

May 16, 2023
Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Solicitation Number: **RFP-2310**
ADDENDUM NO. 1
Questions & Answers

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RENEWING RHODE ISLAND'S FOOD SYSTEM PLAN

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (“Corporation”) seeks proposals from qualified firms to provide an updated food systems plan, building on the 2017 Rhode Island Food Strategy. The state food systems plan will establish collective goals to support the development of a more sustainable, equitable, and economically viable food system for all Rhode Islanders.

Question #1: Is there a budget range or funding cap for this work? What is the budget range or ceiling for this project?

Answer #1: The budget is to be determined.

Question #2: Do you anticipate awarding more than 1 contract or is the goal to work with one consultant and their self-proposed subcontractors?

Answer #2: The goal is to award 1 contract. Subcontractors will need to be approved by the Corporation.

Question #3: Should proposed budgets include compensation or incentives for stakeholders and partners included in the engagement and outreach? Or is there already a budget for that?

Answer #3: As described in the RFP, Proposers shall provide a proposed fee structure of providing services necessary to complete the proposed scope items. This would not include compensation for stakeholder engagement incentives.

Question #4: Does the contractor need to budget for expenses related to the Fall 2023 in-person gatherings and statewide food system summit in 2024 beyond consultant team staff time (e.g, venue, registration systems, translation and childcare, etc)?

Answer #4: No, there is an internal budget for this that will be covered by the Corporation.

Question #5: Is the content, audience, goals of the in-person gatherings already determined? Or part of the scope to assist in strategy as well as facilitation? Are these events specific to the food strategy plan or including the strategy in broader statewide food systems work?

Answer #5: Part of the scope will be to provide strategic direction and guidance on what type of key stakeholders should be engaged through in-person gatherings and focus groups and to support meeting format, topics and assist with facilitation. there will be a staff person at RI Commerce to support with email and phone outreach, scheduling and note taking. RI Commerce will also have staff to handle meeting planning, scheduling and facilitation support. These in-person and virtual events such as statewide summits, focus groups and interview will be specific to the food strategy plan, but by their nature will also serve as an opportunity for networking and partnership building.

Question #6: Can you say more about the ~150 contacts referenced on p. 4? It is not referenced elsewhere in the RFP. Who are the contacts referred to in this sentence: "Provide a methodology that will be used to conduct interactions with the ~150 contacts required."

Answer #6: The first food strategy in 2017 engaged about 150 unique stakeholders through focus groups and interviews. We anticipate that the update to the food strategy will engage at least this amount of unique stakeholders across the food system through either 1:1 interviews, focus groups of 5-20 people or a statewide gathering of approximately 50-75 people.

Question #7: Is there a word limit or any other formatting restrictions on the proposal submission?

Answer #7: No.

Question #8: What is the subset (#) of issue briefs anticipated for the consultant team to need to draft/write and edit versus just edit? What is the expected length of each brief (e.g., 1-2 pages)?

Answer #8: We anticipate developing no more than 30 issue briefs on food products, food markets and issues which will be led by subject matter experts or "co-authors" which will be compensated with a stipend. Each co-author will solicit input from contributors to ensure that they reflect the broad understanding of the topic. Depending on the topic and available data and materials to pull from there may need to be a focus group or interview with key stakeholders to contribute to the brief. Each brief will be 1-4 pages and should include an overview of the current conditions, challenges and opportunities as well as recommendations to indicate a specific policy, area for investment and/or program that should be further explored. The topics will be determined in partnership with expertise from the consultant, the project Steering Committee

and the Advisory Board. Proposers should plan to advise on topic formulation, provide initial guidance to the co-authors and to support with final edits of the briefs to ensure cohesion and consistency.

Question #9: What is the anticipated number of focus groups? Will these be held virtually, in-person, or a mix of formats?

Answer #9: Focus groups will be determined based on topics of the food system briefs. It is likely that some of the topics will be intersectional and one focus group can contribute to input on multiple briefs. Proposers should anticipate supporting at least 15 focus groups by helping to develop a meeting agenda and support facilitation.

Question #10: Are the “two in-person gatherings in Fall 2023 and one statewide food system summit in early 2024” in addition to the “stakeholder summit”? What is the anticipated length (# hours or days) of each gathering or summit and anticipated participation (#)?

Answer #10: There will be two “mini-summits” to gather feedback and direction from two broad but separate stakeholder groups in-person in Fall 2023, one ideally in September and one in November to allow for farmers and hospitality industry partners to participate (date is flexible) and one statewide food system summit/gathering in early 2024 to share the final strategy and build momentum towards implementation.

Question #11: Will points be awarded to prime contractor WBEs, which are not certified in RI, but can demonstrate through other means (e.g., articles of incorporation in their respective state) that they are a woman-owned business?

Answer #11: Proposers should consult paragraph 1 below the evaluation criteria and Appendix A to the RFP. Proposers can also consult the Department of Administration’s Regulations Governing Participation by Small Business Enterprises in State Purchase of Goods and Services and in Public Works Projects, which can be found here: <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/Part/220-80-10-2>.

Question #12: Should the “proposed total contract price” referenced in Appendix A Section A-1 and ISBE Participation Rate form be submitted in a separate file from the “Technical Proposal”? In a separate file and separate email?

Answer #12: It can be included in the same email but as a separate attachment.

Question #13: In regards to section A-1, does an email meet the standard of a “sealed electronic submission”?

Answer #13: Yes an email submission will meet the standard, please refer back to guidance on the RFP on page 8.

Question #14: As the form is only intended to identify ISBE sub-contractor participation rate, where/how should the prime contractor's ISBE status be indicated? Proposal narrative?

