

Request for Qualifications— Engineering Services for the Highgate Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2547)

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is issued by the Village of Swanton for professional engineering services related to the Orman E. Croft Hydro Generation Facility (Highgate Falls) (FERC Project No. 2547).

Section 1 – Introduction and Project Background

The Village of Swanton (Village) is seeking professional engineering services to develop preliminary design alternatives for rehabilitation of the Highgate Falls' existing crest gate system. Specifically, the Village desires to contract with a qualified firm for professional engineering services to develop design alternatives to replace the failed rubber dam at the Swanton Village Electric Department's Highgate Falls Hydropower Project located in Highgate Falls, Vermont. The Highgate Falls Hydropower Plant is licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)(FERC Project No. 2547).

The Village is a municipality in Northwestern Vermont with approximately 2,500 residents. The Village has 42 full-time employees and operates Police, Public Works, Electric, Water, and Sewer Departments and supports a volunteer Fire Department. The Village of Swanton owns and operates the Swanton Village Electric Department (SVED/Village) which has been serving customers since 1894. The SVED serves approximately 3,800 customers in Swanton Village, Swanton Town, Highgate and 5 non-residential customers in St. Albans Town with low cost, safe, efficient, reliable, and renewable electricity. Maintaining these valuable energy services is critical to the social and economic welfare of the rural, designated low- and moderate-income Northern Vermont communities served by SVED.

SVED's overall system includes the Highgate Falls Hydropower Plant and a transmission/distribution system. The Highgate Falls Hydropower Plant provides approximately 75% of all the annual energy utilized by customers. Issues encountered with the Highgate Falls' rubber dam have significantly impacted project hydropower operations and generation. The Village is interested in conducting an alternatives analysis to look at three different replacement options and an additional "do-nothing option" to help the Village of Swanton determine their preferred path for long term operation of the Highgate Falls Plant.

All design alternatives will be considered and could include, but are not limited to, a raised concrete crest, installation of pneumatic or hydraulic crest gates, or combinations of crest raising and gate installation. A fourth, separate "do-nothing" option shall also be evaluated. Under a "do-nothing" scenario, the Village would also solicit an assessment of whether to operate the Plant as-is without a replacement spillway section, sell, and/or decommission the Plant. The Village further encourages applicants to propose additional or innovative alternatives that may offer improved performance, cost-effectiveness, constructability, or operational benefits beyond those identified above.

However, it should be noted that due to recent issues encountered with the Highgate Project's large diameter rubber dam structure, a direct replacement in kind with the same diameter rubber dam element will not be considered by the Village, UNLESS overwhelming evidence of exceptional benefit over other alternatives, as it relates to public safety, cost, O&M, AND economic benefits, can be provided and the results guaranteed.

This is not intended to limit alternatives that propose some form of a rubber dam element in a different geometry than the current structure; for example, raise the crest of the dam through other means and utilize a smaller diameter rubber dam element would not be a replacement in kind.

The selected engineering firm will provide proposed scopes for services including but not limited to engineering design, cost analysis (opinion of probable costs) and a preliminary schedule that includes permitting through commissioning. Alternatives analysis will consider public safety, expected average annual generation, compliance with all applicable license conditions and water quality certification and minimizing project costs to the extent possible. Additional information and details are below.

As discussed in Appendix A, the final copy of the summary memo required under Task 4 MUST be submitted to the Village within 90 days of the Task 1 Site Visit and Kickoff Meeting and the Task 7 final report MUST be submitted to the Village within 270 days from contract signing.

Overall Objectives:

- Understanding of existing project configuration, regulatory requirements, and project goals.
- Initial development of three alternatives and an additional "do-nothing option".
- Consideration of the three alternatives and the "do-nothing option through a defensible alternatives analysis that includes 15% design development.
- Considerations for the design alternatives selection include but are not limited to:
 - Public safety.
 - Power generation.
 - Minimizing cost.
 - Reducing operations and maintenance (O&M) cost and risk.
 - Addressing aging equipment and appurtenant civil/structural elements to the extent possible through implementation of design alternatives.
 - Preserving compliance with all applicable federal license conditions and State of Vermont project requirement to the extent possible.
 - Other goals as identified by the Village of Swanton during development of the alternatives.

