

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
POST OIL SOLUTIONS: BRATTLEBORO WINTER FARMERS' MARKET

BUSINESS AND MARKETING CONSULTANT— FEASIBILITY STUDY

1. FEASIBILITY STUDY PURPOSE

The Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market via Post Oil Solutions is the recipient of a USDA Rural Business Development Grant. The purpose of this grant is to conduct a feasibility study to determine the economic viability of relocating the Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market (BWFM) to a larger space, and to outline a plan to ensure the success of such a move. Through this proposal the BWFM seeks to secure the services of a consultant to provide services that include research, study design and implementation, project management, data analysis, and community outreach.

2. BACKGROUND

Post Oil Solutions and The Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market

The Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market (BWFM) is a project of Post Oil Solutions (POS), a grassroots community sustainability nonprofit in SE Vermont with a mission to “empower people in the region to develop sustainable, collaborative, and socially just communities leading to a self-sufficient post-oil economy.”

Established in 2006, this seasonal market operates weekly from November through March and is the only weekly winter farmers' market in Windham County, and one of only three in the state. It attracts farmers and vendors from beyond the greater Brattleboro area to sell fresh local produce and unique products, and benefit from the direct customer contact that the market provides. BWFM also provides farmers with a vital source of income during the winter season. Additionally, the BWFM is a force for local food security, serves as an incubator for new local businesses, and provides a space for the community to gather and connect.

During the past decade, the BWFM has seen consistent growth in our vendor community, customer base, and importance to the community — expanding from a two-month to a five-month market and providing job security to many of our vendors during the lean winter months. With this growth, however, have come periods of overcrowding, which detracts from the customer base, deprives vendors of potential sales, and affects our ability to serve people with disabilities and families with young children. Vendors lack sufficient space to feature their full array of products, and the market cannot expand to include the additional local farmers, producers, and craftspeople who wish to participate.

A significant market attraction has been our popular downtown location in a centrally located community space. However, limitations imposed by a change in ownership make it doubtful that the market can thrive and continue to grow and serve the community from this location. After much consideration and with vendor support, the BWFM Steering Committee launched a search for a potential new site and now seeks assistance in making the transition to a new space a success.

Post Oil Solutions is an equal opportunity organization.

3. PROJECT PURPOSE

The project we are calling ***BWFM Forward!*** seeks primarily to assess the economic viability of relocating the BWFM to a new site that meets the identified needs of vendors and customers and provides long-term market security while remaining affordable and attractive to emerging small businesses, independent local farmers, and craftspeople. Further, the project will create a transition plan to ensure a successful move.

The consultant will design the feasibility study utilizing research and input from the BWFM steering committee, facilitate implementation, make recommendations for an optimal site or alternative to moving, and create a transition plan.

The project aims to answer the following questions:

1. What size and kind of a market can the greater Brattleboro community sustain?
2. Is there an alternative site that can satisfactorily meet our needs?
3. How do we relocate in a way to ensure continued market success?
4. What are the financial implications of a move?
5. Is there an alternative we should consider?

OBJECTIVES

- Quantify the size and scope of winter market that the community can support.
- Investigate the impact of relocation on vendors to determine preferences, employment impact, requirements for venue siting, and potential growth opportunities.
- Research and identify potential vendors for a new market.
- Compile and analyze customer, non customer, and community responses to confirm priorities, understand customer preferences, and requirements to succeed.
- Delineate the impact of relocation on low income customers using EBT, CROP CASH.
- Evaluate available properties in relation to market needs, financial resources, and market priorities to recommend optimal location and/or alternatives.
- Make recommendations to build support and minimize negative impact on vendors and customers.

4. SCOPE OF SERVICES

1. Work Plan — Develop a project work plan proposal with timeline to achieve objectives within the contracted time period.
2. Feasibility Study — Work in concert with Market Manager and/or Project Manager to design and implement a feasibility study to achieve the objectives stated above using, but not limited to, the following methodologies:
 - a. Vendor and customer surveys, focus groups, online communications
 - b. Site visits and evaluation
 - c. Analysis of data from surveys
 - d. Community outreach
 - e. Market research

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(Scope of Services continued)

3. Arrange and report on consultations with local stakeholders and potential partners to identify beneficial partnerships and build community support for the move.
4. Develop a transition plan that includes recommendations regarding marketing, logistics, and community outreach to increase likelihood of success.

5. REPORTING

The consultant will report to the Market Manager and/or the Project Manager on a schedule to be mutually determined. It is anticipated that the consultant and Project Manager will communicate regularly. The consultant will also provide the following formal reports:

- Project work plan
- Progress reports - bimonthly
- Feasibility findings

6. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The following credentials are desirable:

- Experience designing and implementing feasibility studies, preparing surveys, conducting interviews and leading focus groups; comfortable with using social media as a survey tool
- Understanding of local food systems and/or familiarity with the challenges of running a farmers' market
- Knowledge and experience with redesign or relocation of public spaces
- Demonstrated experience creating local, low budget marketing campaigns
- Competency at data and financial analysis, familiarity with greater Brattleboro/Windham County

7. PROPOSAL FORMAT

Proposals must include the following information:

1. **Statement of interest and qualifications:** Please provide a brief statement describing your interest in the project and how your qualifications and prior experience will enable you to successfully complete the required tasks. Include a resume or CV and two or three references.
2. **Proposed Project Budget:** The project budget is \$11,000 including all labor and expenses. Please provide a budget overview that identifies billing rates per deliverable, or per hour with an estimate of hours per task.

8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The BWFM Steering Committee will select the most qualified consultant based on the following factors:

1. **Qualifications and experience** — Based on the proposal and an interview process, the consultant will show:
 - a. Demonstrated competency in the required areas
 - b. Ability to work collaboratively with the Market Manager and other staff or volunteers

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(Evaluation criteria continued)

- c. Relevant experience and/or familiarity with farmers' markets, local food systems, greater Brattleboro area, similar projects
 - d. Capacity to successfully carry out all project requirements
2. **Cost of proposal** — Proposed budget addresses all project activities and does not exceed \$11,000 for the scope of services.

9. SELECTION PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

Due Date and Delivery

All proposals must be submitted no later than September 8, 2017. Proposals should be submitted electronically as Word or pdf document to Sherry Maher, Market Manager, Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market at brattwintermkt@gmail.com

Estimated Schedule

RFP Release: 8/23/2017

RFP Submission Deadline : 9/11/2017

Proposal Review: 9/11- 9/17/2017

Contract Start Date: 9/25/ 2017

Project completion: May 31, 2018