



Business Plan RFP - Consultant Q&A July 22, 2013

The following is a summary of Q&A with prospective consultants at the vendor meeting on July 16, 2013 as well as phone/email communications with City staff.

Q: The idea of a public market is clearly something the City has been studying for a while. Why hasn't it happened?

A: The City's vision for the public market has evolved over time. Previous efforts and analyses were more focused on the potential for a downtown market that would tend to feature prepared foods geared toward tourists and the downtown lunch crowd. After exploring different types of markets and considering options, the Local Food Committee and city leadership shifted the focus toward a market that would likely be focused more on local produce, food processing, and aggregation/distribution and regional food. That said, the city is relying on the consulting team and the forthcoming business planning process to help point the way toward the most viable option for the market.

Q: To what extent should the previous studies and reports be used as inputs into the new business plan? Should the project build from those materials or be viewed as more a blank slate?

A: The previous reports and studies should be viewed as background material that may provide useful context but does not necessarily represent the current vision for the market. Approach the project as more of a "blank slate". The Local Food Committee is open to new ideas as well as to revisiting previous concepts but is looking for a fresh perspective.

Q: Who does the city envision as the owner/operator of the market facility once it's built? Should the proposals include identification of a process to identify an operator?

A: This is an important but undecided question. Yes, the City hopes that the selected consulting team will help determine the long term plan for ownership and operations of the facility. The city is open to different models that may or may not maintain the City as the owner of the facility.

Q: How will the public market interact with and relate to the existing farmers markets in Madison?

A: The City's vision is that the Public Market will become a complementary facility that supports the Dane County Farmers Market on the square and the neighborhood markets

around the city. The Public Market will be coordinated with the farmers markets to ensure that it is a facility that adds to their success and long term goals.

Q: How important is the concept of the broader “Food Innovation District” to the project? Should consultant teams focus more on the Public Market itself as a retail facility or the Food Innovation District as something broader?

A: The concept of the Food Innovation District is a very important part of the project. More broadly, the City and the Local Food Committee are interested in looking at the Public Market project as something that could be more than just a retail operation and could include food aggregation, wholesaling, value-added processing and other business activities focused on growing and improving our regional food economy. As such, thinking about the Public Market project as a food district that includes a variety of interrelated uses should be an important component of the analysis. The consulting team will need to show expertise in this area.

Q: How does the Public Market project overlap with the Southern Wisconsin Food Hub project? Should consulting teams plan to work in tandem with the Food Hub organizers as well as the Public Market?

A: The relationship between the Public Market and the Southern Wisconsin Food Hub is not yet determined. The City and the Local Food committee are very interested in exploring potential synergies between the two projects including the potential for co-location.

Q: For the “Financial Plan and Funding” work element, should consulting teams include a development expert versed in project financing and deal structure?

A: Yes, having expertise in real estate project financing and deal structure on the consulting team would be valuable to the project.

Q: In terms of site selection, will the field of potential sites be narrowed to a few contenders before the consulting team does their analysis or will the consultant evaluate the whole city? Are there already sites being considered?

A: The City has considered various sites in the past and various stakeholders may have ideas about what sites should be considered. However, as of right now, no specific site has been identified and the City is very interested working with the consulting team to identify criteria that can be used for site selection.

Q: Do all proposals make it through the three (3) stages of review as outlined on page 11 of the RFP?

A: Probably not. The Reviewing Subcommittee will first review the qualifications section of each proposal and then likely narrow the field to the most qualified firms. Then the Committee will review the Approach Section to select a short list of firms to interview.

Q: It sounds like there has been a lot of work already done on this project. Are there any sacred cows in data or design?

A: There are not really any sacred cows. Approach this project with a fresh set of eyes. The City is open to new ideas. However, the community is leaning toward a Public Market concept that would not be located Downtown and would emphasize serving business and communities with access to produce and food products rather than emphasizing prepared foods geared toward tourists.

Q: What about funding for the construction of the Public Market?

A: It is anticipated that Madison Mayor Soglin will likely include a sizable allocation of funds in future capital budgets for the construction of the Public Market. Donations and supporters of the Public Market may also be sources of funding. The funding plan is not yet determined but the project is viewed as a high priority.

Q: Have there been any studies of the impact of the Dane County Farmers Market? The Public Market may compete with the Dane County Farmers Market.

A: There has been no study of this. One goal is for the Public Market to become something that complements the Dane County Farmers Market and other markets rather than a competitor. The Dane County Farmers Market is a key stakeholder and working with them is important. The winter Farmers Market could be housed at the Public Market.

Q: To what degree of reliability does the City want the cost estimate to be? Costs for a massing model may be more general than a specific design model.

