



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Linn County Food System Assessment

Deadline for Submission: 5:00 PM, Friday, October 18, 2019

I. Overview

RFP Purpose

The **Linn County Food Systems Council** is seeking to increase access to and consumption of nutritious foods by increasing the volume and diversity of food produced within Linn County. The first step toward accomplishing this goal is to complete a comprehensive baseline Linn County food system assessment. The food system assessment will study four factors: production, procurement, processing, and barriers to entry and expansion of businesses working within the Linn County food system.

The food system assessment will result in two main deliverables: baseline data and action steps. If possible, a third deliverable should be to include an economic impact assessment related to potential increases in the volume and diversity of locally produced, processed and purchased food. A lack of readily available data on these specific food system characteristics is problematic for the Food System Council as it hinders strategic planning and goal setting efforts. A large portion of this assessment will focus on in-field survey work and communicating with all of the local producers, processors and procurement officers to create a comprehensive catalogue of information on the four identified characteristics. Once a clearer picture develops of the food grown, processed, and purchased locally in Linn County, including the specific barriers to entry and expansion of businesses operating in the food system, that data will then be used to develop a planning document with a series of action steps to increase local food production with timelines and measurable milestones.

The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals from consultants or consultant teams who are interested in performing a food system assessment of these specific criteria for Linn County. A consultant will be selected and invited to participate in further discussions and negotiation of a contract agreement for the requested services based on an evaluation of responses to this RFP.

RFP Timeline

- RFP released September 27, 2019; posted to the Linn County website.
- RFP information session conference call: October 4, 2019 from 10 – 11 a.m. The conference call-in number is 1-866-576-7975, and the participant code is 218839.
- Any questions about the RFP and/or project are due by October 16, 2019 at 5 p.m. Questions received after this date will not be answered.
- RFP Due Date: October 18, 2019 at 5 p.m.



- Notifications of firms to be interviewed will be sent by October 25, 2019.
- Interviews will be conducted the week of October 28, 2019.
- RFP award decision will be announced by November 14, 2019.

An electronic submittal of the proposal (excluding cost proposal) may be emailed to charlie.nichols@linncounty.org, or posted to the Linn County Food System Assessment Dropbox folder by the end of business on October 18, 2019. Please note: the maximum file size for emails that may be received is 100 MB. If your proposal document exceeds this size it will need to be posted to the Dropbox site. For access to the Dropbox site, please contact Charlie Nichols at charlie.nichols@linncounty.org. The separate cost proposal is also due by the end of business (5 p.m.) on October 18, 2019 and shall be submitted in accordance with Section III of this RFP.

Proposals will not be opened prior to 5:00 PM Central Time on Friday October 18th, 2019 and will be opened by an authorized County representative only, and not in the presence of Vendors or individuals not employed by the County. Vendors may withdraw its Proposal by submitting a written notice. Late proposals will not be considered. For evaluation purposes, all terms of the Proposal will be held firm for a period of sixty (60) days following the date of the deadline for submission. Submitted proposals become the property of the County.

II. Scope of Services

The selected consultant/team will perform an analysis using quantitative and qualitative methods, resulting in a comprehensive catalog of the Linn County food system, including the current production, procurement, and processing capacity of Linn County. Additionally, the analysis will identify barriers to entry or expansion. The consultant should include an economic impact assessment related to potential increases in local food production if possible. The findings will be developed by the consultant into a planning document with a series of action steps to increase the capacity diversity of the food system within Linn County, with timelines and measurable milestones.

This food system assessment will follow the Community Food Systems Assessment and Planning Process laid out by the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). The IDPH recommends three core components and nine accompanying phases for assessing food systems. The core components are: engage stakeholders and establish assessment strategies, analyze and prioritize indicators, and implement and evaluate food system plans. Consultant/team shall consider the following nine strategies, which mirror the nine phases for assessing food systems recommended by the IDPH, in developing the scope of work:

Strategy 1: Identify Food System Stakeholders



Use existing network of Food Systems Council contacts to identify key stakeholders already engaged, as well as stakeholders that need to be brought into the discussion. Stakeholders will bring a diverse set of interests and expertise as well as different sets of resources that can be leveraged.

Strategy 2: Convene Food System Meetings

Linn County Planning and Development staff will assist the project consultants with securing meeting space as well as sending out meeting invitations. Staff will work with project consultants to set up a meeting framework with clear objectives to maximize the time and efforts of meeting participants.

Strategy 3: Develop Community Food System Assessment Strategy

Based on the information gained from stakeholders and stakeholder meetings, develop a food system assessment strategy with specified tasks and timelines, including communication and meeting plans to ensure time and resources are effectively utilized in developing the assessment.

Strategy 4: Select Food System Indicators and Collect Data

Choose indicators based on what most accurately measures the success of the project. Consideration will be given to which indicators can be updated by the Food System Council in the future to track progress. Indicators will give an accurate picture of the current system while enabling continued evaluation. Indicators will be: valid and measurable, consistently reported, publicly available, and relevant.

Strategy 5: Engage the Community to Identify Assets and Gaps

Use community participation to compliment stakeholder participation and to assess community beliefs and perceptions about the food system.

Strategy 6: Analyze Data, Determine Trends and Priorities

Assemble collected data, develop economic impact assessment, and present to stakeholders. Identify and discuss results. Prioritize indicators.

Strategy 7: Develop a Community Food System Plan

Use results of stakeholder engagement and indicator evaluation to develop clear action steps for increasing the capacity and diversity of the food system in Linn County.

