

## Jefferson County Environmental Services Department

### Qualifications-Based Selection Program

#### INFORMATION FOR CONSULTANTS

##### **What is Qualifications-Based Selection?**

Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) is a method of obtaining professional consulting services for a specific task based on the qualifications and competence of a consulting firm in relation to the scope and needs of the particular task rather than price factors alone. While initial project cost for consulting services is always a major concern, QBS focuses more on other factors such as qualifications of the engineer, compatibility with the County, and knowledge of and experience with the project requirements. Although the cost for consulting services represents only a fraction of the total project cost, the performance of the Consultant can influence the entire course of the project – financial feasibility, public response, appearance, functional efficiency, construction cost, as well as operation and maintenance costs during the project's life.

##### **Objective of QBS**

The objective of the QBS process is to select a qualified Consultant for the task that will provide the County with a high quality product for the best value.

##### **Why Not Bid?**

Consulting firms do not sell a commodity. Instead, they provide technical expertise, innovation, and knowledge of the latest technology. For example, the process for selection of a firm to construct a project differs from that used in the selection of a design firm to design the same project. A construction contract can be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder because all major aspects of the project are defined, including the type and amount of construction materials required to complete the project. On the other hand, Design Consultants turn their undefined concept into a set of plans and specifications. The Consultants take an idea and give it definition. The contractor takes that definition and turns it into a physical reality. **Further, The U.S. Congress established a federal law in 1972 (P.L 92-582, commonly referred to as the "Brooks Act") that requires that Consultants be selected for projects on the basis of their qualifications subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. Also, it is a violation of Alabama State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors Administrative Code (330-X-14-.05(e & f)) for an engineer to compete for work by bidding.**

##### **The QBS Method – An Overview**

QBS is an extremely flexible method which permits the County to tailor the selection process to meet their specific needs. The process can also be further modified in order to better fit any specific project or type of projects. To do this, the County will implement a Consultant Eligibility Screening process in order to better focus on the field of eligible consultants for the different types of projects. The Consultant Eligibility Screening process will be an ongoing process that will allow all existing and future consultants to submit requests to become eligible to compete for

different types of County work. With this screening process in place, the County will then have a pool of consultants from which to draw during the QBS process. The basic framework of the QBS process is made up of 3 steps:

- Step 1: Selection
- Step 2: Determination of Detailed Scope of Work
- Step 3: Retention of the Consultant

Step 1 includes the County's preparation of a Preliminary Scope of Work followed by a Request for Qualification Statements from potential consulting firms. Once the Qualification Statements are received from all interested Consultants, they will then be evaluated by the ESD Project Engineer along with two other members of the ESD staff who are selected by the ESD Director. Following this review, a short list of the most qualified firms will be developed. The firms on the short list will be interviewed individually. Based on the information gathered during these interviews, the firms would be ranked, and the top ranked firm would be asked to proceed to Step 2, Scope Definition.

In Step 2, the County will work with the selected consulting firm to develop a more detailed Scope of Work – one that clearly defines the plan for the project. This process will better quantify the amount of work required of the Consultant, allowing him to provide the County with a more accurate fee proposal for performing the work.

Once the detailed Scope of Work is determined and both parties are comfortable with the direction and purpose of the project, they will proceed to Step 3. The objective of Step 3 is for the County to retain the Consultant on the basis of an acceptable fee proposal. The fee can now be negotiated more accurately since there is a well-defined scope of work.

### **Consultant Eligibility Screening**

In order to implement the Consultant Eligibility Screening process, the County has created two classification schedules – one to classify project types and one to classify consulting firms - so that the process can be defined more clearly around these groupings.

The types of projects that the County does are separated into 4 categories:

1. Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation/Maintenance Work - Design Engineering and Construction Management:
  - a. Lining Sanitary Sewer Pipes
  - b. Television Inspection
  - c. Manhole Inspection/Rehabilitation/Repair/Replacement
  - d. Sewer Line Replacement/Repair
  - e. Line and Lateral Connections and Reconnections
  - f. Connection Repair
2. Small Scale Wastewater Facilities and Line Work - Design Engineering and Construction Management
  - a. Gravity Line Installation/Relocation
  - b. Manhole Installation/Relocation
  - c. Small Pump Station Installation and Repair
  - d. Force Main Installation/Relocation

