



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
RCAP FORMULATE GREAT
RATES GUIDE UPDATE

PURPOSE

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) has initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify a consultant qualified to update, modernize and expand our existing Formulate Great Rates Guide for water and wastewater systems.

WHO MAY RESPOND

RCAP requires a consultant who has demonstrated experience in water and/or wastewater rate analysis and implementation with a focus on small systems. Being familiar with the RCAP Network is a plus and must be willing to work closely with our national and regional staff, including an in-person presentation and/or meeting at our National Conference in Chicago in August 2020.

The consultant must not be barred from receiving federal funding. To be considered responsive, all submissions must include a statement indicating that the respondent is not on the US General Services Administration's System for Award Management's (SAM's) list of excluded entities.

Table of Contents

- 1. About the Organization**
- 2. Project Overview**
- 3. Scope of Work and Deliverables**
- 4. Project Goals and Target Audience**
- 5. Ownership and Confidentiality**
- 6. Proposal Details**
- 7. Scoring**
- 8. Process for Proposal Submission and Evaluation**

1. About the Organization

Founded in 1973, the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit service delivery network comprised of a national office and six regional partners that provide technical assistance, training, and financial resources to community owned and operated water, wastewater and solid waste utilities in 2,000 small rural communities – including tribes – each year in every state across the U.S. and its territories. Most communities RCAP assists are economically disadvantaged and have a population under 2,500, and many have significant minority populations. The RCAP Network’s approximately 200 field staff members include registered professional engineers, certified operators, utility finance and board management specialists, community planners, and people with other relevant backgrounds.

RCAP work historically centered on achieving these outcomes in small rural communities:

- Improved environmental and community health
- Utilities that are in compliance with federal and state regulations
- Sustainable water and waste disposal systems
- Increased capability of local leaders to address current and future needs
- Improve coordination among federal, state and local agencies in the delivery of water and waste services

Each RCAP regional partner offers an array of services that directly respond to the needs of its area. RCAP field staff track performance data to enhance our capacity to fulfill our mission of “improving the quality of life in rural communities.”

The RCAP national office engages in program management, applied research, policy development, public education, and advocacy on rural issues, especially with respect to community infrastructure. It also supports the work of the network by obtaining financial support, sharing knowledge and best practices across the network, and promoting dialogue to help communities understand the relationship between the environment, public health, and economic viability. More information is available at <http://www.rcap.org>.

2. Project Overview

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) has initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify a consultant qualified to update, modernize and expand our existing Formulate Great Rates Guide for water and wastewater systems. RCAP has a number of printed and digital guidebook resources for small water and wastewater system staff and leadership. Many of these guides were published a number of years ago and need to be updated to meet current industry standards. Based on feedback from our field practitioners, an interest and need has been identified specifically for an update, modernization and expansion of our guidebook entitled “Formulate Great Rates”.

3. Scope of Work & Deliverables

RCAP expects the project to include the following:

- Project management including the development of a project timeline with milestones in coordination with and approved by RCAP;
- Review of existing RCAP rate guidebook as well as internal and external related industry tools—ideally the guide will be accompanied by an adaptable tool that would be user friendly and adequate to meet small system needs;
- Remote stakeholder engagement with RCAP field staff from all six regional organizations and the national office including input on how we are helping small systems with rates and how the guide can be improved to help technical assistance providers and the communities that they are working with;
- Development of guidebook update drafts and review cycle with RCAP national office and regions and input on proofs once the guidebook is designed and goes to the printer; and
- Attendance at RCAP National Conference in August 2020 in Chicago to present initial draft and get final stakeholder feedback and buy-in.

It is expected that these tasks will be accomplished through a combination of activities, including:

- Background research by consultant on RCAP network, intensive review of existing rate guide and analysis of industry best practices on this topic and needs/challenges of small systems;
- Focus groups, interviews, surveys, conference calls and/or any other method that will be useful in receiving regional expert input;
- Present and facilitate receipt of feedback and incorporate it on draft product; and
- Use of an existing tool or development of a new rate tool that aligns with and is integrated into the guide.

