

SE-610 INVITATION FOR INDEFINITE QUANTITY CONTRACT

AGENCY: SC Rural Infrastructure Authority

CONTRACT NAME: RIA Planning and Technical Assistance Services for Public Drinking Water and Wastewater Utilities

CONTRACT NUMBER: P45-P001-PG

CONTRACT LOCATION: Statewide

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT/PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: *(450 character limit)*

Provide a wide range of professional services for planning and technical assistance to small public water and wastewater utilities in SC to address technical, financial, managerial or legal issues that impact financial viability, regulatory compliance or customer service. Pre-Submittal Conference will be held via Teams on April 14, 2025. For more information, please go to ria.sc.gov/about/procurement.

RESUME DEADLINE DATE: 05/01/2025 TIME: 03:00 PM NO. OF COPIES: Printed: 5 Electronic: 1

ANTICIPATED PROJECT DELIVERY METHOD: Design-Bid-Build N/A

AGENCY CONTRACT COORDINATOR: Clarissa Belton, NIGP-CPP, CPPB, CPM

EMAIL: cbelton@sccommerce.com TELEPHONE: (803) 737-0416

The Agency requests qualifications from firms interested in providing professional services for the contract listed above. Any questions concerning this solicitation must be addressed to the Agency Contract Coordinator listed above.

RESUME DELIVERY ADDRESSES:

HAND-DELIVERY:

Attn: Clarissa Belton, SC Department of Commerce

1201 Main Street, Suite 1600

Columbia, SC 29201

MAIL SERVICE:

Attn: Clarissa Belton, SC Department of Commerce

1201 Main Street, Suite 1600

Columbia, SC 29201

CONTRACT INFORMATION:

1. The contract period of the awarded Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDQ):	<u>2 Years</u>
2. Maximum expenditures over the period of the awarded IDQ:	<u>\$300,000.00</u>
3. Maximum single Delivery Order expenditure that will be allowed under the awarded IDQ:	<u>\$100,000.00</u>
4. Maximum number of IDQ's Agency may award under this solicitation:	<u>5</u>

• INTERESTED FIRMS SHOULD SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING:

1. A Current STANDARD FEDERAL FORM 330;
2. The Name and Contact Information, including email, of a Primary Contact;
3. A Certification stating whether the Firm is a Resident of South Carolina (See SC Code §11-35-3215); and
4. Response to Selection Criteria set forth in SC Code §11-35-3220, as amended.

- **PUBLIC NOTICES:** All notices (Meetings, Selection for Interviews-IDQ, and Notice of Intent to Award IDQ Contract) shall be posted at the following location:
ria.sc.gov/about/procurement

- **LICENSURE:** To be considered for selection, persons or firms must be properly licensed in accordance with the requirements of Title 40 of the SC Code of Laws, as amended at the time of resume submission.

- To submit confidential information, see Appendix I, OSE Manual, <https://procurement.sc.gov/manual>.

- In accordance with the South Carolina Green Purchasing Initiative, it is preferred submittals not exceed 20 double-sided pages. The Standard Federal Form 330 is not included in the page count.

- All written communication with parties submitting information will be via email.

- Agency will accept submittals via email above (PDF file no larger than 10MB):

Yes No

- Any actual bidder, offeror, contractor or subcontractor who is aggrieved in connection with this solicitation or the intended award or award of a contract under this solicitation may protest to the State Engineer in accordance with SC Code § 11-35-4210 at: CPO, Office of State Engineer, 1201 Main Street, Suite 600, Columbia, SC 29201, email: protest-ose@mso.sc.gov.

