

Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township 2025 RFP

I. PURPOSE

The Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township are seeking proposals from planning consulting firms to aid in the development of the Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan. As the last comprehensive plan was formed in 2008, this new one will focus on the use of innovative planning to identify top community priorities and develop action strategies and implementation plans to address each priority. Action strategies will describe priorities and wanted outcomes, implementation responsibilities and resources, partnership opportunities, and achievable action steps. Developing solutions and moving forward with implementation will be emphasized as part of the planning process. The following further describes the approach that will be used to prepare the Central Bradford Region Plan.

II. BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION

Located in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township are home to around a collective of 4,850 residents. In 2005, the three municipalities joined together to create a Comprehensive Plan, which covers a span of 25.6 square miles. Central Bradford Region is an excellent candidate for a multi-municipal comprehensive plan due to its important highway and bridge structures, the Bradford County Airport, and the large manufacturing companies that occupy the area. Furthermore, the Towanda Borough was recently approved for a grant by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) worth \$19,000 to use towards the comprehensive plan. The updated plan should expand and modernize upon existing planning projects, as well as incorporate new ones. The following should include, but not be limited to:

- Enhancing the Townships/Borough through blight remediation strategies, restorations of properties, and preservation of historic areas

- Downtown revitalization ideas
- Strategies to grow the community and attract residents/passersby
- Reflection of changes that have occurred over the last decade regarding the impact of the natural gas industry
- Economic development for the future
- What are the needs of the residents, including housing, education, work, and overall happiness

The update to the 2008 Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan should encompass the needs, desires, and visions of both the current and future community, as well as business owners by using creative and effective community engagement methods. Not only that, but the plan should also prioritize the logistics of the community such as proper land usage, economic development strategies, housing, education accessibility, recreation and community facilities (such as parks and walking paths), and overall community service.

III. PROJECT SCOPE

Consultant Expectations:

The consulting team hired will provide a scope of planning services necessary for the completion of the comprehension plan. The firm should be able to provide creative yet feasible action plans using intelligent decision-making skills. Utilization of background information available from the current Comprehensive Plan and other information recently prepared by the municipalities is necessary, but there should also be new information merged into the project. The firm will be expected to work alongside North Towanda Township, Towanda Township, and Towanda Borough staff, also planning committees in the local area, key businesses/stakeholders, and residents. Together, goals and objectives for the comprehensive plan will be made and followed. The plan should be made as both a physical and digital copy that is easy to read and accessible to all in the area.

General Consultant Qualifications:

It is expected that the selected consulting firm is strong in the following areas:

- Small town planning and development
- Leadership and successful completion of goals/objectives
- Organization of planning documents in a timely manner (both physical and digital)
- Implementation of public participation, such as holding (or attending) public meetings, surveys and studies, focus group meetings, key person interviews, etc.
- Effective communication between all parties involved

Timeline:

The Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan adoption is targeted for the summer of 2026 or sooner, if practicable. Prospective firms must have the resources and capability to meet the timeline.

Budget:

Towanda Borough received a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Municipal Assistance Grant for the three municipalities for \$19,000 towards the cost of developing a Comprehensive Plan for the three municipalities. The grant will require a match of a minimum of \$19,000 between the three municipalities.

IV. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township assures that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or in violation of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, handicap or disability, or in violation of any applicable local, state, or federal laws. Please contact Stacy Schoonover at stacy@towandaborough.org or via phone at (570) 265-

2696 ext. 103 for additional information. The point of contact for purposes of this RFP is Stacy Schoonover, Towanda Borough Manager as shown below:

Stacy Schoonover, Towanda Borough Manager
724 Main Street, Towanda, PA 18848
Phone: (570) 265-2696 ext. 104
Email: stacy@towandaborough.org

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

To be considered, proposals must be received no later than 4:00 PM (Eastern Daylight Savings Time) on June 2, 2025 to Stacy Schoonover at stacy@towandaborough.org. Physical submissions will be accepted but an electronic version must be submitted to be considered. All proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format via email or file-sharing service to the Administrative Assistant. Proposals arriving after the closing date and time shall be considered late and shall be rejected. Hard copy submissions will be accepted but are not required.

