

Request for Proposals to Partner Brookings Metropolitan Business Planning Initiative

Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings

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The Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings (Brookings) is seeking—as part of the next phase of its Metropolitan Business Planning Initiative—to identify four to six metropolitan areas with which to work in continuing to pilot an innovative “bottom-up” approach to regional economic growth. With technical support from Brookings and RW Ventures, LLC (which will continue to help manage the project), teams will create and implement comprehensive metropolitan business plans (MBPs). (For more on the Metropolitan Business Planning Initiative, please see the Brookings [concept paper](#) by Bob Weissbourd and Mark Muro). Grounded in customized analysis of metropolitan economies, the initiative seeks to develop new levels of coordination, expertise, effectiveness and business discipline in the practice of regional economic development. The project, in brief, aims to achieve three complementary goals:

- Demonstrate the power of systematic, locally driven regional strategies to transform, reposition and demonstrably improve the economic performance of metropolitan regions
- Improve the field of regional and national economic development practice through the development and implementation of unique, intentional, market-based Metropolitan Business Plans
- Engage with federal, state, and regional policymakers and other “investors” to develop a new approach of integrated, performance-based investment in catalytic economic development ventures

Along those lines, the following sections outline the conceptual background of the project; the opportunity at hand, its scope, and associated deliverables; the preliminary work plan; criteria for participation, including necessary team capacities; and the process for responding to this Request for Proposals to Partner (RPP). Please note that this RPP is only being shared with a select group of potential partners that have already expressed interest and seem likely to meet the criteria described below, among others.

BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT

Three years after the Great Recession, it is increasingly clear that America needs to move toward a more productive “next economy” that will be increasingly export-oriented, lower-carbon, and innovation-driven—as well as opportunity rich. Leading U.S. metropolitan areas—which drive the national economy—are mounting increasingly strategic, locally developed, and sophisticated initiatives to move in these directions.

In this context, the nation and its regions need to take a new approach to economic development. Just as the best U.S. metropolitan areas are defining a new, more sophisticated and intentional approach to regional economic growth, so are federal, state, private and civic sector actors increasingly accepting that metropolitan regions are the critical geographic units in the U.S. economy. Stakeholders at all levels recognize that metros collectively house the vast majority of the assets and disproportionately generate the outputs that define national prosperity. Likewise, more sophisticated understandings are emerging of how regions are differentiating and of how regional prosperity emanates from unique concentrations and interactions of assets, market operations, and enabling environment to improve the efficiency and productivity of local economic activity. Given that, it is clear to Brookings and RW Ventures that the nation and its regions would be better served by the development of comprehensive, integrated, collaborative, and operable strategies tailored to the opportunities in particular regions. With such plans in hand, federal, state, and philanthropic actors will be able to approach metros not as problems requiring programmatic handouts but as compelling, individual investment opportunities for driving national prosperity.

Hence the metropolitan business planning concept: Given the needs of the moment, Brookings believes—and seeks to demonstrate—that the concept of metropolitan business planning offers a powerful new approach to regional economic development.

Metro business planning adapts the discipline of private-sector business planning to the task of regional development. Along these lines, the business planning process enables a region to undertake a deep analysis of its assets, marketplace, and economic performance; identify specific, measurable *goals*; formulate key *strategies* for achieving those goals; and create the *programs, policies, products and other interventions* required in order to carry out each strategy. This then gives rise to a series of *operational and financial implications*, identifying the institutional actors that will be responsible for carrying out each strategy, what they will need to do their job effectively and what kind of resources, including from the federal and state governments, are necessary for the plan to succeed. Finally, MBPs approach economic development as a disciplined business enterprise and specify *performance outcomes* and anticipated *return on investment*. The plans can then be used to restructure federal, state, and philanthropic engagement in ways that invert the current top-down, highly siloed, and often ineffective approach to cities and metropolitan areas while bringing new efficiency to development activity.

