



## **DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE OF SMART GROWTH**

### **CONTRACTING FOR PROFESSIONAL PLANNING CONSULTANT SERVICES**

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Many local governments embarking upon development or revision of major planning tools (e.g., master plans, land use codes, impact fee schedules) will consider contracting out all or part of the work rather than attempting to accomplish it in-house. In-house staff is often unable to accomplish major planning projects while at the same time performing routine tasks such as development review functions. In addition, local planning commissions - which of necessity will be involved in such projects - rarely have the time, resources or expertise to play a lead role in developing or revising such tools.

Thus, it is common for local governments to contract out all or part of the work of developing or revising planning tools. Selection of a qualified, competent planning consultant (individual or firm) will have a profound effect on the quality of both the planning process and the resulting products.

The Office of Smart Growth recommends that a TWO-STEP PROCESS, consisting initially of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) followed by a Request for Proposals (RFP), be employed as a means of achieving high quality in both the consultant recruitment process and the final work product.

**STEP 1.** Issue an RFQ broadly, seeking response from a large number of firms. Review the qualifications, and select a smaller group of firms (usually between 3 and 7) based on how well the qualifications of the firm meet the needs of the community and its project.

**STEP 2.** Issue a highly detailed RFP to the “short list” of the most qualified firms. Identify the best proposals submitted based on established selection criteria (e.g., experience, cost, timing, etc.) and interview at least three firms.

An RFQ solicits information about a firm’s general qualifications, experience and staff capabilities. The RFQ should be sent to a list of reputable consultants as well as be advertised in both a local newspaper of general circulation and a Denver daily. Qualified firms can usually respond quickly and inexpensively to an RFQ without crafting a project-specific, detailed proposal. This saves firms the considerable time and expense of developing a full-blown Proposal (as would be solicited by an RFP). This process discourages hasty or ill-prepared Proposals that may result from a perception that the proposal may be one of tens (or hundreds) of Proposals submitted. Some qualified firms may not even respond due to the perception that the process is a “shot-in-the-dark.”

Using an RFQ is advantageous for several reasons. First, local governments will save considerable time by not having to review large numbers of Proposals, some hastily prepared, and can instead focus in on a smaller number of higher-quality and more detailed, community-specific Proposals provided in response to a subsequent RFP. Second, by reducing the field of consultants to only those “screened” through an RFQ process, the quality of the proposals will be enhanced. Finally, the interview and final selection process will be more manageable and less time consuming.

Attached are samples of RFQs, RFPs, proposal evaluation methodologies and contract negotiation tips.

## **SAMPLE Request for Qualifications**

\_\_\_\_\_ County/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ extends an invitation to professional planning consultants/firms to submit Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) to perform the task of:  
\_\_\_\_\_ updating the master/comprehensive plan  
\_\_\_\_\_ updating the land use code

Statements of Qualifications should include the following:

- Experience of the firm in performing similar planning work, with citations of specific projects and names of clients and periods of performance.
- Resumes of professional staff who would be performing the work, with relevant qualifications and experience.
- Three (3) references of clients for whom the firm has performed similar work.

\_\_\_\_\_ County/Town of \_\_\_\_\_ will select \_\_\_\_\_ firms based on their SOQs and invite them to submit formal bids in a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The RFP will provide more detailed information regarding the project, including statement of work, period of performance, project budget [optional] and project deliverables.

Please send THREE copies of the SOQ to:

[name]

[address]

by COB, [date]

If you have questions please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ for further details.

## **SAMPLE Request for Qualifications**

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCOG) invites statements of qualifications from professional qualified Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Environmental Design firms or individuals to analyze and develop design alternatives and provide detailed construction and management plans for the enhancement of wetland areas for recreational uses such as watchable wildlife, fishing, hiking and education.

Qualified firms or individuals must demonstrate:

1. Familiarity with State and Federal regulations and required permits for work in wetlands areas.
2. Experience in design of wildlife, waterfowl and fishery habitat enhancements, and drainage improvements in high elevation wetland ecosystems typical of Summit County, CO.
3. Experience with the management of indigenous beaver populations to provide ponds in appropriate areas.
4. Experience in design of trails, creation of opportunities for wildlife observation and provision of educational interpretive facilities for public use including handicapped individuals.