APPROVED BY:



(OSE PROJECT MANAGER)

DATE: 03/26/2025

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
RIA Planning and Technical Assistance Services
for Public Drinking Water and Wastewater Utilities

SECTION 1: GENERAL SCOPE

A. Overview:

The SC Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) is seeking proposals from engineering consulting firms with experience providing a range of professional services to public drinking water and wastewater utilities. This procurement is for professional services to provide planning and technical assistance to small public drinking water and wastewater utilities to address financial, technical, managerial and/or legal concerns. Many small public utilities face unique challenges in complying with drinking water and wastewater regulatory standards due to limited financial, technical and/or managerial resources. Key objectives of assistance under this contract are protecting public health, complying with increasingly complex regulatory standards, building capacity for economic development opportunities, and promoting system sustainability.

The contract will support tasks related to assessment of utility viability and needs. Topics assessed may include management, staffing and training; asset inventory and conditions; operations; compliance; financial conditions and rates; potential regional solutions; and board training. A range of professional skills and experience are needed to provide assistance with the tasks listed above and include, but are not limited to: 1) utility management and planning knowledge and experience, 2) technical knowledge and experience with system design, operations and maintenance, 3) regulatory compliance knowledge and experience, 4) financial management and accounting knowledge and experience working with public utilities, and 5) technical, financial, managerial and legal knowledge and experience with evaluating and/or forming regional partnerships for public utilities. These tasks may be conducted in conjunction with, or with the support of, applicable state agencies, technical assistance providers and/or other local utility personnel.

The goal is to provide small public drinking water and wastewater utilities in South Carolina with the planning and technical assistance they need to successfully administer a financially viable utility that meets customer needs and complies with regulatory requirements. The findings and recommendations resulting from the planning and technical assistance services provided via this procurement may be used by utilities to improve system operations and management, or to conduct more detailed planning studies and/or capital projects.

B. Indefinite Quantity Contract:

This procurement and contract are subject to the requirements of the SC Consolidated Procurement Code Title 11 Chapter 35. This will be an Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDQ) that will result in the selection of no more than five (5) firms that can provide and/or subcontract one or more professional services described above and in the Scope of Services and Deliverables on an “as needed basis”. Based on the planning or technical assistance needed by a small public drinking water or wastewater utility, RIA will request a proposal for specific services from one of the qualified firms under the IDQ. Upon receipt of a request for a proposal, the firm will prepare and submit a proposal setting forth the proposed scope of services, schedule, fee, and reimbursable expenses. Once RIA and the firm have negotiated and agreed on the scope of services, schedule, fee, and estimated reimbursable expenses, RIA will issue a Delivery Order, under the IDQ. (Note to be deleted: negotiation language is from the IDQ Delivery Order Contract form SE-640 section C. The Work)

The performance period for this contract will be for two (2) years and the sum of all Delivery Orders issued to a single firm during the contract period cannot exceed \$300,000 and individual Delivery Orders cannot exceed \$100,000.

RIA anticipates a total IDQ budget of \$1,000,000, approximately \$500,000 per year.

C. Background:

RIA receives state appropriations to provide grants for financing drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure projects statewide. RIA also co-administers the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program with SCDES to provide low-cost loans for similar infrastructure projects. SCDES handles the federal program requirements and technical aspects of the SRF program while RIA manages the financial requirements. From FY13 through FY 24, RIA awarded 770 grants totaling \$1.7 billion and provided another \$1 billion in affordable loan financing for 140 projects.

RIA programs are designed to address one or more of the following objectives:

- Increase community sustainability by helping to maintain reliable and affordable infrastructure;
- Improve quality of life by addressing public health, environmental and regulatory concerns; and,
- Create opportunities for economic impact by building the infrastructure capacity to support economic development.

RIA also receives state appropriations to support planning and technical assistance activities for South Carolina communities with drinking water, wastewater and/or stormwater utilities, especially small utilities that struggle to be viable. These state appropriations will be used to procure the planning and technical assistance services described in this proposal.