4. Project Goals & Target Audience

Stage 1. Gathering data and outlining workplan

This stage includes review of the existing guide, research and review of other industry rate tools, resources and best practices, and development and approval from RCAP of the final project workplan which includes a basic timeline including any key milestones.

Stage 2. Regional Stakeholder Engagement

This stage includes remote group and one on one meetings with regional field staff and national office staff with rate expertise for the consultant to better understand the needs and ideal usage of this new guide across the country.

Stage 3. Drafting

Utilizing the information gathered during stages 1 and 2 during stage 3 the consultant will create a first draft of the revised guidebook and accompanying

tools/resources and will provide to the national office for review. Feedback needs to be incorporated prior to in-person presentation/meeting at the National Conference.

Stage 4. National Conference Presentation

The consultant will design a participatory session for rate experts and other network field staff to review the draft and provide a final round of feedback to ensure the guide aligns with their needs and the needs of the small systems they are working with across the country. Feedback needs to be carefully noted with a plan to incorporate as much as possible into the final draft.

Stage 5. Final Review

This stage will be the incorporation of feedback from the National Conference. The consultant will share with RCAP national staff for one final round of content review and the final content will then be sent to the printer for layout. Once designed, the consultant and RCAP national will do 1-2 rounds of final proofing before going to print. The guidebook should be modulated as much as possible and designed for both digital and print utilization.

5. Ownership and Confidentiality

All intellectual property will become the property of RCAP. All data remains the sole property of RCAP. The consultant shall further agree to keep information related to any and all contracts with RCAP in strict confidence, including, but not limited to, the terms of the contract(s) and any confidential business information or proprietary information learned through its dealings with RCAP.

6. Proposal Details

Formatting:

To best evaluate the ability of the consultant to meet our goals, please include the following in your proposal:

- Examples of similarly-complex projects;
- Your approach to project management and stakeholder engagement;
- A summary of financial management experience emphasizing rate analysis and rate-setting;
- A summary of experience in water/wastewater especially with small systems;
- Three client references;
- Suggested project timeline with major tasks and milestones;
- Project budget by line item (include estimated number of hours for completion and cost per hour);
- Sample Project Workplan; and

- Identify who will be involved on your project team, their role, and including their relevant experience.

The proposal should be **no more than 5 pages in length** (excluding attachments such as consultant resumes/CVs, previous work products etc.).

Proposal must include the following:

General Information

RCAP understands that the scope of work requested may be conducted by a single consultant, a consultant group, or by a partnership of consultants. The proposal should provide the name, title, address, telephone number, and email address for each person engaged in the project. If a consultant group or partnership of consultants, the proposal should indicate who will serve as the “point” person.

Consultant Qualifications and Roles

The proposal must describe the consultant’s qualifications to conduct the RFP scope of work activities, including his/her expertise, knowledge, and experience. Experience should include examples of conducting similar or related work as well as experience working in or around water, wastewater and rural communities. Please include the resume/CV of all those on the consultant’s proposed project team.

If a consultant group or partnership of consultants is proposed to conduct the RFP scope of work, the proposal must indicate which activities each consultant will conduct as well as information about their level of expertise, knowledge and experience to conduct those specific activities.

Draft Work Plan

The proposal should contain a detailed description of the proposed activities to be conducted by the consultant in order to complete the requested scope of work, including:

- the specific activities to be conducted at each stage;
- a timeline for the activities at each stage;
- milestones and deliverables tied to those activities; and
- a detailed budget, along with a proposed payment schedule tied to project milestones and/or deliverables.

The selected consultant will have the option to update this as needed.

References

The proposal should include at least three references of individuals who can speak to their experience with the consultant in conducting projects of similar scope.

Information regarding each reference should include the individual's name, address, telephone number and email address.

Previous Work Product

The proposal should include at least one example of a work product similar to the scope of work requested within this RFP (e.g., financial management guidance/tools for small systems).

