

Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza – Request for Information (DRAFT)

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes – it does not constitute an Invitation to Bid (IFB) or a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue either in the future. Responses to this RFI shall serve solely to assist the City of Cambridge (City) in understanding the current options and or possibilities regarding the solicited information and/or to inform the development of a possible future solicitation. Respondents to this RFI are invited to respond to any or all of the questions in this document. This RFI does not in any way obligate the City to issue or amend a solicitation or to include any of the RFI responses in any solicitation. Responding to this RFI is entirely voluntary and will in no way affect the City's consideration of any proposal submitted in response to any subsequent solicitation, nor will it serve as an advantage or disadvantage to the respondent in the course of any solicitation that may be subsequently issued or amended. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future IFB or RFP, if any is issued.



Depiction of activity around renovated Kiosk and reconstructed Plaza (Halvorson Design)

1. Introduction

The Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza, owned by the City of Cambridge, are sites with a rich history. Over the next 1-2 years, the City anticipates restoration of the Kiosk in a historically sensitive way that maintains the unique character of the built environment and experience in the space. In 2017, the City established a Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group to create a vision for the future use, operation, and governance of the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza. This process has provided a broad

range of ideas and generated a series of preliminary recommendations for the future of this space in the heart of Harvard Square.

The City envisions the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza to be flexible and dynamic community assets that enhance the everyday life of Harvard Square, attract and serve a broad range of people, and act as platforms for community gatherings, including civic, artistic, and social activities. The City anticipates hiring an entity to operate the Kiosk daily, and execute temporary programming, consistent with the Recommendations section of the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group [Final Report](#).

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to elicit information to assist the City in crafting a potential future solicitation for an Operator for the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza. Responses to this RFI should include information that will be useful to the City in subsequently drafting a detailed procurement solicitation(s) related to the Operator for the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza. With input from experienced and creative professionals, the City hopes to better define criteria and strategies for selecting an Operator.

Entities that have experience operating spaces and/or programs that touch on any aspect of the objectives of this project are invited to respond to this RFI. The City is interested in learning how that knowledge might relate to the Kiosk and Plaza. Respondents may also have creative ideas about integrating operations and programs to achieve community goals. Respondents to this RFI are invited to respond to any or all of the questions in this document and do not have to assemble teams. The City is interested in information from entities with a variety of operational backgrounds to help plan for the most dynamic experience for the many constituents who will use the Kiosk and Plaza.

3. Overview

Scope

The City anticipates hiring an entity to operate the Kiosk daily, and execute temporary programming, consistent with the vision outlined in the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Workgroup Recommendations. The Cambridge Office for Tourism would fulfill the Recommendations related to visitor information in the Kiosk, including the provision of ambassadors to greet and assist visitors. [DW1] Activities that the Operator would undertake include the following:

- Site maintenance, security, and cleaning (supplementing the services already provided by the City) of the Kiosk and Plaza
- Onsite staffing (executing daily uses and temporary programming)
- Offsite management (planning and scheduling events, marketing and promotion, financial management, etc.)

Please refer to the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group [Final Report](#) for a more detailed expression of the objectives the City expects an Operator to fulfill. In addition to those objectives, the City also expects that the following be achieved:

- The Kiosk is open and operational for the active portions of the day, opening by 9am and closing at 8pm or later.
- The Kiosk is staffed by at least one person during all hours that the Kiosk is in operation.^[DW2]
- The Operator should facilitate a minimum of 5 temporary programming events^[UE3] in the Kiosk and/or Plaza each month.^[DW4]
- The Operator will work cooperatively with the Cambridge Office for Tourism^[CS5] to accomplish the objectives in the Recommendations.
- The Operator will be subject to the City's Living Wage Ordinance.

The information above and in the Vision and Recommendations sections of the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Final Report will be referred to below as the "Scope."

Revenue Generation

The City's intention is for the operation of the Kiosk and Plaza to be financially self-sufficient and draw from a range of potential revenue streams and in-kind resources to offset operational costs, such as:

- Selling tickets for walking tours, theater, concerts, and other local events
- Sponsored activities (such as a fun activity or a concert series sponsored by a business)
- Promotional activities for products, services, and nearby stores/restaurants (e.g., as providing samplings of products or dishes) and occasional sale of goods
- Interior displays with paid messages
- Advertising (appropriately scaled)
- ATM in or around the Kiosk
- Limited sale of goods, such as news, tourist memorabilia, goods produced by small locally owned businesses, etc.

