

Technical Assistance to Small Public Water Systems Request for Proposals #1209120256

Questions and Answers

1. Are Partnerships Allowed?

Subcontracting is not allowed, as the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH or “the Department”) does not want the potential for uncertainty, delay or confusion with regard to who will be providing what services under the contract that will result from this RFP process. A partnership could be acceptable, provided the partnership is structured in a way that would leave no uncertainty, confusion, or pose any other concerns or delays over the delivery of the services called for under the RFP.

2. Must the on-site technical assistance (TA) providers be certified operators?

Yes. Page 10, Section D.1. Project Narrative, subsection d. of the RFP identifies the operator certifications that the TA providers are expected to hold.

3. Is emergency response included in the base 209 units?

The RFP anticipates 209 on-site TA visits, Task C, per contract year. Some of these TA visits may be time sensitive, of an emergency nature. Those on-site technical visits, either on a routine or emergency basis, are not viewed as emergency response under the RFP. Emergency response activities are discussed in greater detail below.

4. What emergency services are anticipated under the contract?

The emergency services will vary, but are generally expected by the Department to be time critical TA provided to water system personnel. For example, the designated operator at a small system may become incapacitated and the backup operator may not be fully knowledgeable on the proper operation of the system.

5. What emergency response services are anticipated under the contract?

The emergency response services will vary, but are generally expected by the Department to be time critical TA where the system may not have a responsible individual for the TA provider to provide assistance or instruction to. For example, the sole operator at a small system may have passed away, and no replacement is immediately available. Alternately, the TA provider may be tasked to support and temporarily operate state owned water treatment equipment out of the NYS emergency stockpile in Queensbury.

Emergency Response Services are viewed as outside the scope of an on-site technical assistance visit, Task C, where the necessary actions or follow up will be handled by a system representative. As such, the Department would expect to reimburse such activities under Task E, as noted in the second paragraph of page 7.

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6. Will the vendor be responsible for coordinating the six single-day training events, and securing facilities?

Yes, the RFP requires the vendor to provide all the aspects necessary to successfully deliver the training (Task D) and any of the other technical deliverables (Task E). For the training deliverables, this would include the logistics of organizing and securing the training facility, preparing training materials, approval for operator credits, publicizing the training, etc. The state may choose to assist the vendor with regard to compiling materials and providing speakers, or broadcasting the availability of the training/deliverables, but it will be the vendor's sole responsibility to provide all the necessary components to successfully deliver the training (Task D) and any of the other technical deliverables (Task E) as detailed in the RFP.

7. Will training be expected in every region in every contract year?

No, it is not expected that a training session will be required in every geographic region noted in the RFP for every contract year. It is expected that training topics and locations will be determined each contract year during the annual work plan approval process. However, for the RFP the bidders have been asked to assume one training session in each geographic region noted in the RFP to establish unit costs and to provide for the proper evaluation of the bids.

8. Is there an existing contract for these services?

Yes, the Department currently has a contract with a vendor for comparable services.

9. Who holds that existing contract?

New York Rural Water Association holds this existing contract. That contract will expire on July 31, 2013. This RFP process is intended to succeed that contract, to allow the New York State Department of Health (the Department) to continue to provide services of this nature to our regulated community of public water suppliers.

10. So are we bidding against New York Rural Water Association?

It is unknown to the Department if the current contractor will submit a proposal for the current RFP. Even if the current contract holder chooses to do so, the process that will be utilized to evaluate all of the proposals will not provide any weight or advantage to the current contractor versus an identical proposal from another vendor. As the contract work is similar (but not identical) to the existing contract, the current contractor may be able to utilize the work they have completed under the present contract within their proposal. However, all proposals will be evaluated based on the information contained within their submitted proposals as detailed in the RFP under the selection process section.

11. Can you provide a map of the location of small water systems in New York State, as this information would greatly clarify the potential travel and/or siting of TA providers?

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See page 7 of the Questions and Answers for a map of the locations of public water systems in New York State with populations of 3,300 or less. Please note that the RFP anticipates that the vast majority of TA will be to small systems, but the contract does allow for assistance to larger systems when appropriate.

12. Is it the expectation that the two candidates for mapping services will have a population of less than 3,300?

Yes, the expectations for the candidate systems to receive mapping services are:

- a population of less than 3,300,
- the lack of resources to complete the task on their own, and
- a direct benefit to having such maps available in the short and long terms.

13. The system mapping proposal is vague on the level of details required in the map, and hence difficult to prepare a bid for. Will the system mapping require the location of service connections, hydrants, curb stops, etc.?

The Department's expectation is that the vendor would provide a basic GIS map, electronic and paper copies, with a sufficient level of detail to allow for the system to utilize it to improve their routine operations; in essence a usable product. The level of detail required to do this is difficult to quantify in general, and depends on the nature of the system itself, the nature of the problems the system is experiencing, and the records or other information that the system has available. For example, a system that is experiencing excessive leakage would benefit from having all valve locations mapped; whereas a system with unknown lines or infrastructure without matching easements would benefit most from having all lines accurately located. Our experience has been that the system's physical configuration, pre-mapping data, and the relevant skills of the operator are the key factors in assessing the level of effort that will be required to satisfactorily map a system under this RFP.

