

Comments in Italics and County Response in Regular font

- *For Step 1, the 4 page limitation is reasonable. For Step 2, I suggest that consideration be given to also establishing a page limitation based on the specific project complexity. This would reduce review time for County staff and force consultants to prioritize the most important considerations.*

The County is not inclined to limit pages at this time. While the County agrees that page limitation on technical proposals may encourage the consultants to prioritize the most important considerations, consultants may also inadvertently omit other project details which will be helpful in evaluating and scoring the proposals. We don't want to restrict an opportunity to distinguish one proposer from other short-listed proposers.

- *For the **Step 1 Evaluation Form**, the categories and weights seem reasonable with the following comments and questions:*
 - *For the third category, “Current Open Monmouth County Contracts (remaining contract balance)”, will the prime consultant be assigned the full remaining contract balance when a portion of that amount is attributable to a subconsultant? Similarly, if a subconsultant on Contract A submits as a prime on Contract B, will that consultant’s remaining billable balance from Contract A be assigned to his current County contract balance for Contract B evaluation purposes?*

The prime consultant will be assigned the full remaining contract balance regardless of any subconsultant's portion. Similarly, any remaining contract balance of a consultant acting as a subconsultant on a project will not be assigned towards that consultant's "Current Monmouth County Division of Engineering Open Contracts (billable balance)".

- *Also for the third category, will there be specific, objective, criteria governing the assignment of rating points? For example, how will an evaluator determine what specific numeric ranking should be assigned, and how can this be made to be consistent between evaluators?*

The score for this criterion will be based upon a formula which compares the current billable balance for contracts between the proposer and the County with the overall billable balance of all outstanding County contracts for engineering or architectural work and will be independent of evaluators.

- *For the fourth category, “Past Project Performance”, will there be specific, objective, criteria governing the assignment of rating points?*

Basically, the past project performance will be evaluated on: Quality of Work Product, Project Management (efficiency & responsiveness), On Budget, and On Schedule. Ultimately, "Past Monmouth County Project Performance" will be based on the "Proposed Consultant Performance Evaluation Form" which was shared at the April 16, 2013 information meeting.

- *For the **Step 2 Evaluation Form**, weighting "Cost and Manhours" at 50% seems to be high and runs the risk of disproportionately outweighing the value of "Understanding" and "Approach". This could effectively result in the Step 2 decision becoming primarily a "low bid" decision. For a quality based process, "Understanding", "Approach", and "Cost/Manhours" should be equally considered since the eventual success and cost of a project to the County is a combination of design cost, final construction cost, and ability to complete within schedule. These overall considerations are less dependent on the design cost than they are upon the consultant's approach, understanding, and ability to design a cost effective and constructible project. Accordingly, I suggest that weighting for the three evaluation categories for the Step 2 Evaluation would be more appropriate at 33% each.*

The proposed weight reflects the guidance received from the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Regarding the assignment of a numeric value for "Cost/Manhours", will there be specific, objective, criteria governing the assignment of rating points?

The score for this criterion will reflect the reasonableness of the total projected work hours, the distribution of those hours among staff of different skill levels, the hourly costs and the proposed lump sum for the project. In this context, the proposer offering the lowest lump sum may not receive a favorable score in relation to the other proposers, nor will the proposer offering the highest cost necessarily receive an unfavorable score in relation to the other proposers.

1. *I strongly suggest a pre-qualification process be implemented by the County for A/E services. Camden County does this once a year and it has an excellent track record. They open up the pool to anyone that is interested. A consultant then submits one proposal for multiple building types and the County keeps a record of the consultants that are most qualified in each building type (offices, data centers, parks, educational, roads, bridges, etc.). When a project need arises under a certain dollar amount the consultants pre-qualified in that building type are notified and then a fee and a brief letter of interest is requested.*

An annual pre-qualification pool process was considered. However, based on our past experience with an open enrollment pre-qualification process which resulted in nearly 100 consulting firms being pre-qualified in over 17 disciplines in which there was an

average of 20 approved firms per discipline; thereby making it difficult to select the short listed firms and keep the process transparent. Therefore, the County opted to proceed with the project specific two (2) step RFPQ and RFP process format.

2. *At the meeting, past performance with the County was discussed as an evaluation criteria in Phase 1. This has the highest weight in the evaluation process. For a firm that has been trying to do work in the County for many years, this is an issue. You are basically telling a consultant that has never done work with you to not submit. I do not think that this is a fair evaluation criteria. At the meeting it was said that this evaluation criteria is balanced by the Monmouth County Open Contracts criteria. If that is the case then the weight should be distributed evenly between these two criteria. Right now, consultants currently working in the County have an advantage.*

Past performance: If a proposer does not have prior experience working on a County project, the score for that proposer will be a neutral “satisfactory” score of 3 and a total of 105 points out of a possible 175. If a proposer has past work experience with the County, their score for past performance will reflect the degree to which the County was or was not satisfied with their work, ranging anywhere from 35 to 175 points.

