



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **PURPOSE**

The Vancouver Farmers Market (VFM) is seeking an experienced Strategic Planning Consultant to design and facilitate a participatory planning process that will create a five-year strategic plan for the organization.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Established in 1990, the VFM is a not-for-profit Section 501(c)(6) corporation founded by a small group of local community activists and City of Vancouver officials interested in building a venue for small farms to succeed and the community to gather. In 2000, the VFM relocated 3 blocks West to its current location as part of the City's Esther Short Park redevelopment, where it continues to partner on initiatives surrounding small business and community development. The VFM has an operating budget of \$505,000 annually, of which 59% is funded from membership rent. As a non-profit, the VFM is governed by an elected Board of Directors.

The Board currently has eleven board members and is comprised of community representatives and vendors and is responsible for determining the market rules, policies and overall governance of market direction. The Board is elected by the vendors herein referred to as "members" at the annual meeting of market members. In addition to the board, the VFM is comprised of three subcommittees (Agriculture, Food, and Artisan) that support the screening, regulation and selection of members on an annual and ongoing basis for the market. These committees are made up of representatives from the community as well as vendors.

With a mission to create community by providing local farm products, original artisan creations, and quality prepared foods, the VFM is Southwest Washington's number one visitor attraction with over 350,000 visitors annually and home to over 180 members. We pride ourselves on offering fresh and local produce, flowers, plants, baked goods, a variety of food options, pet treats, and accessories for yourself, home, or garden. The VFM values community, education, sustainability and growth.

The VFM and VFM Board serves its members by offering professional education, linking members to information and resources, providing regular networking opportunities and offering a forum for market-wide dialogue. It has a strong history of offering in-person programs and encouraging small business growth.

### **MEMBER MAKEUP**

Members of the VFM sell agricultural, food and artisan products. Our makeup of membership has changed over the years but consists of the following:

- **Agriculture:** Fruit, vegetable, herb, flower, plants, and other agricultural and horticultural products. Examples include dairy, fish, shellfish, wine, eggs, meats, and wild-gathered foods as well as processed items made by incorporating ingredients grown by the member.
- **Hot/Fresh Food:** Prepared on site by the member and consumed at the market. Examples include coffee, hot donuts, veggie/meat/noodle stir-fries, and Pizza
- **Prepared Food:** Generally prepared off site and for offsite consumption. Examples include sausage, jam, ice pops, baked goods, and sauces.
- **Artisan:** Handmade items created by the member. Examples include paintings, photos, yard art, ironwork, furniture, jewelry, soap, lotion, clothes and woodwork.

### **PLANNING NEEDS**

All of the farmers markets nationwide work to support, enhance and rebuild local food systems and good economies for small scale businesses in their regions. They operate in a competitive environment, by providing a cost-effective, retail space for local producers helping to make small business success achievable and profitable. Many small businesses have a choice where to vend and it's important in the changing culture of community and farmers markets that VFM stay relevant, adjust to the community and member needs, and plan for strategic growth in years to come.

Like other farmers markets, the VFM functions as a non-profit organization funded by and accountable to its members. The VFM has not formally developed a strategic plan for the past several years; the executive director, VFM staff, and VFM Board and Committees set organizational priorities on an annual basis. Given recent community growth and developments, the adjustment of market layouts and market footprint, transitions in staffing, the addition of new board members and an increase in new and returning members; there is an opportunity to take a new look at the role the VFM can play in supporting the region's small business, agriculture, food and artisan community. Additionally, the VFM is looking to expand its breadth and depth of partnerships, both locally, statewide and nationally to move forward our efforts in the coming years. This includes identifying appropriate and relevant professional association memberships, policy and legislation development, programming efforts, expansion partnerships and marketing, outreach and engagement opportunities amongst other elements.

The VFM Board is currently working from our original mission and vision statement with no formalized organizational strategic plan. As we enter our 30<sup>th</sup> year in operation, the board and staff are eager to develop a strategic plan that will guide our operations for the next five years. We want a process that will include the organization's staff, board, committees, members, and other key community stakeholders that will create a map for the next state of the VFM journey. The level of detail in that map will be determined during the planning process, but at a minimum should include the Scope of Work requirements below.

