REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FARM
SEEKING FARMER

AT WESTTOWN SCHOOL
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THE SCHOOL

Westtown School is an independent, PK-12, Quaker, day and boarding school situated in West Chester, PA, roughly 25 miles west of Philadelphia. Known as the oldest continuously operating co-educational boarding school in the country, Westtown was established in 1799 by members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

For more than 220 years, Westtown has embraced an educational approach centered on creating a world that is more just, more peaceful, and more ethically prosperous. Faculty help students prepare for college and for life by fostering the discovery of their gifts, talents, passions, and sense of purpose, and developing in them the tools to explore with confidence and academic preparedness. A strong sense of community at the school helps students feel known, understood, and capable in their ability to effect true change in the world. Westtown is an authentically bold school that offers an education not just for secondary school or for college preparation, but for an engaged, reflective, and purposeful life.

The values and practices of the Religious Society of Friends pervade the curriculum, campus, and culture of Westtown. Quaker values, including equity, integrity, stewardship, simplicity, and peace, shine through Westtown’s community life, curriculum, co-curricular offerings, social curriculum, and residential program. Each community member is called to honor that of God in all; to value every voice; to respect diversity; to seek peace; and to maintain a special focus on service, stewardship, and social justice.

MISSION

Guided by the essential Quaker calling to seek out and honor that of God in each of us, Westtown School challenges its students to realize their individual gifts while learning and living together in a diverse community. Westtown inspires and prepares its graduates to be stewards and leaders of a better world.
THE LAND

Westtown School is situated on land known as Lenapehoking, the traditional territory of the Lenni Lenape people. The Lenape lived on the land for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans in the early 1600s which brought disease, violence, and a new concept of land ownership, all detrimental to the Lenape. The Lenape were forced to move westward and northward where many live today in different areas, though some remain in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Today, Westtown’s beautiful 600-acre campus allows students abundant opportunities for exploration, play, and stewardship. The campus is a vast learning laboratory for the earth sciences, rife with many species of flora and fauna. It features a 14-acre lake, a frog pond, an arboretum, 14 playing fields, stadium tennis courts, an organic student farm, a Lower School mini farm, a wooded cross country course, and a 21-element ropes course. The campus offers plentiful opportunities for outdoor education, whether on the ropes course, at the lake, or on the farm. Commitment to sustainability of the campus and the educational potential of the surroundings is a consistent theme echoed by many constituents. The school has enrolled 49 acres of campus into Pennsylvania’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) as part of a shared commitment to preservation. CREP promotes best practices in support of water quality, soil erosion prevention, and creating sustainable wildlife habitats. In addition, 113 acres of campus are leased and cultivated by a local farmer.

THE FARM

HISTORY

When the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) purchased six hundred acres in 1795 from farmer James Gibbons in Westtown Township to build a new boarding school, the acreage contained approximately 325 acres of virgin timber, some tillable land, and Chester Creek, an improvable water supply. Even while the school was under construction, land was leased to a tenant farmer who managed the farm animals and acres of crops. In 1852 Westtown School opted to manage its own farm operations rather than lease the land, and that arrangement continued well into the twentieth century with the farm, dairy, and orchard producing both food staples for the school dining room and revenue for the school budget. The farm was formally added to the educational program of the school in the 1920s through a bequest which supported an agricultural course designed to give boys a thorough preparation in agriculture as a profession and to "keep before the students a sense of the dignity of agricultural pursuits and to give them a vision of the opportunities for social and civic service in country and communities" (Westtown School Catalog, 1928-29). All students were called on occasion into service on the farm and in the school orchard during the 1940s when Westtown, like so many other institutions and businesses during the war years, experienced a labor shortage. The orchards are gone and the dairy operation ceased in the late 1960s, but Westtown’s farm land continues to provide food and revenue for the school along with educational opportunities for the students.
CURRENT FARMING PRACTICES
The farm is currently operated using a combination of conventional, pesticide-free, and sustainable practices. A variety of cover crops, compost, and mushroom soil have been used to increase soil health and reduce the application of chemical fertilizers over the past 20 years. We are seeking a farmer who will continue this commitment to soil health and shift to organic practices.

THE FARM MARKET
Located on Westtown’s campus, the farm market building is ideally situated on the north side of Street Road/Route 926, which has an average traffic volume of 11,000 vehicles per day. With its 2,700 sq. ft. building, 900 sq. ft. covered porch, and ample parking, the market includes a prep kitchen, business office, bathroom, walk-in cooler, and an additional 2,400 sq. ft. retail greenhouse. Adjacent buildings include an employee shed, climate-controlled tomato storage, and a refrigerated trailer. At this time, the zoning variance permitting the existence of the market requires that 50% of gross revenue be grown on site. The market holds a current food license through the Chester County Health Department.
THE FARMER

CURRENT FARMER/LESSOR
The 113 acres available for lease are currently being farmed by Pete Flynn, doing business as Pete's Produce Farm. Tours of the existing operations, including the market, will be available on February 25, March 1, and March 8 starting at 10:00 am. If you would like to participate in a tour, please sign up on this form.

