



The City of Hickory

Request for Qualifications

Public Utilities

Advanced Metering Infrastructure
Implementation

Request Number: 24-009



CITY of HICKORY Request for Qualifications

Project Title:

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Advanced Metering Infrastructure Implementation

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SECTIONS WITHIN THIS REQUEST:

- a. Notice and Contact Information
- b. Request for Qualifications
- c. Statement of Qualifications Content Requirements
- d. Sample SOQ Evaluation Form
- e. Special Terms and Conditions

NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Notice is hereby given that the City of Hickory is conducting a qualification-based selection process to retain a proponent for professional consulting services for Advanced Metering Infrastructure Implementation.

The City of Hickory invites interested firms/teams to submit a written Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) relating to this solicitation. Proponents are invited to review the information and to submit their SOQ in accordance with the criteria established within this RFQ. A Project Screening Committee will evaluate firms'/teams' qualifications and experience with similar projects. The City will rank the submittals and create a short list of firms/teams to select the best qualified firm/team. The firms/teams determined to be best qualified through review of the submitted SOQs may be invited to interview with a project committee and the firm/team being most qualified will be selected for negotiations to complete the project. Should negotiations become unsuccessful, the second ranked firm/team will be invited to enter negotiations.

Written questions regarding this RFQ must be received by Friday, September 22, 2023, no later than 12:00 PM. Email questions are acceptable but must contain the wording “**Advanced Metering Infrastructure Implementation RFQ Question**” in the subject line. Questions may then be responded to as an amendment to this document and posted to the solicitation within an anticipated five (5) working days after questions deadline. Oral statements or instructions shall not constitute an amendment to this RFQ.

All submittals must be received by the deadline specified herein. Any submittals received after the due date and time specified will not be considered. The City of Hickory reserves the right to reject any or all submittals, or to withhold awarding a contract for any reason it may determine, and to waive or not to waive any informalities in any submittal. **Contact with City Council or other influential individuals to the selection process regarding this RFQ is expressly forbidden and shall be grounds for immediate rejection from the process.** All information regarding the content of the specific submittals will remain confidential until sealed proposals are opened.

POINT OF CONTACT:

Andrew Foy, Assistant Public Utilities Director
City of Hickory
1441 9th Ave NE
Hickory, NC 28601
Mail:
PO Box 398
Hickory, NC 28603
afoy@hickorync.gov;
828-323-7427



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<p>Submittals must be received before the deadline and they may be mailed to:</p> <p>City of Hickory – Public Utilities Post Office Box 398 Hickory, NC 28603 Attention: Andrew Foy, Assistant Public Utilities Director</p> <p>Or delivered to:</p> <p>City of Hickory – Public Works 1441 9th Ave NE Hickory, NC 28601 Attention: Andrew Foy, Assistant Public Utilities Director</p>	<p>Submittal Deadline:</p> <p>12:00 PM</p> <p>October 6, 2023</p>
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NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. "The Owner" means officers or employees of the City of Hickory.
- B. "Proponent" means the person or firm/team responding.
- C. "Statement of Qualifications" or "SOQ" means the submission received from a Proponent in response to this RFQ.
- D. "Request for Qualifications" or "RFQ" means the entire document, including all of the documents and any addenda thereto issued before the RFQ closing time.

II. BACKGROUND

Hickory Public Utilities Department is a regional water service provider having an extensive water distribution system containing multiple storage tanks serving other municipal, county and bulk users. The water distribution system is comprised of approximately 1000 miles of 2" through 36" diameter water mains, 12 storage tanks, and 7 booster pump stations covering approximately 325 square miles. The City of Hickory also maintains metering stations located in Conover, Maiden, Icard, and Mooresville.

This distribution system provides service to approximately 32,000 metered connections with meters ranging in size from ¾ inch through 8 inch. The City's existing water meters include 28,118 residential and 3,886 commercial meters. The City's current, and preferred, meter is Neptune. The City expects that a hybrid network of long-range wireless and cellular endpoints will be necessary due to the geographical conditions which exist across the current footprint.

III. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The following scope of work is envisioned for this project with the intent to award the entire scope to one qualified firm or team of firms; however, the City reserves the right to contract separately

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for any portion of the project. This may include issuing a subsequent RFQ for certain tasks or assigning tasks to the City's on-call engineering firms.

By issuing this RFQ, the City is seeking a partner to determine the best path forward to improve its business and find ways to utilize current and future technologies to achieve that goal. Part of the scope expected of the selected consultant will be to further identify and refine our goals prior to issuance of any RFP for an AMI vendor. Generally, the City's goals of implementing an AMI system are listed below:

- Improve customer service and customer experience
- Increase billing process efficiency
- Reduce bad debt costs
- Reduce operational expenditures over time
- Improve planning capabilities
- Improve system monitoring
- Improve asset performance
- Accurately quantify and reduce system losses
- Ensure future and backwards compatibility and minimize risk of obsolescence

The project, and consultant proposals, will be defined by three phases. At the completion of each phase, the project and selected consultant will be evaluated, and a determination will be made by the City whether to proceed to the next phase with the selected consultant. The project phases as currently envisioned are described below. Note that this is not intended to be all-inclusive, nor is it guaranteed that all the below tasks will be utilized. A more detailed Scope of Work will be developed with the selected consultant.

Phase I: AMI RFP Development and Vendor Selection

- Fully define the City's needs across all departments and stakeholders
- Prepare and issue a detailed RFP for an AMI Vendor
- Develop evaluation metrics for ranking proposals
- Provide an initial evaluation report summarizing the AMI proposals and recommend a short list of candidates
- Schedule and facilitate detailed presentations from short-listed candidates
- Provide a final report on the RFP process including a recommendation as to which Vendor's solution best meets the City's needs.

Phase II: Contract Negotiation

- Serve as technical advisor in the negotiation of terms and conditions with the recommended vendor(s), including service level agreements, performance criteria, scheduling, warranties, and final pricing
- Perform a technical review of final contract documents and facilitate their execution.
- Provide representation during the approval process.

Phase III: AMI System Implementation

- Manage the implementation of the selected AMI system through start-up and final acceptance.
- Create a project plan that identifies each individual task via a detailed work breakdown structure that includes, at minimum: the level of effort required to complete tasks, a timeline for completion of tasks, dependencies (predecessor and successor relationships), responsible party (vendor, client, consultant, etc.), and the status of each task.

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- Develop a Project Communications Plan that defines the methods of information collection and distribution and outlines the understanding among the project team members regarding the actions and processes necessary to facilitate effective communications for all stakeholders.
- Facilitate meetings and provide updates as required to maintain open communications among all stakeholders throughout the implementation process.

IV. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

- A. No contact shall be made with Hickory City Council as this shall be grounds for dismissal of RFQ submittal.
- B. All questions should be submitted in writing to the Point of Contact listed above.
- C. SOQs will be received prior to deadline in person at Public Works or by mail (information at beginning of RFQ).
- D. SOQs submitted via fax or email are not acceptable and will not be considered.
- E. Proponents will be evaluated on experience and qualifications. Project fee related information is not requested (excepting Section II, subsection D, paragraph 1) and will not be used in the evaluation process. Receiving project fee related information will be grounds for dismissal of the RFQ submittal. Firms/Teams shall submit their standard rates for positions involved in the Project.
- F. Clearly indicate on the envelope the name of the Proponent and the name of the Project for which the SOQ is being submitted.
- G. Refer to the section SOQ Content Requirements for detailed instructions.
- H. There will not be a pre-proposal conference for this project.
- I. There will not be a public opening of the SOQs with Proponents present.

V. COST OF SUBMISSION AND OWNERSHIP OF SOQ

- A. The City of Hickory is not responsible for any costs incurred by Proponents in preparing, submitting, or presenting their SOQs.
- B. Except as otherwise provided in this RFQ, all SOQs become the property of the City upon submission and will not be returned.

