

Request for Proposals

Project Name:	Marketing & Branding Strategy - Boulder Institute for the next decade
Project Objective:	Develop an understanding of the current success and value of marketing and branding strategy and make recommendations for future approaches
Timeframe:	The project is expected to start in July 2016 and finalize at the end of March 2017
Budget:	Up to USD \$50,000
Proposal Deadline:	May 24, 2016

About the Boulder Institute of Microfinance

As the paramount training institution working to contribute to the development of inclusive financial services for over two decades, Boulder Institute has trained over 5,000 professionals. Boulder Institute is known for helping finance professionals understand the changes needed to effectively serve lower-income markets in their countries in a way that no other institution is able to develop.

At its inception, Boulder focused on the emerging issue of sustainable microfinance, around which the signature Micro Finance Training (MFT) program was born. During its first decade (1994-2004), the English-language MFT was offered annually in the city which gave it its name: Boulder, Colorado. Since 2004, the English and French MFT programs have been offered every summer in Turin, Italy at the ITC-ILO. The Spanish-language MFT has been itinerant, offered annually in different Latin American countries since its 2007 inauguration. Two decades later, sustainable microfinance is mainstream and many of our alumni are currently heading the largest microfinance institutions in the world.

Boulder has a strong global brand that is tied to its MFT Programs. Boulder MFTs are unique in offering participants the option to select among 12 - 40 courses depending on the program, allowing them to tailor their experience to their individual needs and interests. Boulder MFT's are one of the few global spaces where microfinance institutions, support organizations and government agencies convene to talk about the issues that matter most in financial inclusion.

Boulder Institute's programs have a unique mix of elements:

- **Global perspective:** Boulder's faculty have a global view that, combined with the diversity of participants attending our programs, enhances the exchange of experiences between countries and continents.
- **Technical approach:** Boulder's courses convey evidence-based models and approaches that critically analyze what works and what doesn't in microfinance.
- **Strategic in nature:** Boulder's programs are designed not only to build participants' capacity, but to challenge them to understand different perspectives by providing a diverse menu of options, tools and references for solving complex problems.

Beyond its recognized success in training, Institute has engaged in major conversations about financial inclusion, rural financial services and MFI governance in heated markets through conference-style events such as the Boulder-Bergamo Forum on Access to financial Services, the Pocantico meeting in 2008 and The MasterCard Foundation Symposium on Financial Inclusion (2013-2015).

Schedule of deliverables

The consultant will:

- Analyze the current Boulder Institute of Microfinance brand positioning assuring a wide outreach to stakeholders
- Analyze the positioning of BI's training programs offered at present assuring a wide outreach to stakeholders
- Based on the above analysis, prepare a report.
- The report is to include:
 - o Current brand image strengths and weaknesses
 - o Suggestions for brand repositioning as necessary
 - o Recommendations for future programs marketing
 - o Suggestions regarding overall marketing and communications
 - o Best channels for diffusion, and
 - o Other sections as deemed necessary by the consultant

Main considerations for the strategy

Boulder Institute has a strong global brand that is tied to its MFT Programs. New programs currently in development (two per year over the next two years planned), need to be effectively marketed, leveraging the existing brand in the most constructive manner. In addition, when it comes to new programs, BI would like to further explore how to best distinguish the new programming from the existing MFTs in a way that points to the complementarity and avoids cannibalization. Moreover, when it comes to its non-traditional market, BI needs to develop a marketing strategy that allows it to expand its outreach to new players in the financial inclusion field (e.g. digital deployment ecosystem players, insurers, etc as appropriate). These thoughtful marketing and communication efforts will be needed to ensure we reach out to new client segments (e.g. c-level executives, agricultural experts and specific regions where participation has dwindled), with messaging that is attractive to them.

The marketing strategy would allow Boulder to:

- Provide clear direction as to how the Boulder brand and marketing can be improved and is updated to lead us into our third decade.
- Better understand the Boulder brand and propose strategies on how we can build on its strengths while distinguishing it from the long-standing Boulder MFT.
- Propose ways in which we can improve our messaging to effectively reach new client segments (boulder alumni, C-level executives, non-traditional financial service providers, participants from Asia and Eastern Europe).
- Provide guidance as to how we can mitigate the risks of rolling out two new programs per year through a concerted marketing effort based on a comprehensive understanding of the Boulder brand.

The work is expected to take up to **50** working days. The consultant is expected to propose a schedule for the most appropriate way to accomplish the above goals, along with the schedule of deliverables adjusted as necessary but a proposed schedule is included above and is open to Consultant's suggestions for improvements.