14. Will the selected contractor have input as to the annually selected mapping projects?

Yes. It is the Department's intention to work with the contractor to identify candidate systems with a comparable level of effort by the contractor for each work year of the contract. Should no appropriate candidates be identified in a given work year, as with the actual quantities under all of the task items, then the work would not be assigned and would not be completed or reimbursed under the contract.

15. Would the 4,000 hours required for the contract include time spent on GIS mapping?

It is expected that at least half of the contract effort, i.e., at least 2,000 hours, is required to be spent for on-site technical assistance. Please refer to pages 3, 4, 10 and 11 of the RFP. The other half of the contract effort, 2,000 hours at a minimum, is expected to provide for all the other contract deliverables which would include mapping. However, the contract deliverables and reimbursement are not based upon vendor staff time. The staff time requirement is provided by the Department solely to help

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clarify to the bidders the Departments' expectations for the level of time and effort within the vendor's proposals.

- 16. Can you clarify the requirement to take photos as documentation of TA visits, as some types of assistance (leak detection) may not lend themselves to being photographed at the time of the on-site visit?**

The Department recognizes the difficulties and sensitivities of photographing water systems in distress or during emergency situations. The Department's expectation is that the on-site TA provider will simply make a good faith effort to supplement their records with visual documentation that is date and time stamped by a camera, as allowable under the circumstances of the TA visit. It should also be noted that this item is not a discreet deliverable under the RFP, but would fall under the requirements for at least 2,000 hours associated with the Task C deliverables.

- 17. Can you clarify the RFP language regarding the reporting of common problems that may require additional attention or program adjustment?**

This language is located under the reporting requirements detailed in Task F.

As this is a service contract, it is in the Department's and successful vendor's best interests to make timely and appropriate adjustments to the activities under this contract to provide for the best results. This language simply highlights the Department's desire to work with the successful vendor to do so on a regular basis, throughout the life of the contract. Any actual adjustments to the services provided for under the contract would need to follow the formal processes available to do so, such as the annual work plans. Additionally, any proposals by the contractor to expand, modify, or delete items or services within the contract would need to also follow formal processes to modify the contract.

- 18. Can you clarify the statistical reporting requirements on total calls received and served by the contractor? Is this a requirement of the current contract?**

This is a requirement of the current contract, and is detailed in the RFP under task F. The Department wishes to continue to utilize this deliverable to facilitate communications of contract activities with our field staff and to properly monitor and manage the contract. So, as the intent of the monitoring is for communication and performance evaluation, the reporting format needs to be sufficient to meet these needs. Upon contract award, the Department can provide the existing template or develop a new one with the successful contractor provided the information identified in the RFP and the previously noted objectives are satisfactorily achieved.

- 19. Can you clarify the requirements on sales noted within the RFP?**

There is a general contract clause on page 21 of the RFP regarding sales. The Department cannot clarify this clause, as it is a standard contract language clause of New York State. We can only advise all of the vendors to carefully read and be aware of all of the contract language clauses of the RFP; as

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it is expected that they will all be present in the final state contract executed with the successful vendor.

20. Can you clarify the requirements for two people to provide on-site TA?

Given the geographic expanse of the state, and the expectation that some of the required TA will be time sensitive in nature, the Department does not believe this could be accomplished satisfactorily with less than two separate TA providers located in different areas of the state. Thus, the requirement on page 10 for at least two TA providers located in separate regions in the state. However, the Department recognizes that each vendor will likely have offices and/or personnel in various locations that could provide for varying configurations with varying levels of service. Hence, the Department will evaluate the proposals on the actual numbers and locations of TA providers, as noted in the Project Narrative, Item b., Technical Approach.

21. Can you clarify the Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) requirements of the contract, as subcontracting is not allowed within the RFP?

As subcontracting is not allowed for the deliverables outlined in this RFP, the opportunities to fulfill the MWBE requirements would be limited to the purchasing of goods, equipment and consumables. The Department recognizes these limitations, and encourages vendors to make their best faith efforts in regard to fulfilling this item.

22. Are the bimonthly meetings expected to occur in Albany with the New York State Department of Health.

The Department desires to have face to face meetings with the successful vendor, in Albany, on a quarterly basis.

23. Will the contractor be required to provide or cover the cost of analytical laboratory services that are associated with TA? For example, testing for disinfection byproduct levels?

No, the successful bidder will not be expected to provide analytical laboratory services. Where analytical testing is needed, the Department would expect the TA provider to help identify the nature, number, location of samples, assist with the collection of the samples, and interpret the results with the water supply personnel. The water system or the Department would be responsible for paying for any analytical laboratory samples.

24. Can we attach an entire equipment list rather than itemize our equipment list on the form provided by NYSDOH?

The forms provided in the RFP are necessary components of a complete proposal as noted on page 8, Proposal Requirements. The vendors must utilize the forms provided by the Department for the bidding process. Failure to do so may result in the bid being declared non-responsive. Additional

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details may be attached to the forms or included elsewhere in the proposals, but may not be substituted for fully completing the required equipment forms.