It was this approach to regional planning that Brookings and RW Ventures undertook to co-develop with a small number of U.S. metropolitan regions in winter 2009–2010. Three varied metropolitan areas—Northeast Ohio, Minneapolis Saint Paul, and Puget Sound (Seattle)—were chosen to co-develop and pilot the concept, and through the course of 2010 each of the pilot sites worked closely with Brookings and RW Ventures to craft an indigenous local plan and advance an initial concrete initiative for release at the Metro Program’s December 2010 Chicago Global Metro Summit. All three metros have now produced major multi-dimensional plans and are currently working on the implementation of their initial strategic initiatives with substantial momentum in their home regions.

Overall, the three pilots have so far been highly successful and, as hoped, the pilot regions and Brookings team have refined and continued to co-invent the MBP approach. Now, Brookings and RW Ventures are seeking additional metropolitan partners to continue and expand this innovation by launching a second series of metropolitan business plans.

THE OPPORTUNITY: PROJECT SCOPE AND DELIVERABLES

In order to launch this next round of work Brookings seeks teams from four to six more U.S. metro regions with which to collaborate.

Project Scope

As with the first set of pilots, the aim is to demonstrate how this ground-up approach of strategic, integrated, metropolitan business planning and strategy implementation can work and, in parallel, to demonstrate a new relationship between governments, private and civic sector institutions and U.S. metropolitan areas. As before, Brookings seeks to facilitate regional strategy development that:

- Helps regions “change the game” in their economies by producing demonstrably improved economic outcomes
- Helps develop and highlight new and best practices for achieving productive, inclusive, and sustainable growth in U.S. metropolitan areas, and so the nation
- Helps accelerate the emergence of strong metropolitan leadership networks and institutional capacity
- Facilitates peer learning across pilot regions

At the same time, Brookings and RW Ventures seek to supplement the first round of pilots with additional ones that extend the approach to different geographies and types of regional economy, and that offer additional strategic opportunities to move toward the next economy (export-led, low-carbon, innovation-driven and opportunity rich).

Along these lines, Brookings and RW Ventures seek expressions of interest in partnering from metro-based teams interested in delivering a substantial draft MBP by late summer 2012.

Deliverables

Brookings and RW Ventures will work with partners to apply, improve, and adapt the general MBP template that was worked out in the first round of pilots and that will serve as a common starting point for work in the new pilot regions.

In addition to preparing a MBP, each region will prepare a Metropolitan Investment Prospectus, and later a policy implementation memo, based on its MBP.

1. Metropolitan Business Plan

The MBP itself is comprised of two distinct components. The first, the Strategic Overview, entails applying the business planning steps of market analysis, mission and goal determination, and strategy development comprehensively across all areas of the economy. The template organizes this analysis and strategy development around five “leverage points,” further described in the [concept paper](#). (The MBPs of the initial three pilot regions are also available.) The second component, the Lead Initiative, develops a full business plan—adding the steps of product development, operational and financial planning and output projections and monitoring—for a lead catalytic strategy (selected from among the strategies developed in the Strategic Overview).

- (A) Strategic Overview: The planning process for each pilot region will begin with a review of existing regional strategy and project documents to extract and synthesize current work. It is anticipated that high-level mission, values, goals, elements of market analysis, and varied strategies and projects can be identified and organized in the context of the Metropolitan Business Plan template.

Brookings will provide key market data on metropolitan status and performance with respect to the leverage points, using a consistent set of nationally available indicators across all pilot regions. This will serve as a concise and general “baseline” assessment of the pilot region.

This high-level market analysis will serve as a starting point for finer-grained, more indigenous inquiry aimed at developing a profound, multi-dimensional understanding of the region’s unique assets, challenges, and opportunities, enabling development of tailored goals and strategies across the linked areas of the economy.

- (B) Lead Initiative: Local partners will also identify and justify with high-quality, detailed business analysis a specific, highly focused lead strategy in the region that responds to opportunities identified by the baseline analysis, and to drill

down through the rest of the elements of a full business plan—specifying the design of core initiatives, products, and policies and operational and financial characteristics for implementation. This deeper “dive” will exhibit regional, comprehensive, or integrated cross-sector thinking and advance a bold strategic initiative that is already underway or could in the project period become investment-ready. (For examples see the MBPs and prospectuses from the first three pilot sites.) Brookings and RW Ventures will help local teams choose one or more key initiatives to develop with a high level of detail, carrying it through the remainder of the business planning process.

