

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS MID-SOUTH REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

East Arkansas Planning and Development District (“EAPDD”), in partnership with Shelby County Government, TN seeks to retain the services of one or more consultant firms to provide professional services for the development of the Mid-South Regional Food System Assessment. EAPDD is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit written proposals from consultants or consultant teams who are interested in providing such services. Based on an evaluation of responses to this RFP, a consultant will be selected and invited to participate in further discussions and negotiation of a contract agreement for the requested services.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

EAPDD and Shelby County Government were awarded the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants to develop regional sustainability plans. Access to food as a health tool and economic development engine are identified as a key objectives for both planning initiatives. Due to proximity of the two planning areas, the two entities have combined resources to develop a joint regional food system assessment.

The objectives of the proposed regional food system assessment are:

1. Outline a vision for a sustainable food system for the Mid-South region;
2. Develop a comprehensive baseline and framework of the Mid-South’s current food system to include an understanding of issues, opportunities, and practices from other jurisdictions;
3. Provide a gap analysis between the current state and the vision;
4. Inventory public and private programs that can be leveraged to accomplish priorities identified through this effort;
5. Create a community action plan identifying implementable and locally appropriate recommendations to address the region’s food system issues.

We anticipate this assessment will help the Mid-South region to address:

- Sustainable economic development related to the food system through food production, aggregation, processing, distribution, and value capture;
- Understanding local and regional market (demand and supply) in terms of expanding markets for farmers to support and expand agricultural viability, connecting consumers to their food source, and providing a direct source to fresh and healthy food;
- Improve or impact access to local and regional healthy food sources;
- Improve or impact local and regional sustainability and resiliency, including analysis and projections for changes in climate and water availability;
- Creation of an economic model for use in decision-making built into a data platform, building on existing data of EAPDD and Shelby County Government and including scenario modeling;
- Identification of ideal types of producers, existing and potential;
- Identification of market areas (multiple markets are likely);
- Identification of business development best practices that have proven sustainable beyond start up phase;
- Improving access to healthy food across urban, suburban, and rural communities;
- Improving and measuring positive health outcomes;
- Building regional cooperation and interaction;
- Understanding impact of corporate farms on niche farms (and surrounding communities);

- Creating jobs and businesses; and
- Education.

The study area for this project shall be defined by a preliminary market analysis of the food system/foodshed, but as a minimum shall include the counties of the combined planning areas: Clay, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Greene, Lawrence, Lee, Mississippi, Phillips, Poinsett, Randolph, and St. Francis Counties in Arkansas; Fayette and Shelby Counties in Tennessee; and DeSoto County in Mississippi.

The Regional Food Assessment will be publicly available for use by public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders, so a collaborative effort driven by a Steering Committee comprised of organizations from the Mid-South region should guide assessment. EAPDD and Shelby County Government will be responsible for organizing and coordinating the Steering Committee, but selected consultant(s) shall engage with the Steering Committee as needed. A partial list of organizations invited to participate in the Steering Committee is attached as Exhibit A.

SCOPE OF SERVICES:

The consultant/team procured will perform an analysis, using quantitative and qualitative methods, of the Mid-South regional food system, including consumer demand, food production, food processing and manufacturing, wholesale distribution and storage, and retail distribution (related to demographics in a given sector), niche markets, and quantify the gap between local/regional food production and consumption and local food expenditures as a percentage of total food expenditures.

The assessment shall quantify the potential economic impacts of increased local food production from sustainable urban, peri-urban, and rural farming in the region in terms of a variety of economic factors and indicators, including total increased local food production, narrowed gap between local food production and consumption, increased local food expenditure as a percentage of total food expenditure, new acreage under production, market absorption of local food, recaptured local food dollars and impact on local GDP, blighted and/or underutilized parcels repurposed, conservation of farmland and open space to meet current and future demand for local/regional food production, new jobs and businesses created, impacts on entrepreneurship, minority participation and upward mobility, increased property values, and increased property taxes and other impacts on municipal tax revenues. The study should also include a survey of financing mechanisms, best practices and recommendations from comparative areas, and a discussion of how these findings impact opportunity and equity.

These findings shall be developed into field guides and how-to manuals to facilitate local implementation, in keeping with the methods used throughout the reNEW East Arkansas effort of EAPDD. Consultants will need to facilitate the development of component ownership and accountability by members of Steering Committee.

Consultant/team shall consider the following steps in developing the scope of work:

- 1. Develop an Assessment Methodology*

Assessment of current local and regional food system shall consider production, aggregation, distribution, consumption, and waste in order to impact supply and demand in local and regional markets.