25. Can the list of potential bidders be shared with our firm, so that we can offer our services as a qualified MWBE firm to help the bidders reach their goal?

The organizations that attended the bidder's conference are listed below. See question #21 for information on subcontracting.

New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower, Room 1119,
Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12237

Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District
121 Second Street,
Oriskany, NY 13424

O'Brien & Gere, 333 West Washington Street
P.O. Box 4873
Syracuse, NY 13221-4873

New York Rural Water Association
P.O. Box 487
Claverack, NY 12513

Holzmacher, McLendon & Murrel, P.C. (H2M)
575 Broad Hollow Road
Melville, NY 11747

DCK Services LLC
P.O. Box 152
Glens Falls, NY 12801

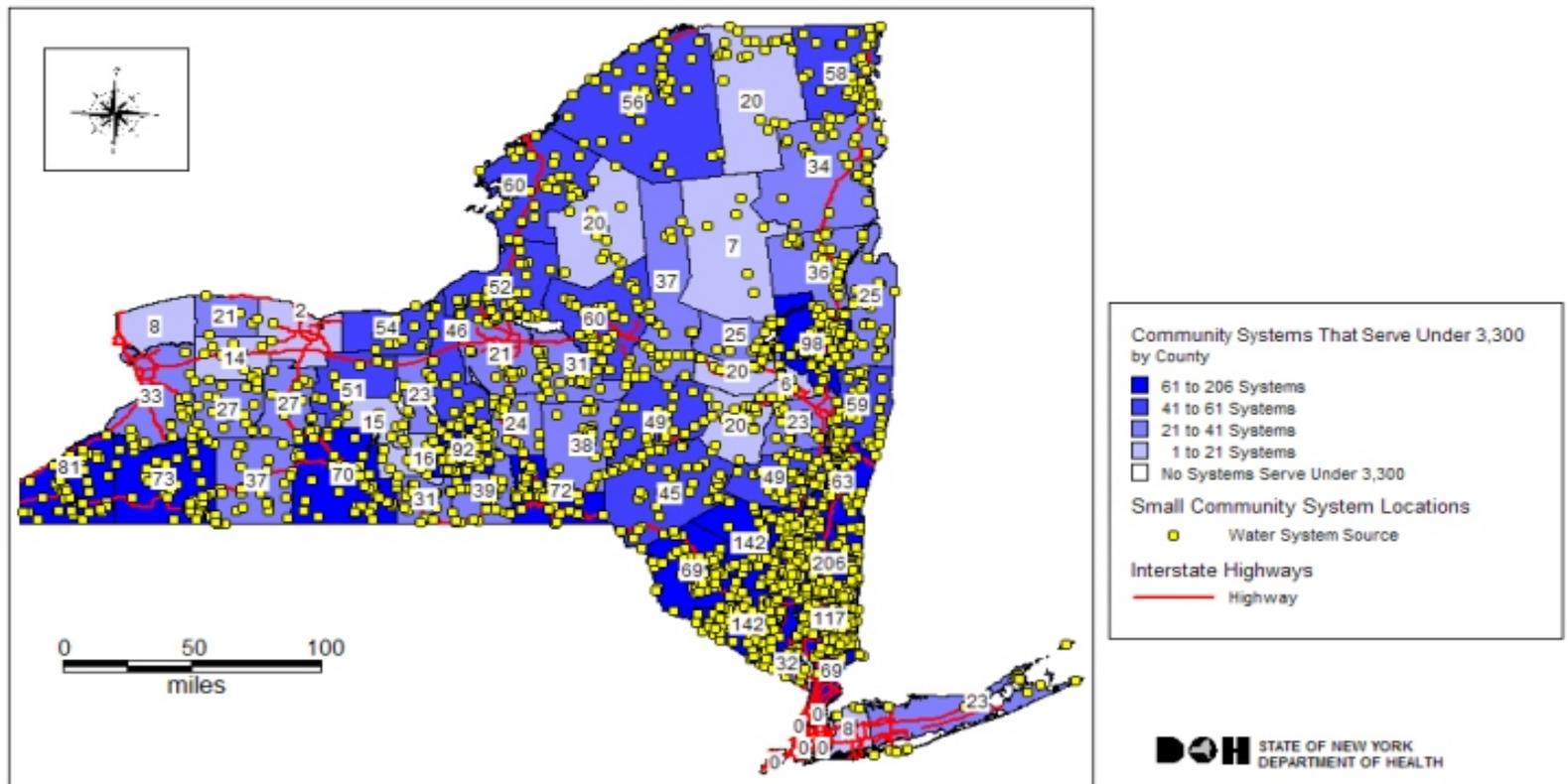
Delaware Engineering, P.C.
28 Madison Avenue Extension
Albany, NY 12203

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Community Water Systems Serving 3,300 or Less Population

(Note that systems serving no population were excluded.)



Map Created December 2012 by jct02@nyhealth.gov. Accuracy is not guaranteed.