

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) GUIDELINES

Purpose: These guidelines are established to help grantees meet the DCNR requirement that consultants be hired using a competitive **Request for Proposal (RFP)** process for planning and technical assistance grant projects under the Community Conservation Partnership Program (C²P²)

Why do an RFP?

- The RFP lets consulting firms know the availability of a project.
- It provides a detailed Project Scope of Work (SOW) and related requirements so that all firms are competing on the same basis and with the same information.
- Proposals from more than one consulting firm provide an opportunity to compare different approaches to the work, various cost proposals and the level of expertise of more than one firm.
- The RFP provides structure to the consultant selection process to ensure that the project work is well understood, work requirements and contracting details are not overlooked and the most cost-effective professional services contract is achieved.

The RFP Process

- The RFP process, while competitive, is not a formal process required by state law such as the law governing construction work or purchase of materials and equipment. As a more informal process, it can be molded by the local grantee (agency)¹ to best meet its needs. Accordingly, **the firm selected through an RFP process does not have to be the one submitting the lowest cost proposal. The selected proposal must be cost-effective and responsive to the community and project needs.**
- The Bureau requires that the grantee (agency) prepare the RFP and that the RFP be approved by the Bureau ***before*** the grantee seeks a consultant. The Bureau requires that copies of the approved RFP be sent to at least five (5) consulting firms if possible. The Bureau may be able to assist in finding potential firms; however, the Bureau does not endorse any consulting firms. The grantee is encouraged to contact other previously funded agencies to solicit contact information for qualified consulting firms.

DCNR APPROVAL PROCESS

- **DCNR must review and approve your RFP *before* you advertise for proposals. Once you have made a preliminary selection from the consultants who responded to the RFP, send the following items to the Bureau:**

¹ Grantee (Agency) = municipality, municipal agency, or non-profit organization

- ◇ list of proposals received and the cost of each proposal (bid tab)
 - ◇ the name of the firm you wish to hire
 - ◇ the rationale for selection and copy of the selected firm's proposal
 - ◇ copy of the selected proposal and draft of the consultant contract
- Bureau staff will review this material and respond in writing. **You may not proceed without our written authorization.**

THE RFP FORMAT

- Below is a list of major components for an RFP along with some details and guidelines for each component.
- **Attached is a sample RFP form that you may use if you wish.** The sample RFP is also available in an electronic format and will be provided upon request.
- An RFP can take many forms. You may use a format that you normally use provided it adequately meets our requirements or you may be required to use a format established by your organizations management. The format you use should, however, provide comprehensive information so that consultants can submit a complete and valid proposal without further inquiry to the agency.
- While you are not required to use the attached sample RFP form, we encourage you to use it. It may save you time in preparing the RFP and will facilitate a quicker review by Bureau staff.

COMPONENTS AND GUIDELINES FOR AN RFP

1. Cover Letter/Announcement

This is a general letter or announcement indicating the following:

- The type of study (comprehensive recreation and park plan, master site plan, feasibility study, etc.)
- Deadline for submission of the RFP.
- The address to which the RFP should be sent.
- Any legal clauses required by your solicitor such as: "Your municipality has the right to reject any or all of the proposals, equal opportunity clauses, etc."
- Any requirements from your municipality such as submission in a sealed envelope and marked as "Study Proposal" or separate, sealed submissions for the RFP and the price quote.

The Announcement is used as an introduction to the RFP or it can be used as an invitation to interested consulting firms to request a copy of the RFP. The latter is useful when you wish to invite many firms to submit a proposal but do not want to waste a copy of the RFP on firms that are not interested in the project.

The Announcement can also be used as a public notice to be posted and/or printed in a newspaper if desired or if it is required by your agency to locally advertise the work.

If the project is complex or if you expect many consultants to be interested in the project, it may be useful to invite interested consultants to a pre-proposal meeting to review the RFP to clarify any details and answer the consultants' questions.

If a proposal meeting is not scheduled, one person should be designated to answer consultant questions so that information given to consultants is consistent. The grantee (agency) contact person and telephone number should be stated in the announcement or cover letter.

2. **Background Information On Your Community**

This data will help consultants better understand your proposed study and community and should include:

- General information about your community such as location, population, neighboring municipalities, and special features (i.e. growing/declining community, residential/urban/rural in nature, unique demographics, etc.)
- Status of public and private park and recreation facilities. Include acreage of municipal parkland, the kinds of facilities you have, who the main providers of private recreation and park are, existence and role of a park and recreation board and/or department, philosophies of the grantee (agency) on this service, recreation and park budget, etc.
- Plan outcomes that are desired for the study such as inventory and assessment of existing facilities, mandatory dedication requirements, identification and preservation of open space, the need to develop specific facilities, etc. DCNR can assist grantees in developing plan outcomes.
- Language that this project is partially funded by a DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program grant. (See the attached sample RFP for the exact wording to be used.)

