

Woodstock Economic Development Commission Application for Community Project Grant

Name of Project: Emergency Funds for Bridge Construction
Impact on Who is Sylvia? and Primrose Garden

Start Date: ASAP

Description:

Who is Sylvia? and **Primrose Garden** are at ground zero for the duration of the Central Street bridge construction that started on March 19th and is scheduled to continue into early June. According to the project manager, Rob Young, sidewalk and railing construction on the north side of Central Street, where our shops are located, is scheduled on the tail end of project. Given our building's location over the Kedron Brook, we stand to be the most detrimentally affected for the longest duration of time. Since the project began, our shops, the sidewalk, and crosswalk have all been inaccessible from the front and west of us; there are vehicles, construction equipment, and red caution netting stationed directly in front of our shop entryways 24/7. Customers cannot tell if our shops are accessible. Of the few customers that have been able to make it to us, all have complained that there are no signs directing pedestrian shoppers on how to get to the shops on our side of the bridge construction, mentioning that it took them an average of 20 minutes and multiple attempts to figure it out. Customers must contend with exposure to extensive and exhaustive noise and dust pollution, thus limiting the amount of time they feel comfortable spending in our shops. We cannot keep our shop doors open to further signal to customers that we are accessible because of the noise and air quality. It has been especially onerous for my customers to enjoy browsing and trying on items in a dressing room that it located in the corner closest to the construction event.

Our sales have been severely restricted due to this construction project, and thus our only source of income. My numbers show I am losing approximately \$100 per day for the duration of the construction. After an inordinately unprofitable second half of March, I was forced to make the decision in April to cut electrical costs via opening by appointment only during the week and maintain my regular business hours on the weekend. I used my time to focus efforts into recouping my losses via online sales. Despite my best attempts to mitigate costs from other sources (online, landlords, and the state), my budget is woefully short of meeting my necessary capital goals. In light of these extenuating circumstances, I ask that the EDC please consider providing much-needed financial aid to **Who is Sylvia?** and **Primrose Garden**.

Total Project Budget: Total demonstrable profit loss to date:
\$3592 (Who is Sylvia?) \$1,771+ (Primrose Garden).
Estimated profit loss for both businesses projected at:
\$10,203.

Grant Request: \$5,363 (to be divided equally)

Applicant Information:

Name of Project Coordinator: Jessica Abston

Name of Organization/Business: Who is Sylvia? LLC,
Primrose Garden, Corp.

Organization background:

(i.e. year founded, principals, mission, event organizing experience.

Attach additional information if necessary.)

Who is Sylvia? Vintage Clothing, Lace, Linens, and Accessories is the longest continuously run vintage store in the United States. We have operated in the same location in Woodstock, VT since 1980. We've been voted one of the top five vintage retailers in the northeast by *Yankee* magazine, and more recently, one of the top 175 locations WORLDWIDE for stylists to shop. I became the fourth woman business owner to take the helm in November of 2011. As a purveyor of sustainable/slow fashion, we are committed to providing exquisite quality items at affordable prices to vintage collectors, dealers, museums, movie and theater departments, and most importantly, everyday fashion enthusiasts. We can also confidently declare that 100% of our items are local, recycled, or some combination of the two.

Primrose Garden has been operating next door to us with the SAME OWNER since 1988. Ann Nestler has been a business owner and resident in the town of Woodstock for over 30 years. **Primrose Garden** specializes in an impeccable array of high quality and interesting interior and exterior décor pieces that often can't be found anywhere else. She puts her expert touch into designing her own floral arrangements and centerpieces.

Business Address: 26 Central Street, Woodstock, VT 05091

Telephone Number: (802) 457-1110 (Who is Sylvia?)
(802) 457-4049 (Primrose Garden)

Contact's Email Address: wisvintage@gmail.com

Organization's Website URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/whoissylviavintage/>

Instagram: @whoissylviavintage

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Primrose-Garden/142785005767300>

Organization's EIN: 37-1652548 (Who is Sylvia? LLC)
03-0329169 (Primrose Garden, Corp.)