2. *Conduct an environmental scan*

Scan should be an asset-based survey to balance needs-based approach with opportunity generation approach. Scan should address, but not be limited to: fertile Delta soil, deepwater aquifer, Mississippi River, population base in Memphis and other population centers, food banks, non-profit presence in local food issues, philanthropic interest in local food issues, and regional stakeholders. Scan should also consider economic factors such as growth opportunities, industrial development, volume and leakage, location factors, and marginal value.

3. *Assessment of Food System*

Quantitative and qualitative assessment shall address all phases of the food system, including production, processing and distribution, access, consumption, and food waste recovery. Within this analysis, the consultant should consider, but not be limited to: sources and markets for production, aggregation and processing, food hubs, demand for consumption of healthy foods, behavior shift toward consumption of healthy foods, integration of smaller farmers markets (in rural communities) into food system, vehicles for engagement, regulations on solid waste management related to the food system, regional waste diversion.

4. *Results, Gap Analysis & Action Plan*

This section shall address the following questions:

- What are implications for natural resources, land use, and resiliency?
- What are implications for economic development?
- Are there available assets to meet the potential growth opportunities identified?
- What is the economic impact in terms of volume and leakage? Can it be expressed as percentage of GDP?
- Where does production occur? How does location contribute to optimization of the production component of regional food system?
- Where does consumption occur? Who contributes most to creating demand? Who benefits most from improved access?
- How do we create a framework to mitigate barriers? How can we encourage geographic efficiencies that could lower barriers to entry?

This project will require a consultant with proven expertise in food systems analysis and assessment combined with an ability to effectively communicate ideas and recommendations, lead discussion and achieve consensus of action and approach within the Steering Committee, which may at times have multiple or differing objectives, priorities or opinions.

Proposers should note that the Scope of Services identified herein is considered an advanced draft and may be modified after selection of a consultant based upon changing circumstances and/or negotiations with the proposing firm(s).

PROPOSALS:

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

- Firm name, address, and telephone number;
- Point of contact: name and telephone number;
- 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 Mid-South Regional Food System Assessment initiative;
- Overview of consulting team including clear statements of expertise in project of this nature;
- Qualifications of staff and if applicable sub-consultants;
- Demonstrated ability to meet schedules without compromising sound planning practices; and
- At least three (3) project references.

Total project budget for this assessment is \$125,000.

Respondents requesting additional information or clarification are to contact John Zeanah, Administrator of the Memphis and Shelby County Office of Sustainability, at john.zeanah@memphistn.gov or 901-576-7167.

SUBMITTING PROPOSAL:

Firms may request consideration by submitting one original, two copies, and one CD to:
East Arkansas Planning and Development District
2905 King Street
Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401
ATTN: Regional Food System Assessment

All proposals must be received on or before 4:00 PM (Central Time) Friday, November 14, 2014.

EVALUATION PROCESS:

Submittals will be reviewed by a Review Committee organized by EAPDD and Shelby County Government that will identify the most qualified proposers. At the discretion of the Review committee, selected consultants/teams may be interviewed to determine the most qualified firm or firms.

EXHIBIT A

Partial list of organizations invited to participate on Steering Committee

- 4 Rivers Food Hub
- Ag tech schools
- Arkansas State University
- Bring It Food Hub
- Community Development Council of Greater Memphis
- Delta Regional Authority
- East Arkansas Community College
- East Arkansas Planning and Development District
- Extension agents
- Food Advisory Council of Memphis and Shelby County
- Foundation partners
- Green Leaf Learning Farm
- Heifer International
- Kellogg Foundation
- Kresge Foundation
- Memphis and Shelby County Office of Sustainability
- Memphis Area Association of Governments
- Memphis Bioworks (AgBioworks)
- Memphis Interfaith Alliance
- Memphis Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team
- Mid-South Community College
- North Delta Planning and Development District
- Northeast Arkansas Food Bank
- Northwest Mississippi Community Foundation
- reNEW Council Members (who identified value-added ag as a priority)
- Sonny Morris
- ULI Memphis
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
- University of Arkansas Center for Agriculture and Rural Sustainability
- University of Arkansas Law School
- University of Arkansas National Agricultural Law Center
- University of Memphis Center for Partnerships in GIS
- USDA Agricultural and Marketing Service
- USDA NRCS StrikeForce
- USDA Rural Development
- Wallace Center at Winrock International
- White House Strong Cities, Strong Communities liaison to Memphis
- YMCA Health Innovations