

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANNING SERVICES

NOTICE:

Buncombe County is soliciting proposals from qualified firms to provide renewable energy planning services within a multi-jurisdictional area. This project will be undertaken jointly between the following governmental entities: Buncombe County, City of Asheville.

An RFP package which includes a Scope of Work describing the required services can be obtained on the Buncombe County website at www.buncombecounty.org beginning July 2, 2018. Proposal must be submitted electronically by 3:00 PM EST on Friday August 10, 2018. If a respondent desires to provide hard copies in addition to the electronically submitted proposal, these should be delivered to the following address:

Buncombe County Office of Sustainability
Attn: Jeremiah LeRoy
200 College St., Fourth Floor
Asheville NC, 28801

Respondents may contact Jeremiah LeRoy with questions regarding the Request for Proposal. Question should be submitted in writing via email to jeremiah.leroy@buncombecounty.org

The right to reject any and all proposals by County is reserved.

The Proposals will be evaluated by a County/City review team and several respondents may be invited to be interviewed.

Any and all costs of preparing proposals (including site visits where needed) shall be the responsibility of the submitting firm.

General Overview

Request for Proposals

Buncombe County (“County”) is soliciting proposal from qualified consulting firms (“Respondents”) to provide professional planning services which will explore renewable energy options within a multi-jurisdictional area. This project will be undertaken jointly between Buncombe County and the City of Asheville. A detailed description of the overall work to be performed is provided in the “Scope of Work” section of this document.

Minimum Qualifications

- A. Demonstrated experience developing innovative solutions to increase local implementation of renewable energy sources and the ability to utilize that knowledge and experience to support this project.
- B. Demonstrated experience with the electricity sector, including relevant legislation and regulations applicable to renewable energy in North Carolina, and its major participants – investor owned utilities, energy service providers, independent power contractors, public service commissions and other key market players.
- C. Demonstrated understanding of North Carolina statutory and regulatory requirements along with best practices. Respondents shall have experience in customer data requests and analysis.
- D. Demonstrated experience in resource planning and renewable energy procurement.

Background

Buncombe County is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, in the Western portion of the state of North Carolina and has a population of over 250,000. Buncombe County and the City of Asheville have seen steady and continued business and residential growth in recent years. In addressing the benefits and challenges of this continued growth, these local governments have set aggressive goals to reduce the adverse carbon impacts their communities have on the environment. Buncombe County and the City of Asheville have ambitious community renewable energy goals – Buncombe County recently adopted a resolution setting a goal of 100% renewable energy for County operations by 2030 and 100% renewable for the overall community by 2042. Development of renewable energy resources on public and private sector facilities has become a priority for the residents of Buncombe County. However, in order to achieve these goals, the communities must transition to low-carbon and renewable energy sources.

This RFP is intended to result in a partnership to explore renewable energy development pathways, and the implications of such development for the partnering communities mentioned herein. The RFP also seeks information on opportunities and challenges associated with providing communities with renewable energy and to reveal how such arrangements can be used to fulfill the renewable energy goals of Asheville and Buncombe County.

Scope of Agreement

The selected respondent will be required to provide all labor, supervision, materials, supplies, transportation, equipment, and services necessary to assume overall responsibility for the coordination and communication of this project’s goals.

Responsibilities of the Respondent

The services being requested are outline in the section entitled "Scope of Work"

Evaluation and Criteria

Proposal will be evaluated by a selection committee coordinated by Buncombe County and the City of Asheville Sustainability staff. This committee will consider all documents, the response to this RFP, information gained while evaluating responses, and other relevant information to make its determination. Proposal evaluation criteria and required content will be outlined later in this document.

Submission Procedure and Proposal Content

Proposals shall be submitted no later than 3:00PM E.S.T. August 10, 2018. Respondents desiring to deliver a hard copy in addition to the required electronic copy may do so to:

Buncombe County Office of Sustainability
Attn: Jeremiah P. LeRoy
200 College St. 4th floor
Asheville, NC 28801

One (1) electronic copy shall be submitted. Proposals shall be limited to twenty (20) pages in length, single sided, excluding cover sheets and cover letter.