A: A site has not yet been selected; we don't know if there will be a lot of sites or a specific site that comes out of this business plan. Cost wise we want more than a dollar per square foot number but recognize that the project is not at a point where highly-detailed cost estimates are possible or needed. One way to consider this when developing a scope and budget for the project would be to identify preliminary cost estimates as one milestone in the project and then detailed cost estimates as a later milestone.

Q: Is there a refining period built into the scope of this project?

A: It is anticipated this project to take 9-12 months. Some of this is built into this timeframe.

Q: Has the City already worked with site selectors for the Public Market?

A: In previous public market studies there were a variety of sites considered; these are not exclusive or exhaustive. The Gravity Model study looked at three sites. The community has interest in various locations. This is wide open.

Q: Who will manage the market?

A: This is open and needs more research as part of the Business Plan. It could be publically owned and operated, privately owned and operated, or owned and operated by an independent non-profit, yet to be created. We are looking for guidance from the consultant team on the best structure for ownership and operations.

Q: Does an organization already exist that could be an operator?

A: Probably not. Though there are several organizations that have related expertise and could potentially evolve to become a public market operator.

Q: This project requires a lot of asset analysis. Has a segment of geography or assets been already determined? Is the focus on Madison or Dane County?

A: The City of Madison and greater region have a wide variety of existing food economy assets including cooperatives, restaurants, agricultural land, a planned community commercial kitchen, etc. It is essential that the Public Market fits into the existing food economy context. This mix of assets crosses jurisdictional boundaries. For the asset analysis, consulting teams should look beyond the city.

Q: Is there interest in developing something to serve many population segments, such as, low income communities?

A: Yes, a public market that can improve food access for lower income communities is important.

Q: Who is the Local Food Committee?

A: The Madison Local Food Committee has nine (9) members appointed by the Mayor; three members are City Alderpersons and 6 are citizen members. The link to the members is at: <http://madison.legistar.com/DepartmentDetail.aspx?ID=17496&GUID=80B8BBD5-EDD8-47B1-9F02-01875C6F249C&Search=>

Q: Would the City consider proposals that are apportioned, that is, partial proposals?

A: Ideally a team would come together and provide all work products as stated in the RFP. The City is leaning toward a full team but would consider connecting firms with one another if they submit proposals for just a subset of the work elements. The City reserves the right to “mix and match” teams but would prefer not to.

Q: In terms of the Public Outreach component of the plan, how much will the consulting team be expected to do versus the city staff and local food committee? How will the outreach activities be coordinated? The Local Food Committee's Outreach Plan seems aggressive and on a faster track than the business plan. Can you explain this?

A: Between now and when the consultant is hired the Food Committee feels there is time to engage key stakeholders and it makes sense to lay the groundwork for key collaborations. After a consultant is hired it is envisioned the consultant would be part of this collaboration. The City Staff and the Local Food Committee foresee playing an active role in Public Outreach activities to build support for the project and ensure that the consulting team gets the information it needs.

Q: What is the scope of this project? This will have an impact on the cost estimates. The consultant will need a geographic scope, is it; just Madison, the full county, adjoining counties, the THRIVE region?

A: Stakeholders may be outside of Madison and in other counties. This is a City project. The City is hoping the consultant provide guidance on what the relevant food assets are and who needs to be in on the dialogue.

Q: Is there a budget for this project?

A: The Common Council has authorized \$250,000 for this business plan project. We are looking for the best value. The city is looking for project approaches that lay out clear milestones during the course of the project that provide “go/no go” decision points. The hope is that this will help maximize budget efficiency. All proposal should direct the City to what these milestones are in the project.

Q: What is the vision among the City’s leadership and what is happening with the farmers market?

A: Perhaps a first milestone in the project could be to develop concepts defining different typologies of a public market and what each of those would do for our food economy. Madison has a lot of pride in its farmers markets and food culture. It is important that the public market is additive and contributes to existing food-related assets. This is why Work Element one is focused on first understanding the city’s existing food assets and existing gaps and needs in the city’s food system. We need to know what problems the Public Market is trying to solve and what gaps it will fill. However, a vision for the market is beginning to take shape. The Mayor describes the public market as a “gritty” place you can get food that has dirt on it.

Q: Will a list of the pre-bid meeting attendees be posted?

A: Yes, also these questions and answers will be on the website at:
<http://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/economicdevelopment/madison-public-market/370/>

Q: The University is not mentioned in the RFP. Will they have a role in this project or do they have the potential to be engaged?

A: Though not specifically mentioned in the RFP, the University is a key stakeholder in the project and will be engaged during the business plan process. The Local Food Committee includes members who are affiliated with the University.