

# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

## Planning and Community Development Consultant for Hardwick Downtown Designation

Town of Hardwick, Vermont

DATE ISSUED: January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Responses Due: Monday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 4:00 pm

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### Overview

The Town of Hardwick is seeking a qualified consultant(s) who will work with the Downtown Commission to create the organizational framework for a downtown organization and develop a 5-year strategic plan. Both are required for Downtown Designation, which the Town of Hardwick is currently pursuing. Hardwick has had a Village Center Designation since 2003.

#### Context and Background

Downtown Hardwick has experienced a sustained increase in locally -owned business development over the past decade. These include Positive Pie, Whistle Emporium, and The Scale House. They joined the established small businesses that have served customers for more than 30 years, such as the Galaxy Bookshop, The Clip Joint Salon, the Village Restaurant, the Buffalo Mountain Food Coop, Yummy Wok, Connie's Kitchen, and the Flower Basket. The community has most recently welcomed The ReHair Shop Salon, Front Seat Coffee, and Birdsong Beer & Wine shop.

The Hardwick Downtown Commission is working to forge partnerships with all local and regional allies to realize the full potential of Downtown Hardwick Village. Their mission is to build a business and economic development network to further support civic, cultural, and economic activities through downtown revitalization and the obtainment of a "Downtown Designation".

The Downtown Commission will hire a consultant to work with the Downtown Commissioners to complete the application for Downtown Designation and formalize the creation of a freestanding downtown organization that is modeled closely on the [National Main Street Center model for downtown revitalization](#).

#### Funding

Consultant services are funded in part from a Municipal Planning Grant administered by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. **All work covered by this funding must be completed by May 30, 2023.**

## Work Plan

The project will be managed by the Hardwick Downtown Commission, the governing body appointed by the Hardwick Select Board. Its primary mission is to "build a business and economic development network to further support civic, cultural, and economic activities alongside downtown revitalization and the achievement of "Downtown Designation" from the Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development/Downtown Program. The group meets monthly. This group will form the core of the freestanding downtown organization that emerges from this project and will assume responsibility for staffing the organization and executing the strategic 5-year plan. While the final workplan and budget will be negotiated with the consultant, we expect a minimum commitment of 300 hours through May 30, 2023.

- Consultant(s) will work with Town, Downtown Commission, ACCD, and other stakeholders to identify an organizational structure for the Downtown organization. The consultant(s) is expected to provide coaching and general guidance to the Downtown Commission and develop the organization bylaws.
- Consultant(s) will work with Town, Downtown Commission, ACCD, and other stakeholders to develop a 5-year Strategic Plan, execute Community Reinvestment Agreement, and provide other support for Downtown Designation application.
- The Consultant(s) will develop fundraising plan for Downtown organization and host a public event to launch campaign.

## Deliverables

- Formal establishment of a downtown organization, bylaws, and 501(c)3 status for the organization.
- Assistance to the existing Downtown Commission in recruitment of an Executive Director for said 501(c)3 organization, as well as volunteers for working committees, such as Promotion, Marketing, Economic Development, and Organizational Development.
- Establishment of a broad base of financial support to sustain existing and continued downtown revitalization efforts.
- Creation of a long-range work plan for the new Downtown Organization, which includes, but is not limited to the following objectives:
  - ✓ Creation of a programmatic approach to identifying and attracting new businesses that complement Hardwick's downtown business and residential resources.
  - ✓ Development of action framework to support partnership avenues with existing programs supporting cultural and creative infrastructure.
  - ✓ Development of local action plans to support sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism activities.

- ✓ Creation of a year-round, programmatic approach to beautification efforts, such as downtown planting, seasonal decorations, as well as developing marketing collateral materials and activities.
- Downtown Designation from the State of Vermont.

## Timeframe

The project will commence no later than one week after the consultant is hired. All work must be complete by May 30, 2023. Due to the nature of the grant program funding this project, there are no timeframe extensions.

## Additional Information

Hardwick's Village Center Designation map is attached. The Downtown Designation boundaries may be subject to change.

## 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 past ten (10) years.

**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 shall become property of the Town of Hardwick upon submission. The municipality 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

Qualified candidates should email one (1) digital copy (PDF) of their response to this RFQ by Monday, February 7, 2022, 4:00 p.m. to:

**Municipality/Local Project Manager: Shari Cornish, [shari.cornish@hardwickvt.org](mailto:shari.cornish@hardwickvt.org)**

Text/Voice: 323-422-5887

Please expect a confirmation email upon receipt of the qualifications by Local Project Manager.

If you have any questions about this project or the RFQ, please phone or email to the Local Project Manager. We will respond to all questions in writing within two (2) days. Both the question and response will be shared with the other consultants.

## **Selection Process**

Qualifications will be reviewed by a selection a quorum of the Downtown Commission. A short-list of consultants will be selected to submit detailed proposals with a project approach, scope of services, schedule, and budget with details on staffing, hourly costs, and overhead. Proposals will be presented in-person or virtually by the consultants at interviews.

## **RFQ Schedule Summary:**

Qualifications due Monday, February 7th 4:00 p.m.

Consultants selected for short-list: Monday, February 14, 2022

Proposals due: Monday, February 28, 2022, C.O.B.

Consultant selection by: Week of March 21, 2022

Project work to begin: No later than one week after contract signing

Complete project on or by May 30, 2023.

## **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 community development, fundraising, and grant writing
  - b) Ability to communicate effectively, work with a diverse group of stakeholders
  - c) Knowledge of downtown revitalization, especially the Vermont Downtown Program, and the National Main Street approach to revitalization
  - d) Understanding of smart growth planning principles, economic development challenges in rural Vermont Communities
  - e) Proven ability to work with committees and conduct public meetings
  - f) Availability to begin work on project start date
2. Quality, completeness and clarity of submission - 15%

## **Interview Framework**

The Town of Hardwick reserves the right to select the top two to three highly scored consultants and invite them for an interview. In this process, the selection committee may ask the respondents to give an oral presentation of their respective proposals. The purpose of this oral presentation is to provide an

in-depth analysis of qualifications, experience in performing similar services, and an opportunity for the consultant to clarify or elaborate on their qualifications without restating the proposal.

The interview and presentation is merely to present facts and explanation to the review committee and allow the selection committee to ask targeted questions of the consultant team. The interview and presentation, if deemed necessary by the review committee, will be held at the Town Managers Office in Hardwick, Vermont, or scheduled on Zoom as needed. The day and time will be notified to the respondents at least one week prior to the meeting. All costs and expenses incurred in traveling for the purpose of interview and presentation shall be the responsibility of the consultant.

## **Final Consultant Selection**

Following the selection process, one team will be selected to negotiate a final contract for services. The final scope of work with specified deliverables may be modified through negotiation of the final contract. The final project team may also be modified through negotiation of the final contract. Any expenses resulting from the interview and proposal process will be the sole responsibility of the consultant.

## **Contract Requirements**

The consultant contract will be subject to the terms of standard requirements of the Municipal Planning Grant Program (Procurement Procedures and Other Grant Requirements). A sample contract meeting these requirements is available [here](#).