

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
for
VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING

Town of Topsham
100 Main Street
Topsham, ME 04086

Date of Issuance: November 21, 2023

PROPOSALS DUE: December 19, 2023

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Town of Topsham is updating its 2012 Climate Action Plan and seeks a qualified consultant (Consultant) to provide professional services. The Consultant's role will involve conducting a vulnerability assessment and facilitating the planning of near and long-term actions for both the municipal government and Topsham's residents.

Topsham's objectives in updating its Climate Action Plan (CAP) are to:

- Identify the extent of climate-related risk to the Town's geographic areas, infrastructure, assets, and populations.
- Engage diverse perspectives in an inclusive community engagement process.
- Develop positive, locally feasible adaptation and mitigation strategies with a high degree of support by the community.
- Propose actions that are broadly accessible to all Topsham residents and businesses.

The recent acceleration of extreme weather, flooding, forest fires, and more intense storms have made climate adaptation and greenhouse gas emission reduction essential. With the adoption of the statewide [Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan](#), the Town of Topsham has determined that a climate action plan, by the people of Topsham and for the people of Topsham, is a necessity.

Topsham is home to over 35 square miles of residential areas, commercial districts, recreational spaces, conserved lands, wetlands, streams, and frontage along the Androscoggin River and Merrymeeting Bay. There is a pressing need to identify priority areas and populations, assess their vulnerability, and implement measures to enhance resilience in both human and natural resources in the face of a changing climate.

The Climate Action Plan Update is funded by a Community Resilience Partnership Community Action Grant (see attached grant application). The Consultant will join a team working together to complete the CAP and the Consultant's work is to dovetail with others. The team includes:

- Topsham Energy Committee, responsible for community engagement and will assist the Town with the hiring of the Consultant.
- Topsham Town Planning Staff, focusing on assisting with community engagement, coordinating the Consultant RFP process, selecting the Consultant, and providing input for the climate action planning process.
- Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG), responsible for overall project management including scheduling, advising, coordinating, and facilitating the tasks as directed by the Town. In addition, MCOG will support the Energy Committee and Maine SeaGrant/Casco Bay Estuary Partnership with community engagement, assist with the Consultant RFP process, and conduct the GHG Inventory in partnership with Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI USA).
- Maine SeaGrant/Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (MSG/CBEP) will bring expertise on equitable community engagement to help develop and execute the community engagement plan. In addition, they will take the lead in developing Topsham's social and economic vulnerability assessment.

Budget: The budget for the Consultant's scope of work outlined below is between \$23,000-\$26,000 and includes all services and incidental expenses.

Climate Action Plan Update Timeline:

- September - November 2023. Develop a community engagement plan and conduct initial public outreach to create awareness, inspire participation, foster transparency, and build support for the CAP. This task is underway.
- October 2023 - January 2024: Write and release the RFP, hold interviews, select a Consultant, and enter into a contract.
- February 2024 - August 2024: Selected Consultant works on vulnerability assessments and climate action planning. Team implements Community Engagement Plan. MCOG conducts GHG inventory and helps develop emissions reductions targets.
- September 2024: First draft of vulnerability assessments and updated CAP is shared with the public for comments.
- October 2024 - January 2025: Additional public hearings on the draft and approval by the selectboard for the May town meeting warrant.
- February - April 2025: Public outreach on plan leading up to May town meeting.
- May 2025: Voting on plan at May town meeting.

Existing Documents for Review

[Topsham Comprehensive Plan Update 2019](#)

Town of Topsham [Climate Action Plan 2012](#)

Sagadahoc County [Hazard Mitigation Plan 2021](#)

CONSULTANT SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant will work to conduct a vulnerability assessment and climate action planning process that clearly identifies specific risks facing the community, prioritizes those risks, and outlines measurable goals and strategies to address them, through an inclusive process involving community members, elected officials, and Town staff. Emphasis should be on pairing impacts with solutions and clearly communicating the ways individual and community actions will be beneficial.

Work will include, but is not limited to:

TASK 1 - Data gathering and existing document review. The Consultant will collect all data needed to identify the aspects of climate change most likely to affect Topsham. This includes understanding how climate change may affect geographic areas, infrastructure, and assets.