Please send two copies of qualifications to Community Development Director, NWCCOG, P.O. Box 2308, Silverthorne, CO 80498 by June 25<sup>th</sup>. Include related qualifications and experience of persons who would be directly involved in the project. List and provide a brief description of similar or relevant past experiences. List completed wetlands projects and related client contacts. Indicate availability of firm to work on project in Summit County. Provide name, address, and phone number of principal contact. Questions? Contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

# **SAMPLE Request for Proposal**

## **Comprehensive Plan Update**

The Town of LaSalle extends an invitation for your firm to submit a full proposal for the preparation of an update to its comprehensive plan. This plan will serve as the guide for future development in LaSalle and enable the citizens to direct an orderly growth and development process. It is not the desire of the Town to have an impressive, dust gathering tome, but a proactive working document that enables Planning Commissions and Boards of Trustees of the future to develop constructive solutions for the challenges appearing on the horizon.

The Department of Local Affairs has provided partial funding for this project. The Department will help the Town in the review of the proposals and the final product.

### **LaSalle - A Historical Perspective**

The Town of LaSalle is located in the southern central portion of Weld County, approximately five miles south of Greeley and forty-five miles north of Denver on U.S. Highway 85. The present population of LaSalle is nearly 1,887 persons. The community was incorporated in 1910, with the railroad and agricultural industry accounting for the majority of the population. LaSalle currently is basically landlocked, with the last housing boom in the late 1970s. The main switching yard for Union Pacific Railroad is based in LaSalle, and along with U.S. Highway 85, there is a virtual line drawn between the community. The South Platte River is directly north of LaSalle and serves as a natural boundary between the City of Evans and Greeley. Currently, there is only one parcel of land annexed (58 acres) and available for development.

LaSalle has become a “bedroom community” to Greeley and Evans. There are limited employment opportunities in the community. Most of the working population holds jobs outside of LaSalle.

LaSalle is a statutory town and has a “Mayor - Trustees type” of municipal government with six Trustees elected at large with four-year overlapping terms. The Town employs a town clerk, deputy town clerk, assistant town clerk, part time operations director, public works director and three public works employees, a police chief and four officers, and a full time recreation director.

The LaSalle Fire Protection District provides fire protection for the Town. The fire protection district is based in LaSalle and serves rural areas outside the town besides the community itself.

LaSalle is one of the three communities along U.S. Highway 85 that are a part of the RE-1 School District. LaSalle students attend elementary and middle school in town, and high school in Gilcrest, a community six miles to the south.

The Town operates its own sewer system and water is supplied through Central Weld County Water District. In 1992, the Town underwent a Water Enhancement Project that involved metering the entire town, piping into Central Weld County Water, and creating a 20-year indebtedness. LaSalle has an abundant supply of non-potable water from wells that is now used

for park irrigation. Greeley Gas supplies natural gas, Public Service Company supplies electricity, and U.S. West provides telephone service. Approximately ninety-five percent of the streets in town are paved and have curb, gutter and sidewalk.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

The original comprehensive plan for LaSalle was written in 1978 and has not been updated since. This project is to update and revise the current plan to develop a “handbook” approach that can be self-perpetuating and easily understood by the residents.

The Project consists of updating the Town of LaSalle, Colorado’s comprehensive plan; reviewing the Town’s annexation, subdivision and zoning ordinances and other pertinent documents that relate to the implementation of the comprehensive plan, and committing by resolution to a process that leads to the signing of intergovernmental agreements with surrounding jurisdictions concerning growth management in the Town of LaSalle’s urban growth boundaries. The plan will look at recent and future changes in growth patterns in Weld County, the development of IGAs with Weld County and the City of Evans to provide separators and preserve the “gateways” to the Town, and the development of infrastructure to serve the Town as it grows.

Elements of the comprehensive plan will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Base mapping;
- b. Assessment of needs and opportunities;
- c. Neighborhood and town-wide goals, policies and strategies, including, but not limited to the following areas:
  - growth/contraction;
  - housing;
  - economic development;
  - transportation;
  - public improvements and infrastructure - parks, open space and recreation;
  - hazardous materials routing
  - flood plains; and
  - community culture.