RFP RESPONSE CONTENT

- A transmittal letter must accompany the RFP submission. The purposes of this letter are to transmit the proposal, acknowledge the receipt of any addenda, and to allow the firm an opportunity to indicate their ability to provide the services requested. The letter must contain the following information for the primary firm and any sub-consultants or partner firms:
 - Primary Contact Name
 - Primary Contact Address
 - Primary Phone and Email
 - Business Expertise (and level of inter-firm coordination if applicable)
 - Minority or Women-Owned Business Status (if applicable)
 - Identification of subcontractors or partnerships and clearly identified roles
- A narrative overview of how the responding firm will meet and develop the desired criteria contained within Appendix A: Vision, Qualifications, and Experience. The narrative should specifically include:

- how the firm will ensure the Vision statements are achieved throughout the process
 - how the firm will approach the partnership, with the three municipalities playing an integral role in the development of the Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan
- A conceptual schedule serving to graphically depict milestone and benchmark dates for public input, reports, presentations, and project progress. Please use anticipated project completion dates for this portion of the submission.
 - A list of key personnel employed by the consultant with corresponding titles and resumes provided as well as a list of the personnel that are anticipated to be assigned to the project along with their responsibilities, qualifications, and experience. The principal point of contact should be identified. Additionally, the hourly rate for each identified person shall be provided.
 - A proposed not-to-exceed budget which shall be based upon the Comprehensive Plan Requirements for Municipalities contained within the PA Municipalities Planning Code requirements; public meetings and public engagement strategies; steering committee attendance; and costs associated with achieving the Vision and Qualifications outlined in Appendix A.
 - Cost proposals must be detailed and may include, as separate budget lines, other value-added planning best practices, innovative planning techniques, or proprietary approaches to sound community and comprehensive planning that have not been outlined within this RFP. Cost proposals should also outline the final plan deliverables as well as interim deliverables as it relates to invoicing timing.

V. CONSULTANT SELECTION PROCESS

A selection committee comprised of members from the three municipalities shall review the submissions and develop a list of qualified responders to advance in the selection process. Interviews may be scheduled. The municipalities reserve the right, at their discretion, to interview none, some, or all of the applicants. In addition, the municipalities reserve the right to request modifications to the proposals. Following the interview process, if applicable, the selection committee will recommend to the Towanda Borough Council to enter into a contract with the firm that best suits the needs and vision of the planning effort based upon the submission narrative, staffing, proposed cost, and fit with the municipalities goals as referenced in Section 2. All contracts with the Borough of Towanda must be approved in a public

meeting by the Towanda Borough Council. A notice to proceed will be issued to the successful responder once the recommendation is approved.

VI. CONTRACT PROVISIONS AND INFORMATION

After the three municipalities make a selection, they shall then proceed to negotiate a contract at a mutually agreeable price based on the scope of work for the project. If the municipalities are unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with the selection committee's top firm, the Towanda Borough shall formally end negotiations with that firm and begin to negotiate with the next firm recommended by the selection committee. Negotiations shall continue in this sequence until a contract is agreed upon or the three Municipalities may decide to re-post the RFP. The performance of this contract shall be by all federal, state, and local laws as may be applicable. Any contract between Towanda Borough and the consultant shall be subject to the rules and regulations of any agencies funding this work. Towanda Borough reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, and to waive irregularities. The contract between the Borough and the selected consulting firm will include the following non-negotiable contract provisions:

1. Indemnification of the county
2. Non-indemnification of the contracted firm
3. Choice of Law (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania)
4. Termination for convenience / termination for cause by the Borough
5. Work-for-Hire Transfer of Copyrights / Intellectual Property
6. Borough ownership of the instruments of service / deliverables / data
7. Prevailing party attorneys' fees
8. Non-discrimination
9. Suspension and debarment
10. Release of liability of the contractor
11. Insurance coverage and Borough status as an additional insured
12. Terms of payment and invoicing, including a 45-day payment period
13. Data security, confidentiality, and use of county/municipal data and information

14. Any and all federal and state contract provisions required as a result of grant funding

Towanda Borough reserves the right to request additional contract provisions it deems necessary as needed to protect the best interest of the county. A separate “Data Sharing Agreement” will be signed by the selected firm and the Bradford County GIS Department upon a notice to proceed is issued.