All proposals must include a cover letter indicating the respondents name, primary contact person, address, telephone number, and email address.

Additional Information

No interpretation of the meaning of any provision in this RFP, nor any correction of any apparent ambiguity, inconsistency, error, or other matter pertaining to this RFP shall be made to a respondent orally. All requests for interpretation, clarification or additional information regarding this RFP should be made in writing, via email to Jeremiah.leroy@buncombecounty.org. The deadline for questions shall be July 27, 2018. The County shall not be obligated to respond to requests for such interpretation or correction.

Respondents or their agents are instructed not to contact County and City employees, agents or contractors of the County and participating Cities, the County or City Manager offices, or the County Commission and City Councils, or to externally manipulate or influence the procurement process in any way, other than through the instructions contained herein, from the date of release of this RFP to the date of execution of the Agreement resulting from this solicitation. County, in its sole discretion, may disqualify Respondents in violation of this paragraph.

County reserves the right to cancel or modify the terms of this RFP at any time. County will provide Respondents with written notice of the cancellation or modification.

Community Renewable Energy Planning Service

Scope of Work

As mentioned in the background section of this RFP, Buncombe County and the City of Asheville are working to develop an approach to reach their goals for carbon footprint reduction and renewable energy.

The Primary deliverable to be provided through the requested services is a customized and achievable renewable energy plan for Buncombe County developed at a county-wide scale. It is important to reiterate that the Renewable Energy Plan will be developed at a County-Wide scale (geographic boundaries of Buncombe County), but will also include county/city government operations. This includes understanding County-wide energy use and technological solutions, barriers, legal implications, and potential financial models for renewable energy implementation.

Scope of Services

The Renewable Energy Plan created by this project should include identification of strategies to achieve stated renewable energy goals structured in a framework of practical achievability with an understanding of the regulatory context and conditions in North Carolina. Additionally, the plan should incorporate these issues as they relate to County and City operations. The plan should be developed in close coordination with County and City staff. Essential elements of the plan include:

- Assessment of the current regulatory framework for energy policy, investor owned utilities and renewable energy in North Carolina; provide an analysis and recommendations to applicable policy issues related to identified plan strategies and regulations related to energy production, use, efficiency and renewable energy;
- Assessment and identification of renewable energy and energy storage opportunities and approaches to achieve identified strategies or scenarios including identification of appropriate locations for renewable energy and/or storage installations or implementation to include county or municipally owned/operated lands or facilities;
- Quantify the financial implications and assess the economic and other impacts of developed strategies and recommendations;
- Development of recommendations/opportunities for community partnerships with private businesses, utility companies, renewable energy providers, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant parties within the County;
- Support County/City staff for public meetings or presentations and development of educational and outreach materials related to the plan or plan development process;

Compensation

The consultant may be compensated on an hourly basis with an established not-to-exceed cost for each individual assignment, a lump sum fee, or an agreed upon fee arrangement. The proposed staff, estimated hours, reimbursable and any other costs shall be established through mutual agreement between the consultant and the County.

Once a contract is fully executed and the exact scope of work is approved by the County, the consultant shall proceed with the project, invoicing the County on a monthly basis based on the actual staff-hours charged to the project. The invoice should document all staff-hours charged and description of project progress. Failure to include this information will result in rejection of the invoice.

Employee classification and associated hourly rates for all work performed will be in accordance with the contract. All hourly rates shall be considered as straight time and no overtime rates will be allowed.

