

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR A STRATEGIC PLANNING STUDY FOR THE CENTER FOR CREATIVITY AT THE RIALTO

In August of 2019, the Town of Westfield’s local movie theater, the 100-year-old historic Rialto Theater, unexpectedly closed its doors. In the spring and summer of 2021, a group of Westfield residents, who had been in the process of creating a “makerspace” in the central business district of Westfield, turned their attention to the Rialto Theater. This group, organized as a New Jersey not-for-profit corporation, and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) charitable entity, entered into a contract with the current owners of the Rialto Theater to purchase the building.

The Westfield Arts Collective, operating as the “Center for Creativity at the Rialto,” seeks to create an inclusive and collaborative community space to inspire and showcase the visual and performing arts, through creation, exhibition, and education. The WAC’s goal is “to raise the level of creative energy in Westfield New Jersey and enhance people’s lives through the arts.”

1. NATURE/ SCOPE OF SERVICES SOUGHT

The WAC is seeking to retain a consultant to develop a detailed roadmap to transform the Rialto Theater into the Center for Creativity at the Rialto, which we envision as a “community living room” where makers, artists, actors, writers, and musicians of all ages and experience levels can connect, create, and learn from each other. We do not envision ourselves as a pure “performing arts center,” although exhibiting the performing arts will be part of our mission. We envision providing a multi-purpose, flexible, financially viable, and vibrant set of programmatic and entertainment activities, with an adjoining café/restaurant.

The successful respondent should have a thorough knowledge of the performing arts industry in New Jersey, an understanding of similar creative spaces in small markets, experience with historic building/theater restoration, the ability to coordinate with architects to optimize design, knowledge of fine art exhibition, art lab creation, and arts education.

In addition, the selected firm would produce the following deliverables:

- A. A clear vision and mission for the organization, and a community-centered strategic plan to put that vision and mission into concrete action.
 1. The facilitation of on-site workshops with the Board of the WAC to develop a shared vision and definition of ‘success’ for the project.
 2. The engagement of key stakeholders and partners through interviews and small group discussions to gain insight into the priorities, needs, and opportunities for the project.

3. A market analysis that confirms the demand and audiences for the new center, answering the question, “Why would this be a good project for the community?” This analysis will include a benchmarking of different local, regional, and possibly national similar centers as evidence of what is working best to attract people and produce sustainable revenue.
- B. The development of operating policies and procedures to drive the organization’s programs, internal communications, and external relationships.
- C. A concrete business plan created once the specific model is selected, providing details on programming, operations, and a sustainable revenue model, with the preparation of a pro forma operating forecast for a normalized year of operations, outlining projected income from operations, including program fees, rentals, leases, concessions, and potential contributed revenue and endowment or public sector support; and forecasted operating expenses, including staffing level with associated salaries and wages, payroll costs, advertising, administration, maintenance and repairs, utilities, presentation costs, equipment leases/rentals, insurance, overhead and capital reserves and an analysis of net gain/loss.

2. **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

- A. There are no required elements of a responsive submission. However, the WAC would want any submission to at least include the following:
 1. The name of the respondent, the principal place of business and, if different, the place from which the services will be provided.
 2. A description of the respondent’s overall experience in providing the type of services sought. At a minimum, the following information/experience should be included as appropriate: (i) description and scope of work by Respondent; (ii) explanation of perceived relevance of the experience to this project; and (iii) the education, qualifications, experience, and training of all persons who would be assigned to provide services along with their names and titles.
 3. A narrative statement of the respondent’s understanding of the WAC’s needs and goals.
 4. A listing of all other engagements where services of the types being proposed were provided in the past. Reference and contact information is recommended.
 5. A cost proposal.

3. **PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

Responsive submissions will be reviewed to determine if each respondent has met the minimum professional, administrative, and financial requirements described above. The successful respondent shall be determined by an evaluation of the total content of the

responsive submission submitted.

4. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

Proposals will be received by the Center for Creativity at the Rialto until 5:00 p.m. EST, Friday, February 18, 2022. Proposals received after the time established for receiving proposals will not be considered.

Questions regarding any aspect of this Request for Proposal, and Completed proposals can be delivered via e-mail and should be sent to:

Beth Cassie, Board President
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