The workbook will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. A description of how to use the workbook;
- b. Review and recommendation of changes needed in the implementation tools such as annexation, subdivision and zoning ordinances to match the goals of the new comprehensive plan;
- c. Review procedures for proposals that deal with all elements of the comprehensive plan;
- d. Review criteria for the different types of proposals;
- e. A list of goals, policies and strategies that apply to each type of request;
- f. Reference information that provides the user of the workbook easy reference to individual sections in the comprehensive plan, and implementation documents that pertain to neighborhood goals, policies, procedures and strategies and also those of the Town; and

- g. A list of questions to help the Town in the evaluation of a development proposal and its impacts on the town and its relationship to the comprehensive plan.

Plan presentations, public hearings and workshops will be scheduled during the plan's development. The purpose of these meetings will be to present progress updates; to receive citizen, elected official and staff comments; to present the final draft report and ancillary materials to the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees. Presentations will include, but not be limited to the following:

- 1 - 3 General workshops for the citizen at large.
- 2 - 3 Informal workshops/presentations to the Planning Commission and Board of Trustees.
- 1 Formal Planning Commission public hearing.
- 1 Formal Board of Trustees public hearing.

### **PRODUCTS**

The final products that will be a direct result of this project will include, but not be limited to the following:

- 25 Bound copies of the Comprehensive Plan, printed reports and maps.
- 100 Copies of the executive summary.
- 2 Mylar of all maps.
- 2 Copies of the text of the Comprehensive Plan and printed reports saved in Word Perfect 6.1 or WP6.1 readable computer files. Files are to be stored on IBM compatible 3.5" media.

The consultant will prepare at least six copies of any preliminary draft reports and land use maps for review by the Planning Commission, Board of Trustees and Operations Director before the preparation of the final documents. The consultant will use a common writing style and organize the material into a format that will be easily read and used by the public, elected officials and staff. The excessive use of jargon and the passive tense in writing is to be avoided. The document will strive for a "Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability" score between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

As a selected contractor, you will submit your proposal in two parts, each in a separate sealed envelope. The first part will deal with the content and creativity of your proposal. The second part will deal with your cost analysis for the project. Please submit ten copies of part one, and one copy of part two. Both parts are to be submitted by October 19, 1998 to:

Operations Director  
Town of LaSalle  
119 Main Street  
LaSalle, CO 80645

If you have any question about the proposal, please call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

The proposal will contain the following information:

### **PART ONE - CONTENT AND CREATIVITY**

1. Describe the process you will use to develop the various elements or products contained in the "Scope of Work."
2. Describe the products you anticipate will be generated by this project and show examples (if appropriate and practical).
3. Provide a time line schedule for completion of the project and an analysis of the estimated time to be spent upon each product and each element of the process.

### **PART TWO - COST ANALYSIS AND CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS**

1. A breakout of the anticipated project cost. We require that you provide information on the cost of each element or task and the total cost of the project. This information will be related to the number of hours to be spent on each element as defined in Part One. The total cost of the project is to be on a "not to exceed" basis.
2. Describe your contract requirements, billing procedures, billing schedules and progress reports, etc.

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

The Part One and Part Two submittal will be reviewed by a committee of elected and appointed officials of the Town and representatives of the Department of Local Affairs. We will evaluate the submittal on the content, the appropriateness and creativity of approach, the projected products and their usefulness in future planning decisions, the projected completion schedule for the plan, and last but not least, demonstrated writing style and readability. You will be invited for interviews with the Board of Trustees and the Planning Commission (likely date is November 2<sup>nd</sup>).

A contractor will be selected following the interview. A written contract will be prepared containing the finalized scope of services, payment schedule and product delivery schedules.

### **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Responding firms will be rated on the following criteria:

1. Professional background of the firm and the experience each person in your firm has that will be assigned to this project.
2. Your proposed project performance plan and the role each person will have in accomplishing the work.
3. Recent experience on similar projects and how those similarities might relate to this project. Please provide examples and references.
4. Unique or other relevant experience.
5. Firm's familiarity with the LaSalle, Greeley/Weld County, Northern Colorado area.
6. Capability of the firm to perform the work on schedule and within budget. Overall project cost.