Together, the Strategic Overview and the Lead Initiative will clearly articulate the elements of a business plan, including:

- ✓ the metro’s development mission or vision
- ✓ a market scan to capture the reality of the regional economy, with additional narrowly focused analysis making the strategic and business case for undertaking key development initiatives
- ✓ overarching goals, highlighting, in particular, goals for key development initiatives
- ✓ strategies for achieving desired goals, with greatest detail for key development initiatives
- ✓ the products, services, policies, and programs to be implemented to pursue key development initiatives
- ✓ specific organizational and operational implications for key development initiatives, including performance metrics, institutional roles and accountability for implementation
- ✓ financial statements for key development initiatives showing project budget and resource needs (including the proposed use of investor funding)
- ✓ projected measurable outcomes suitable for achieving the overall goals and vision and demonstrating a return to investors

2. Metropolitan Investment Prospectus

MBPs articulate how a metropolitan area will increase outputs, revenues, and employment, providing returns to governmental and other investors (in the form of increased tax collections and reduced welfare costs, for example). For the Lead

Initiative, therefore, Brookings and RW Ventures will work with each pilot region to develop a short and concise Metropolitan Investment Prospectus that will present the investment opportunity, specific “asks” and returns, and form the basis for development of a new federal /state / metropolitan relationship.

3. Policy Implementation Memo

Drawing on and complementing the locally developed Metropolitan Business Plans and prospectuses, Brookings will work with the regions to draft a policy implementation memo that articulates the implications of the pilot regions’ initiative for federal, state, or local policy response and reform. This memo will highlight the approach and synthesize the pilot projects’ “asks” and implementation implications, in order to then propose a bold new policy direction, along with specific policy proposals, for federal and state investment in the MBP and particularly its Lead Initiative.

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All of these deliverables will be published and released to key stakeholders and the public on the web, through published papers, and through local and Washington events.

WORK PLAN AND TEAM

To ensure successful development and execution of the business plans, careful attention must be paid to adherence to a clear work plan and the maintenance of a sound team and division of labor.

Work plan

Strong project management will be critical in developing the business plan. Brookings therefore proposes a broad “aspirational” work plan something like the following, though this outline should be adjusted to the degree of work and capacity available in each region. Note that a serious commitment of at least two years’ duration is requested for development of the MBP and Lead Initiative, given that Brookings believes that sustained work is needed to assure successful on-going implementation.

Kick-off Meeting

Each MBP will begin with a kick-off meeting designed to introduce the Brookings and core local teams to each other and to develop a more detailed, agreed-upon project plan, including clarification of roles and responsibilities. The meeting will allow, as desired or needed, for further introduction of the Brookings “next economy” vision; more discussion of the MBP concept and methodology; and agreement on a work plan. A key outcome of the meeting will be the identification of a core pilot-region team (including convening organization, lead actors, and strong analytic team) as well as a plan for ensuring deep “buy-in” in the region among locally-based individuals/organizations whose involvement is critical to the ultimate success of the plan.

Phase 1: Strategic Overview

After the kick-off meeting, the next five months will be focused on assembly and completion of the comprehensive market analysis and development of the integrated strategies across the leverage points. This work on the Strategic Overview entails not just deep analytics but broad engagement to build institutional capacity both to undertake the necessary work and to develop and implement high quality MBPs. Brookings will be responsible for supplying basic market scan data for the region as situated among the largest 100 metros in the U.S. Each partner metro will be responsible for producing and organizing the full assessment by supplementing the Brookings data feed with local market intelligence and data. Brookings expects each region will conduct significant, multi-dimensional, in-depth, and rigorous empirical and qualitative research (in collaboration with the Brookings / RW Ventures management team) aimed at situating the opportunities and deficits of the regional economy as a context for developing strategic initiatives.

Based on the comprehensive market analysis, local teams will then identify strategies to address challenges and opportunities within and across each of the leverage points, as appropriate.

