

NCI Charrette Request for Proposal (RFP) Template

**version 3.1**

A complete framework for specifying   
an NCI charrette process in a request   
for proposal

*A free resource from the National Charrette Institute.*

# NCI Charrette Request for Proposal (RFP) Template

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# PLEASE READ

PLEASE DO NOT SIMPLY CUT AND PASTE WITHOUT CONSIDERING YOUR SCOPE AND BUDGET!

The NCI Charrette RFP Template describes the entire set of tools contained in the NCI Charrette System™. We can safely say that the scope outlined in the template cannot be delivered in its entirety by consultants for anything less than a substantial budget.To accomplish this full program with a small budget could require some form of free labor (see [NCI Blog](http://charretteinstitute.org/category/budgeting/)). If your budget is challenged you will need to remove elements from your scope, and/or devise an inexpensive strategy for covering some of your scope. Please contact NCI for advice on scopes and budgets.

## About this Resource

NCI will update and improve this resource over time. Please assist us with this goal by sending us a copy of your RFP that results from the use of this template. We are happy to review your RFP and upon our approval will distribute it to individuals who have completed our NCI Charrette System™ and NCI Charrette Management and Facilitation™ certificate trainings. To allow time for our review and feedback, please send it to us 2 weeks in advance of wide distribution or release. Also, please feel free to send us feedback, questions and updates on your project.

## A Word about Budgets

The NCI Charrette RFP Template is presented as a framework that must be revised in response to the specific project requirements. Project budgets vary widely depending on project scope. The NCI urges the project sponsor to carefully consider the potential costs associated with their specific RFP as they modify the template for each individual project. For more on charrette budgets, see *The Charrette Handbook* and the [NCI Community Forum blog](http://www.charretteinstitute.org/blog).

## Use of this Document

The specific requirements for a RFP utilized by a state or local agency are often set forth by law and these laws vary from state to state. Agencies may also have administrative rules requiring specific provisions or language for an RFP. The RFP should be reviewed by someone familiar with such laws and rules to determine its compliance. This RFP is a model and cannot predict all possible needs of each jurisdiction, therefore the resulting RFP may not request all services necessary for the locality, and again, careful review is required. ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE HEREBY DISCLAIMED AND ANY USE OF THIS RFP IS AT THE SOLE RISK OF THE USER.

# INTRODUCTION

This model RFP (Request for Proposal) has been assembled by the National Charrette Institute as a general guide for the procurement of services relating to a community planning project that includes a NCI charrette. The template for the Scope of Services provides basic language for the application of the NCI Charrette System™ (formerly called NCI Dynamic Planning), and should be customized according to the project. An overview of the NCI Charrette System™ is provided below in the Contextual Summary. A complete description is found in *The Charrette Handbook*.

The purpose of this RFP template is to:

* Provide language to encourage consistency of resulting proposals,
* Ease the rating and comparison of proposals, and
* Assist in the successful implementation of a superior community development process and product.

The “Project Sponsor” referred to below is the agency or organization that is issuing the request for proposal. The “Consultant” referred to below is the individual, firm, or team of individuals/firms who may respond to the request for proposal. It is expected that the project sponsor will include an introduction to the RFP in order to present potential applicants with the necessary information to submit a responsive and complete proposal. This introduction may include why the sponsor desires a charrette process and the context and related history for the project including previous planning efforts or documents. The RFP may also include more specific details concerning format of proposals, the expected deliverable products to support a feasible plan, as well as a description of the process and criteria the sponsor will use to review and evaluate submissions.

# CONTEXTUAL SUMMARY

(Note to project sponsor: The following contextual summary is provided as a reference for the RFP writer and those reviewing the proposals. This information may also be incorporated into the RFP in its entirety or as a hyperlink for the benefit of the applicants.)

## NCI Charrette System™

The NCI charrette referred to in this RFP is a collaborative design and planning workshop that occurs over at least four consecutive days.Projects that have either challenging design constraints and/or political situations typically require at least five or more days. (The NCI requests that the word charrette not be used for events lasting less than four days)*.* The charrette is held on-site and includes all affected stakeholders at critical decision-making points. The products of the charrette are a comprehensive set of plan-enabling and supportive documents that represent a feasible plan.

A successful NCI charrette cannot be a stand-alone process. It is one phase of the NCI Charrette System™*, a three-phase, holistic, collaborative planning process* during which a multiple-day charrette is held as the central transformative event. The NCI Charrette System™ is designed to assure a feasible plan through careful charrette preparation and follow-up. The RFP is structured on the three NCI Charrette System™ phases: 1) Phase One: Research, Education and Charrette Preparation, 2) Phase Two: The Charrette and 3) Phase Three: Implementation.

