Request for Proposals
Town of Brattleboro - Assessment on Community Safety

Issue date: August 19, 2020
Response date: September 8, 2020

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Preamble
As approved by the Selectboard on August 18 and in furtherance of more than 15 hours of public discussions at Selectboard meetings on June 16, July 7, July 21, and August 6 of this year, Brattleboro will begin a focused examination of how Town resources are currently utilized and can be best utilized to ensure equitable and optimal community health, wellness, and safety. The review will examine (but is not limited to): the Brattleboro Police Department, Town support for non-profit organizations, social service agencies and other community resources, as well as identifying currently unmet community needs. This open process will invite in the wealth of knowledge and life experiences that our community holds about police, social services, racism, oppression, and alternatives to punishment and violence. We are working toward a community that is free of white supremacy in all of its manifestations.

This RFP is a call for one or more paid facilitators who will design and facilitate a community-focused process to conduct this study, and provide to the Selectboard recommendations on policies, organizational structures, redistribution of resources, and/or further studies needed based on gathered input. This assessment and recommendation will be due by December 31, 2020.

Acknowledgements
We acknowledge that what is now known as Vermont is a part of the traditional lands of the Abenaki; specifically, the immediate Brattleboro area is known to them as Wantastegok. The Abenaki and their ancestors have made this place their home for 12,000 years, developing an intimate knowledge and relationship with it.

We further acknowledge the centuries where people in power explicitly (and implicitly) have used incarceration, policing, law-making, court orders, and other tools of public safety to prioritize white lives and safety over the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. As we bear witness in recent times, this oppression persists. These same tools have been used to control and oppress other marginalized groups of people: psychiatrically-labeled people, people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness, people who use or have used drugs, people whose identity challenges currently accepted gender roles and/or sexual relationships, and the list goes on.
Background
During the Brattleboro Selectboard meeting on June 16, numerous community members called for the Selectboard to reject the proposed budget and direct police funding to other community safety initiatives, local nonprofits, and social service organizations. The Selectboard passed the budget and agreed to enter into a process of examining community safety, policing, and the budget.

In response, a group of Brattleboro town and area residents involved in diverse and collective movements for liberation and social justice put forward a Proposal (Community Proposal) on June 30, requesting a process that would take a real, deep, equitable, accountable look into policing and community safety. Many community members, social justice organizations, and people from groups especially affected by policing expressed a desire to enter this work together with the Town and Selectboard. (Over 150 individuals and 14 organizations signed on to this Community Proposal before the July 7 meeting.) A Selectboard member, Elizabeth McLoughlin, also put forward a proposal on this date (McLoughlin Proposal).

At the next Selectboard meeting on July 7, community members highlighted key points of overlap and divergence between the Community Proposal and the McLoughlin Proposal. After a lengthy discussion, agreement about the community safety process was not reached. Continued conversation to discuss the process for examining community safety, policing, and the budget was scheduled for the Selectboard Meeting on July 21.

Prior to the July 21 meeting, Selectboard Member McLoughlin submitted a draft Request for Proposals (RFP). Community members involved in submitting the original Community Proposal met to discuss creating an addendum with more specifics, and instead submitted a response to the McLoughlin RFP which included an elaboration upon the Community Proposal.

At the July 21 Selectboard meeting, discussion focused on the collaborative community response to the McLoughlin RFP. After a long discussion involving many community members, the Selectboard voted unanimously to accept the community submission in full, and empower the group of community members to take the existing language they had worked on, turn it into an RFP, and submit it for discussion and voting.

The group of community members provided a proposed RFP, as requested, and that document was reviewed in another long discussion involving many community members during the Selectboard meeting on August 6. At the end of that meeting, the Selectboard directed Town Manager Peter Elwell to revise the document, but only to the extent necessary for it to be in the proper format, to accurately reflect the Town’s legal structure and the requirements of applicable State Statutes such as the Open Meeting Law, to establish a timeline that aligns with the Town’s budget process and Representative Town Meeting (RTM) deadlines, and to ensure that participatory language in the document emphasizes transparency and eliminates exclusions. This document is the result of those limited revisions. After further review and community input, the Selectboard approved this RFP at its meeting on August 18.
Process Overview

The numbered list below outlines the expected chronological process by which the study will be conducted.