VII. RFP COMMITMENT, CANCELLATION, AND INCURRED EXPENSES

This Request for Proposals offers no commitment of funding or contractual obligations until the selected firm and Towanda Borough settle on a mutually agreeable scope of work and project budget and commit to both via a publicly approved contract by the Council. Additionally, the RFP does not commit Towanda Borough to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the submittal, to procure, or to contract for services. Towanda Borough reserves the right to negotiate with all qualified responders or to cancel in part, or in its entirety this request for qualifications if it is in the best interest of the Borough to do so.

Request for Proposals-Appendix A

Vision, Qualifications, and Experience

Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township desire to contract for qualified professional services to assist the municipalities in the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The municipalities seek a qualified, solution-focused consultant team with demonstrated professional planning, economic analysis, government services analysis, and economic development experience. The Vision, Qualifications, and Experience outlined below present a minimum effort expected by the consultant selected for the project and will be used as part of the evaluation matrix in selecting a preferred consulting firm.

OUR VISION

The Towanda Borough, Towanda Township, and North Towanda Township fully envision this Comprehensive Plan update to serve as a guidance tool to grow our community. The municipalities envision a product that clearly and concisely identifies the issues currently facing the region and those that may arise in the future. The plan will then holistically address the problems. The Comprehensive Plan is an implementable, tangible, living document with clear, realistic goals that have achievable objectives and measurable indicators of that achievement outlined. The Municipalities envision a product that is easily accessible and understandable by the general public and is presented in a format that is easily read and used by the municipalities, the county, and the public at large via several digital-based media.

To further clarify the vision, the planning department intends to develop the Central Bradford County Regional Comprehensive Plan with the following vision statements in mind:

- The plan will focus on problems faced by the municipalities, implementable action steps, and measurable indicators of progress to provide solutions.
- The plan will be implementable with a limited selection of achievable objectives, as opposed to a lengthy goal list that is not attainable within a reasonable time frame.
- The plan is to be created in a visually engaging and attractive manner, formatted with a keen eye toward graphic design appeal.
- The plan will seek to identify and incorporate innovative, contemporary, and collaborative planning techniques into the methods, goals, and objectives.

- The plan will involve specific and value-added citizen engagement, especially among traditionally disadvantaged groups such as low-to-moderate income, minority, and limited-English proficiency populations.
- The plan will strategically incorporate other county planning initiatives into the overall development and implementation strategies. These may include the Bradford County Comprehensive Plan, the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commissions Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and the Bradford County's Greenways and Open Space Plan.
- The plan will be developed cooperatively with the County planning department and GIS department staff as this is viewed more as a partnership than simply handing off the comprehensive plan to be written by the consultant team.
- The final plan end product will include a thorough Executive Summary.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The evaluation of prospective consulting firms will be based on the following qualifications and experience criteria:

- Previous experience (no more than three projects) preparing comprehensive or community plans for Pennsylvania counties or municipalities with a description of each project by the PA Municipalities Planning Code.
- A qualified contingent of staff, either within the primary firm or within the subcontractor firm (if applicable) with relevant skills, qualifications, and backgrounds as related to comprehensive planning. • Ability to utilize contemporary mapping techniques and applications to collect and analyze pertinent data and present data in a visually appealing and compelling manner.
- Demonstrated experience with the ESRI suite of products.
- Demonstrated experience in performing a variety of analyses, including but not limited to economic market analysis, real estate market analysis, fiscal impact analysis, land use, and environmental resources analysis.
- Experience utilizing innovative and engaging public relations techniques, along with graphic design skills to create contemporary, public-facing, digital-friendly, multimedia materials.
- Ability to conduct comprehensive inventories of resources and assets such as internet availability, housing availability, environmental resources, community facilities, infrastructure (water, sewer, roads), and land use patterns.
- Demonstrated experience in coordinating county-level planning efforts with local municipalities, authorities, agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses.
- A demonstrated understanding of rural planning issues with appropriate efforts and initiatives to address them.