

Responses to Question Received Related to the RFP for an Equity Consultant

First set of questions:

Question 1: When it comes to consultants, does PUC have a preference for in-state or out-of-state professionals? Our team is well-versed in Act 154.

Answer 1: The PUC does not have a preference.

Question 2: Could you provide us with PUC's definitions of diversity, equity, justice and inclusion if you have them?

Answer 2: The PUC has not adopted definitions for those terms.

Question 3: Does PUC have an employee resource group dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and justice?

Answer 3: Yes, the PUC has a staff employee resource group dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

Question 4: As a project-based firm, we don't charge hourly rates but we can provide line-item fees and a "not-to-exceed" pricing. Would this be acceptable for PUC?

Answer 4: The Commission would appreciate a not-to-exceed budget supported by as much detailed information as possible.

Question 5: The Commission would appreciate a not-to-exceed budget supported by as much detailed information as possible.

Answer 5: Yes, the PUC has allocated money for DEIB-related activities.

Question 6: Is PUC interested in a proposal that includes possible next steps?

Answer 6: The Commission is interested in RFP responses that provide information on all potential steps.

Second set of questions:

Question 1: Will the PUC prioritize (over other firms) those that have worked with similar municipal clients, and would the PUC consider in their award decision a firm's previous work with similar organizations?

Answer 1: The PUC will consider work with similar clients as a factor in its consideration of proposals.

Question 2: Will the PUC prioritize (over other firms) those that are local to the state of Vermont?

Answer 2: No, the PUC will not prioritize in-state v. out-of-state firms.

Question 3: How many people are employed at the PUC?

Answer 3: 28 people.

Question 4: Can you share a budget for this work?

Answer 4: The PUC has allocated up to \$100,000 for DEIB-related activities.

Question 5: In addition to evaluating the PUC's process, procedures, and operations, is the PUC interested in an *analysis* of (and potentially the gathering of) existing employee data and employee feedback? (e.g. the equity consultant would provide data-driven recommendations for changes to PUC processes after the consultant conducts qualitative/quantitative analysis of employee data/feedback related to all parts of the employee lifecycle)

Answer 5: Yes.

Question 6: In the proposal itself, will the PUC allow the applicant to include recommended add-on components for the assessment, along with an estimate of their pricing (e.g. a set of focus groups for an additional fee) that may be beneficial to include once the work has started?

Answer 6: An applicant may include add-on components and their pricing.

Question 7: If yes to #6 above, must the additions be factored into the total proposed budget for the RFP submission? Or can they be noted in the submission but not included in the total proposed budget?

Answer 7: If the proposal includes additions above and beyond the requirements of the RFP, the proposed budget need not include those items. However, the cost of those additional items should be clearly noted in the proposal.

Third set of questions:

Question 1: Will the Commission provide all internal and external operations, policies, and procedures for equity that are expected to be evaluated by the consultant?

Answer 1: Yes.

Question 2: The RFP mentions that "The Evaluation may also identify specific trainings for Commission employees based on the Consultant's findings." Are these trainings expected to be conducted by the consultant?

Answer 2: The trainings could be trainings provided by the consultant or other trainings available through the State or other organizations.

Question 3: How does the Commission envision that the consultant will "assist the Commission in planning for its implementation of Act 154"? Should this assistance result in any sort of written deliverable?

Answer 3: The Commission would provide the consultant with an overview of its obligations under Act 154, have meetings with the consultant regarding its potential implementation of the Act, and seek written recommendations from the consultant.

Question 4: Act 154 details a community engagement plan will need to be created and adopted by each agency on or before July 1, 2025. What level of participation from the consultant is the Commission expecting? Has the Commission begun drafting this plan?

Answer 4: The core principles of community engagement that the plan must comply with have not been adopted yet by the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee. Therefore, the Commission has not yet started drafting its plan. Once the Commission begins this work, the Commission would provide the consultant with an overview of its thoughts for the plan, have meetings with the consultant regarding the potential plan, and seek written recommendations from the consultant.

Question 5: Act 154 explains the Commission must conduct a baseline spending report over the past three years and post it publicly on or before July 1, 2024. Will the consultant have access to this report, or a draft of the report, during the evaluation?

Answer 5: Based on our most up-to-date information from ANR, the guidance document needed to draft the spending report will not be available until the summer of 2024. Therefore, any report that the Commission may have to provide would likely not be available until fall 2024. If this timeframe coincides with the timeframe of the evaluation, the Commission will provide the consultant with any report required of the Commission.

Question 6: What steps has the Commission taken towards achieving the goals set out in Act 154, and will the Commission provide information on these steps to the consultant?

Answer 6: The Commission is actively engaged in the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee and has drafted a memo regarding the Commission's deadlines and deliverables under the Act.

Question 7: Will the Commission make available all reports of environmental justice complaints and the steps taken to mitigate them?

Answer 7: Once the Commission has this process in place, the Commission can provide any complaints it receives to the consultant.

Question 8: Does the Commission have a maximum budget for the consultant not to be exceeded on this project?

Answer 8: No, there is not a maximum budget for the consultant. The PUC has allocated up to \$100,000 for DEIB-related activities.