TASK 2 - Community engagement. For a deeper understanding of the effects that climate change will have on the community, the Consultant will work with the team to engage community members and

Town officials in facilitated discussions to learn about their particular concerns in relation to climate change, be they related to Town geographic areas, infrastructure, assets or public health. The Consultant will also assist in planning and facilitating public meetings that promote inclusivity to gather input on defining resilience objectives and evaluating and prioritizing strategies and actions to achieve those objectives.

TASK 3 - Baseline Vulnerability Assessments. Building on insights from community engagement activities, the Consultant will identify, and develop a baseline vulnerability assessment of the areas, infrastructure, and assets at highest risk from the negative effects of climate change. Attention should also be given to impacts to health due to climate change.

Note: Topsham has engaged MSG/CBEP to conduct a social and economic vulnerability assessment in tandem with the Consultant's work. MSG/CBEP will coordinate with the Consultant to center social and economic vulnerability throughout the assessment process by ensuring that both quantitative and qualitative data are included. The Consultant will be responsible for coordinating MSG/CBEP and incorporating their findings into the assessment and report.

TASK 4 - Climate Action Planning. The Consultant will lead the climate action planning process, integrating insights from the community engagement process, the GHG Inventory by MCOG, the results of the social vulnerability assessment by MSG/CBEP, and their own assessments. The intent is for the Consultant to consolidate this information and facilitate planning for climate adaptation and mitigation actions in the short and long term, for both the municipality and residents. The climate action planning process should prioritize robust community engagement, including socially and economically vulnerable populations.

The scope of work will involve sharing best practices and case studies, recommending adaptation and mitigation strategies, proposing a prioritization framework, providing research and talking points about climate change, and facilitating the planning of climate actions grounded in data for both the municipality and its residents. The emphasis should be on locally achievable, positive solutions that enjoy strong public support, while also taking into account equity considerations to ensure actions benefit and do not harm vulnerable and underrepresented community members.

Deliverables:

- A project plan including process, timeline, and milestones for deliverables review and approvals.
- Data collection plan and package of data for Town.
- Community engagement approach, coordinated with the Energy Committee's Community Engagement Plan.
- Methodology for assessing vulnerability and risk.
- Preliminary and final Vulnerability Assessment Reports produced through joint coordination with MSG/CBEP.
- Preliminary and final list of climate actions with descriptions on how these actions will help Topsham adapt to climate change and contribute to emissions reduction goals.

Proposal Evaluation and Selection:

The Energy Committee, MCOG and Topsham’s Director of Planning will review the proposals. The top candidates will be invited to an interview with the Committee, MCOG and Town staff, and subsequently the Town will make a recommendation to the Select Board for a final decision.

Important Criteria:

Project Approach

Experience, Qualifications and References

Proposed Schedule

Cost Proposal

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should include:

- I. Project Approach:
 - a. A summary of the proposed project approach, demonstrating an understanding of the objectives of the project as whole, and the Consultant’s role within it.
 - b. Specific methodology and strategies to be employed to meet the project objectives and complete the tasks outlined.
 - c. Community engagement strategy.

- II. Proposed Schedule including a timeline that includes milestones, key deliverables, and deadlines.

- III. Experience, Qualifications and References:
 - a. Company background and history, demonstrating experience with vulnerability assessments, community engagement and climate action planning.
 - b. Summary of at least three (3) similar projects that demonstrate relevant experience. Include detailed project descriptions including organization name, contact person and their email and phone number, date of completion, and an overview of services provided. The Town intends to contact references provided.
 - c. Names, resumes, qualifications and experience of project leads and qualifications of all staff anticipated to be assigned to the project. The Project Manager identified in the proposal cannot be changed or replaced unless agreed to by both the Town and the Consultant.
 - d. Identify any subconsultants to be used on the project, their scope of work, qualifications, and primary representative.

- IV. Cost Proposal: Provide a detailed cost schedule including estimated hours for each task and deliverable listed in the Consultant Scope of Work. If alternative tasks are proposed, please also provide additional detailed cost information.

- V. Submittal Deadline: The deadline for submissions is December 19, 2023, at 5:00 pm. Submissions should be emailed to jerdman@topshammaine.com.

Proposals will be opened in public on December 20, 2023, at noon, and the results and tabulation will be available for public inspection.

Contact Information:

Please direct all questions regarding this RFP to Julie Erdman, Director of Planning at jerdman@topshammaine.com. **Questions regarding the scope of work must be submitted in writing by December 8th. Questions and responses will be compiled and available for review on December 12, 2023.**