The Operator shall observe the following requirements:

- Businesses or organizations may pay the Operator to promote themselves through activations^[UE6] and may provide free samples of products or sell goods. Promotional activities and/or sales by businesses or organizations without a physical location in Cambridge can occur in the Kiosk or Plaza on a total of no more than 7 days per month and no more than 60 days per year, except by approval from the City Manager.
- A single business or organization conducting sales or promotions in the Kiosk or Plaza can do so on no more than 20 days per year, except by approval from the City Manager.
- In order to receive approval to exceed limitations as noted above, the Operator would need to demonstrate the value of proposed activities and a sufficient tastefulness in its approach for both past and proposed activities.
- The Operator is encouraged to collaborate with Cambridge community organizations, institutions, and civic entities in its programming.
- Ticket sales, news sales, or commercial activity directly related to visitor information that fall under "daily uses" would not be subject to the limitations above.
- Advertisements, promotions, sponsorships, and any other commercial activities that promote products such as alcohol, smoking of any substance (including marijuana and e-cigarettes), violence, or firearms would be prohibited. Additionally, any type of content which is false and/or misleading^[UE7], or which promotes unlawful conduct or illegal goods, services, or activities would be prohibited.

- Advertising should be placed and sized in such a way as to mitigate the impact on the transparency of the Kiosk, not interfere with the historical integrity of the structure, and avoid over-branding the structure or the surrounding space. The City expects to^[UE8] be involved in decisions related to any placement of advertisement.

For temporary activities involving businesses, the City encourages featuring small, locally-owned and/or -run businesses and organizations when possible^[UE9].

4. Information Solicited

Programming

- What are ways the Operator could engage with a diverse cross section of the community to incorporate a robust range of creative and community-based programming that captures the life of the Harvard Square community and of Cambridge?
- What are ways the Operator should collaborate with the Advisory Committee to enhance the quality of the programming schedule?
- Are there particular temporary program ideas for the Kiosk and/or Plaza not mentioned in the Scope that would generate significant value to the community?
- What are ways the Operator can create a programming schedule that responds to the daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms of Harvard Square to maximize the value of Kiosk and Plaza programming to the Harvard Square community and to Cambridge?
- Please comment on the proposed hours of operation for the Kiosk.

Financial Sustainability

- What would be the most challenging aspects^[UE10] to achieving financial sustainability^[UE11]?
- Are there any permissible or appropriate revenue sources not mentioned in the Scope that an Operator might draw from that would help strengthen financial sustainability?
- Please comment on the reasonableness of assumptions and estimates embedded within the Sample Financials section of the Final Report.
- Please comment on the staffing needs required to accomplish the level of proposed programming.
- Please comment on the most effective placement of potential advertising in or on an historic structure.
- Please comment on how an Operator could conduct revenue-generating activities that provide value to the community, are appropriate to the context, and avoid over-branding or over-commercializing the space.

General/Other

- In addition to items identified in the Financial Sustainability section, what challenges will the Operator face in implementing the Scope?
- Are there particular aspects of the Scope that would significantly hinder a successful operation?
- What are various ways to measure operational success?
- What kinds of fixtures would be necessary or useful inside the Kiosk to successfully implement the Scope, considering the tradeoffs involved with dedicating limited space away from flexible, temporary activities?
- Please comment on the minimum experience necessary to effectively function as the Operator for this project.

- How could the City best evaluate an Operator's success with prior programming and/or provision of visitor information?
- Are there additional Operator Characteristics that the City should consider?

5. Additional Information Requested

- a) Company Name (please list parent company if applicable)
- b) Company Address
- c) Company Website
- d) Contact name and information (e-mail address required)
- e) Provide a description of your company and the basis of your expertise in offering a response to this RFI.
- f) Please provide responses to questions identified in Section 4 of this RFI.

6. Costs

Responders are advised that the City will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI; all costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party's expense.

7. Public Record

All responses to this RFI will be public record under the Commonwealth's Public Records Law, Mass. Gen. L. ch. 66 s. 10, regardless of confidentiality notices set forth on such writings to the contrary.