Answer #14: The form is not only applicable to subcontractors.

Question #15: Is there a # associated with this RFP that should be included in the cover form or will the title suffice?

Answer #15: Solicitation Number: RFP 2310.

Question #16: Will the Five Year Impact study be available to proposers in advance of submitting the proposal?

Answer #16: No.

Question #17 : Who will comprise the Commerce project team (Scope of Work, bullet 2 and 4) other than the Director of Food Strategy?

Answer #17: 70% FTE project coordinator dedicated to supporting the consultant, Director of Food Strategy and the Steering Committee with administrative tasks such as email outreach, scheduling, etc and writing/editing as needed.

Question #18: Issue briefs:

- What support can the selected Proposer expect to receive on the issue briefs?
- How many issue briefs is a "subset"?
- Who will be writing and editing the issue briefs beyond this "subset"?
- Have the subject matter experts been identified yet? What is the Proposer's role in selecting these experts or coordinating their research and writing?

Answer #18:

- What support can the selected Proposer expect to receive on the issue briefs?
 - There will be "co-authors" with subject matter expertise sub-contracted to support writing and stakeholder convening on each topic. This might include identifying and contacting key stakeholders, scheduling a small focus group or interviews, drafting the initial issue brief and providing feedback on the final version. There will also be administrative support on staff at Commerce to support with outreach, email/phone follow up, editing support and project management as deemed necessary by the Proposer.
- How many issue briefs is a "subset"?
 - No more than 8.
- Who will be writing and editing the issue briefs beyond this "subset"?
 - See response above regarding co-authors.
- Have the subject matter experts been identified yet? What is the Proposer's role in selecting these experts or coordinating their research and writing?

- No they have not been identified, the Proposer will advise the Steering Committee on the selection process as well as final selection of the issue brief topics. The Proposer will be available for onboarding co-authors either as a group to guide their process and will be available as needed to help address any issues or complexities that arise. The Proposer will also be expected to advise the Steering Committee and Advisory Board on developing strategies and related metrics informed by the issue briefs which will ultimately become the final food systems plan “2.0”. A staff coordinator at Commerce will help with basic administrative coordination and scheduling/follow-up as well as editing as needed for their research and writing but the consultant should be available to provide strategic planning and food systems planning expertise as needed.

Question #19: Who is the “client” or primary liaison within Commerce (Director of Food Strategy?) for this project?

- Who is on the statewide advisory board?
- What are their decision-making processes like?
- How will that board be making decisions with the “client” in the course of this project?

Answer #19:

The primary liaison within Commerce will be the Director of Food Strategy

- Who is on the statewide advisory board?
 - A group of 25-30 RI food system stakeholders across industry, academia, government, non-profits and communities.
- What are their decision-making processes like?
 - This will be determined with the first meeting of the Advisory Board in early June, however the role is primarily to advise the Steering Committee on the planning process, who should be involved, what should the focus and priority areas be, how is progress measured, etc. Final decisions will be made by the Steering Committee with significant weight given to the input of the Advisory Board given their expertise and representation of the interests of a broader group of stakeholders.
- How will that board be making decisions with the “client” in the course of this project?
 - The Advisory Board will meet regularly every 4-6 weeks to weigh in on important parts of the process. The Advisory Board is meant to advise by providing subject matter expertise and represent the voices of their members and/or constituents. The Advisory Board is not meant to make decisions about the strategy.

Question #20: What are the “inputs” that will inform food strategy document’s strategies, indicators, and measurable objectives, other than the issue briefs and the Five Year Impact study? (For instance: Is there an expectation of data analysis on agriculture or food industry cluster trends, workforce trends, etc., and if so is that part of the Impact Study?)

Answer #20: In addition to the issue briefs and five year impact study there may need to be an analysis of other secondary research reports as well integration and alignment of food-adjacent RI state plans such as waste management, transportation, land-use etc. There will be no expectation of primary research or data analysis or aggregation aside from utilizing existing data sets and/or reports that are already available through the USDA, federal and state agencies and non-profits.

Question #21: Who is expected to be the implementer of this plan once developed?

Answer #21: The Corporation will be the lead implementer in partnership with Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and Rhode Island Department of Health. Non-governmental entities are expected to support implementation as well such as the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, Farm Fresh Rhode Island and many of the non-profit partners working to support a more regional and resilient food system for Rhode Island.

Question #22: What are the goals of the two in person gatherings (final bullet)?

- What kind of “support” should the Proposer expect to provide for these gatherings?
- How should these gatherings contribute to the content or process of developing the Plan?

Answer #22:

- What kind of “support” should the Proposer expect to provide for these gatherings?
 - The Proposer should be prepared to provide guidance to the event planners on the purpose, goals, agenda and key stakeholder that should attend in order to achieve the best outcomes for the food strategy 2.0 development. The two fall “mini-summits” will serve to provide early input on the draft plan and issue briefs from key stakeholders to ensure adoption from important food system stakeholders. The Proposer should also be prepared to support with facilitation at the summit through leading a workshop or presenting on the initial findings, but will not be expected to manage any of the event logistics or costs.
 - The statewide gathering in early 2024 will serve as a public launch of the final plan to inform stakeholders and the general public about the new strategy and how it was developed, to build excitement, establish or strengthen collaborations for implementation and map out the next stage of implementation with food system partners across Rhode Island. The Proposer should be prepared to provide guidance to the event planners and project team again on the purpose, goals and agenda to achieve the best outcomes.
- How should these gatherings contribute to the content or process of developing the Plan?
 - Answered above.

***End of Addendum ***