The applicant should be aware that the Village of Swanton is potentially seeking multiple funding sources some of which may be local, state, federal, or from other sources. The applicant should be familiar with, and prepared to meet and comply with all rules, regulations, and requirements associated with project funding including that all aspects of

the project follow applicable state and federal grant requirements. The Village is an equal opportunity employer. Minority and women owned businesses are encouraged to submit a proposal. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify applicant requirements as mandated by the ultimate project funding utilized.

The Village is working on an expedited schedule with estimated milestones summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. RFQ Schedule

Milestone	Date and Time	Notes
RFQ Initial Release/Notice Date	1/12/2025	Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and Notice initially issued by the Village of Swanton
Preliminary Information Package Available (Non-Mandatory)	1/12/2025	Email wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Information Package" to receive a Preliminary Information Package. Please note that the package may contain Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII) information and execution of a Non-Disclosure Agreement may be required prior to obtaining these materials.
Deadline to Schedule Individual Firm Site Visit (Non-Mandatory)	1/23/2026, by 4:00 PM ET	Email wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Site Visit Request" to schedule a 1-hour site visit during the window of 1/26/2026-1/30/2026, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Requests received after deadline will not be accepted. Site visit is optional but recommended.
Window for Individual Firm Site Visit (Non-Mandatory)	1/26/2026-1/30/2026, 8:00 AM-4:00 PM	By prior appointment only, maximum 1 hour site visit. Execution of a liability waiver by the applicant with the Village of Swanton and proof of applicant liability insurance with the Village of Swanton named will be required prior to the site visit. Participants will also be required to provide their own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the site visit.
Zoom Q&A Meeting (Non-Mandatory)	2/2/2025, 10:AM ET	Meeting attendance is optional but recommended. Email wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Virtual Meeting" to request a Zoom Q&A meeting link. Requests received after deadline will not be accepted.
Formal Written Questions Due (Non-Mandatory)	2/3/2026, by 4:00 PM ET	Email RFQ questions to wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Questions". Requests received after deadline will not be accepted.
Village Of Swanton Responses to Formal Written Questions Available on Request	2/9/2026, 3:00 PM ET	Village of Swanton Responses to Formal Written Questions available, email wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Q&A Response" to request.
RFQ Submission Due to Village of Swanton	2/23/2026, by 1:00 PM ET	RFQ submissions due. Email final submission document to wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Response". Submission will be in electronic PDF format and

		the final PDF file should be 10 MB or less in size. Submissions received after deadline will not be considered.
Village of Swanton, Notice to Three Highest-Ranked Firms	3/2/2026, by 1:00 PM ET	Village of Swanton notifies the three highest-ranked respondents with request to schedule initial negotiations.
Addenda	-	If available, issued on request to wsheets@swanton.net with subject "Highgate Falls RFQ Addenda" It is the applicant's responsibility to request and obtain all addenda, if issued.
Note: Additional schedule information and response requirements may be contained in other RFQ sections.		

Section 2 – Procurement Method

This solicitation follows the following process:

Step 1 – Qualifications: Firms submit qualifications. Initial ranking is based solely on experience and competence. See Section 4 for additional information.

Step 2 – Negotiation: The three (3) highest-ranked firms will be invited to negotiate a final scope of services that identifies specific and discrete tasks, with pricing and schedule for the identified tasks, and a full price and schedule for the entire anticipated contract (including all administrative fees). If negotiations are not successful with the 3 highest-ranked firms, the next-ranked firm will be invited to negotiate a fair and reasonable price, schedule and scope. See Section for additional information.

Step 3 – Final Selection: Based on Step 2, final selection will be made based on the most qualified firm's negotiated scope, schedule and costs.

The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify this procedure as required.

