

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Professional Planning and Economic Development Consulting Services For the Mt. Ascutney Regional Outdoor Recreation Project Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission

Date Issued: March 20, 2018

RFQ Due: April 13, 2018

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Overview

On behalf of the Towns of Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor, the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC) is seeking a qualified consultant that can assist with assessing the economic impact of outdoor recreation, developing an implementation plan, evaluating the possible economic value of infrastructure projects, and prioritizing them based upon anticipated benefits.

The Towns of Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor were awarded funding from the Municipal Planning Grant program to develop a multi-jurisdictional outdoor recreation plan that will identify ways to strengthen recreational/economic opportunities, explore connections to villages, and serve as a basis for a regional marketing effort. The Town of Windsor is taking the lead in administering this consortium project.

Context and Background

The Towns of Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor are looking to improve and leverage their existing outdoor recreational facilities as a way to improve the quality of life for residents and to become a corner stone in improving the local economy. There are a lot of great outdoor recreation facilities in this three town area. Similarly, there are a lot of organizations involved to varying degrees with those facilities. There is the Ascutney Trails Association (ATA), Ascutney Outdoors (AO), Sport Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB), Green Mountain Horse Association (GMHA), and local VAST snowmobile clubs to name a few. Recreation facilities can be found on a patchwork of private and public lands, and involve areas such as state parks, town forests, Army Corp flood control lands, and boat accesses and campsites along the Connecticut River Paddler's Trail. There is coordination among many of these groups now, such as with ongoing discussions about a trail-around-the-mountain, but more coordination would be helpful. There was talk in the past for branding and marketing the area together, but that has not really happened yet. This area is not as likely to be a successful hub of outdoor recreation if we continue to work individually. We need to band together to become a more desirable outdoor recreation destination and to have a plan to integrate that with our town infrastructure planning and community outreach.

An important component of this effort involves an evaluation of the economic value of the outdoor recreational opportunities in this three town area. A more important aspect of this project is to develop an actionable implementation plan and to evaluate top priority actions based upon the likelihood that they will result in tangible benefits for the community.

The Towns have hired the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission to complete some aspects of this project, and wish to hire a consultant to complete the remaining aspects of this project. The grant application and budget for this project provides more detail; it is available by request.

Funding

A total of \$13,980 is available for consultant services specified in this RFQ. The source of the project funding is the Municipal Planning Grant Program administered by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

Work Plan

The consultant will assist the three towns with the following work tasks:

Task 4: Evaluate the Economics of Recreation for the Participating Towns

- A. Based on other existing reports, complete a basic economic assessment to determine the value of existing outdoor recreation and related assets in this three town area (i.e. basic visitor spending economic and fiscal impact analysis).

In performing this basic economic assessment, we expect that the consultant will utilize existing information. It is our hope that all of the available background information will enable this task to be completed fairly quickly and easily. This existing, or soon to be completed, information includes:

- 1) Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Economic Impact Study
- 2) Vermont Outdoor Industry Association Report
- 3) Existing data on Mt Ascutney State Park attendance and hiking trail usage
- 4) 2017 trail usage data from STAB/Upper Valley Land Trust
- 5) Findings from a trail visitor survey that the three communities will be conducting over the next few months. This survey is using a questionnaire that is very similar to the one used in the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Economic Impact Study. (It is anticipated that we will have results from this survey by the late summer of 2018.)
- 6) Dartmouth College Policy Research Shop studies, including but not limited to an economic impact of outdoor recreation on this three town area. (This report should be available in April 2018.)
- 7) Green Mountain Horse Association Economic Impact Study

Task 5: Develop an Implementation Plan

The consultant will coordinate with the SWCRPC in the development of an implementation plan for desired future conditions (e.g. improvements to existing facilities, new connections and other improvements). The consultant will evaluate top priority improvements for likely positive impacts on the community. In other words, we hope that the consultant will be able to provide some sense of which projects will have a “bigger bang for the buck”. This will involve work on the following sub-tasks.