### **SCOPE OF WORK**

The VFM seeks a consultant who will help us design the planning process and who will facilitate the planning process at VFM Board Meetings, outside meetings and retreats (if necessary) this fall and upcoming spring. The consultant will be working with a board/staff team with varying levels of knowledge of farmers market operations and strategic planning processes. Expertise in

navigating different backgrounds, education levels and knowledge will be crucially important for any consultant applying.

**All Consultants interested in applying to this RFP must provide the following services:**

- An initial discussion with VFM’s board at its meeting in Fall 2019 (*September 18, 2019*).
- Interview current VFM board members (11) and staff (6).
- Interview or survey additional stakeholders, including members of VFM subcommittees, key VFM members and selected community agencies and constituents.
- Assist VFM staff in framing questions for an online survey of the entire VFM membership.
- Facilitate three strategic planning focus meetings of 2-3 hours each (VFM Board/Staff)
- Conduct research to identify market best practices and market shares comparison.
- Work with board and staff to synthesize feedback from surveys and interviews; establish a strategic framework; propose organizational priorities, policies and services; and develop a ‘strategy screen’ to help VFM staff/board members assess and prioritize proposed future activities
- Write the strategic plan document, based on committee, community, and stakeholder feedback, with VFM staff/board.
- Assist with determination, development of VFM board, committee, staffing recommendations and structure based on needs, forecasted growth plans and best practices identified in the assessment phase of this plan.
- Provide a one-page strategic plan summary visual tool highlighting key plan elements and direction.
- The Board of Directors has pre-approved a limit of \$10,000 for this project, however additional spending may be granted based on the scope of work presented.

**Request for Proposal REQUIRED APPLICATION COMPONENTS: (Total Page Limit: 10 Pages)**

- Detailed resume or curriculum vitae describing experience working with other farmers markets, community markets or organizations similar to the VFM in scope and size. **(Limit 3 page maximum)**
- Three project or consultant references who can speak to your work. Please note that references will be contacted as a part of this RFP process. For each reference, include the following information: **(Limit 1 page maximum)**
  - 1) Reference Full Name/Relationship to You
  - 2) Title/Organization
  - 3) Project Title
  - 4) Your role in the project
  - 5) Scope of project description
  - 6) Strategy to approaching the work and;

7) Result of work or final product description

- A sample of your work and/or a completed strategic plan you have done with past clients as a part of your consulting work. Include a one-page visual tool if possible. **(Limit 5 page maximum)**
- A draft timeline and approach of your strategic plan strategy for support the VFM. Include a detailed cost breakdown for consulting services as a part of your strategy. **(Limit 1 page maximum)**

**TIMELINE**

The strategic planning process will begin fall 2019 and be completed by the spring 2020. Included below is a timeline of RFP application due dates, review and consultant selection.

| <b>VFM Strategic Plan RFP Timeline</b>                              |  |
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| <b>Item</b>   | <b>Date</b>  |
| <b>VFM Request for Proposals Posted</b>                             | Monday, August 26, 2019                              |
| <b>VFM Request for Proposals Open</b>                               | Monday August 26-Friday, September 13, 2019          |
| <b>VFM RFP Question &amp; Inquiry Cut-Off Date</b>                  | Wednesday, September 11, 2019 @ 4pm                  |
| <b>VFM Requests for Proposals Closes</b>                            | Friday, September 13, 2019 @3pm                      |
| <b>RFP Committee Vetting &amp; Selection</b>                        | Friday, September 13-Wednesday, September 18, 2019   |
| <b>VFM Board Meeting</b><br><i>(*Contractor Selected/Announced)</i> | Wednesday, September 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2019 @6:30pm |
| <b>Contractor Negotiations</b>                                      | Thursday, September 19- October 4, 2019              |
| <b>Contract Start Date</b>  | Monday, October 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2019               |

**QUESTIONS & INQUIRIES**

Please contact the Vancouver Farmers Market Staff at with questions at [info@vancouverfarmersmarket.com](mailto:info@vancouverfarmersmarket.com) or call (360) 737-8298.

Include “ATTN: RFP Inquiry” in the subject line of your e-mail.

**Cutoff date for questions and inquiry is Wednesday, September 11<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.**