Your answers to the following questions will help the EDC evaluate your grant application according to the published funding rubric. Please be as succinct as possible while still supporting your answer:

1. How does the proposed project improve the quality of life for all Woodstock residents and visitors?

Quality of life is intrinsically tied to the sustainability of the local economy; it brings money into the town and allows for cultural and community events to thrive in Woodstock. These things improve the lives of visitors and residents alike.

Who is Sylvia? is a community-minded business that likes to partner with other businesses in town to make these types of events possible. For example, after Leonardo DiCaprio visited **Who is Sylvia?** back in 2013, we partnered with **Pentangle**, **Bentley's**, and local musicians to create a multi-faceted Gatsby-themed event that included the film screening at **Pentangle**, live music and period cocktails and apps at **Bentley's**, as well as a costume contest with prizes—all documented by a professional photographer. I look forward to further discussions with the EDC on how to make more events like this happen.

If you know Ann, you know she is unquestionably the friendliest and most helpful shopkeeper in town; almost every time I drop by next door, she is conversing with visitors and residents—offering helpful suggestions and information about how to

enjoy Woodstock to its fullest. As someone who has lived AND owned a business in Woodstock for over 30 years, she is an invaluable resource and liaison for the community.

2. How does the proposed project enhance the beauty of Woodstock?

In so much as the beauty of Woodstock lies in the diverse and independent landscape of its downtown offerings, **Who is Sylvia?** is a priceless part of that landscape. I curate the inventory in my shop to be stylistically relevant and aesthetically diverse. We specialize in eclectic, hard-to-find, and one-of-a-kind wares—closet curiosities and custom-made miscellany. I'm proud to showcase local independent designers and artists in the shop; we have so many talented creative people in this area, and their wares add a tangible handcrafted quality to our selection that fits right in with our mission of local sustainability. In fact, a few of the local designers we carry actually incorporate antique lace, textiles, and other materials they've purchased from the shop into the designs they sell here. How's that for full circle? As a Woodstock business owner, it doesn't get more satisfying and beautiful than seeing photos of local customers wearing vintage one-of-a-kind prom and wedding dresses, and authentic Victorian costumes for the Wassail parade that were purchased right here at **Who is Sylvia?**

Primrose's contribution to the beauty of Woodstock is much more tangible and visible. From Ann's thoughtfully designed floral arrangements and plant boxes in front of the shop to her enchanted back porch river view, customers remember the effort and curation she puts into her store displays outside and inside—and they specifically return to experience them again year after year.

3. In what way will the proposed project contribute to the Woodstock's economic vitality?

Keeping our storefronts open and viable brings a diverse and well-funded crowd to Woodstock who might not otherwise visit. These visitors don't just spend money at our shops; they frequent local eateries and other merchants, stay in local accommodations, and contribute to the overall economic vitality of the town.

Since our January 2017 inclusion in Fashion Editor, Booth Moore's *Where Stylists Shop*, we've been attracting the attention and revenue of more industry professionals and big name clients, such as Scarlett Johansson and Drew Barrymore. These big names are turning into repeat customers and generating more opportunities for personal and town-wide business growth and exposure. Did you ever think to include Woodstock, VT on a list of the World's Greatest Fashion Hotspots? Booth Moore did. And **Who is Sylvia?** made that happen.

Ann can also attest to the staying-power of the **Primrose** customer; after being in business for over 30 years, she not only sees her customers come to visit her shop and the town of Woodstock year after year—she is now seeing their children return and spend money here. It takes long-standing businesses like **Primrose** to create that type of generational economic impact on a town.

4. Does the event have broad-based private-sector, public, community, or local support?

As businesses that have thrived in downtown Woodstock for decades, **Who is Sylvia?** and **Primrose** matter a lot to the local community, our longstanding customer base, and our respective industries. Our support is local, national, and international; everyone is rooting for us to succeed and overcome this setback.

5. Will the proposed project attract new residents to Woodstock?

Who is Sylvia? catches the attention of a lot of young people who may not have otherwise be drawn in by Woodstock's more mainstream charms. **Who is Sylvia?** is unlike any other shopping experience in the Upper Valley; it is unique, quirky, and authentic in a way that appeals to potential urban transplants. I can't tell you how many young adults from Boston, New York, and other big cities come into **Who is Sylvia?** because they've found out about us online or from a friend and ask me what it's like to live in Woodstock and whether I'd recommend moving here. The viability, visibility, and accessibility of young professional business owners in downtown Woodstock is absolutely vital to attracting young people to a town that would benefit from appealing to a younger demographic.