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

This section specifies in detail the form and minimum content requirements for information required to be submitted in each SOQ. Proponents may, at their discretion, include additional information which they consider relevant to ensure a full and proper evaluation, provided that the specified maximum allowable number of pages is not exceeded.

I. SUBMITTAL FORMAT

- A. Four (4) bound copies and a PDF provided on a flash drive is required of each submittal. The material should be in sequence and related to the solicitation. The sections of the submittal shall be tabbed to match SOQ and be clearly identifiable. Failure to include all requested information will result in the proponent being non-responsive and may result in the rejection of the proponent's submittal.

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- B. Cover letter expressing interest in the available project. It shall also identify a principal and secondary individual as point of contact for any future correspondence and be a maximum of two pages.
- C. Page size of the SOQ shall be 8 ½" x 11" with a minimum font size of 10. A maximum of two (2) 11" x 17" pages will be allowed (one (1) page if double sided). Note: this will count towards the page limit.
- D. No more than 20 pages single sided or 10 pages double sided. Note: divider tabs (if used), Cover Letter and Table of Contents do not count towards the page limit and shall not include pertinent information to be evaluated.

II. SOQ CONTENT

Please provide the following in this order:

- A. Cover Letter/Letter of Interest (does not count toward page limit; two (2) page maximum)
 - 1. Principal and secondary contact for the project including mailing address, email, phone numbers, and appropriate license numbers. At least one of these individuals shall have the ability to negotiate Contract conditions for the Proponent.
 - 2. Provide a statement of interest, including a narrative describing the firm's unique qualifications and answering the specific question "why should the City select your firm/team for this project?"
- B. Table of Contents Page (does not count toward page limit)
- C. Firm Profile
 - 1. Provide general information about the Proponent, which needs not be specific to this RFQ. Include history of the firm, years in business, office locations, number of staff, types of services provided and specialist areas of expertise. Indicate office location from which services will be provided. This includes any sub-consultants.
 - 2. Statement that the Proponent is licensed to provide required professional services in the State of North Carolina.
 - 3. Statement (confirmation) of current general liability insurance as required to provide services.
- D. Experience and Qualifications of the Proposed Team
 - 1. Provide a minimum of three similar projects (completed within the last five years) for which your team was responsible and which you consider to be a demonstration of your team's project ability, including project title, reference (name, phone, email) location, fees, consultant's cost estimate, bid amount, approximate project cost, year completed, and members of proposed team included with project and their role on it. Include information on how actual project cost compared to consultant's cost estimate. Provide a narrative explaining any differences.
 - 2. Please provide a minimum of three (3) unique municipality references (should references in item D (1) above be duplicated, may provide a reference without a project).
 - 3. Submit qualifications on the team and explain why your team is especially well qualified to perform the required services.
 - a. Provide the experience of the proposed team on similar projects. Identify type and location of similar work to illustrate work quality and the role of each proposed team member. Show how the experience relates to the categories outlined.

NOTE: Projects used as examples of similar work shall be clearly noted if the work was done by individuals while employed by other firms. The only projects which you may claim without attribution are those projects

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actually produced by your firm/team. Improper or misleading credit for projects, in our view, is an adverse reflection on a firm's integrity and may be grounds for rejection of those projects from your experience or record or dismissal of the entire RFQ submittal.

- E. Experience and Qualifications of Proposed Team Members (this information will count toward page limit).
 - 1. Provide an organizational chart demonstrating your team's leadership, key team members and any proposed sub-consultants along with project roles. Identify projects, if any, where team in SOQ worked together on projects.
 - 2. Provide experience and qualifications of key team members via resumes, who will be responsible for this project (with any critical sub-consultant). Include work experience, education, licenses, registrations, or certifications applicable to the proposed work.
 - 3. Identify team experience on similar projects and the extent of team involvement including time commitment.
 - 4. Indicate office location of each team member.

