



HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

June 2016

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Preparing a well-written and concise Request for Proposals (RFP) is critical to the success in securing the right consultant and for increasing the likelihood of success for your Comprehensive Plan Update. Outlined below are some tips and tricks for preparing an effective RFP that will garner proposals you can compare easily and quickly:

- **Before you write, plan!** Coordinate an interdisciplinary group of professionals from the planning, engineering, public works, parks, and economic development functions at your organization to discuss what is required in the system statements, *as it relates to each department of your city*, the budget impacts and sources of funding, and where there might be opportunities to coordinate other needed studies/plans into the Comprehensive Plan Update to save time and money. Inter-group coordination is the most critical step in ensuring success of the Comprehensive Plan RFP and the update process.
- **Clearly state your goals.** Why are you updating your plan and what do you want to achieve through the update? Yes, it's required, but this is your chance to envision the future, or at least consider the type of goals and policies you will want to explore and implement over the next 25 years.
- **Include a budget range or maximum.** While it might seem counterintuitive to include what you are planning to spend on the Comprehensive Plan, this insight gives consultants the ability to scope the project based on unique and creative approaches and allows you to compare levels of effort within your generally set budget. It reduces your chances of receiving wildly different cost proposals. More importantly, it allows you to better determine the *best value* proposal by examining what specific scope you can get for the budget. Finally, it can eliminate cost as becoming the only deciding factor, which may be a good strategy for your community.
- **When writing a scope, focus on your desired process.** If you desire specific community engagement techniques, a steering committee, or the engagement of advisory committees and City Council, state that clearly. Or, if you are open to a variety of options, state your overall budget and ask for ideas. Up to 50% of the cost of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan can be the public engagement process, so if your budget is limited, plan accordingly.
- **Deadline.** A minimum of one month of response time is needed from the date of issuance. Please consider holidays and weekends when setting your exact date of submission. The interview and selection process usually takes longer than cities anticipate, so plan for a minimum of one month of review, interviews, and formal selection.
- **Selection Committee.** Choose your selection committee carefully, and ensure that it consists of people who are engaged and have the ability to influence the decision, including representatives from other departments. The more information the consultant knows about the selection committee, the decision-makers, and the process, the more responsive the proposal will be.

Finally, the most timely advice is to get started now! There is a mandatory six month adjacent community review required before submittal of the Comprehensive Plan to the Metropolitan Council for review, so the working deadline for preliminary plan completion by your community is July 1, 2018. Most plans take one year minimum to complete from the time of selection of a consultant, so get started now.

