



State of New Jersey

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Response to Questions for the RFP to Develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Highlands Region

August 29, 2023

Questions about Budget:

Q: Is the project budget able to be disclosed and, if so, what amount of funding has been allocated for this project? Is there an anticipated maximum budget for this scope of work? Is there a budget cap or preferred budget range for the project?

A: The Highlands Council been awarded a \$172,000 grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for this Open Space and Recreation Plan. That amount may be supplemented by the Highlands Council as necessary.

Questions about Stakeholder Outreach:

Q: Is there a vision for how public-facing the outreach should be? Does the Highlands Council anticipate in-person public meetings throughout the region, or would alternative approaches be considered to maximize efficiency and participation? Has the Council identified any other high-priority stakeholders (beyond USFWS) that it expects to have significant involvement in the project? Who are additional “stakeholder” groups outside of the Highlands Council/staff and the USFWS?

A: Stakeholder engagement is a priority it is expected that stakeholder engagement be a continuous process both before the plan is created, during the plan’s creation, and after the plan’s adoption. The Plan shall incorporate environmental justice principles to ensure that proposed open space and recreation projects have equitable benefits for all populations, and climate resiliency principles to address the impacts of climate change on the region. Additionally, the stakeholder engagement should be as robust as possible- ensuring that all parties are at the table throughout this process. The Highlands Council welcomes creativity with engagement plans or alternative approaches to best meet such goals.

Q: Is the community engagement program expected to reach all 88 municipalities within the Highlands?

A: Yes. The Open Space and Recreation Plan should cover all 88 municipalities.

Q: Does the Highlands have contacts at the local municipal level to aid in facilitating community engagement?

A: Yes we have contacts with each of our municipalities, as well as nonprofit groups that work regularly with communities.

Q: Will the Highlands aid in advertising and scheduling venues for engagement events?

A: The Highlands Council can assist in the advertising of engagement events and can schedule events at our offices.

Q: Are there a minimum number of engagement meetings expected?

A: There is no minimum number of engagement meetings. The only expectation is that it should be a continuous process throughout the development of the plan.

Q: For the outreach program development, will that also include presentation of the final open space plan to the public? If so, is there a specific number of public meetings envisioned or based on a statute?

A: A final presentation to the Highlands Council at one open public meeting is expected.

Questions about GIS/Databases:

Q: Are there existing GIS databases that the consultant team will be provided with? Will there be an existing database of existing recreational and open space inventory, that will be shared with the selected consultant. Further, in what format is this data available, datasets in GIS?

A: There is an existing database of preserved and open space lands in GIS Datasets, however the Council does not maintain a database of recreational facilities.

Other Questions:

Q: Is there a specific frequency of project progress meetings and reports the Highlands is looking for?

A: There should be various check-ins and meetings as needed to complete the project.

Q: What is the anticipated timeline for a decision or target date of award?

A: There is no set timeline for a decision at this time. The earliest we would award the RFP would be at our December 14th, 2023 Highlands Council Meeting.

Q: When do you expect the awarded contract to start?

A: We are anticipating the contract to begin within the first quarter of 2024.

Q: Could you provide further information on the anticipated role of USFWS in the project?

A: Part of the funding for this plan is coming from a Capacity Building Grant from the Fish & Wildlife Service, to assist our involvement in the Highlands Conservation Act Grant program. As such, any reporting of work would be done on behalf of Highlands Council Staff. USFWS will play a role in the stakeholder engagement portion of the project itself. This coordination would be done from the Highlands Council specifically to assist in this portion.

Q: Is there an existing list of potential preservation sites that shall be shared with the selected consultant? Is there an estimated number of properties?

A: There is not a list of potential preservation sites. However, the Highlands Council currently has preservation priority information for the region. It is part of the proposal to update these priorities.

Q: Is there a FAQ page as it relates to this RFP been published or to be published?

A: This Q&A Document stands in place of the FAQ page.