic Development 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. Loudoun Economic Development has adopted the following statements as guiding principles:

Our Vision: Loudoun Economic Development envisions a diverse, globally competitive, #LoudounPossible economy.

Our 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 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program.

The goal of this part of the grant is two-fold:

1. to evaluate the effectiveness of the Loudoun Made, Loudoun Grown Marketplace e-commerce platform (<https://loudounfarms.org/marketplace/>);
2. to survey Loudoun's farms and rural businesses to obtain strategic insights on their needs and opportunities for enhancing their capacities.

Specific tasks include:

Task 1 - Platform Evaluation

The Marketplace e-commerce platform was selected based upon customer needs, ease of use, record-keeping capabilities, tech-support services, and the County's desire to create a pass-through mechanism with no distribution costs that occur directly between the vendor and the customer.

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During the 2021 farm market season (May through October) Loudoun Economic Development worked with a marketing firm to provide technical support to vendors and to develop marketing / outreach measures to promote the marketplace and increase sales. This dedicated marketing effort yielded a mix of positive results and areas for improvement.

Therefore, the consultant will coordinate with our department, the platform host, and our marketing contractor to become familiar with the platform operations and implementation plans to date. The consultant will then reach out to vendors and consumers to identify factors that are affecting customer's abilities to purchase products, such as site navigation, product selection, product availability, and product distribution, as well as alternative on-line shopping options.

The deliverable for this part of the project is a written report containing the platform evaluation and the recommendations to improve platform performance.

### Task 2 - Vendor Survey and Capacity Building Strategies

Many of our farmers indicate that they are at or above their growing capacity and do not have additional products to sell through the Marketplace. The consultant will assist Loudoun Economic Development to identify and evaluate barriers facing our vendors within the protein sector, produce sector and value-added sector with respect to increased production. The consultant will provide Loudoun with recommendations to increase capacity for our farms and rural businesses and identify potential funding mechanisms to implement these practices.

The consultant will develop an outreach and survey strategy for current marketplace vendors and farms / business expressing interest in expanding their operations. The consultant will: (1) Identify survey participants within the protein sector, fruit and vegetable sector, and value-add sector with a goal of 100 survey participants; (2) develop survey questions to help identify factors that limit production such as available land for expansion; workforce needs, infrastructure, and access to capital; (3) analyze existing data from local and regional sources relative to capacity building, and gather new data from the surveys and direct communication with survey participants, and (4) compile the information into a report that summarizes existing assets, capacity and willingness to expand, gaps in production, and capacity building opportunities.

The deliverable is a written report containing the evaluation, recommendations and the raw data from the survey results in an appendix.

### Task 3 - Summary of Findings

The consultant will coordinate with Loudoun Economic Development on a twice-monthly basis on the project activities throughout the term of the project. Our team will work closely with the consultant to provide guidance, feedback, and input as the consultant evaluates the e-commerce

platform, develops the vendor survey, recommends capacity building strategies, and provides Loudoun County with the final deliverables.

#### TIMELINE:

RFQ Released: November 18, 2021

Responses Due: COB December 3, 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. With uncertainty over COVID-19 restrictions, we understand that in-person engagement may be limited. We request that you address in-person versus remote engagement in your response.

After receiving responses, Loudoun Economic Development 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 January 2022.

**SCHEDULE AND BUDGET:** The projected timeline for the project is January – April 2022. The project budget is approximately \$50,000 - \$75,000 (depending on in-person versus virtual surveys).

It is requested that all respondents include in their response all-inclusive pricing with set costs. As mentioned above, in-person engagement may be limited by COVID-19 restrictions, so we request that you provide cost breakdowns that include both in-person and remote/virtual engagement for vendor surveys associated with Task 2.

#### 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](mailto:john.magistro@loudoun.gov).