All of the work will necessarily be led and conducted by the local project team and stakeholders. Brookings and RW Ventures will provide data, analytic advice and ideas on best practices and strategies. Brookings in RW Ventures will also offer ideas on how best to develop community buy-in for the integrated set of strategies that will work best for each region.

Toward the end of this phase, we anticipate a cross-team meeting will take place to enable sites to share their analysis and strategies and provide each other feedback.

Phase 2: Lead Initiative

Meeting 2

Held about five months after the project kick-off meetings, a second on-site meeting will be held to accelerate development of the Lead Initiative. This meeting may include additional stakeholders as appropriate, including program providers, private-sector firms, and political leaders, as determined necessary to the needed work of identifying and designing the Lead Initiative by the local project team (with input and advice from Brookings).

The primary objective of this planning session is to further engage key stakeholders in identifying and developing the Lead Initiative.

Lead Initiative Design

After Meeting 2 the next four months will be focused on designing the Lead Initiative, including further institutional engagement and capacity development. Each partner metro will be responsible for designing—with its expert consultants and Brookings / RW Ventures advice—the full initiative. At this stage, Brookings expects each region will develop a detailed, well-argued, compelling business plan for a game-changing catalytic initiative aimed at seizing a key economic development opportunity. This work will be conducted by the local project team with guidance and comment from the Brookings / RW Ventures management team as well as top-quality consultants or outside experts.

The local project manager will assume responsibility for assembling and producing the Lead Initiative. Brookings / RW Ventures will continue to provide input and access to expert resources.

Phase 3: New Partnerships and Implementation

Once the draft MBP is developed, the prospectus and policy brief are prepared, as a prelude to further engaging stakeholders both locally and particularly in state and federal government. With those documents completed, the projects third phase turns toward raising the resources and building the institutions to deliver the Lead Initiative.

Meeting 3

The objective of Meeting 3 will be to provide final comments and move towards finalizing the MBP, engaging further stakeholders, and initiating implementation, including exploring federal, state, philanthropic, and private sector engagement and investment.

It is envisioned that the local project team will assume responsibility for writing the full business plan, including the Strategic Overview and Lead Initiative, as well as the prospectus and policy brief. Brookings / RW Ventures will help guide the process, provide extensive input and access to relevant experts, and offer quality control.

Implementation

Completion of the draft MBP is, we should stress, not the end of the process. In fact, it's only the beginning. These are not conventional, static, aspirational plans, but detailed business and operational plans for launching new programs and ventures.

Implementation is the point of the exercise. Therefore, Metro Business Plan partners must make a serious, multi-year commitment to not only develop game-changing plans and initiatives but see that they are executed. Sites should therefore plan to dedicate serious staff time and resources to following up on their plan and initiative with key stakeholders; federal, state, and local policymakers and elected officials; and the philanthropic and private sectors. Demonstrable impact must be the key result of this work.

The plan and its initiatives belong to the local region and its project team and so the region will assume responsibility for their implementation. Brookings / RW Ventures will provide advice and support for at least a year after the initial plan has been completed.

We anticipate a major public event to showcase the next round of MBPs during the second half of 2012.

Team and Roles

A driving force behind this project is the belief that the best regional solutions must be highly tailored to the circumstances of particular regions and so must be developed locally through the leadership of deeply involved government, civic, and private-sector actors. The preferred team structure for the Metropolitan Business Planning project reflects this by placing local economic development actors at the center of the process, with Brookings and RW Ventures playing supportive project management, assistance, and coordinating roles as the plans are developed.

Identifying a robust team of local leaders in each region will be essential to the success of the project. Each team should be spearheaded by a well-established civic leader or institution with a regional perspective and the ability to convene a wide range of stakeholders throughout the course of the project. In addition, a lead author-analyst and a project manager/coordinator with strong technical expertise and access to analytic and other support staff will be necessary to execute the day-to-day work of developing the elements of the plan. The number of individual team members and division of roles and responsibilities among them is necessarily flexible, and will be determined locally in the context of each region's existing network of organizations and relationships.