3. Large Scale Wastewater Facilities and Line Work - Design Engineering and Construction Management
  - a. Installation/Repair/Relocation of Major Interceptor Sewers
  - b. Installation/Repair of Major Pump Stations
  - c. Installation/Repair/Relocation of Major Force Mains
  - d. Tunneling
  - e. Wastewater Treatment Plants
  
4. Other Professional Services

With all of the County's projects separated into one of the four above categories, the County will then classify each of their Consultants according to the kind of work for which they are capable and interested in doing. To do this, ESD will invite all existing and future Consultants to submit a request to become eligible to compete for projects in one or more of the four project categories. The requests will be reviewed and those Consultants that are approved will become eligible for the project categories for which they submitted paperwork. In order to become eligible, the Consultant should fill out and submit one of the attached Eligibility Screening Forms for each of the project categories for which they are interested. Guidelines for submitting the forms are included on the form itself. These forms should be submitted as soon as possible to insure that each Consultant is eligible to compete for County work. The Consultant's eligibility status will be valid for a period of five years. After this time, renewal will be necessary. The eligibility screening process will remain open to new applicants at all times.

## **Jefferson County QBS – A Detailed Look**

Following is a sequence of events detailing the Jefferson County QBS Process:

### **STEP 1 – SELECTION**

1. The ESD Project Engineer determines a preliminary schedule for the QBS process for an individual project.
  - a. Date(s) to publicly announce the upcoming project by posting preliminary project details on the ESD web site. This announcement will include a deadline for consultants to submit eligibility requests if they have not done so already.
  - b. Date to distribute request for project specific qualification statements to eligible consultants.
  - c. Deadline for consultants to return qualification statements.
  - d. Date to complete review of qualification statements and create a short list of prospective consultants for the project.
  - e. Date to distribute notification to short-listed consultants advising them of the date for interviews.
  - f. Meeting date to conduct consultant interviews (should be scheduled at least 10 working days after notification to allow consultants time for preparation).
  - g. Date to complete ranking of consultants and to select the most qualified.
  - h. Date to notify short-listed consultants of selection.
2. The ESD Project Engineer determines which of the four project categories is appropriate.
3. Once the appropriate category is determined for the particular project, the ESD Project Engineer determines the pool of eligible Consultants by reviewing the list of Consultants who have completed the Eligibility Screening Process and have been approved for the designated project category.

4. The ESD Project Engineer prepares a preliminary scope of work for the project and it is incorporated into the request for qualification statements to be sent to eligible Consultants.
5. The ESD Project Engineer establishes project specific criteria for the selection of the Consultant and it is incorporated into the request for qualification statements to be sent to eligible Consultants.
6. A request for Qualification Statements is prepared by the ESD Project Engineer and distributed to the eligible Consultants.
7. The ESD Project Engineer compiles all Qualification Statements received from eligible Consultants and forwards copies to the two other members of the ESD staff selected by the ESD Director for review.
8. A pre-determined grading system will be used to review all qualification statements. Grade sheets will be provided with each qualification statement for the reviewer to fill out.
9. On a designated date, ESD staff members will return reviewed qualification statements and grade sheets to the ESD Project Engineer.
10. After totaling the scores assigned by all of the reviewers, the ESD Project Engineer determines a short list of consultants.
11. Interviews and/or presentations are conducted. The ESD staff members who participated in the Qualification Statement review conduct the interviews with the short-listed Consultants.
12. Consultants are evaluated and ranked by those present during the interviews.

#### STEP 2 - DETERMINATION OF DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

1. The highest ranked Consultant is notified and begins to meet with the County about the project. Compensation for time spent in STEP 2 will be deferred until a final agreement is reached in STEP 3. Until that time, detailed records will be kept by the Consultant with periodic review by ESD so that an appropriate credit can be given to the Consultant in the final agreement.
2. The County and the Consultant more clearly define the scope of work and specific services required of the Consultant in order to complete the task.

#### STEP 3 - RETENTION OF THE CONSULTANT

1. The County and the Consulting firm negotiate an acceptable fee proposal.
2. Once an agreement is reached, the two parties enter into a written agreement and present the Agreement to the Commission for consideration for approval.
  - a. If an agreement is not reached, the Owner and Consultant return to Step 2 and review the project scope and the services to be provided and a new fee is proposed.
  - b. If an agreement still cannot be reached with the highest ranked design Consultant, the negotiations are formally terminated and the County begins negotiations with the second ranked firm at Step 2.