

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Consultant Services Sought for the Natural Resources and Recreation Planning for the Observatory Knob Property, Town of St. Johnsbury

Date Issued: **December 17, 2024**

Responses Due: **January 15, 2024**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Overview

The Town of St. Johnsbury, VT and the Observatory Knob Advisory Committee will engage a professional consultant to lead a public input process and natural resource inventory for a newly acquired 119-acre parcel of land. This will lead to the development of a master plan inclusive of plans for trail development, habitat protection, soil erosion prevention, and proactive planning so that various recreational user groups can enjoy the property- while minimizing erosion, protecting habitat, and respecting the nature of the surrounding neighborhood.

This project is being funded in part by a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Grant in coordination with the Northern Forest Center.

Workplan and Deliverables:

The project should encompass the following items, although the consultant may suggest modifications:

1. Project Kickoff Meeting with the Observatory Knob Advisory Committee and other stakeholders. The purpose of this meeting is to gather information from the Committee, review the scope of work, budget and timeline for the project.
2. Conduct timber, natural community, wildlife inventories and other natural cultural resource assessments.
3. Engage local experts (wildlife biologists, foresters, wetland ecologists, historical, archeological, etc) and local community partners (trail groups, Regional Planning commission and Conservation District staff) in the planning efforts.
4. Develop a public involvement process that is transparent and welcoming. Involve the public in the process early and as appropriate times throughout the process:
 - Create a platform (email list, town website postings, etc.) to share regular project updates.
 - Schedule up to three public forums to provide updates and gather public feedback. Meetings shall be advertised on the town website, in the Caledonian Record and promoted on social media.
 - Provide targeted outreach to opportunities for public engagement including online surveys, coordinated public walks on the property and a diversity of outings (nature walks, snowshoe hikes, trail runs, tracking workshops) to ensure diverse community interests are represented.
5. Develop a management plan and present the plan to the Knob Committee at a Committee meeting for

their review and comment. The draft plan shall be provided in hard copy and electronic format so that it can be made available to the public.

6. Provide the final management plan to the Committee and join the Committee for the final presentation to the Select Board for their approval.

FUNDING

Up to **\$30,000** will be available for consultant services, to include all of consultant's related expenses for the project. The Town will cover the cost of publication of required public hearing notices in the paper of record, the cost of postage for postcard mailings, and the cost of childcare as needed to encourage residents to attend scheduled public meetings.

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 any 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, contact information, and hourly rates for the individuals involved.
3. Summaries of relevant projects – Describe relevant experience on similar projects 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. Size Limit - The proposal, encompassing items 1-3 above, shall be submitted digitally and not exceed 25 MB including cover letter, project lists and contacts.

All information submitted becomes property of the Town upon submission. The Town 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.

Respondents should submit the above information via email by 5 P.M. on Wednesday January 15, 2025 to Chad Whitehead, St. Johnsbury Town Manager, at cwhitehead@stjvt.com and Mathew Walsh mwalsh@stjvt.com.

Please expect a confirmation email from mwalsh@stjvt.com upon receipt of the qualifications. If you have any questions about this project or the RFQ, please address them via email to Matthew Walsh. Responses to all questions will be provided within 2 business days. Both the question and response will be shared with the other potential consultants.

SELECTION PROCESS

Qualifications will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of representatives from the St. Johnsbury Recreation Committee and town officials. Prior to making a decision, the selection committee may request an interview in-person or via conference call.

Evaluation of Qualifications

Respondents will be evaluated according to the following factors, weighted as shown in the table below:

Factor	Weight	Max Points	Weighted points
Experience with similar projects	5	5	25
Knowledge of the NEK region	4	5	20
Proven ability to work with committees and conduct public meetings	4	5	20
Availability to begin work on project start date	4	5	20
Quality, completeness and clarity of submission	3	5	15
TOTAL POINTS			100

Final Consultant Selection

Following the selection process, one consultant will be selected to negotiate a final contract for services, including a final scope of work with specified deliverables. Any expenses resulting from the proposal process will be the sole responsibility of the consultant.

ANTICIPATED TIMEFRAME:

- Submissions due January 15, 2025
- Consultant selection by February 1, 2025
- Project work to begin February 15, 2025
- Complete project by July 1, 2025

The Town of St. Johnsbury reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received or any parts thereof, to waive any informality or technicality in any proposal or in any provision in the request for proposals, to require a modification of the contract terms at any time, and to select the bidder who, in the opinion of the Town, will meet the best interests of the Town, provided that nothing herein shall be deemed to waive any requirement of federal, state or local law.

The Town of St. Johnsbury is an equal opportunity employer.

CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

The consultant contract will be subject to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Provisions for Contracts and Grants, which is available for review upon request.