



## **Subject: Sole Source Vendor Justification – The Young Gardeners Program**

### **To Whom It May Concern:**

This letter serves as formal documentation that the Young Gardeners Program, operating under the auspices of Groundswell (formerly known as Galveston's Own Farmers Market), is a sole source vendor for the specialized educational gardening services it provides to Galveston ISD's afterschool and schoolday programs.

The Young Gardeners Program offers a unique and integrated educational experience that combines hands-on gardening instruction with STEM, health, nutrition, and environmental science. The program is uniquely positioned to support the district's TOR Kids/Prep (TKP), Texas ACE Afterschool Programs and provide 'Outdoor Education,' their schoolday bell-to-bell operations that align directly with GISD's intent to provide high-quality enrichment opportunities that reinforce academic learning beyond the traditional classroom.

### **Sole Source Justification:**

#### **1. Exclusive Curriculum and Instructional Methodology**

The Young Gardeners Program utilizes a proprietary curriculum developed specifically for elementary and middle school students, grounded in evidence-based gardening education. The lessons are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards and are not commercially available nor replicated by other providers in the region.

#### **2. Certified Local Expertise**

Program delivery is led by trained staff of Groundswell's Young Gardeners Program who receive annual foundational training and ongoing monthly professional development under the direction of the Young Gardeners Program Director and trusted experts in school garden education. This local expertise ensures program continuity, cultural relevance, and adherence to the unique climate and soil conditions of our region—benefits that generic, nationally based programs cannot replicate.

#### **3. Established Partnership and Infrastructure**

The Young Gardeners Program maintains a long-standing and active partnership with Galveston ISD, offering garden-based enrichment at multiple campuses. The organization has built and maintained on-site gardens and developed customized programming tailored to each school's needs. The depth of this infrastructure and these established relationships are not easily replicated by alternative providers.

4. **Grant-Required and Community-Specific Programming**

The services provided by the Young Gardeners Program are embedded in the scope of work and sustainability plans for several GISD grant-funded initiatives. These include programs supported by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and local foundation partners, such as the TOR Kids/Prep (TKP) Afterschool Program, Galveston ISD Education Foundation and beyond.

Replacing this vendor would risk compromising the integrity and compliance of these grant-funded initiatives.

5. **No Comparable Alternative**

Following a review of regional and state-level providers, no other vendor was identified that offers the same combination of local presence, certified instructional staff, proprietary curriculum, and proven success within GISD. The Young Gardeners Program is the only known provider capable of meeting the district's requirements for gardening-based educational programming under current funding conditions.

For the reasons outlined above, the Young Gardeners Program is considered a sole source vendor for Galveston ISD's afterschool and schoolday programming. Should you have any questions or require further documentation, please do not hesitate to contact my office directly.