3. **Consultant Qualifications**

As a state-funded project, DCNR requires that the consultant possess certain skills as described in the "**Consultant Qualifications**" document. DCNR requires this form to be written into the RFP or cited as an appendix. You are welcome to add any additional requirements you consider necessary.

4. **Consultant Selection**

This section addresses the basis upon which you will make your selection. Following are some criteria that are normally considered:

- General qualifications, experience and expertise of the consultant team
- Experience with the specific project type.
- The clarity and completeness of the proposal and the apparent understanding of the work to be performed
- The soundness of the consultants proposed methods and approach to the work such as the consultants plan for citizen involvement

- Information derived from reference checks and reviews of other documents completed by the consultant
- Consultant's proposed fee

Attendance at a screening interview is sometimes required for a short list of selected consultants depending on the size and complexity of the project and the prior knowledge of the consultants. This can be helpful if there is a selection committee that needs to reach a consensus. It is useful to require the consultant to bring the full consulting team (persons who will actually work on the project) to the interview. Consider providing the candidates your expectations regarding preparation for the interview.

If only one proposal is received you may accept it, subject to the Bureaus approval, if:

- the proposal is complete
- the consultant making the proposal is capable of performing the work required
- the consultant meets minimum qualifications required by the RFP
- the total project cost is reasonable and within the project budget.

If any of the above conditions are lacking, you may wish to enter into negotiations with the consultant to determine if an acceptable consultant contract can be agreed upon and to get the lowest price for the work.

If entering into a consultant contract based on a single proposal is not acceptable or a contract cannot be negotiated with the consultant submitting the only proposal, additional proposals can be sought on an informal or formal basis by written request to other potential consultants. The RFP should specify the options the grantee (agency) may pursue if only one proposal is received.

5. **Scope of Work (Requested Services):**

- **Minimum Study Requirements** -- DCNR has minimum study requirements as set forth in the **General Information and Scope of Work (SOW)** document for your project type. We will work with you to tailor a specific project SOW **before** you develop the RFP. This SOW will then be included as part of the RFP and the consultant will be expected to fulfill the SOW. As it will become a part of the consultant contract.
- **Additional Plan Requirements** -- Include any other requirements such as:
 - ◇ Number of key person interviews, study committee and staff meetings
 - ◇ Number of public hearings and public meetings
 - ◇ Required format of the final product including the number of draft and final plans that must be submitted for review and approval by the grantee (agency) and DCNR, the printing cost of each draft and the printing cost of the final plan
 - ◇ Who will be responsible for the printing cost of the report documents
 - ◇ Product time lines or agreed-upon benchmarks by which progress can be measured (such as first study committee meeting, public hearings, completion of survey instrument, drafts of inventory, survey results, base mapping, color-rendered drawings, etc.)

- ◇ Who will have the responsibility to prepare and submit DCNR's Planning Progress Reports.

NOTE: It is important that the SOW clearly states your objectives for doing the study and the final products required. However, in most cases the consultant should be allowed and encouraged to propose changes to the specific work tasks to better utilize the consultant's specialized experience and preferred methods.

6. Proposal Format

The RFP should request the consultant to provide information such as:

- Personnel involved with components of the study, number of hours and costs for each staff member
- Project description -- how the consultant will approach the project
- Work schedule -- time frame to begin and complete the project
- Proposed costs itemized according to plan elements.
- List of current and past clients as references

See attached Sample RFP for additional items

7. Consultant Responsibilities/Agency Responsibilities

This is a description of the support you will provide and what the consultant will be required to do.

- **Consultant responsibilities** might include submitting bi-monthly status reports to DCNR, performing all work as per the RFP, providing a specific number of copies with graphics of final plan, providing sufficient time for review by DCNR and the grantee (agency), printing summary of key findings, etc.
- **Grantee (agency) responsibilities** might include assisting with the survey process (be specific on which work elements each party will handle), working with the consultant to gather resources, appointing the study committee, handling meeting notices and conducting meetings, payment schedule/scenario, payment of consultant per agreed-upon schedule, etc.

8. Include any other requirements recommended by your solicitor for this RFP.

9. If you require the selected consultant to enter into a form of professional services contract specified by your agency, we recommend including a copy of this contract form as an appendix to the RFP. Request that the consultants submit with their proposal any concerns they have regarding the contract and/or their willingness to accept the contract form as presented.