



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Production of a Business Plan to Guide Development, Operation and to Secure Funding to Formally Establish Wasauksing Maple Products

1. Summary

This RFP is to identify a qualified and experienced business planning consultant who will develop a compelling business plan to help guide the development and operations of Wasauksing Maple Products (WMP) and to secure funding for start-up. The consultant will also be required to engage a Registered Forester to help develop a sustainable sugar bush management plan that is to be used to help guide operations and tap development. In addition, the consultant will be required to include an allowance for design/architectural fees in the event that a new building or building addition design is required.

2. Background

Wasauksing First Nation (WFN) is located on the eastern shore of Georgian Bay in Lake Huron, approximately 5 km off highway 69 and 3 kilometres southwest of Parry Sound. Parry Island is the second largest island on Lake Huron with a land base of 7,874 hectares (19,457 acres). The Ojibway/Potawatomi community has approximately 1,200 community members with approximately 400 members living on-reserve.

WFN has been operating a not-for-profit sugar bush on and off since the late 1970's based on favourable feasibility studies completed in 1965 and 1996 which determined that Wasauksing "has several maple stands that could individually sustain enough taps to qualify as one of the larger maple syrup operations in Ontario." Over the last several years, the operation has focused on moving closer to a for-profit model by completing equipment upgrades, improving staff consistency and by producing a high quality product for the area market.

3. Vision

WMP aims to become a self-sustaining and profitable business that utilizes its maple forest resources in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner, while continuing to pass this community tradition on to future generations. The long-term vision of WMP is to be renowned for its quality First Nation branded maple syrup and to grow the operation to be one the larger and more modern maple syrup operations in Ontario. The business would also like to eventually become a model maple syrup operation for other First Nations.

4. Scope of Work

The business plan should include:

- a. Table of Contents

- b. Executive Summary**
 - A clear and concise overview of the business and plan. Background which summarizes the First Nation's historical sugar bush operations;
- c. Vision**
 - An overview of short and long-term goals;
- d. Marketing Strategy**
 - Identify products and services. Outline any health benefits of products and options for how products could be bundled or packaged;
 - Examine the market, its size, growth and identify target markets. Assess any market opportunities and examine competition in the market, including any competitive advantages. Include a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats);
 - Identify how products can be branded First Nation and any associated costs with incorporating the First Nation story/history of maple syrup;
 - Identify any costs associated with signage and/or the development of a new or enhanced logo;
 - Develop a product pricing strategy;
 - Develop a three year promotional and marketing strategy. Identify all promotional costs including costs to complete mobile sales at local markets and/or festivals. Website development and on-line sales with pros, con's and costs. Recommend the most appropriate forms of promotion and sales channels;
 - Cost quotations should be provided as attachments.
- e. Sustainable Sugar Bush Management Plan by Registered Forester**
 - Attain and facilitate the services of a registered forester to assess the current maple tree stand of approx. 107 hectares (264 acres);
 - Review the operations current tap regime and develop a plan for how many taps can be developed each year over the next three years. Identify the maximum potential over the longer-term (3-5 year, 5-10 year). A GIS map should be developed and shared with WFN to show a high level plan for areas of development;
 - Identify any best practices that will help ensure that maple resources can be sustained in a healthy manner into the future;
 - Identify any bush management or thinning activities by year that should occur and form part of the operations of the business;
 - The plan can be completed separately but must be referenced and used as a guide in the business planning.
- f. Assess the Facility, Infrastructure and Equipment**
 - What are the capital costs required for the current facility to meet the National Building Code. The First Nation will have an inspection completed by its Tribal Council inspector at no cost to the consultant. Any additional costs for the assessment are the responsibility of the consultant and should be outlined in your proposal;
 - Include an analysis of upgrading the current facility versus building new (if required);
 - Assess the current floor plan and recommend areas for improvement;

- Detail a list and estimated valuation of fixtures, furniture, tools and equipment currently owned by the operation;
- What new equipment, tools and fixtures are required for the operation?
- Identify development, design and service considerations (water, power, septic) and outlines any costs associated with upgrades. Recommend the best available option(s);
- Should a new building or addition be required, provide several design options and recommend the best available option with class c estimates;
- Cost quotations should be provided as attachments.

g. Operational Plan

- Outline how the operation will be managed and staffed, including any training that may be required along with the associated costs. Provide short descriptions that outline duties for all staff positions;
- Identify the operating hours and season of the facility;
- Identify how books and records will be maintained and any associated costs;
- Outline how inventory and production batches will be tracked;
- Outline any quality assurance processes;
- Overview the governance structure using a limited liability or limited partnership model and identify and on-going governance costs. Highlight any legal costs required to implement the governance structure;
- Overview all regulatory requirements (maple products, food safety, etc) and how they will be met. Include copies of regulations as attachments;
- Outline facility operating procedures, including facility tour guidelines. Should any operations such as packing or bottling be outsourced?
- Overview how and where products will be stored;
- Identify the best available product distribution channels;
- Identify any health, safety and security requirements;
- Identify all other operational costs;
- Cost quotations should be provided as attachments/supporting documentation.