Section 3 – Scope of Services (Appendix A)

See Appendix A for scope of services.

Section 4 – Submission Requirements

The information required to be submitted under Step 1-Qualification, in Section 2 above is as follows. Firms shall submit by email (See Section 9 for additional information) an electronic PDF file (≤10 MB total, including all attachments) containing the following minimum requirements. These qualifications, including the minimum requirements below are due February 23, 2026 by 1:00 PM ET to the Village of Swanton, c/o William Sheets, Village Manager. See Section 1 and Section 9 for additional information. Applications submitted after the due date will not be accepted. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify these requirements as needed.

Statement of Qualifications

- **Project Understanding & Approach** – key risks, data needs, anticipated constraints/challenges, anticipated management of constraints/challenges, and potential value engineering opportunities for consideration in the alternatives analysis.
- **Field Data Collection** – List any anticipated field data collection needs. Note: Field data collection is an optional task under this RFQ.
- **Review of Existing Information**- Describe anticipated methodology and organization methods for review of operational and regulatory materials including all relevant dam safety materials.
- **Team** – Resumes, core team organization chart with roles/responsibilities, and identification of anticipated project lead. Contact information for applicants. Identify Vermont Licensed Professional Engineer on the core team who will take responsibility for deliverables and provide license number(s). Separately list any anticipated subcontractors, if any, their team members, and anticipated roles and responsibilities.
- **Relevant Project Experience** – Provide a minimum of 3 projects within the past 10 years involving: crest gates (pneumatic/hydraulic), spillway retrofits, or dam replacements. Highlight projects where alternatives analysis led to final design and construction support by your firm. In addition, provide evidence through previous, completed design/construction projects, of the applicants costing and estimating accuracy. Provide references and client contact information, for example projects. The Village of Swanton may contact references for performance verification.
- **FERC Dam Safety Experience** – Demonstrate FERC Part 12 familiarity and experience within the past 10 years. Note: FERC Part 12 services are not in scope for this RFI however prior experience is a qualification requirement.
- **Insurance** - Evidence of insurance coverage including but not limited to General Liability, Auto, Professional (E&O), and Workers' Compensation.

In addition, during the Step 2 – Negotiation, under Section 2 above, additional information including the following will be developed by the negotiating firms and submitted to the Village of Swanton. Submittal process instructions including format, delivery method, submission date/time, etc., will be developed and provided to the negotiating firms during the Step 2 Negotiations. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify these requirements as needed.

- **RFQ Initial Task Price and Schedule** - Cost broken-out by RFQ task including total hours and rate. Provide separate rates for applicant and any anticipated subcontractors. Provide estimated project schedule broken down by each Task and total anticipated schedule.

- **Additional Team Information** - For core team and any sub-contractors, if any, provide evidence of your capacity to dedicate staff to completing the scopes to be negotiated on schedule.
- **Applicable State and Federal Certifications** - lobbying, debarment, DBE/WBE/MBE participation plan if any, other funding requirements.

Section 5 – Evaluation Criteria (Appendix B)

Evaluation will be based on Appendix B. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify this procedure as required.

Section 6 – Negotiation Procedures (Appendix C)

Scope and cost negotiations will be conducted only with the three top-ranked firms following Step 1, in Section 2. If unable to reach agreement, the next-ranked firm from Step 1 will be invited to negotiate. See Section 2 and Appendix C for details. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify this procedure as required.

Section 7 – Funding Compliance

The applicant should be aware that the Village of Swanton is potentially seeking multiple funding sources, some of which may be local, state, federal, or from other sources. The applicant should be familiar with and prepared to meet and comply with all rules, regulations, and requirements associated with project funding including that all aspects of the project follow applicable state and federal grant requirements. The applicant should also be familiar with and be prepared to meet and comply with all rules, regulations, and requirements associated with the Village of Swanton's Grant Management and Procurement Policy which is included in Appendix D. The Village of Swanton is an equal opportunity employer. Minority and women owned businesses are encouraged to submit a proposal. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify applicant requirements as mandated by the ultimate project funding utilized.