- F. Project Approach
 - 1. Proponents shall provide a description of their approach to Advanced Metering Infrastructure Implementation, including any information that may differentiate your team. Your approach should include (not necessarily in this order), at a minimum, the following:
 - a. Technical approach
 - b. Project management approach, including assigning personnel to a project of this size, duration, and how such relates to the proposed scope of services (including sub-consultants)
 - c. Budget and schedule control
 - d. Quality management
 - e. Your expectations of City and Public Utilities during this process.

- G. Interview

If selected for an interview, firm/team shall present project vision and preliminary thoughts as part of the interview presentation.

SAMPLE OF EVALUATION FORM

The City of Hickory will rate submitted SOQs based on, but not limited to, the criteria below:

Overall reputation of firm/team
Key team members – experience and qualifications
Project references specific to this type of service
Experience with applicable regulatory agencies and permitting
Experience in providing these services to local governments within the previous 3-5 years
General project understanding and approach
Innovation and/or alternative methods, quality of designs including plans and specifications, accuracy of cost estimates
Proposed schedule
Unique qualities that would make firm/team best suited for project

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SPECIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

I. SOFTWARE COMPATIBILITY: For the purposes of aiding the Proponent in the performance of their obligation under this Contract, the City shall furnish upon request all relevant data in the City's possession and shall direct City officers, agents, and employees to render all reasonable assistance to Proponent in connection with Proponent's performance under this Contract. The provision of such aid, assistance, information or services as received from the City shall in no way relieve the Proponent from obligations under this Contract. The City does not warrant the compatibility of City furnished data, either electronic or in any form, with the Proponent's software. All costs associated with data conversion or software upgrades and conversions shall be borne by the Proponent.

II. INSURANCE PROVISIONS

COVERAGE AFFORDED	LIMITS OF LIABILITY
Workers Compensation	Statute
Employer's Liability	\$100,000
Commercial General Liability Insurance	\$1,000,000 – Bodily Injury Combined Single Limit
Including: A. Products & Completed Operations B. Blanket Contractual C. Premises-Operations-Personal Injury	\$100,000 Property Damage
Professional Liability Insurance (Errors and Omissions) (See Special Conditions)	\$3,000,000 (minimum) Combined Single Limit

The following automobile liability insurance coverage will also be required for all professional service contracts which include surveying and/or construction surveillance.

Comprehensive Automobile Liability	\$1,000,000 – Bodily Injury
Insurance Including: non-owned, and hired vehicles	Combined Single Limit \$100,000 Property Damage

III. KEY PERSONNEL: It is essential that the Proponent provide adequate experienced personnel, capable of and devoted to the successful accomplishment of work to be performed under this Contract. The Proponent agrees to assign specific individuals to the key positions.

The Proponent agrees that once assigned to work under this Contract, key personnel shall not be removed or replaced without written notice to the City.

If key personnel are not available for work under this Contract for a continuous period exceeding five (5) calendar days, or are expected to devote substantially less effort to the work than initially anticipated, the Proponent shall immediately notify the City, and shall, subject to the concurrence of the City, replace such personnel with personnel of substantially equal ability and qualifications.

Selected Proponent must be able to appropriately staff the project within ten (10) days of City Council award.



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- IV. OTHER CONTRACTS:** The City may enter into Contracts for additional work related to this project. The Proponent shall fully cooperate with other contractors, design firms, and with City employees to accommodate such other work. The Proponent shall not commit or permit any act that interferes with the performance of such work by other contractors.

- V. COMPENSATION AND METHOD OF PAYMENT:** In consideration of the performance of the services described in the Scope of Services, the City shall pay the Proponent in accordance with the negotiated contract rates, and the Proponent shall charge the City only in accordance with those same rates. The City will pay the Proponent following the submission of deliverables, as per contract, and of itemized invoice(s). Each itemized invoice must bear a written certification by an authorized City representative confirming the services for which payment is requested.