SECTION 2: SPECIFICATIONS

A. Scope of Services and Deliverables:

RIA will determine the public drinking water or wastewater utilities to receive services under this contract. The scope of work for each Delivery Order will be determined by RIA based on the planning and/or technical assistance services most needed by the utility. The main outcome of the planning and/or technical assistance will be to identify and prioritize utility needs in order to become viable and, if requested by RIA, to prepare an engineering cost estimate to address one or more of those needs. The scope of work in the Delivery Order will specify the deliverables that should be prepared and submitted to RIA. A range of professional services may be provided under the IDQ to address challenges faced by small public drinking water and wastewater utilities such as:

- 1) utility management and planning,
- 2) asset identification, inventorying and/or mapping;
- 3) engineering assessment of asset conditions including recommendations for repairs, replacements and/or upgrades;
- 4) engineering assessment of the system design, performance, operations and maintenance;
- 5) regulatory compliance;
- 6) financial management, rate setting and planning;
- 7) utility management and staffing assessment;
- 8) technical, financial, managerial and/or legal services to assess and possibly assist with forming regional partnerships; and
- 9) general assessments of utilities that struggle to be viable by quickly identifying the highest priority problems and proposing solutions to address those financial, technical, and/or managerial problems.

General assessments will be conducted by a Rapid Assessment Team that will be staffed based on the specific needs of a utility and may include a wide range of professionals in addition to the consultant (including technical assistance providers, state agency staff, financial or technical consultants, current utility managers or operators or other personnel to be identified in conjunction with RIA) deployed to take a high-level look at technical, financial, operational, and managerial concerns or other specialized areas of expertise. The consultant will be charged with helping to assemble a qualified team, coordinating the assessment activities and documenting the recommendations.

Individual tasks that may be performed to support the activities listed above include, but are not limited to:

1) Rapid Assessment of a Utility

a) Coordinate and/or Provide Technical Support for a Rapid Assessment Team

- Coordinate a Rapid Assessment by working closely with RIA and the utility to plan and conduct the assessment. Also assist with activities such as obtaining background information about the utility, support RIA in establishing and staffing the Rapid Assessment Team, identify technical staff to support the rapid assessment and provide technical assessment services such as those described elsewhere in the RFQ, prepare schedules, track the assessment progress, and prepare reports and/or engineering cost estimates.
- Provide or subcontract technical, financial and/or legal staff or services to support or participate on the Rapid Assessment Team as needed.

b) Conduct General Assessment of Utility Conditions and Needs

Such services will include but may not be limited to:

- Review the utility service population, water source(s) and treatment process, wastewater treatment process, sludge processing and disposal process and wastewater discharge location(s), water and/or wastewater regulatory permit details such as expiration date, water treatment process and capacity, and wastewater discharge limits.
- Complete the viability tool found at ria.sc.gov
- Review the latest regulatory inspections and regulatory compliance and enforcement history
- Review asset inventory and/or maps
- Review Capital Improvement Plan
- Review Asset Management Plan
- Review Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for personnel and financial operations
- Review O&M Manuals and SOPs for technical operations of the system
- Review any other system studies and reports (hydraulic modeling, flow analysis, water audit, etc.)
- Review current rates and when last updated
- Review the latest financial information such as audits, operating budgets and expenses, etc.
- Review the managerial, staffing and system operator (in-house or contractual) status and needs
- Prepare a report that summarizes the findings of the general assessment

c) Prepare a Report with Findings and Recommendations

- Include next steps to be undertaken to implement system viability, along with suggested timelines. Such next steps may include, but are not limited to, additional studies, operational steps, financial management recommendations, training, or capital improvements.
- Provide the report to RIA for review.
- Discuss RIA feedback and implement requested edits.

d) Present the Findings to the Utility

- Present the findings and recommendations to utility managers and policy makers, including elected officials as appropriate.
- Discuss/explain the analysis and recommendations as needed.

