



## METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AGRICULTURE TASK FORCE PROPOSAL

November 22, 2019

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), through support from philanthropy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and COG's Department of the Environmental Programs, launched a Regional Food Systems Program to build stronger connections within the region's food and farm economy. This expanded on past work of COG's Regional Agricultural Workgroup to bring together technical assistance providers to raise awareness about the unique value that farms and farmland provide to Greater Washington.

A key outcome of the Regional Food Systems Program is an updated [What Our Region Grows](#) report. It recommends actions to support food and agriculture in Greater Washington, including:

- Creating a regional commission on agriculture;
- Hosting regional forums on agricultural issues;
- Commissioning a strategic plan for agriculture;
- Funding agricultural-related technical, educational and marketing services; and
- Supporting diversification of farm activity, incentivizing local food aggregation, processing, distribution and purchasing.

A volunteer Agriculture Task Force (Ag Task Force), facilitated by COG's Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC), was established in 2019 to assess regional capacity to implement these recommendations.

A primary recommendation of the Ag Task Force is to create a 10-year Regional Food and Agriculture Economy Commission to oversee implementation of *What Our Region Grows* recommendations, and priorities identified during interviews with regional leaders. Doing so will put food and agriculture on a more level playing field with other vital regional issues like water supply. This approach will be a nationally unique, innovative path and vision to support a region's agricultural and food systems.

The Ag Task Force also recommend that COG's Regional Food Systems Program be continued into Fiscal Year 2021 and beyond supported by contributions from local governments, private, and philanthropic sources, to lay the foundation for establishing the Regional Commission.

### DELIVERABLES

Near-term products to be delivered through the Regional Food Systems Program include:

- An inaugural Research Competition for Food and Agriculture;
- COG's "Farm Card" employee Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program working group and program guide;
- A workshop with technical assistance providers on supporting minority and immigrant food and farm entrepreneurs;
- Formation of the Regional Food and Agriculture Economy Commission, including elected officials and experts in local food and agriculture; and
- Ad hoc technical assistance to COG member jurisdictions.

Medium - and long-term products could include:

- Implementation of the Regional Food and Agriculture Economy Commission;
- *What Our Region Grows* Report: Third Edition;
- A consensus position on creating a regional food and farm financing authority; and
- A Strategic Plan for Regional Food and Agriculture Resilience.

Medium and long-term deliverables may evolve as Commission members and partners are identified and shape this body's work program.

### PROPOSED FY21 BUDGET

The Ag Task Force recommends an FY 2021 budget of \$250,000 to continue COG's Regional Food Systems Program and provide additional deliverables to COG members and stakeholders across the region.

The FY 2021 budget will support completion of the near-term deliverables using one FTE position at COG to serve as the Regional Food Systems Value Chain Coordinator, management oversight and support, one part-time Intern, and limited meeting and project expenses.

### Revenue

The Ag Task Force recommended forming a coalition of interested localities, together with private and philanthropic partners, to implement the proposed path and vision. Local funds will leverage support from external partners to support the Commission and Food Value Chain program. The budget shows recommended revenue and sources for Fiscal Year 2021. In future years, an expanded budget could be funded by a greater diversity of public, private, and philanthropic sources.

<i>FY 2021: Program Contributions</i>	
Source	Amount
Philanthropic Partners	\$60,000
COG Department of Environmental Programs	\$25,000
Jurisdictional Contributions	\$165,000
Total	\$250,000

<i>Potential Jurisdictional Contributions Breakout</i>		
	Recommended Amount	Number of Contributions
Large Jurisdiction	\$25,000	5
Small Jurisdiction	\$10,000	4
Total		\$165,000

### MORE INFORMATION

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