



Date: December 12, 2024

Dear Conservation Partners

The Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District is seeking a consultant to guide our upcoming strategic planning process. We have been awarded funding from Watersheds United Vermont to support the creation of a new 5-year strategic plan to guide the district's programming and growth.

Windham NRCD is one of the 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts in Vermont, established by the 1939 Soil Conservation Act. Our original mission was to help farms combat soil erosion, but we have since grown to assist all land stewards improve their environmental stewardship through the implementation of conservation practices and environmental education on a range of natural resource topics. Districts also act as a bridge between the local level and state and federal agencies. We help land stewards access government programming and funding and collect input at the local level and use it to communicate needs on the ground to our government partners. We are overseen by a publicly elected Board of Supervisors who are residents of our District. Vermont's conservation districts are almost entirely dependent on grant funding for our operating budget.

Windham NRCD has experienced dramatic growth over the past five years, increasing from a staff of 0.5 FTEs in 2019 to our current staff of 4 full-time staff and 8 seasonal staff. This growth in staffing and budget has been accompanied by an expansion in our array of services offered. As a result, we now lack a strategic plan that meets our expanded capacity and scope of work. We intend to develop a comprehensive planning document that will help us grow sustainably and allow us to navigate the ever-shifting landscape of state and federal funding and programming.

Proposals will be accepted via email at windhamcountynrcd@gmail.com until 5 PM on **Monday, February 3**. For questions or further information, please contact Executive Director Cory Ross at ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Cory Ross

Executive Director, Windham County NRCD

Request for Proposals from the Windham County NRCD

Strategic Planning Consultant

Application Schedule

RFP release: December 12, 2024

Proposals Due: February 3, 2025 by 5 PM

Questions Due: January 14, 2025 by 5 PM

Answers Provided: January 21, 2025

Anticipated Project Start Date: February 24, 2025

Anticipated Project Completion Date: August 1, 2025

Maximum Bid Amount: Bids should not exceed \$8,000.00

Project Schedule and Scope

Consultant support for this effort is supported through a grant from Watersheds United Vermont. All associated tasks will need to be completed by August 1, 2025 – including the final deliverable of a draft strategic plan. Starting in March 2025, the Windham NRCD board will begin the strategic planning process. The Windham NRCD board and staff will work on strategic planning as part of regular board meetings in March, April, June and July. In addition to these standing meetings, the Windham NRCD board is prepared to participate in an extended planning retreat, engage with surveys, and, as needed, some board members and staff will participate in working groups between board meetings.

Windham NRCD anticipates a strategic planning process that incorporates the following:

- 1) A review and recommitment of Windham NRCD's mission.
- 2) A Discussion on the state of the natural resources within the district.
 - i) Several planning documents already exist that will be incorporated into any review.
- 3) Surveys of individual board members and staff, and of partner agencies and organizations.
- 4) A review of current programs, budgets, and staffing
- 5) The development of a list of desired outcomes
 - i) Internal to the organization
 - ii) External for the district's residents.
- 6) A review of opportunities for
 - i) Programs
 - ii) Projects
 - iii) Funding
- 7) The drafting of a strategic plan document aimed at the 5-year timeframe that can incorporate annual updates
- 8) A transition from the strategic plan to specific staff and board next steps

Proposed Consultant Activities

The contracted consultant will support the strategic planning process throughout the calendar of activities in 2025. Exact tasks completed will depend on consultant expertise and will emerge through coordination with the executive director and board chair. In general, consultant tasks will fall into the following categories:

1. Direct facilitation

The consultant will work with the executive director and board chair (or their designee) to identify opportunities for direct facilitation of discussions or other activities aimed at furthering the strategic planning process. A schedule of facilitated activities will be outlined in the initial contract. The consultant will provide written summaries following facilitated activities.

2. Survey Development and Analysis

The consultant will provide support for developing surveys aimed at soliciting individual board and staff input as well as collating and analyzing results. These surveys will serve to supplement the planning meetings and guide facilitated discussion. The consultant will present survey results in written and as needed, in-person formats.

3. Plan Drafting

The consultant will provide planning expertise to guide the development of an effective strategic planning document. The consultant will provide editing and feedback on draft plans and will work to synthesize the outcomes of facilitated activities and surveys into these drafts.

Letter of Interest

Consultants should supply a letter of interest by 5 PM on February 3. Letters should be brief (no more than 2 pages) and include the following:

- **Experience** – Brief summary of consultant’s relevant experience
- **SOW**– Specific availability to complete the tasks outlined in the Scope of Work along with any recommendations for adjusting the project scope and timeline.
- **Timeline** – Assurance that consultant has capability to complete work within project timeline.
- **Cost** – Quote for Scope of Work. The proposed budget should not exceed more than \$8,000.00.

If you have any questions, please contact Cory Ross, Executive Director = ross.wcnrcd@gmail.com
- (802) 212-9459.

Selection Process:

The Windham County NRCB Board of Supervisors will review proposals and select project consultant or firm with advice from the Executive Director. Criteria for selection includes, but is not limited to: price; applicant’s ability to perform within the specified time limits; applicant’s experience and reputation, including past performance and demonstrated flexibility District

reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals in whole or in part and to accept other than the lowest price proposal.