2) Conduct Follow-Up Analysis

RIA may request additional tasks separate from or following the completion of a rapid assessment. These may include the following:

a) Regionalization Feasibility Study:

- Conduct an evaluation of the assets, financial conditions, management capacity and regulatory compliance history of any non-viable utility being evaluated as part of the study. Perform an analysis of feasible regional partnership options that could address barriers to financial viability and/or regulatory compliance identified for a utility. The study should include the pros and cons of the different options analyzed and identify which option(s) are feasible. The study should identify technical, financial, managerial, and legal concerns that may impact a feasible regional solution. The study should include a roadmap of steps and associated costs required to implement a feasible regional solution.

b) Asset Inventory and/or GIS Mapping of Water Distribution and/or Wastewater Collection System:

- Prepare or complete an inventory of all utility assets.
- Prepare or complete a GIS map of the water distribution and/or wastewater collection system. This may include adding asset attributes to the GIS database such as age, condition, maintenance schedule and so forth. May include purchasing GIS software and training utility staff on the use of a GIS system.

c) Condition Assessment of Water and/or Wastewater System to Identify and Prioritize Needed Improvements:

- Create or update inventory of system assets as needed
- Assess water or wastewater system performance
- Determine water or wastewater system needs to achieve and maintain regulatory compliance
- Assess sewer overflows, inflow and infiltration of the wastewater collection system including pump stations, and consider frequent repairs and aging infrastructure in the collection system
- Assess the performance and compliance history of the wastewater treatment and discharge facilities and the residual (sludge) handling and disposal facilities and consider aging infrastructure, compliance with existing or new regulatory standards and projected growth
- Evaluate new wastewater discharge location(s) to meet current or future regulatory standards
- Assess water loss in distribution system and identify principal areas of concern and steps that management may take to mitigate the loss of water and revenue
- Assess the performance and compliance history of the water treatment plant, wells and/or intake structures and consider aging infrastructure, compliance with existing or new regulatory standards and projected growth
- Evaluate water source(s) and identify possible solutions to address contamination, limited quantity, or drought resiliency
- Hydraulic modeling of the water and/or wastewater system to assess performance and need for upgrades or operation changes
- Based on the condition assets described above, identify maintenance or operation changes that may be needed for the system, prioritize capital projects that may be needed for the system, and prepare engineering cost estimates, if requested.

d) Financial Assessment and/or Rate Study:

- The study should look at budgets, revenues, and expenditures. The analysis should include a review of historical and projected operating costs and debt capacity as well as cash flow. Other financial activities to assess include record keeping, procurement procedures, documented policies and operating procedures, ordinances and the frequency and need for audits. The assessment should recommend actions that should be taken to address any deficiencies found.

- A rate study may be requested by RIA prior to or as a result of the financial study. The rate study should examine the funds needed to sustainably operate the system and recommend customer rates to meet those funding needs while considering affordability and the pace of potential growth as it relates to system needs.
- e) Management Assessment:
- The management assessment should address management capacity, staffing needs, training, and areas of expertise that may be needed. System operator requirements and staffing needs should be addressed. The assessment should include a review of management and staffing policies, procedures and recordkeeping, audit compliance, and financial statements. The assessment should include recommended actions that should be taken to address any deficiencies found and should consider possible remedies to include direct hires, subcontracting services and/or regional partnerships (e.g., sharing a licensed operator with another utility).
- f) Capital Improvement Plan:
- Obtain information about the condition and status of current assets, prioritize capital projects needed to address concerns or problems (e.g., growth, aging infrastructure, regulatory compliance, customer satisfaction, etc.) and develop a plan for the next one to five years that lists the capital projects needed in priority order along with the estimated cost of each project. The plan should address how the capital projects will be funded.
- g) Security Concerns or Vulnerability Assessment:
- Perform a cyber and/or physical property security assessment that identifies security concerns and vulnerabilities and recommend actions that should be taken to address any issue or vulnerability found.
- h) Utility Master Plan:
- Prepare a long-range plan that will enable management to efficiently plan for growth, current and future financial and economic conditions, current and future regulatory requirements, and other factors. This plan should include multi-year projections for all assets, including plant and equipment and water or sewer horizontal and vertical assets.