8. Scoring

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications – 35%
- Scope of Proposal – 30%
- Workplan – 25%
- Budget – 10%

9. Process for Proposal Submission and Evaluation

Instructions for submission

a) Closing Submission Date

Proposals are due by **5:00 PM Eastern on Friday, March 27, 2020.**

b) Inquiries

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to Sarah Buck (contact information below) no later than Friday, March 20, 2020.

Sarah Buck, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Regional Collaboration
sbuck@rcap.org

c) Conditions of Proposal

All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the consultant and will not be reimbursed by RCAP.

d) Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format via email to sbuck@rcap.org before the closing submission date. If the file is too large for email, a link to the file should be provided.

Late arrivals will not be accepted. Mail submissions will not be accepted.

It is the responsibility of the consultant to ensure that the response is received by RCAP by the closing submission date. A response may be judged nonresponsive and excluded for further consideration if it is not received by the deadline or does not follow the specified format.

e) Right to Reject

RCAP reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any and all responses received in response to this RFP. A contract for the accepted response will be based upon the factors described in this RFP.

f) Small Businesses, Minority-Owned Firms, and Women’s Enterprises

RCAP will make efforts to utilize small businesses, women’s business enterprises, and/or minority-owned firms. A consultant qualifies if it meets the definition established by the Small Business Administration.

g) Confidentiality

If the consultant deems any material submitted to be proprietary or confidential, that must be indicated in the relevant section(s) of the response.

h) Notification of Selection and Timeline

It is expected that a consultant will be selected within two weeks of the closing submission date, although this timeline is subject to change. RCAP reserves the right to cancel this RFP at anytime. Upon conclusion of negotiations with the successful consultant, all consultants submitting responses to this RFP will be informed in writing of the name of the successful firm or individual.

RFP Released: March 6, 2020
Proposals due: 5:00 PM ET March 27, 2020
Interview consultants: March 30-April 3, 2020
Consultant selection made: April 6, 2020
Project begins: April 20, 2020

i) Criteria for Selection

RCAP will select the proposal which it feels will deliver the highest quality deliverable at the best value. Proposals will be initially reviewed by the RCAP Technical Team. Interviews will be completed by RCAP national staff, who will submit the best option to the Senior Leadership Team for a final decision.

The award will be made to the qualified consultant whose proposal is most advantageous to RCAP with price and other factors considered. RCAP may, in its sole discretion, reject any and all proposals without providing a detailed explanation for decisions.

RCAP, in its sole discretion, may request proposal presentations by meeting with any or all consultants to clarify or negotiate modifications to proposals. However, RCAP reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms, from both technical and price standpoints, that the consultant can propose.

RCAP contemplates award of the contract to the responsible Consultant with the most cost-effective solution and the capabilities to perform the contract services.

j) CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Consultant must disclose, in an exhibit to the proposal, any possible conflicts of interest that may result from the award of the Contract or the services provided under the Contract. Except as otherwise disclosed in the proposal, the Consultant affirms that to the best of its knowledge there exists no actual or potential conflict between the Consultant, the Consultant's project manager(s) or its family's business or financial interests ("Interests") and the services provided under the Contract. In the event of any change in either Interests or the services provided under the Contract, the Consultant will inform RCAP regarding possible conflicts of interest, which may arise as a result of such change and agrees that all conflicts shall be resolved to the RCAP's satisfaction or the Consultant may be disqualified from consideration under this RFP. As used in this Section, "conflict of interest" shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Giving or offering a gratuity, kickback, money, gift, or anything of value to a RCAP official, officer, or employee with the intent of receiving a contract from RCAP or favorable treatment under a contract;
2. Having or acquiring at any point during the RFP process or during the term of the Contract, any contractual, financial, business or other interest, direct or indirect, that would conflict in any manner or degree with Consultant's performance of its duties and responsibilities to RCAP under the Contract or otherwise create the appearance of impropriety with respect to the award or performance of the Contract; or
3. Currently in possession of or accepting during the RFP process or the term of the Contract anything of value based on an understanding that the actions of the Consultant or its affiliates or Interests on behalf of RCAP will be influenced.

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format via email to sbuck@rcap.org before the closing submission date: 5:00 PM ET on Friday March 27, 2020