In short, the local team's ability to develop and produce locally on a rigorous timeline a hard-hitting, well-analyzed Metropolitan Business Plan is of critical importance.

Adequate funding of a highly skilled local project team will be a critical requirement for participation in the project.

The regional team will, in this respect:

- Identify and engage the necessary stakeholders
- Select and organize the needed work team
- Conduct the necessary analyses
- Organize and manage development of the MBP and all aspects of the project
- Produce the documents described above

Brookings and RW Ventures will co-manage the overall project, providing:

- Project framing / context
- Standardized document templates (if needed)
- Facilitation (if needed) of collective kick-off meeting and local working sessions for each region
- Standardized market assessment data
- Ongoing technical assistance and content expertise
- Analytic support and writing guidance, particularly during Investment Prospectus development
- Facilitation of peer learning sessions
- Guidance on publication of project documents
- Support in interface with federal and state agencies and administration

While Brookings' intention is to help convene leadership and then co-develop each MBP, the primary orientation remains "bottom-up." Brookings believes strong strategy and change has to come from and be driven by differentiated regions acting in their own right, so we are looking for energetic, effective lead partners to drive plan creation in each region. The resulting plans will be "owned" by each metro.

TEAM SELECTION CRITERIA

As many as four to six metro-area teams will be selected to begin participation in spring 2011 and we hope that several will be far enough along in fall 2012 to go public with powerful new MBPs. Selections of partner-teams will be made based on the following criteria:

- Degree of existing regional planning and vision, around which substantial consensus has been built
- Critical mass of effective, regionally focused leadership who are already organized to effectively work together
- Significant data and analytic capacity, with proven ability to deliver results. Access to top-quality consultancy or other analytic advice, writing capacity, and project-management services is a major plus

- State of development of qualified specific key initiatives which can be tied to quantifiable plan outcomes
- Ability to raise significant funding from foundation or other resources to help support both Brookings / RW Ventures engagement and high-quality local project capacity
- Representation of varying types of regional economies and specific initiatives
- Orientation to one or more of Brookings’ “next economy” directionals of exports, the low-carbon economy, innovation, or “opportunity”
- Familiarity and experience working with federal and state policymakers
- Long-term commitment to the partnership and MBP process, and likely achievement of concrete initiative implementation

Responding to this RPP: Proposal Elements and Next Steps

Team proposals should include the following key elements:

- ✓ Cover letter expressing interest in participation. The cover letter should review key local assets for project success, including existing relevant strategy documents and development activities; stakeholder engagement, institutional capacity, and proposed team structure; local and consultants’ analytic capacity; community and philanthropic support
- ✓ Existing foundational analysis that identifies local assets and challenges
- ✓ Existing regional planning documents, studies and reports, evidencing relevant preexisting strategy work
- ✓ A document introducing a proposed local team structure, including roles outlined above in “Team Structure and Roles.” This would include bios and/or organizational profiles
- ✓ A document anticipating budget needs and financial resources

Local teams interested in learning more about the Metropolitan Business Planning project are encouraged to attend the forum Brookings is hosting on the concept in Washington on April 11, which will be followed by an invitation-only afternoon meeting for teams

invited to respond to this RPP. Teams with specific questions as they begin to assemble their materials in response to this RPP are invited to contact Brookings or RW Ventures for assistance or to set up a phone conference (see “Contact Information” below).

Materials should be submitted **electronically** no later than **May 2, 2011** (see “Contact Information” below for recipients). Candidates will be notified of their selection by **May 30, 2011**.

Following a review of submissions, candidate regions may be contacted as necessary for a follow-up telephone or in-person interview to clarify any questions and supplement the electronic proposal materials.

Contact Information

For questions regarding this RPP, please call either of the contacts below:

Amy Liu, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings (aliu@brookings.edu)

Robert Weissbourd, RW Ventures (bob@weissbourd.com)

To respond to this RPP, please send materials electronically to *both* Brookings and RW Ventures:

Mariela Martinez at Brookings (mmartinez@brookings.edu)

Gretchen Kosarko at RW Ventures at (Gretchen@rw-ventures.com)