B. Project Meetings

An estimate of the project meetings needed to implement a project will be identified in the project-specific request for proposal and subsequent project Delivery Order.

C. Progress Updates

Provide a monthly progress update via email, phone, video conference, or in person to RIA during the execution of a project Delivery Order.

D. Project Schedule

The performance period for the Indefinite Quantity Contract is two years. The project schedule for individual projects will be specified in the request for proposal and subsequent Delivery Order. It is estimated that a rapid assessment (including items 1-4 in Section 2A, Scope of Services and Deliverables) should take no more than three months. Other, more in-depth studies may take six to nine months.

SECTION 3: SUBMITTAL INFORMATION

Submittal shall include, at a minimum, information required in the solicitation, responses to all selection criteria required by the SC Consolidated Procurement Code Title 11 Chapter 35 and the following:

1. Firm's staffing proposal for this contract, including a list of subcontractors that may be used at any stage of the contract with a description of their responsibilities.
2. Provide the location(s) of the firm's office and any subcontractor's office that will directly support this contract.
3. Documentation of technical and engineering qualifications related to drinking water and wastewater utilities within the firm or planned subcontractor(s).
4. Documentation of qualifications including knowledge of sound business, financial and management practices for drinking water and wastewater utilities within the firm or planned subcontractor(s).
5. Firm's ability and experience addressing each component of the scope of services.
6. Demonstrated ability to meet time and budget requirements.
7. List of projects completed by the firm in the past five (5) years that involve working with drinking water and/or wastewater utilities to improve the financial, managerial and/or technical operations of the utility including any with a statewide or regional focus. Include the Executive Summary of each project and staff involved in each.
8. List of references for any similar projects completed by the firm in the past five (5) years.

SECTION 4: PRE-SUBMITTAL CONFERENCE

The State will conduct a Non-Mandatory Pre-Submittal conference as part of this process to provide additional project information and expound upon potential questions. This conference will be held on **April 14, 2025 at 2:00 PM EDT** via video conference. Although attendance is not mandatory, all interested firms are strongly encouraged to attend. Firms interested must contact the Agency Coordinator, Clarissa Belton at cbelton@scommerce.com to receive an invitation to the meeting.

We encourage all interested parties to submit their questions prior to the pre-submittal conference to ensure thorough responses can be provided. Questions should be emailed to the Agency Coordinator, Clarissa Belton, at cbelton@scommerce.com by 4:00PM EDT on April 9th. All submitted questions will be addressed at the Pre-Submittal conference.

Any questions raised during the pre-submittal conference must also be submitted in writing to the Agency Contact at cbelton@scommerce.com following the meeting by 5:00PM EDT for formal documentation and response.

All responses, including those to questions submitted before or during the conference, will be posted at ria.sc.gov/about/procurement the following business day.

SECTION 5: QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

Responsive firms will be ranked by a selection committee according to the criteria required by the SC Consolidated Procurement Code Title 11 Chapter 35:

- (i) past performance;
- (ii) the ability of professional personnel;
- (iii) demonstrated ability to meet time and budget requirements;
- (iv) location and knowledge of the locality of the project if the application of this criterion leaves an appropriate number of qualified firms, given the nature and size of the project;
- (v) recent, current, and projected workloads of the firms;
- (vi) creativity and insight related to the project;
- (vii) related experience on similar projects; and
- (viii) volume of work awarded by the using agency to the person or firm during the previous five years, with the objective of effectuating an equitable distribution of contracts by the State among qualified firms including Minority Business Enterprises certified by the South Carolina Office of Small and Minority Business Assistance and firms that have not had previous state work.

Up to five qualified firms will be chosen based on the committee's rankings.

Deadline for submissions is 3:00 p.m. Thursday, May 1, 2025. The request for qualifications is also posted on South Carolina Business Opportunities (SCBO).