## **SAMPLE Consultant Interview Questions**

1. What similar projects has your firm worked on recently?
2. What specific staff members will be assigned to the project? Percentage of time for each?
3. What types of public process/community involvement efforts do you envision?
4. What other projects will your firm be involved in during the project period? Will this affect your ability to devote sufficient time and effort to this project?
5. How do you assure that the comprehensive plan is utilized in the future? What “action elements” will be developed?
6. How will other jurisdictions’ planning efforts relate to this project?
7. What is the role of planning commission, town board, and town staff in the comprehensive planning process?
8. How will the needs and visions of the town residents be assessed?
9. What is your firm’s familiarity with \_\_\_\_\_ and the surrounding area?
10. What “external” forces do you see as having an effect on \_\_\_\_\_ future?
11. Describe the most difficult problem you have encountered in doing a small town/rural county comprehensive plan? How did you resolve it?
12. How has the comprehensive planning process changed over the last 10 years?
13. Describe in detail project deliverables (reports, maps, etc.), the number provided, and format. Who will bear the costs of preparing these?
14. Many of the communities have a limited number of staff. What experience do you have in creating an easy-to-use land use, development and design process?
15. What will the finished product look like? What elements will it contain?
16. If mapping is done through a computerized system, will the community own the computer files?

## **Situational Questions**

1. During one of the community meetings you are faced with two divergent factions, such as those who are pro-gambling vs. anti-gambling, or no growth vs. pro-development. How do you involve them in the planning process and reach beyond their one-issue position?
2. During the planning process it is discovered that the town's plans for county owned land on its borders and the county's plans are radically different. What process would you suggest for resolving this situation? In the future?

## **Questions for Checking References**

1. Did you have any particular problems associated with the project that this firm/individual did for you?
2. Does the project work as intended?
3. How is the firm/individual to work with? (e.g. are they reliable, easy to communicate with, accessible, etc.)
4. Was the project completed on time?
5. Was the project completed within the budget?
6. Was the contract honored? Were amendments necessary?
7. Would you hire this firm/individual again?

**SAMPLE  
Proposal Evaluation Scoring  
Comprehensive Plan Development**

**Evaluation Criteria and Weights Assigned**

	Maximum Score
Basic Services	15
Scheduling	10
Presentation & Workshops	10
Products	20
Proposed Graphics	5
Relevant experience of firm	20
Experience & Qualifications of staff	10
<u>Interview</u>	<u>10</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

	Proposal 1	Proposal 2	Proposal 3	Proposal 4	Proposal 5
Basic Services					
Scheduling					
Presentations & Workshops					
Products					
Proposed Graphics					
Relevant experience of firm					
Experience & qualifications of staff					
Interview					
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>					
<b>COST</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>COST VALUE SCORE*</b>					

\*Cost value scores are derived by dividing cost by total score. Cost value scores should only be calculated in instances where there is no set budget for the work in question – usually when a jurisdiction is covering the entire cost of a planning project. In instances where a jurisdiction has received state or federal funding to assist a planning project, the available budget will be common knowledge and consultants will generally submit virtually identical cost estimates for the project. In these cases, cost value scores are of little or no use.

# **Hiring Professional Services**

## **Contract Negotiations**

Contract negotiations are often not stressed in procurement by government agencies. However, it is important to note that negotiations are an important part of the process to hire professional services. As a government official, don't assume there is no flexibility in price, timing, personnel, or other provisions of the project contract.

The ultimate goal in negotiations should be a contract that is most advantageous to the purchaser/local government. This considers price and many other factors. Some important factors, but not all, included in contract negotiations are as follows:

1. Establish a clear and concise agreement on scope of work (identify end product, required results, services, etc.)
2. Clearly set the responsibilities of the firm and the local government agency
3. Identify project administrator
4. Define communication channels, meeting requirements, etc.
5. Establish the contract fee, rates for reimbursable expenses, etc.
6. Establish completion dates
7. Establish method and schedule of payment
8. Identify roles of sub-consultants
9. Execute the contract (involve the agency's attorney)
10. Commence work