**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**Purpose**

Vinalhaven (Maine) Chamber of Commerce (VHCC) seeks a consultant who will assist our Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Team in creating a strategic framework for our organization focused on maximizing our assets, building and leveraging collaborative partnerships, and optimally serving our stakeholders.

At our October, 2020 VHCC monthly meeting, our membership and board voted to undertake a strategic process that will actively engage our organization in clarifying our mission, assessing past work and current opportunities, and working to ensure a strong and stable organization with a long and effective future.

Therefore, the purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from consultants experienced in strategic thinking and planning. VHCC seeks a consultant to provide the following services:

1. Work with the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Team, comprised of current and past members, to articulate a clear strategic framework as a part of a strategic plan for VHCC for 2021–2023.
2. Conduct and report on findings of research that may include:
	1. Small scope internal and external surveys to evaluate VHCC;
	2. Interviews and/or focus groups of a cross-section of current and former members and stakeholders;
	3. Trend and landscape scans as well as future forecasting for similar organizations;
	4. Current and historical research about VHCC; and
	5. Opportunities for collaboration and/or partnerships with other organizations which could bolster VHCC’s impact and provide a mechanism for long-term financial and organizational stability.
3. Assist in evaluating the organization’s written mission.
4. Developing vision and value statements.
5. Establish a framework and process for the organization to operationalize the strategic direction and plan and assist, as needed in creating a resulting plan.
6. Facilitate strategic planning meetings and provide leadership, direction and expert consultation and advice related to the strategic planning process.
7. Deliver a clear, easily-operationalized, measurable, strategic planning roadmap.

**Background**

More information about the Vinalhaven Chamber of Commerce and the two islands we represent; Vinalhaven and North Haven. Located in the heart of Penobscot Bay, our islands are valued for their striking natural beauty and tightly knit small town communities. Vinalhaven has about 1,200 year-round residents while North Haven has about 350. Both islands boast accredited K-12 schools that we proudly support, medical and dental health centers, and volunteer ambulance and fire crews. Lobster fishing and related support activities make up roughly half of our islands' economies. In addition to commercial fishermen and women, we are builders, musicians, plumbers, teachers, shopkeepers, electricians, innkeepers, artists, writers, mechanics, realtors, restaurateurs, boat builders, ferry captains, architects, administrators, conservationists, and more. Both islands have a Town Manager or Administrator who works with elected Select Boards to govern our respective towns, and both support a plethora of civic organizations that serve the needs and interests of our island communities. While exact history is not known, we as an organization have been around for decades. We are currently about 75 members strong and are 100% volunteer supported; currently we have no paid staff.

VHCC has always struggled with the challenge of finding and retaining long-term volunteer leadership. Burnout is common. Hiring occasional part-time paid staff has helped to alleviate the workload of volunteers, but is not a permanent solution to operating a sustainable organization. Additionally the organization has often struggled with defining a clear scope and strategy to achieve its mission. The coronavirus pandemic has acerbated the issue of volunteer fatigue and lack of organizational direction. Hence the decision by VHCC to make strategic planning an organizational focus at this time.

VHCC is located on Vinalhaven, an unbridged island located in Penobscot Bay, 15 miles from the mainland in Knox County, Maine. Vinalhaven is the largest year-round inhabited island in Maine, both geographically and by population. The island spans 23.46 square miles and boasts a year-round population of 1,165 (2010 Census), 2,200 seasonal residents, and upwards of 4,000 summer visitors.

Vinalhaven’s primary industries are marine-based (lobster fishing) and tourism. Forty percent (40%) of year-round residents work in occupations associated with the lobster fishery–either directly as fishermen or in services that support the industry, such as buyers, dockworkers, and boat mechanics. Vinalhaven’s lobster landings are the second largest in the state; comprising 7.6% of Maine’s total lobster catch by weight, and generating $39 million annually.

The island’s tourism industry caters mostly to short-term visitors and day-trippers who flock to the island to experience the natural beauty of the coast made easily accessible through numerous public parks and conserved lands.

**Scope of Project**

The consultant should listen and articulate in writing the mutual expectations of not only the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Team, but also the Executive Committee and broader membership and will:

* Guide the creation and implementation of a long-term organizational strategic framework and plan;
* Monitor and report the progress of the strategic framework; and
* Integrate the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Team, the Executive Committee, and the broader membership into a culture of collaboration, focused on a shared vision through the strategic planning process; and
* Deliver an agreed-upon end product that reflects our expectations and an understanding of operationalization and implementation.

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**Timing**

The selected applicant will present a final product to the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Team and Executive Committee by May 30, 2021.

**Instructions to Applicants**

All proposals must be submitted to VHCC by January 15, 2021.

Submit to:

Sue L'Africain

President, Vinalhaven Chamber of Commerce

VHCCpresident2018@gmail.com

Required Materials

Provide the official name, address, phone number and email address of the applicant (organization or individual) as well as the name of the principal contact person and the name and title of the person authorized to execute the contract.

Bios/resumes of key personnel fulfilling the contract, if awarded, including key qualifications and previous similar work experience.

A description of the applicant’s approach to strategic planning consultation, including methodology, perspective or philosophy that guides your work.

Provide a comprehensive work plan, including a timeline and a budget for completing the project.

Proposals must be signed by an authorized individual(s) of the applicant organization and include the name, title, address, telephone number and email address of the individual(s) with authority to negotiate and contractually bind the individual/organization.

All proposals received will be considered in final format.

Review of Proposals

The review team will consist of members of the VHCC Executive Committee and member-advisors.

We expect to make a final decision on this matter no later than January 29, 2021 with notification to applicants occurring soon thereafter.

We will review proposals in accordance with the following weighted criteria:

* The proposed approach to the scope of work
* The level of experience of the individual(s) identified to fulfill the project
* The individual’s/organization’s experience with similar projects
* The total proposed cost

Conflict of Interest

Applicants agree that they or their employees do not currently have, nor will they have, any conflict of interest between themselves and VHCC. Any perceived or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in the proposal.

Contractual Agreement

VHCC will issue a contract/letter of agreement with the selected applicant, in which the manner and time of payment will be addressed.