Pete is willing to consider transitioning Pete's Produce Farm at Westtown School to a new farmer as a turn-key operation. Purchase of the business would include the business name, farm market equipment, a one-acre Haygrove high tunnel, an additional 3,000 sq. ft. high tunnel, two production greenhouses, vendor contacts, customer lists, the domain name, social media accounts, and optional consultation services. Several pieces of farm equipment are also available for purchase. Any such negotiations would be between the new farmer and Pete Flynn; Westtown School would not be involved in such arrangements.

FUTURE FARMER/LESSOR
Westtown School seeks a competent, community-minded farmer or farmers in partnership with:

- A commitment to a reciprocal, regenerative, and restorative relationship with the land;
- At least two years of farm management experience, either through completion of a farm training program, experience operating a current farm, commercial farm, and/or experience in a management role on a farm;
- At least two years of retail experience;
- A willingness to provide opportunities for student visits and learning;
- Intentions to grow food for Westtown School’s Food Services Department as well as a broader community, either through a traditional business entity, non-profit structure, or other formal arrangement;
- The ability to access and maintain comprehensive liability insurance; and
- An understanding of and adherence to all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

As Westtown strives to fulfill its commitment to being an anti-bias, anti-racist (ABAR) school, we are seeking culturally competent farmers with a demonstrated commitment to and ongoing professional development in the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.

THE LEASE

Westtown School will work with the farmer to develop and agree on a lease, negotiated through a fair process, that meets the farmer’s needs, ensures stewardship of the land, and furthers the School’s goals around land access.
At a minimum, Westtown expects the lease agreement to contain the following elements:

- A start date of January 1, 2023
- A minimum 5-year introductory period with an option to renew for another minimum 5-year term
- A negotiable annual lease rate, which will include two parts –
  - Farmland - a per acre charge
  - Market - a percentage of gross revenue charge
- An agreement on branding and the use of Westtown School’s name and logo
- A continuation of the two acre partnership with Chester County Food Bank
- A continuation of mowing of the CREP land (49 acres) and tennis courts land (3 acres) at least twice during the growing season for a fee paid by Westtown School
- Annual operational costs (i.e. labor, seeds, supplies, equipment, tools) as well as temporary structures, will be the responsibility of the farmer(s)
- An agreement on water access and responsible usage
- Details regarding the ongoing maintenance and use of trails on the farmland
- An arrangement in which Westtown School’s Food Services Department can purchase competitively-priced produce grown on the farm land
- A demonstrated commitment to regenerative, ecologically sustainable, and organic farming practices.

THE PROPOSAL

In order to simplify the evaluation process and obtain maximum comparability, Westtown requires that all responses to the RFP be organized as follows:

A. Title Page
RFP title, submission date, name, address, phone number, and email address for the primary contact person(s) as well as each person involved in the enterprise.

B. Cover Letter
A cover letter which describes:
- The farmer’s interest in the Westtown farm and market, as well as the skills and perspective they would bring to this venture;
- A statement on what attracts the farmer to seek access to a long-term lease of farmland, and why leasing land is particularly attractive; and
- The farmer’s philosophical approach to stewardship of the land including their experience in land stewardship.

C. Structure
Clearly describe the proposed management structure i.e. LLC, sole proprietorship, cooperative, etc. including the role of each person.

D. Background and Experience
A detailed resume and/or other evidence of experience farming for community or market consumption, including 2021 annual farm revenue and net earnings; describe the
background and experience of each person, including business, farming, and retail experience as well as related skills such as mechanical, planning, etc. that will help with farm operations and maintenance.

E. Westtown Township Relationship
A description of the farmer’s existing relationship with Westtown Township, if any.

F. Plan
A basic farm plan which outlines proposed production systems, management approaches, infrastructure improvements, a marketing and/or distribution plan and/or resources that will be utilized to develop that plan, proposed structure, a plan for offsite housing, etc.

G. Current Financial Information
A statement on how the farmer plans to support themselves financially either off the farm, on the farm, or a combination thereof, as well as a summary Personal Financial Statement with the name of each principal person who will be engaged and:
   ● Annual gross income of each person
   ● Description of and total value of assets held by each person
   ● Description of and total debt held by each person

A full credit report will be requested at a later stage, but if the farmer has questionable or no credit, please make a statement now. All information provided will be kept confidential.

H. Future Financial Information
Five-year income and expense projections of the proposed farm and market operations.

I. References
Three professional references from individuals who are very familiar with the farmer’s experience.

J. Additional Information
Provide any additional information not specifically requested, but which you believe would be useful to Westtown in evaluating your proposal.

Submit one electronic copy of the proposal in PDF format to carolyn.hapeman@westtown.edu. You will receive a reply within one business day to acknowledge receipt. If you do not receive a reply, please call 610-399-7868.
THE TIMELINE

Please respond before 5:00 p.m. on March 31, 2022.

Westtown School will conduct a careful review of all proposals. Farmers who may be a good fit will be invited to meet with the Farmland Use Task Force in April. All farmers will be notified as to the status of their proposal.

QUESTIONS

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to Carolyn Hapeman, Dean of Finance and Operations, at carolyn.hapeman@westtown.edu.