Anticipated Schedule

Release of RFP: **July 2, 2018**

Deadline for clarification and changes: **July 27, 2018**

Proposals Due: **August 10, 2018**

Review by Evaluation Committee: **August 13-24, 2018**

Possible Interviews and Contract Negotiation: **August 24 – Sept 7, 2018**

Contract Execution: **TBD**

Proposal Format

Proposals should be submitted in a format that allows for uniform review and easy access to information by the Evaluation Committee. The proposals should be clear and concise, with substantive portion of the proposal limited to 20 pages (single-sided) (additional pages shall be allowed for staff resumes, references and other general proposal information). Emphasis should be placed on the specific qualification of the people who will actually provide the services and the firm's ability to manage the service. To assist in the evaluation process the proposal shall contain at least the following information:

- **Transmittal Letter and Signature Page:** Provide a brief cover letter stating your firm's commitment to provide the services as needed in this RFP, including a brief narrative describing the firm, its history, and data relative to the firm's size.
- **Basic Qualifications**
 - Provide the firms experience with renewable energy, climate adaptation, or sustainability planning and energy policy efforts at the community or local government level in the last 5 years;
 - A complete list with brief descriptions of recent renewable energy, climate adaptation,

or sustainability planning efforts at the community or local government level the firm has participated in in the last 5 years;

- Information describing the firm's knowledge or experience coordinating with utilities and renewable energy providers;
- Provide the firm's experience with energy policy, implementation or development of emerging strategies or approaches to promote or enable to use of renewable energy and the applicable regulatory context of energy policy and renewable energy projects in the State of North Carolina including knowledge and coordination with the NC Utilities Commission or similar regulatory entity;
- Provide examples of your experience coordinating with relevant government agencies or other organizations with key knowledge of energy regulations, energy efficiency and renewable energy policy and implementation;

- **Staff Qualifications**

- Provide an overview of the qualifications of your project manager and key project staff, including anticipated sub-consultants; including the identification of appropriate personnel with detailed knowledge of renewable energy, climate adaptation or sustainability planning and detailed knowledge of the regulatory context of energy policy and renewable energy in North Carolina and/or personnel with experience coordinating with the NC Public Utilities Commission;
- Describe who will perform the various tasks and what will be their level of involvement and responsibilities and give their qualifications for this specific project;
- Include resumes of individuals;
- Provide a list of at least three (3) projects in the last 5 years of this nature for each person listed, with brief descriptions, which show ability to complete projects. Include organization name, address, contact person's name, phone number, email address and name and type of project; and
- Indicate the location of the office that agent(s) will work out of while services will be performed.

- **Approach to Project**

- Include a statement describing how you would approach this project and how you will work with the members of the project team;
- Describe your approach to completing the essential renewable energy plan elements identified in the Scope of Work; and
- Describe experience conducting project related meetings and scoping meetings.

- **Examples of Work**

- Provide specific example(s) of your firm's local/municipal renewable energy, climate adaptation or sustainability plan development projects prepared for municipal or other government clients. Where available, online links to example plans/documents should be provided for reference during proposal review.

Evaluation and Selection

Each member of the Evaluation Committee will individually review and rank each proposal by the criteria described. The full Evaluation Committee will then convene to review and discuss these evaluations and arrive at a composite ranking for each firm. At this point firms with the lowest ranking will be eliminated from further consideration. If more than one firm remains under consideration, the Evaluation team may interview such firms and then reach consensus on the best qualified firm.

The County and City staff will conduct reference checks by contacting those individuals submitted by the Respondent with their proposal in response to this RFP. In addition, the County/City may contact references not listed by the Firm.

References checks will not be ranked separately, but will be used to validate information included in the Proposal submitted by Respondents. The information obtained for the reference checks may also impact the rankings assigned by the selection committee for the proposals and interviews.

The County reserves the right to investigate and confirm the Respondent's financial responsibility. This may include financial statements, bank references and interviews with past clients, employees, and creditors, as well as the quality of services. Unfavorable responses to these investigations are grounds for rejection of proposal.

If compensation or other terms cannot be agreed upon with the selected firm, the County will terminate negotiations with that firm and may enter into negotiations with the next highest ranked Respondent.