## Three Phases of NCI Charrette System™

### Phase One: Research, Education, Charrette Preparation

Phase one of the NCI Charrette System™ establishes the information and people infrastructure for the project. Establishing the information infrastructure includes the identification, creation, and collection of all base data necessary to perform the project planning and design during the charrette. Creating the people infrastructure includes identifying and engaging all those whose involvement is necessary to produce a feasible outcome that will be supported by the community.

(Note to project sponsor: This phase typically lasts between six weeks to nine months or more. It is important to allow enough time to complete the proper charrette preparation tasks. A common project fatal flaw is not providing adequate time for phase one.)

### Phase Two: Charrette

The NCI charrette is the catalytic event of the NCI Charrette System™. It is a design-based collaborative event that lasts at least four days. Projects that have either challenging design constraints and/or political situations typically require at least five or more days. The goal of the NCI charrette is to produce a feasible plan that benefits from the support of all stakeholders throughout its implementation. A multidisciplinary charrette team, consisting of consultants and sponsor staff, produces this plan. In addition to plan drawing and statistical documents, three-dimensional renderings are used in all presentations. The work takes place in a charrette studio situated on or near the project site. During a NCI charrette, the charrette team first conducts an open public meeting to solicit the values, vision, and needs of the stakeholders. The team then breaks off to create alternative plans, testing and refining them with the goal of producing a preferred plan. The NCI charrette is based on a series of feedback loops through which stakeholders are engaged at critical decision-making points. These decision-making points occur in primary stakeholder meetings, several public meetings, and possibly during an open house throughout the course of the NCI charrette. On the last night of the charrette, the charrette team makes a comprehensive presentation covering all elements of the plan, e.g., planning, transportation, economic, environmental, social. Enabling documents such as form-based codes and transportation and other development standards are also presented.

(Note to project sponsor: A common project fatal flaw is not to allow for the proper number of charrette days. NCI requests that the word charrette not be used for events lasting less than four days.)

### Phase Three: Implementation

Three major processes follow the NCI charrette:

1. The first is product refinement, during which the charrette team tests and refines the final charrette plan to assure its feasibility.
2. The second is based on a relationship strategy in which the project sponsor continues to work with the stakeholders to maintain their support of the plan. A post-charrette public meeting is held, usually no more than four to six weeks after the charrette, during which the revised plans are presented for final public review and input.
3. Third is integrating all enabling documents into the jurisdiction’s regulatory framework. This may include form-based codes, transportation and development standards, and other policy documents.

## NCI Charrette System™ Strategies

The following nine strategies are used in the most successful charrettes. These strategies should be referred to every step of the way when designing the process for a project using the NCI Charrette System™. The strategies are also useful when writing a Request for Proposal that includes a NCI charrette and later while evaluating the submissions. Given the diverse interpretations of what constitutes a charrette, it is very important to be clear about what is expected when specifying one.

### Work Collaboratively

True collaboration is based on valuing each individual’s unique contribution. Therefore, anyone who might build, use, sell, approve, or attempt to block the project is involved before the start of design and throughout the project. It is important to involve stakeholders only at the point in a project when it is possible to consider their input.

### Compress Work Sessions

Time compression facilitates creative problem solving by accelerating decision making and reducing unconstructive negotiation tactics. Time-compressed design sessions in the NCI charrette allow uninterrupted focus on a problem often results in unexpected solutions to difficult problems. This strategy can be particularly useful in the 11th hour of a negotiation when it becomes obvious that a decision must be made quickly for progress to continue.

### Design Cross-functionally

Holistic solutions require holistic approaches to a problem. This means that during the charrette all relevant disciplines are represented and working together to achieve the same goals. Multidisciplinary teams of architects, planners, engineers, economists, market experts, public agency staff, and others work concurrently to build a feasible solution to community development problems from the onset of the charrette. When an important area of expertise is excluded from the process, changes and rework are likely to emerge late in the process at high costs in time and money lost.

### Communicate in Short Feedback Loops

Regular stakeholder reviews build trust in the process, foster true understanding and support of the project, and minimize rework. A feedback loop occurs when a design is proposed, reviewed, changed, and re-presented for further review. Stakeholders are continually educated about the project process and plan’s progress. They are brought into the process early and at proper intervals throughout so that their input can have an impact on the outcome.

### Study the Details and the Whole

Designs at varying scales inform each other and reduce the likelihood that a fatal flaw will be overlooked that could result in costly rework. Looking at the details also supports shared learning by providing the information necessary for a well-rounded discussion about a proposal.

### Produce a Feasible Plan

To create a feasible plan, every decision point must be fully informed, especially by the legal, financial, and engineering disciplines. From the beginning of the NCI Charrette System™, feasibility is a focus of the discussion, which brings a level of seriousness and rigor to the process for everyone involved.