h. Full Financial Plan (3 years)

- Develop realistic pro-forma cash-flow, income statement and balance sheets. Projections should include all costs, expenses and revenues, and the plan should commence at the point at which project implementation starts and be for a minimum of 3 years or a year beyond cash-flow positive and breakeven, whichever is the latest. Provide an annual cash flow projection summary for the length of any mortgages or loans to demonstrate that any debt can be serviced;
- Include all notes, assumptions and any other information that supports the financial plan;
- Identify potential funders and maximize eligible funder contributions in the financial plan;
- Provide a Source and Use of Funds table/summary with shows all sources and uses of funding, including any WFN equity contributions.

i. Assessment of risk

- Identify business risks with mitigation and contingency measures;
- Outline an exit strategy should the business be unsuccessful.

j. **Outline an implementation plan**

- A monthly critical path for the first year addressing the needs in all areas of the plan;
- An annual "to do" listing for years two and three.

k. **Environmental Issues**

- These need to be assessed at a high level, and any costs associated with detailed studies and/or issue resolution need to be identified.

4. Deliverables and Outcome

This project is seen to be a collaborative venture between the consultant's team and the First Nation. The main, and day-to-day, contact will be Craig Brown, Chief Executive Director. Consultations with the current Sugar Bush Operations Supervisor will also be required.

The main deliverable is a business plan with all attachments and supporting documentation. The document should be accompanied by all supporting material in such a manner that WFN can take ownership of the Business Plan and carry on with its development as time progresses and circumstances change.

Documentation should be delivered in MS Office format (.docx .xlsx .pptx) using Wasauksing formatting and branding; the document may say 'Prepared by 'Your Company'.

5. Insurance

The consultant is responsible for deciding if insurance coverage is necessary to fulfil its obligations under the Contract and to ensure compliance with applicable law. Any insurance acquired or maintained by the consultant is at its own expense and for its own benefit and protection. It does not release the consultant from or reduce liability under the Contract.

6. Application and Selection Process

The RFP competition will close at 16:30 EDT on Friday June 9, 2017. All Proposals should be submitted electronically; all applications will be acknowledged.

During the consideration phase, the selection committee may contact bidders to gain further understanding of their proposal contents; inability to respond in a timely manner may impact the overall decision of the committee.

Any and all questions should be forwarded by email to ced@wasauksing.ca by Wednesday May 24, 2017 at 16:30 EDT. Responses will be provided by Monday May 29, 2017 at 16:30 EDT to all parties known to be submitting proposals.

Once a successful bid has been selected, a contract will be issued in accordance with the proposal. Work on the project should start as soon as possible and/or once funding has been secured to cover the cost of the project. Unsuccessful bidders will also be notified.

7. Project Execution and Payment

It is envisaged that the project will be completed within 12 weeks at which point the final report / business plan and supporting documentation will be delivered and presented to WFN.

The price quoted as part of the proposal should include all anticipated costs including travel and accommodation. However, travel and accommodation should be listed separately and will only be refunded should the travel be carried out.

Please note that we reserve the right not to proceed with this project.

8. Contractual Terms and Conditions

We have a standard service contract format that we use for contracts; however, we are also happy to consider contract formats supplied by individual contractors.

All final documents/reports/plans and attachments shall be deemed to have been given to Wasauksing First Nation with no restrictions on its use.

9. Requirements for Proposal Preparation

The proposal should be prepared in MS Word (.docx) or .pdf. We will be looking at the proposal as an indication of the bidder's ability to get the relevant and important information across succinctly and accurately. At minimum, the proposal should include a description of the consulting firm/business, an overview of the firm's project team and its expertise and experience (please note experience with comparable projects), a description of the project approach and methodology, budget and timelines with milestones and per diems for each project team member, including the registered forester and architect. Please also provide at least two references for comparable projects with permission to contact.

In order to provide proponents with maximum flexibility, this RFP identifies minimum requirements only. Proponents may propose enhancements to any aspect of this RFP as they see fit. In doing so, however, proponents must clearly identify the reason for recommending each particular enhancement and the cost and time implications of each.

10. Proposal Evaluation

The assessment and selection will be both objective and subjective:

- Objectively, we will be looking to see that the proposal has addressed all of our points and requirements;

- Subjectively, we will be looking to see that it demonstrates an understanding of our issues and objectives from an organizational, community, geographical and cultural perspective and that the consultant and consultant team has the experience, capacity and ability to meet or exceed our requirements.

While price will be an important consideration, we will be looking for overall value and so the lowest bid will not necessarily be the successful proposal.

11. Proposal Communication

All communication regarding this RFP and the subsequent submission of your proposal should be directed to:

Craig Brown
Chief Executive Director
ced@wasauksing.ca (e-mail is the preferred means of communication)
1-705-746-2531 Ext 2235

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