Current Open Contracts: If a proposer does not have any Current Monmouth County Division of Engineering Open Contracts, then they will be given a maximum score of 5 for a total of 125 points. If a proposer has outstanding engineering/architectural contracts with the County, their total points in that category will be lowered accordingly based upon a formula which compares the current billable balance for contracts between the proposer and the County with the overall billable balance of all outstanding County contracts for engineering or architectural work.

We feel the past performance should receive more relative weight than the Current Open Contract balance. Nevertheless, the method described above gives new proposers the maximum points for Current Open Contracts and gives them the benefit of the doubt by assigning an unearned “satisfactory” rating on past performance.

3. *It was stated at the meeting that a debriefing can be scheduled for every RFP, but it was also stated that the evaluation cards could not be seen. In order to achieve true transparency, the evaluation cards should be able to be reviewed at the debriefing. The unsuccessful consultants should also be able to review the submissions that the County received as well.*

At the request of the unsuccessful proposer, the County will debrief the proposer and provide feedback with respect to the proposer’s response to the RFP and the total scores of all the responses to the RFP will be shared with the unsuccessful proposer. It has been the County’s long standing policy not to disclose the individual scores, so that the evaluators may unbiasedly score the proposals without fear that they will be individually criticized for their evaluation. All proposals are available to the public at the time of opening and any time thereafter under OPRA.

4. *My opinion is that every department or division in Monmouth County should follow whatever new selection process that goes into effect on 1 July 2013. That will eliminate any confusion from department to department.*

We will take that into consideration for future implementation. At the moment, the proposed process will not apply to Monmouth County Parks System.

5. *I am not sure if 4 pages in Step 1 is enough space to answer all of your criteria for bigger projects.*

The page limitation will require responders to the RFPQ to prioritize the most critical aspects of the proposed project and the requested services. Until further notice, successful responders will be afforded unlimited pages for the Step 2 technical and cost proposal.

- *Plate 3 (Since 2006: Fair & Open Process) mentions that Request for Proposals will be posted on the County's Website, to which any interested firm may respond. Plate 6 (Proposed Two Step Process) mentions that the County will request for Qualifications. Does this mean that the consultant should indicate to the County its willingness to participate in a proposal and wait for a Request for Qualifications to be issued by the County?*

Once the new process is adopted, the County's individual engineering and architectural project's Request for Professional Qualifications (RFPQ) will be publicly posted on the County's Website. Any interested firm will be able to register, download the RFPQ documents and then submit a response. Based on the evaluation of submitted responses to the RFPQ, the top three or four firms will be requested to submit a full technical and cost proposal based on the Request for Proposals for that specific project. There currently is no automatic vendor registration or vendor notification of upcoming solicitations.

- *Regarding Plate 7 (Proposed Qualifications Evaluation Form), how firms that do not have any contracts with the County will be scored (Weight and Points)? Specifically for item 3: Current Monmouth County Open Contracts and for item 4: Past Monmouth County Project Performance. Would the maximum total points be zero?*

If a proposer does not have any Current Monmouth County Open Contracts, then they will be given a maximum score of 5 for a total of 125 points. If a proposer does not have prior experience working on a County project, the score for that proposer will be a neutral score of 3 for a total of 105 points. Therefore, firms who do not have previous Monmouth County experience will receive the benefit of the doubt by receiving the neutral score of 3 under Past Monmouth County Project Performance and highest score of 5 relative to Current Monmouth County Open Contracts.

- *The Request for Proposals should provide a clear and specific Scope of Work. Even if the Scope has not been fully discussed and approved by the impacted Departments, the Scope should be clear enough to place all respondents on a level playing field. Vague and ambiguous language inserted within an RFP to “protect” the Owner only adds costs to the proposal or animosity between the selected consultant and the Owner during the design and construction phases of service.*

The County’s RFP will make every effort to provide reasonably detailed scope of needed services requested for each project. All responders will propose on the same Scope of Work.

- *The Step 1(RFQ) of the proposed process should request questions or comments that can be clarified in the Step 2 RFP. The few additional moments of the respondent’s time and the County staff time will make the final responses more competitive and complete.*

The County will take this comment into consideration for future implementation as the need arises. The limited four (4) page qualifications does not prohibit the responder from identifying the information they feel is necessary. All questions will be taken into consideration for the Step 2 RFP process.

No Response necessary for below comments:

- *The two-step process with the narrative limited to 4 pages will definitely encourage greater participation by consultants. The 4 page limit will help to keep the costs of preparing proposals down.*
- *Basing the selections in the first step, primarily on qualifications, while considering current work backlog with the County will also encourage greater participation.*
- *As a larger firm, AECOM may not be able to effectively compete on a cost-basis for smaller, simpler projects. For larger, complex projects requiring unique solutions, the two step process will allow AECOM to introduce our experts to Monmouth County and bring added value to a project.*