### Use Design to Achieve a Shared Vision and Create Holistic Solutions

Design is a powerful tool for inspiring a community to establish and achieve a shared vision. Drawings help illustrate the complexity of the problem and can be used to resolve conflict by proposing previously unexplored solutions that represent win/win outcomes.

A capable designer can change people’s positions by altering their perception of the possible solutions.

### Conduct a Multiple-day Charrette

The goal of a charrette is to take a project from a vision to alternative concepts, to a preferred plan, to a developed feasible plan, on to a final presentation. A minimum of three feedback loops is required to adequately involve the public in this undertaking. It takes at least four consecutive days to accomplish this work collaboratively. Projects that have either challenging design constraints and/or political situations typically require at least five or more days. The first feedback loop is a warm-up, presenting many ideas that were generated based on stakeholder input. The second loop further engages people in the design and planning and shows them that the charrette team is listening and responding to them. The third loop completes the cycle with a refined plan based on continuous input, feedback, and response. Without the full feedback cycle, the charrette team loses the opportunity to change perceptions and assure project support.

### Hold the Charrette on or Near the Site

Working on-site fosters participant understanding of local values and traditions, and provides the necessary easy access to stakeholders and information. Working near a site is important in a NCI charrette given the short time frame available. Working within a community gives the charrette team easy access to stakeholders and allows relationships to be built over a number of days. The open studio gives stakeholders access to the team and the plan throughout the day and into the evening, providing the opportunity for someone with a busy schedule to stop by even if she could not attend a scheduled meeting.

# NCI CHARRETTE RFP TEMPLATE

## Submission Requirements

At a minimum, proposals should include the following:

1. A description of the consultant’s understanding and approach to the project, including projected timeline and anticipated project deliverables.  
   (Note to project sponsor: It is advisable to provide a definitive set of deliverables that describe a feasible plan as part of the RFP)*.*
2. A description of the type and level of support the consultant will require/expect from the project sponsor—such as staff support, provision of meeting/studio space, materials, meals, etc. (may be incorporated into the first item above.)
3. Expertise of the team: roles and experience of key personnel.
4. Examples of comparable projects completed in the past three years, with references for each, at least eight in total,
5. Estimated budget based on the scope of services and the proposed approach detailing the time and budget allotted to each consultant and sub-consultant by task.

## Scope of Services

## Research, Education and Charrette Preparation

## Project Assessment and Organization Tasks

(To be conducted with the participation and approval of the relevant planning staff.)

1. **Project Start-up Meeting:** Conduct an initial Project Start-up Meeting to create a shared understanding of the project purpose, process and schedule between the project sponsor and team members, including the Mayor and Council representatives. Conduct an Initial Stakeholder Analysis by identifying key stakeholders, their issues, levels of involvement and strategies for outreach. Create a Charrette Products List, consisting of drawings, studies and documents that describe a feasible plan that must be completed by the end of the charrette. This includes but is not limited to: Preliminary analysis briefing materials, copies of all public presentations, and implementation plans.
2. **Project Process Roadmap** (NCI Charrette System Roadmap)**:** Prepare a guiding document for the project management team that lists the project phases, events, and products on a timeline and assigns roles and responsibilities for each task.
3. **Charrette Schedule:** Prepare a charrette schedule in table format indicating the charrette events, such as open house hours, meetings, meals and production targets. List the times when each charrette team member will be present at the charrette.
   1. **Stakeholder Research and Involvement Tasks**(As dictated by the Project Process Roadmap).
4. **Stakeholder Identification and Analysis:** Prepare a document that indicates the primary (for example, local officials and landowners), secondary (community groups, schools, faith-based organizations), and general stakeholders (community members), their issues and positions and a recommended outreach and engagement strategy designed to solicit their continued input and participation in the process.
5. **Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Plan:** Describe the plan for facilitating community engagement per the Stakeholder Identification and Analysis at three levels:
6. The large public gathering, such as a lecture or workshop.
7. The group meeting, such as a neighborhood organization, steering committee or business group meeting.
8. The individual or small group meeting, which consists of one to five people, such as elected officials, business and property owners or other key stakeholders.

The plan should describe a methodology for generating proportional demographic community representation including traditionally underserved populations.

1. **Project Objective and Measures:** Create a set of quantifiable objectives and measures based on stakeholder interviews, governing policies and standards, project goals and economic, engineering, and environmental constraints. These measures are to be revised as new information arises and will guide the design decision-making process.
2. **Public Kick-off Meeting:** Conduct a public kick-off meeting early in the project process. The meeting purpose is to inform the community about the project purpose, process, and their options for involvement. The meeting should include exercises to elicit information and vision elements from the community. Assist the project sponsor with media communications and publicity.
   1. **Base Data Research and Analysis**
3. **Base Data Research and Analysis:** The project sponsor will provide all relevant existing related community-planning reports, plans, and studies from local planning agencies, universities, and community advocacy groups for the consultant’s review. The consultant will conduct all necessary base data research called for in the Project Process Roadmap, e.g., the existing state of the community in terms of economic/fiscal conditions, transportation, storm-water, wetlands, energy consumption, housing types, demographics, air quality, and other measures.

