



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Elizabeth Stone, Environmental Policy Analyst II

**From:** Horsley Witten Group, Inc.

**Date:** April 21, 2025

**Re:** Additional Information or Horsley Witten Group, Inc. and Roots 2Empower Proposal

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The following memorandum is provided to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) by Horsley Witten Group, Inc. (HW) in response to a request for clarification related to HW's recent proposal. Specifically, RIDEM requested additional information related to two issues:

- 1) Expand upon the consultant team's strengths in engaging with municipal representatives and frontline workers. The proposal speaks heavily to engaging with EJ and LIDAC communities and not as much to municipal and workforce outreach/engagement.
- 2) Provide additional information regarding the breakdown of expenses for the \$80,000 budget. RIDEM specified that a detailed project budget is not required as part of this response.

HW welcomes the opportunity to discuss these issues further once RIDEM has the opportunity to review this memorandum.

### Engaging with Municipal Representatives

The HW Team has decades of experience directly engaging with municipal representatives, whether they are officials, staff, or board/commission members. For this project, HW will play a significant role in this regard due to HW's considerable experience with technical assistance and engagement with municipalities. HW has worked directly with over half of Rhode Island's municipalities and has developed training sessions and guidance on municipal planning issues statewide. HW's experience with local governance, regulation, comprehensive planning, decision-making, power structures, and rules of operation will be used to assist both with any applicable process design and meeting support. HW's ability to "speak the language" of municipal governance will help to bridge the gap between bureaucracy and grassroots

community efforts. In that regard, Roots 2Empower (Roots) will play a critical role in ensuring communications from and discussions with municipal representation is accessible to community representatives.

#### Engaging with Frontline Workers

Both HW and Roots have direct experience with engaging frontline workers through projects that were designed to elevate the voices of vulnerable communities. For the purposes of this project, Roots and HW define frontline workers as those who provide essential services to the public, such as healthcare, education, childcare, food, transport, utilities, and more.

To engage frontline workers, Roots takes an inclusive approach, bridging the gap between people's lived experiences and public policy. Roots designs meetings that provide targeted information to help participants see the value of their civic participation and understand where their expertise as frontline workers is needed to drive an equitable transition to a regenerative future. Roots staff members all have personal experience as frontline workers themselves, and their Program Director has substantial experience working with labor unions to engage rank and file members on policy issues. Roots applies this expertise to scope potential impacts in the transition to a regenerative economy – including food service and hospitality workers impacted by the stimulus of clean energy development projects, teachers educating the next generation, and workers in the fossil fuel industry who will need to transition. To recruit for events, Roots partners with diverse groups to ensure a strong representation of frontline workers, including local labor unions where appropriate, schools, elected officials, and local businesses.

HW also brings considerable experience with direct engagement of frontline workers. In recent months, for example, HW was engaged by the Town of Groton, CT specifically to engage with organizations in the community that provide these types of essential services. Examples of groups with whom we've engaged include:

Groton Community Meals	New London Homeless Hospitality Center
Riverfront Children's Center	Groton Housing Authority
Seabird Enterprises	Union Baptist Church
Groton Ambulance	Hartford Healthcare

In Rhode Island, HW's most notable experience with directly engaging frontline workers is through our work with the Health Equity Zone (HEZ) initiative. Our five-year capacity building and management role in the Bristol HEZ helped to implement initiatives around personal health and wellness, food and nutrition, substance use awareness and prevention, and physical activity based on the needs of its residents. Key accomplishments include cooking demonstrations with local chefs, coordination with the R.I. Bridge and Turnpike Authority for

suicide prevention signage on the Mt. Hope Bridge, the opening of the East Bay Recovery Center, an Opioid Overdose Prevention Plan and media campaign, Complete Streets education and walk/bike audits. The HEZ successfully leveraged over \$1.3 million in federal, state, and local funding.

#### Budget Breakdown

The HW proposal establishes the general division of project budget as \$20,000 for HW and \$60,000 for Roots. As an additional level of detail, our team anticipates allocating approximately \$60,000 toward labor costs and \$20,000 to direct costs. Direct costs include, but are not limited to: travel, renting meeting space, purchasing food, providing childcare, language interpretation, stipends for participation, payments to community partners for convening and communications.

While the exact structure of the HW/Roots approach will remain flexible, the approximate allocation of funding is envisioned as follows:

Task 1. Project Coordination – Approximately 15% of labor costs and 5% of direct costs.

- A. Initial orientation with the RIDEM Team, EC4, and their project consultant. This will allow everyone on the HW team to understand progress to date, overall schedule, and where our milestones will be integrated into the broader planning effort.
- B. Regular coordination meetings with the EC4, the Advisory Committee, and RIDEM.
- C. Documentation of all meetings and distribution of this documentation.

Task 2. Community Meetings – Approximately 65% of labor costs and 5% of direct costs.

- A. Initial “entrance” engagement into the community, connection with community leadership, and convening.
- B. Engagement process and community meeting design.
- C. Engagement logistics, coordination, and outreach.
- D. Meeting performance (staffing and facilitation).
- E. Processing meeting results, documentation, and report-out to the community and larger project team (EC4, Advisory Committee, etc.)

Task 3. Policy Review and Recommendations – Approximately 20% of labor costs and 0% of direct costs.

- A. Narrative Report summarizing and documenting the engagement process and results. Report includes assessment of policies emerging from the larger process and evaluation of how these policies affect the communities engaged by HW and Roots.
- B. Presentations to the EC4 and the Advisory Committee.