Strategy 8: Implement Food System Plan

Assign responsibility for each action step to specific groups and or/individuals. Estimate time and monetary budgets for each action step, providing a clear and realistic picture of the amount of work necessary to implement action steps.

Strategy 9: Evaluate Impacts



The Food Systems Council will be responsible for: holding action step assignees accountable, monitoring key indicators, and updating the food system plan as necessary. The consultant will help the FSC develop an evaluation framework that fits the resources and needs of the FSC. Progress on the plan will be shared periodically (no less than annually) with the public.

Note: Consultants lacking expertise in any one strategy area are encouraged to partner with other consultants experienced in that area.

III. Proposal Contents

Interested consultants should submit a Letter of Interest and Statement of Qualifications including, but not limited to, the following:

- Firm name, address, telephone number, and email address;
- Point of contact name, telephone number, and email address;
- Summary of suggested approach to meet the objectives for the project as described in this RFP;
- Past experience specific to the issues and problems applicable to the Linn County Food System Assessment Initiative;
- Overview of consulting team, including clear statements of expertise in projects of this nature;
- Qualifications of staff and, if applicable, sub-consultants;
- Demonstrated ability to meet schedules without compromising sound planning practices;
- At least three (3) project references;
- A cost proposal shall be electronically submitted with the subject line "Cost Proposal – Linn County Food System Assessment (Name of Firm)". The cost proposal should include the cost of the assessment as well as an additional cost for an optional economic impact study. The cost proposal must be dated and signed (electronic or scanned) by an individual authorized to negotiate on behalf of the respondent. The cost proposal shall be submitted directly to Mr. Britt Hutchins, Linn County Purchasing Director, at britt.hutchins@linncounty.org. Mr. Hutchins may be reached at 319-892-5110 with questions regarding submission of the cost proposal.

Note: Proposals should not exceed a total of 20 single-sided pages or 10 double-sided pages. Font size should be no smaller than 11 point.

IV. Selection Criteria

The Linn County Food Systems Council will evaluate proposals based on the following factors:

- Qualifications, experience, and capabilities; (30%)



- Technical approach and ability to complete the stated requirements; (30%)
- Capacity of the firm to perform the work; (15%)
- References and demonstrated success in accomplishing a similar scope of services; (10%)
- Innovativeness of approach (10%)
- Cost of proposal (5%)

V. Background

Linn County Food System Council

The Linn County Food Systems Council (FSC) was created on March 28, 2012 by resolution of the Linn County Board of Supervisors. The Council's first meeting was held on July 17, 2012. The FSC mission is to "...bring together agriculture, food industry, educators, economic development, conservation, and hunger representatives onto one council that can guide and advise the County on the necessary policies and programs that will make Linn County's food system economically, environmentally and socially resilient." FSC current membership is made up of local food and service organizations, local government representatives, local business representatives, and local producers.

VI. Budget

Total project budget for the Linn County Food System Assessment is \$44,900, including a \$25,000 Wellmark Foundation Small MATCH Grant.

Please refer questions about this RFP to the Linn County Planning and Development Department by emailing Charlie.nichols@LinnCounty.org.

VII. Terms

Linn County reserves the right to withdraw or amend this RFP at any time when, in the sole discretion of the County, such action is considered to be in the best interests of the County. Linn County further reserves the right to waive irregularities and informalities in a submitted Proposal or in the bidding process, to accept other than the lowest cost Proposal, and to reject any or all Proposals.



Failure to provide any information requested in this RFP may be cause for rejection of the Proposal. Linn County does not intend to limit the contents of a Proposal. Additional information deemed pertinent may be included. However, the County reserves the right to exclude such information from consideration in the evaluation of Proposals.

Linn County reserves the right to award an agreement based on the initial Proposal(s) received without engaging in discussions or negotiations with Vendor(s). Accordingly, Vendors should submit its initial offer on the most favorable terms possible to the County. Linn County may, but is not obligated to, seek clarification of a Proposal. Linn County may, but is not obligated to, conduct negotiations with one or more Vendors whose Proposal is the most competitive or may best meet the needs of the County.

Information contained in this Proposal may be disclosed in accordance with Linn County's policy on the disclosure of information. Vendor is requested to label and identify specifically any information contained in its Proposal that it considers to be confidential and/or proprietary and for which it requests confidential treatment. By submitting its Proposal to Linn County, Vendor agrees to accept the County's determination of confidentiality and acknowledges that material for which confidential treatment is not granted may be disclosed after the award has been announced.

Limitation of Liability

This Request for Proposals (RFP) should not be construed as, and is not intended to be an order, offer, request to contract, or a commitment by Linn County to enter into an Agreement for Professional Services.

Issuance of this RFP and any actions taken hereunder shall not create a duty on the part of Linn County to pay any costs incurred by Vendor in connection with, or resulting from, this RFP. This includes, but is not limited to, the preparation or submission of Proposal, or responses to inquiries from Linn County related to this RFP or Vendor's Proposal; or anticipation of a contract or otherwise with respect to this RFP or Vendor's Proposal.

Agreement Terms and Conditions

The terms of the final written agreement executed between Linn County and the selected Vendor will be drawn principally from this RFP, the terms and conditions set forth in the Vendor's Proposal and accepted by the County, and other conditions, responsibilities and specifications provided by the County. The acceptance of any Proposal is conditioned upon the negotiation of a mutually acceptable agreement. If an acceptable agreement is not reached with fifteen (15) days of Vendor selection, Linn County reserves the right to disqualify the Vendor and reevaluate the remaining proposals.