

Town of Norwich

Request for Proposals for Executive Search Firm / Consultant for Town Manager Recruitment Services

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Introduction

The Town of Norwich, Vermont requests proposals for an executive search firm or consultant to guide its search for a new Town Manager.

The Selectboard ("Board") is seeking a firm or consultant to conduct a wide-reaching search and provide a slate of qualified candidates for the Town Manager position, which will oversee a \$5.3 million budget and a staff of approximately 30 people. The Board seeks an engaged, thoughtful, and deliberate approach in the search for a new town manager, including a plan for soliciting feedback from community stakeholders.

The Town will select a search firm or consultant on or before November 2023. The deadline for submission is September 8, 2023.

Scope of Work

1. Perform a position analysis and develop a comprehensive position profile, which may be informed by site visits, but should include at a minimum, meetings with Board members, staff, focus groups, community stakeholders, and the like.
2. Review of the current compensation and recommend changes, if necessary, based upon market conditions and other factors.
3. Review of existing recruitment materials to create an opportunity guide or other marketing materials for advertising the position. The Town expects the successful firm to develop a marketing strategy that utilizes advertising, direct solicitation of known desirable candidates, and the firm's professional contacts.
4. Collection and collation of applications with initial review and screening of candidates, providing periodic status updates to Board.
5. In collaboration with the Board, the firm will design and facilitate an efficient and timely interview process.
6. Completion of detailed background and professional reference checks on recommended finalists, including but not limited to verification of education

background, with checks on criminal/civil litigation, financial and social media issues and credit check.

7. In collaboration with the Board, the firm will implement a screening process to produce a short list of final candidates. Completion of detailed background and professional reference checks on recommended finalists, including but not limited to verification of education background, with checks on criminal/civil litigation, financial and social media issues.
8. Presentation of a summary of finalists' employment backgrounds, personal strengths, accomplishments, recommendations, and personal and professional references.
9. Advise Town on establishing performance expectations particular to the selected candidate's profile and qualities.

About the Town of Norwich

The Town of Norwich is a community of approximately 3,300 residents in rural Vermont, located in the area of Dartmouth College and known locally as the Upper Valley. The Norwich area includes Dartmouth College, the Montshire Museum, Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital, the Army Corps of Engineers Cold Regions Lab, the Veterans Administration Hospital, various engineering firms and the like. Chartered in 1761, the town has a total area of 44.7 square miles and lies on the western bank of the Connecticut River, which forms the boundary with New Hampshire. Interstate 91 and U.S. Route 5 run through the town as does the Appalachian Trail; Amtrak rail service is available in nearby White River Junction, Vermont, and there is an airport in neighboring Lebanon, New Hampshire. Norwich enjoys a rural lifestyle with scenic beauty and exceptional natural resources. Its citizens are active volunteers for boards, commissions and committees in town, and are engaged in all aspects of the town and area. Citizens expect transparency in their town government consistent with the Vermont Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. § 312), and fair value for their tax dollars. Having the first-in-the-nation interstate school district, students attend elementary school in Norwich, and middle school and high school in Hanover, New Hampshire. The town is proud of its bustling heart-of-the-town general store and other commercial and cultural establishments which include two restaurants, a brew pub, King Arthur Flour baking company, and the Montshire Museum of Science.

Town of Norwich Form of Government

Norwich voted for a Town-Manager form of government in 2002, pursuant to Vermont Statutes Annotated, Title 24, Chapter 37, which inter alia mandates the duties of the Town Manager and Selectboard. Since 2002, the town has employed six Town Managers. Under that Chapter the Board is required to select a Town Manager with special reference to his or her education, training and experience, who works under the supervision of the Board to oversee and direct the day-to-day activities of the Town departments, within including, Finance, Public Safety (Police and Fire), Recreation, Public Works, and Planning. The Town Manager office also provides some Human Resources functions, including the hiring, removal, and oversight of most Town

employees. Based on Selectboard budgetary and policy direction, the Town Manager provides leadership on all the Town's strategic initiatives. In addition to the Town of Norwich, there is a separate, co-existing Norwich Fire District which is a "municipality" pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 126 and 20 V.S.A. § 2481 and which provides water for fire protection and potable water.

The Ideal Town Manager Candidate

The successful Town Manager candidate will be an experienced administrator, and a creative and visionary leader. The candidate will be able to multitask with the routine and unscheduled issues which regularly flow through the Town Manager's office. Effective communication skills and a collaborative approach are essential requirements to fulfill a shared vision of Town goals and to execute Town policies. Specifically, the candidate will be able to communicate with the public effectively and proactively as to the efficiency level of governance and to articulate and advocate for long-term goals, the paths required to achieve them, and the necessity of achieving them. In turn, the candidate should expect support from the Board as part of the collaboration of effective government, and similarly the Town Manager will be responsive to Board feedback and direction. Critically, the Town Manager must possess and utilize a variety of tools, resources, and skill sets to nurture and sustain a healthy work environment for staff, a productive working relationship between staff and elected and appointed officials, and a sense of trust within the community as a whole. The candidate will also build and maintain effective working relationships with state and regional partners and organizations. The Town Manager will also be a strategic and fiscally responsible leader demonstrating a solid commitment and ability to oversee Town expenditures, in addition to obtaining and maintaining grants and other means to increase revenue streams and manage expenses of the Town.

Qualifications

Candidates for the position of Town Manager must have a bachelor's degree at a minimum. The Board will consider combinations of education and experience that demonstrate the ability to perform the Town Manager job. Candidates should have a record of experience preparing and making public presentations to diverse groups. A record of demonstrated leadership in successful strategic initiatives, such as affordable housing, financial acumen, climate action, and organizational improvement, highly desirable.

Proposal Requirements

1. A cover letter on firm letterhead including the date, the Request For Proposal subject line, the contact information for the firm's representative, with the following information:
 - a. The firm's experience working for smaller municipalities.
 - b. A description of the firm's practice vis-à-vis identification of talent, and placement of advertisements or other tools to identify and screen talent.

- c. What is the firm's approach for developing position specifications, e.g., how are the public, the town employees, and other stakeholders, engaged.
- d. A description of the reference process, specifically who conducts references, what checks are done, at what point in the search are they done, and how will the results be delivered to the Board.
- e. What guarantees does the firm make.
- f. An explanation of the firm's fee structure for smaller municipalities, specifically whether the work is done as a retained or contingency firm. If retained, what are the associated fees.
- g. A description of the process and likely timeline.

Selection Process

The Board will begin review of proposals upon receipt with a deadline for submission of September 8, 2023. The intention is to select a firm by October 11, 2023. The successful firm will be as specific as possible in addressing the Proposal Requirements as outlined above. The Board will notify the successful applicant in writing.

DISCLAIMERS

1. Those submitting a response to this RFP do so entirely at their own expense. There is no express or implied obligation by the Town of Norwich to reimburse any entity or individual for any costs incurred in preparing or submitting of proposals, preparing or submitting additional information requested, or participating in any selection interviews.
2. The Town of Norwich reserves the right to withdraw this Request for Proposal, to accept or reject any or all statement of qualifications, to advertise for new proposals if it is in the best interest of the Town to do so, and to award a contract as deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.