Section 8 – Outreach For Consultation

Outreach for consultation with any outside party, agency, tribe, governmental entity, private individual, or other entity by any firm regarding the Highgate Falls Project is expressly prohibited without the prior written approval of the Village of Swanton.

Section 9 – Administrative Information and Authorization

- **Primary Contact:** William D. Sheets, Swanton Village Manager
- **Email:** wsheets@swanton.net
- **Office Address:** 120 First Street, Swanton, VT 05488
- **Highgate Falls Hydropower Plant Address:** 428 Mill Hill Road, Saint Albans, VT 05478

It should be noted that the Village of Swanton reserves the right to accept, reject, or seek modifications to any response. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify this RFQ or any associated document or information provided to applicant. This RFQ is authorized and issued by:

By: William Sheets

William Sheets, Village Manager

Date: 01/09/25

The Village of Swanton is an equal opportunity employer. Minority and women owned businesses are encouraged to submit a proposal. The Village of Swanton reserves the right to modify applicant requirements as mandated by the ultimate project funding utilized.

Appendix A – Scope of Services

Provide professional engineering and related services to evaluate, design, and develop alternatives to replace the Highgate Falls dam's crest control. Tasks include:

1. Site visit and kickoff meeting. Provides an opportunity to discuss project specifics and to get a better understanding of Village of Swanton's project goals.
2. Review of operational and regulatory materials, including all relevant dam safety materials.
3. Field data collection.
4. Development of three alternatives and a fourth do nothing option in consultation with the Village of Swanton. Development of a summary memo and virtual presentation of selected alternatives to the Village of Swanton Manager. The final copy of the summary memo **MUST** be submitted to the Village of Swanton within 90 days of the Task 1 Site Visit and Kickoff Meeting.
5. Evaluation of alternatives including:
 - a. Development of 15% design including hydraulic, hydrologic, civil, electrical, mechanical, and ancillary systems design for each alternative.
 - b. General evaluation of impact of alternative on public safety, power generation, O&M cost and risk, aging equipment and appurtenant civil/structural elements, compliance with all applicable federal license conditions/State of Vermont project requirement, any other goals as identified by the Village of Swanton during development of alternatives.
 - c. Cost and schedule estimates for implementation of each alternative including alternative impact on O&M cost and site revenue
 - d. Summary of required permits and potential regulatory impacts for each option
6. Draft report preparation.
 - a. With up to two draft report reviews by the Village of Swanton and up to two virtual meetings to discuss.
7. Final report preparation and presentation to the Village of Swanton. Final report **MUST** be submitted to the Village of Swanton within 270 days of the contract signing.
8. Regular virtual meetings with Village of Swanton over course of project.

Appendix B – Evaluation Criteria and Ranking Matrix

Initial evaluation of RFQ responses under Step 1, as discussed in Section 2 above are as follows:

Criterion	Weight	Description	Points
Firm Experience with pertinent Hydroelectric/Dam Projects and FERC Part 12	30%	Experience with similar projects in last 10 years	30
Key Personnel and Capacity	30%	Qualifications and availability of key staff	30
Past Performance and References	20%	Quality, timeliness, and cost control	20
Knowledge of Local Conditions	20%	Understanding of local conditions, have done similar work in Vermont	20

The 3 highest-ranked firms from Step 1 will be invited to negotiate a fair and reasonable price and final scope. If negotiations are not successful with the 3 highest-ranking firms, the next-ranked firm will be invited to negotiate a fair and reasonable price and scope. Based on Step 2, final selection will be made based on the most qualified firm based on the scope and cost negotiated in Step 2.

Appendix C – Negotiation Procedure

1. Village opens negotiations with the top three ranked firms to develop final scope, schedule and cost.
2. If no final scope, schedule, and cost are reached, the next highest ranked firm is invited to enter negotiations.
3. Final selection will be made based on the most qualified firm based on the negotiated scope and cost developed in Step 2.