(Note to sponsor: Base data gathering and development is potentially a large task. List the baseline information resources available to the consultant and the extent that your staff will take responsibility for delivering the material and/or that the consultant will be expected to do so.)

1. **Pre-charrette Project Brief:** Prepare a concise summary of the information from all previous phases of work including summaries on project assessment and organization, stakeholder research, education and involvement, and base data research and analysis.
   1. **Charrette Logistics**
2. **Meeting Venues:** Provide the project sponsor with a list of space, furniture and equipment requirements for the charrette meeting venues. (Indicate whether the project sponsor will provide the meeting venues.)
3. **Charrette Schedule:** Work with the project sponsor to refine and revise the charrette schedule as new information becomes available. Assist with the logistical requirements and agendas for all meetings held during the charrette.
4. **Charrette**   
   (Conduct a multiple-day public charrette that includes the following events and tasks).

(Note to sponsor: NCI recommends a minimum of four days for a successful charrette. Projects that have challenging design constraints and/or political situations typically require at least five or more days. Events that last less than four days should be called workshops rather than charrettes.)

* 1. **Organization, Education, Vision**

1. **Charrette Opening Public Meeting**: Conduct a public meeting in order to establish a community understanding of the project background purpose, process, roles and opportunities for community involvement; and, use hands-on drawing exercises and other methods to elicit public input on such topics as community values, and future vision.  
   1. **Alternative Concepts Development**
2. **Alternative Concepts Development:** Create a minimum of three plan concepts based on community input from Charrette Opening Public Meeting, the Project Objectives and Measures, as well as engineering, environmental, policy and other project requirements.

1. **Initial Stakeholder Reviews:** Review the alternative concepts with regulatory agencies and primary stakeholders such as landowners and community leaders.
2. **Public Meeting or Open House:** Conduct a public meeting or open house to present the alternative concepts and to facilitate a dialogue among all of the relevant viewpoints represented. Gather the information necessary to narrow the alternative concepts into a preferred plan.
   1. **Preferred Plan Synthesis**
3. **Preferred Plan Synthesis:** Develop a draft preferred plan by accounting for all of the information from the second public meeting or open house, merging the high performing elements of the alternative concepts with any newly developed design elements. Document the degree to which the preferred plan performs according to the Project Objectives and Measures.
4. **Intermediate Stakeholder Reviews:** Review the preferred plan with regulatory agencies and primary stakeholders as necessary.
5. **Public Open House** (optional)**:** Conduct an open house to present the preferred plan and solicit community feedback.
   1. **Plan Development**
6. **Plan Development and Refinement:** Conduct detailed design studies and feasibility tests of the preferred plan. Example studies include environmental impacts and economic and market feasibility. Develop preliminary project implementation documents such as zoning plans and codes.
   1. **Public Presentation**
7. **Final Charrette Public Meeting:** Conduct a final charrette public meeting. Present a concise and comprehensive summary of project goals, the charrette process and all elements of the draft preferred plan. Gather community input through an open discussion or open house format. Provide the project sponsor with electronic files of the final charrette products upon the conclusion of the charrette.
8. **Post-Charrette, Plan Adoption**
9. **Public Communications:** Using the press and other media communications, disseminate the proceedings and final products of the charrette. For example, update the project website or post selected charrette products on the sponsor’s website.
10. **Document Review and Revisions:** Perform all necessary final feasibility studies of the charrette documents. Create a draft revision of the charrette documents.
11. **Draft Report:** Produce a report that concisely describes the project, the process, and the plan. The report should cover the entire project process, highlighting stakeholder involvement and decision-making processes. The documents should be capable of educating those who did not participate in the process previously.
12. **Final Project Public Meetings:** Hold a public meeting or series of meetings no later than six weeks following the charrette to present the recommended revisions of the preferred plan and solicit public input.
13. **Final Report:** Make final revisions to the report based on the input from the City and the final public meeting.
14. **Enabling Documents:** Provide all enabling documents necessary to incorporate the final plan into the jurisdiction’s regulatory framework. Provide preliminary and final drafts for staff review. Examples include regulating plans, form based codes, development standards, entitlement standards, and transportation standards.

(Note to sponsor: Provide a definitive list of documents required for adoption as a regulatory plan by your jurisdiction.)

1. **Education and Training:** Conduct three training sessions with staff, commissioners and elected officials to assure that those who are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the plan have a clear understanding of its purpose and process.

(Note to sponsor: Modify this task to fit your particular regulatory structure. More than three training sessions may be necessary to assure that all decision-makers are prepared to implement the plan.)