1. The Town of Brattleboro seeks one or more individuals to serve as paid facilitators for a comprehensive examination of community safety within the Town of Brattleboro. The scope will include community desires, needs, and reports of harm experienced, a review of current systems and providers, and recommendations for how to utilize our Town resources to ensure equitable community health, wellness, and safety. This will include an examination of the Brattleboro Police Department’s policies, practices, and budget.

2. Applicants will submit a detailed scope, schedule, measures of success, along with a budget. See below for a full list of facilitator qualifications.

3. The Selectboard will make the applications public and will choose the facilitator(s) based on the criteria in this document.

4. Simultaneous with this RFP process, the Selectboard will be creating a Community Safety Review Committee made up of a cross-section of Brattleboro-area residents. Applications will be solicited and in its selection of Committee members the Selectboard will prioritize inclusion of Black, Indigenous and People of Color as well as other community members who are especially impacted: those who use drugs, psychiatrically labelled people, people with disabilities, domestic violence and sexual assault survivors, poor people, people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness, LGBTQ+ folks, and more, while not excluding community members who may not identify as part of any traditionally marginalized population. Participation in this Committee will be compensated at a rate to be determined by the Selectboard.

5. The Facilitator will lead the Committee through a process that meets the expectations laid out in the Assumptions section below.

6. The Committee’s meetings will be open to the public and the Committee will operate in a manner that fully complies with all applicable State Statutes, including but not limited to the Open Meeting Law and the Public Records Law.

7. The Committee will advise the facilitator on gathering input from the community, provide guidance on areas to explore, participate in the interviews and data analysis (as appropriate), and jointly with the facilitator, craft reports and recommendations.

8. By December 31, 2020, the facilitator and Committee will together make initial recommendations. This report will be presented to the Selectboard and released to the public.

9. The Selectboard will consider these recommendations in public meetings during January of 2021 as the Selectboard finalizes its recommended FY22 Budget and the warning for the RTM to be held in March of 2021.

10. The Town will act upon the recommendations received in public meetings and provide quarterly updates at Selectboard meetings about the implementation process.

11. It is anticipated that there will be additional phases of this work beyond the March 2021 RTM. That may include continuing the Community Safety Review Committee and/or other initiatives. However, this RFP seeks proposals from potential facilitators for an engagement that will end in March of 2021. Any work beyond that date would be in accordance with a subsequent proposal.
Assumptions of the Study
The following is a list of considerations, as requested by both Selectboard and Brattleboro community members, to provide a legal, open, accessible, and affirmative process.

1. Meetings that are open, accessible, and affirmatively engage public participation in accordance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law.
2. Virtual options for participation, during the pandemic and beyond.
3. Childcare for participants, as necessary, for in-person meetings.
4. Interpretation and translation for those who are Deaf/Hard-of-hearing.
5. Thoughtful inclusion of those who may not speak English.
6. A forum and process to collect community members’ experiences with police and other emergency responders, including mental health crisis services, anonymously, without fear of retribution by police or the State, such as through one-on-one interviews without sharing details publicly as removal of names in a small community does not sufficiently address anonymity.
7. Prioritizing holding any in-person meetings in spaces where POC have built trust, comfort, and power - such as The Root Social Justice Center. These can be identified with input from the committee and/or the public.
8. Meetings happening at times that are accessible to people - especially those most impacted by this system.
9. Use anti-racist frameworks to consider white supremacy in examining policing and community safety. This should include, but is not limited to:
   a. Ways in which town emergency response (such as police and non-profit collaboratives) may cause harm rather than equitably cultivate safety and support.
   b. Community safety needs that are unmet by these systems/programs.
10. Any individual who is involved in the Committee must be transparent about any possible conflicts of interest based on employment or other affiliations. This requirement applies equally to all applicants during the application/appointment process and to all members of the Committee as the Committee conducts its business.
11. No police officers will be appointed to serve as members of the Committee.