Ann at **Primrose** has a reputation for being the unofficial welcome wagon to Woodstock. Through her warm demeanor and approachable air, she has personally done more to recruit new residents to Woodstock than any website or social media account.

6. Does the organization have other funding sources (including self-generated or organization funds)?

Yes, of course, as businesses that have been operational in the same location for over 30 years, we have self-generated capital. However, we are small businesses that operate on a tight budget. Our capital is not substantial enough to accommodate a business interruption of this magnitude and duration.

7. Does the project have adequate funding for now and future years?

Both **Who is Sylvia?** and **Primrose** have established a long-standing and loyal customer base that is ever-expanding. People travel from all over the world to shop at our stores, and we've been here long enough that we now see their children shopping here as well—we are both committed to sustaining that legacy.

Also, **Who is Sylvia?** is on the cusp of a growth spurt; I inherited a business with zero online presence, but after years of hard work, **Who is Sylvia?** is finally showing increased sales potential from the internet marketing I've been cultivating through social media and networking. For example, I am currently partnering with one of my big name clients on styling a music video, which when released will generate a huge bump in online exposure for **Who is Sylvia?**

However, that growth is contingent upon capital reserves that are dwindling significantly under these extraordinary conditions; it would be debilitating and potentially fatal blow for us to bear the full financial loss of this construction.

Did you:

a. Attach any supporting information?

Yes, please see excel spreadsheet detailing our expense/revenue analysis for March 19th-31st, April, and May. Also, please see attached photos below documenting the extent of our businesses obstruction during the bridge construction. These photos were taken March 27th—April 27th; the most current are pictured first.

b. Include a budget for the event?

Who is Sylvia? subtotal to be used toward outstanding bills and expenses: \$2,681.50

Primrose Garden subtotal to be used towards outstanding bills and expenses: \$2,681.50

Combined total: \$5,363

Submitted by: (First and Last Name) Jessica Abston

Signature: _____

Date: 05/02/2018

EXPENSE SHEET APRIL + MAY '18				COMPARATIVE REVIEW 2015-2018		
	April '18 business expenses	May '18 business expenses	March '17 revenue 19-31	April '17 revenue	May '17 Revenue	
Rent	\$1,200*	\$1,500	\$1,870	\$2,491	\$4,428	
Heat	\$334.14	na				
Electricity	\$35.52	\$35.52	March '16 revenue 19-31	April '16 revenue	May '16 revenue	
Phone/internet	\$108.01	\$108.01	\$1,969	\$2,289	\$6,775	
Parking	\$100	na				
Quarterly sales tax	\$46.56	na	March '15 revenue 19-31	April '15 revenue	May '15 revenue	
Accountant	\$250	na	\$1,938	\$3,852	\$3,763	
Bookkeeper	\$382.50	na				
Trash	\$68.69	\$68.69	March average	April average	May average	
IRS	\$778	na	\$1,926	\$2,877	\$4,989	
Snow removal	\$330	na				
			March '18 revenue 19-31	April '18 revenue:		
TOTAL:	3633.42**	\$1,712.22	\$552.00	\$217 in store \$600 online*		
			Total Demonstratable Difference (March '17): \$1,318	Total In Store Demonstratable Difference (April '17): \$2274	Total loss in revenue during bridge constr. (to date) '18 v. '17: \$3592	
				*no online sales in April 2017.		

*after \$300 discount from landlords
**\$1,258.86 of which is still outstanding

Primrose Garden Accounting Snapshot		
Revenue		
Year	April	May
2018	\$464	?
2017	\$2,235	\$1,912
2016	\$5,394	\$5,785
Expenses 2018		
Item	April	May (estimate)
Rent	\$1,500	\$1,500
Heat	\$150	\$0
Aqueduct	\$72	\$84
Electric	\$182	\$153
Fairpoint	\$83	\$83
Trash Removal	\$0	\$66
Sewer	\$488	\$0
PO Box	\$44	\$0
Accounting		\$600
Totals	\$2,519	\$2,486