- A. Prioritize the desired improvements
- B. Evaluate feasibility of priority physical improvements (permitting constraints)
- C. Planning-level cost estimates
- E. Develop an implementation plan for priority improvements
 - 1) Project description
 - 2) Priority
 - 3) Timing/schedule
 - 4) Responsible party
 - 5) Funding options

The SWCRPC will be working on other project tasks, including public outreach, developing an inventory, supporting efforts to conduct a trail visitor survey, and developing a multi-jurisdictional outdoor recreation plan. It is anticipated that the SWCRPC will coordinate very closely with the consultant, especially with respect to preparing an implementation plan together.

Timeframe

Some aspects of the overall project have already begun. For the consultant, the proposed project timeframe is to begin late-April 2018 and be completed by May 31, 2019.

Project Deliverables

The consultant that is hired for this project is expected to produce the following specific items:

- 1) Technical memorandum or report that summarizes the economics of outdoor recreation within Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor.
- 2) Implementation plan that includes an assessment of the likely positive impacts of top priority projects.

Additional Information

We expect that the consultant will have a contract with the Town of Windsor, but will work for the three towns in the successful completion of this consortium project. The consultant and the SWCRPC will be expected to work collaboratively together. The consultant and the SWCRPC will work closely with the project steering committee.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All responses to the RFQ shall include the following information:

1. **Cover Letter** - A letter of interest for the project.
2. **Statement of Qualifications and Staffing** – Provide a qualifications profile of the lead consultant and sub-consultants, including indication of the lead consultant, the proposed role of each consultant on the team. Also provide detailed information on each consultant, including the name of the firm, year established, and contact information.
3. **Summaries of relevant projects** – Describe relevant experience on similar projects for each firm and list the work experience of the individuals expected to be involved in the project. Include a minimum of three (3) professional references for whom a similar project has been completed within the last ten (10) years.
4. **Page Limit** - The proposal, encompassing items 1-3 above, shall not exceed 15 double-sided pages (30 total pages) including cover letter, project lists and contacts.

All information submitted becomes property of the SWCRPC upon submission. The SWCRPC, on behalf of the consortium, reserves the right to issue supplemental information or guidelines relating to the RFQ as well as make modifications to the RFQ or withdraw the RFQ.

Submission Requirements

Respondents should submit one (1) digital copy (PDF) and four (4) printed copies of the proposal by April 13, 2018 to:

Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission
Jason Rasmussen, Director of Planning
P.O. Box 320
38 Ascutney Park Road
Ascutney, Vermont 05030-0320
(802) 674-9201
jrasmussen@swcrpc.org

Please expect a confirmation email upon receipt of the qualifications by the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission.

If you have any questions about this project or the RFQ, please address them in writing either via U.S. mail or email to Jason Rasmussen before April 4, 2018. We will respond to all questions in writing by April 6, 2018. Both the question and response will be shared with the other consultants that have contacted Jason Rasmussen about this RFQ.

Selection Process

Qualifications will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of local officials and representatives from the project steering committee. The committee will review and evaluate each statement of qualifications, based on the criteria below. Firms will then be ranked accordingly. The selection committee may interview the top three firms if it is deemed necessary in order to choose the highest qualified firm. Upon completion of any interviews, a scope of work and cost proposal will be required and negotiations will begin with the top-ranked firm. If a scope of work and fee cannot be agreed upon within a reasonable time, negotiations with the top-ranked firm will be concluded and negotiations with the second-ranked firm will be initiated. If a satisfactory contract is not worked out with this firm, then this procedure will be continued until a mutually satisfactory contract is negotiated. Any expenses resulting from the interview and proposal process will be the sole responsibility of the consultant.

RFQ/Proposal Schedule Summary:

RFQ questions due April 4, 2018.

Qualifications due April 13, 2018.

Interviews [optional] will be scheduled as needed.

Consultant selection by April 20, 2018 [or later, if interviews are deemed necessary].

Evaluation of Qualifications

Respondents will be evaluated according to the following factors:

1. Consultant Qualifications (experience with similar projects, ability to work with municipalities to attain desired outcomes, and knowledge of the topic): 85%
 - a. Experience with economic/quantitative analysis and recreation planning.
 - b. Proven ability to work with committees and conduct public meetings
 - c. Availability to begin work on project start date
2. Quality, completeness and clarity of submission: 15%

Contract Requirements

The consultant contract will be subject to the terms of Attachment D of the Municipal Planning Grant Agreement (Procurement Procedures and Other Grant Requirements). A sample contract meeting these requirements is available on the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development [website](#).