Proposal Guidelines
The subsections below identify the different parts of the RFP responses we expect to be submitted. You may use the “Assumptions of the Study” section as a starting point for your proposal.

About Facilitator(s)
In this section, provide a brief biography and description of the individual facilitator(s) which include a philosophy and qualifications to execute the scope of work. You may include prior experience with qualitative research, social justice work, providing this type of meeting facilitation in a public setting, or other work deemed relevant. Please include a resume for each member of your proposed facilitation team.

Scope of Study
The proposal must include a scope detailing the items below.
● A description of how you will work with the Community Safety Review Committee to lead this inquiry, assessment, and identification of recommended actions.

● A methodology to include public opinion in a way that is safe, legal, ethical, and thoughtful.

● A methodology for assessing existing systems and the organizations that operate in and on those systems, including how to obtain information from those organizations in a manner that is safe, legal, ethical, and thoughtful.

● A preliminary list of potential participants, including organizations, groups of people, and/or individuals to be considered.

● A list of potential risks to be addressed in conducting the study.

Schedule
Please provide a list of milestones and corresponding dates by which you will measure progress in this process, keeping in mind that the initial report and recommendations are due by December 31, 2020, and that this initial engagement will end in March of 2021.

Measures of Success
Identify, in your opinion, how success should be measured regarding public participation/involvement and the end products requested in this proposal. Feel free to use the section “Assumptions of this Study” as a starting point.

Cost
Include a budget with all anticipated costs.

Facilitator Qualifications
Qualities we are seeking in a facilitator:

● Anti-racist. A helpful way to think of this is a person experienced in “identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.” [NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity]

● Experienced in creating spaces and processes where many voices are included and power differences do not result in less privileged people being excluded.

● Experienced in qualitative research methods (i.e. semi-structured interviews, focus groups, community forums, ethnographic observations, participatory research).

● Familiar with and open to creating new/decolonized systems instead of only looking for solutions within currently operating systems (i.e. familiar with restorative and transformative models).

● Ability to handle sensitive data in an ethical, legal, and culturally-appropriate way.

● Incorporates processes for transformative and liberated work that includes somatics (body-based practices). Uses these processes to "get" information from our community that is not traditional and in a way that is easy for people to interpret and participate in.
For example, creating art, movement or other initiatives where our community can express their experiences in a way that feels accessible to them. This will include people who have been harmed or alienated by prevailing processes (i.e. the “sit for 3 hours and respond to questions by an authority figure” scenario).

- Experienced in working with groups that have been historically marginalized by police and social services (i.e. BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low-income, psychiatrically-labelled people, those in recovery and/or actively using).
- Experienced in rural communities.

### Evaluation Criteria

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Meets Facilitator Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive and Achievable Scope</td>
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<td>Thoughtful Measures of Success</td>
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<td>Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
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### Delivery of Proposal

Electronic submissions should be sent to: townmanager@brattleboro.org

Via U.S. mail:  Town Manager  
Town of Brattleboro  
230 Main Street, Suite 208  
Brattleboro, Vermont  05301

### Questions Concerning Proposal

If you have any questions concerning this RFP, please submit them by August 31 via email to Peter Elwell, Town Manager, at townmanager@brattleboro.org.

### Registration of Interest

Please email Town Manager Peter Elwell at townmanager@brattleboro.org to express your initial interest in potentially submitting a proposal in response to this RFP. All registered individuals or groups will receive written answers to any questions submitted by any potential proposer, so that all potential proposers will have access to the all the same information from the Town of Brattleboro.

### Response Date

Proposals must be received by 23h59m on September 8, 2020.