



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

and

**SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR
ANSWERING SERVICE FOR UTILITY DEPARTMENTS
(REBID)**

HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS

OCTOBER 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THIS "INVITATION TO BID" (ITB) / "REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS" (RFP) MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE CITY IN ORDER FOR YOU TO RECEIVE ADDENDUMS (ie. Updates or changes to the bid packet).

PLEASE COMPLETE BELOW AND FAX TO 501-321-6833 or mburks@cityhs.net IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT OF THIS PACKET so that you will receive any changes or updates as they occur. If we do not receive this form from you any updates or changes that you do not receive are not the responsibility of the City.

**ITEM / SERVICE SOUGHT BY "ITB" / "RFP":
ANSWERING SERVICE FOR UTILITY DEPARTMENTS – ASC (REBID)**

DATE RECEIVED: _____

RECIPIENT: _____ (NAME)
_____ (ADDRESS)

_____ (PHONE)
_____ (FAX)
_____ (EMAIL)

Printed Name

Signature

ADVERTISEMENT & NOTICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
ANSWERING SERVICE FOR UTILITY DEPARTMENTS
(REBID)
City of Hot Springs, Arkansas

The City of Hot Springs, Arkansas is hereby soliciting sealed proposals to provide **ANSWERING SERVICE FOR UTILITY DEPARTMENTS (REBID)** to the City. Sealed proposals will be received by the Office of Purchasing until **2:00 pm, MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2020**. Proposals will be received only at the Purchasing Office address shown below.

All proposals must be submitted in accordance with the RFP specifications which may be obtained during normal business hours from:

Office of Purchasing
Post Office Box 6300
324 Malvern Ave
2nd Floor, Room 206
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901
(501) 321-6830

Proposals will be evaluated as described herein.

The City reserves the right to accept part or all of any specific proposal(s). The City further reserves the right to reject all proposals or part or all of any specific proposal, to hold all proposals in force and effect for ninety (90) calendar days after date of opening, to waive any informalities in the proposal(s) and to postpone or cancel the proposal opening date for cause or convenience.

The City of Hot Springs, Arkansas is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

The City encourages the participation of DBE/WBE/MBE enterprises in its procurement process.

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Hot Springs, Arkansas, is seeking proposals for an Answering Service for Utilities Water and Wastewater Departments. This Request for Proposals (RFP) contains all the information necessary to prepare and submit a proposal. Prospective proposers are advised to study this RFP completely and follow the instructions exactly.

II. DEFINITIONS

Throughout this request for proposals, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "RFP" means Request for Proposals.
2. "CITY" means the City of Hot Springs, Arkansas.
3. "Proposer" and "Entity" means the individual, firm, partnership, joint venture, or corporation which submits a proposal to the City in response to this RFP.
4. "Contractor" means the proposer chosen by the City to perform the services outlined in the RFP.
5. "Project" or "Plan" means answering service for Utility Departments in accordance with the scope of services and specifications.

III. INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS

1. All proposals must be received at the Office of Purchasing, City of Hot Springs, Arkansas, by 2:00 pm, MONDAY OCTOBER 26, 2020 regardless of delivery method.
2. The envelope or container transmitting the proposals must be sealed, labeled and addressed as follows:

PURCHASING OFFICE
CITY OF HOT SPRINGS
P O BOX 6300
324 MALVERN AVE
HOT SPRINGS, AR 71901

ANSWERING SERVICE FOR UTILITY DEPARTMENTS
TO BE OPENED: 2:00 P.M., MONDAY OCTOBER 26, 2020

3. **Five (5) copies** of each proposal must be submitted together comprised of one unbound original, three printed copies and one electronic PDF (thumb drive or disc). Any proposal not submitted in compliance with the instructions contained in this section and/or not containing the information requested by Section VI may be declared "non-responsive" and may not be considered.
4. Any person, firm or corporation able to meet the requirements of this RFP is invited to respond to this RFP. Proposals will be bound by the provisions contained in this RFP, unless an amendment or deviation is formally approved and distributed by the City.
5. This RFP represents in writing to all proposers the most comprehensive and definite statement that the City is able to make as to the requirements, terms, and conditions for this proposal process and performance of the project. Information and understandings, verbal or written, which are not contained either in this RFP or in subsequent written addenda to this RFP will not be considered in evaluating proposals.
Any conditions or expectations on the part of the proposer for performance by the City must be set forth in the proposal. The City is not obligated to consider the proposer's post submittal terms and conditions.
6. The specifications /scope of work / services listed are to be interpreted as meaning the minimum acceptable by the City.
7. Proposals must include all Federal, State and City taxes, as applicable.
8. As part of the public negotiation process leading to the selection of a contractor, the City may request additions or modifications to any proposal. It is the present intent of the City not to negotiate

substantive portions of an applicant's proposal and to rely on the information submitted in these proposals in awarding a contract.

9. The City reserves the right to award the contract without further discussion on the proposals submitted. The City and its designees also reserve the right to reject and/or accept any and all proposals received or parts thereof. The City retains the right to waive any minor irregularities in any proposal submitted. The City may make such investigations it deems necessary to determine the ability of the proposer to provide/perform as sought by the City and the proposer shall provide relevant information as requested.
10. All proposals will become part of the official file on this matter without obligation to the City. In addition, respondents are hereby advised that proposals, once the City has made its selection, are subject to the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act and, therefore, available for viewing or copying by anyone upon request.
11. This solicitation does not commit the City to pay any costs incurred in preparing and submitting the proposal or to contract for the services specified.
12. Acceptance by the successful proposer of an award from this proposal indicates that the successful candidate is in no way currently indebted to the City, Garland County or the State of Arkansas. Indebtedness to any of the above shall be basis for non-award and/or cancellation of any award.
13. It is the City's policy to encourage the involvement of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (minority-owned and women-owned businesses) in contracts awarded. DBE's are particularly invited to submit proposals to perform work outlined in this RFP, either as a prime contractor, subcontractor, or as part of a joint venture. Non-DBE firms are encouraged to arrange subcontracts or joint ventures with DBE's prior to submission of their proposal.
14. ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING PROPOSAL RESULTS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO MARY BURKS, PURCHASING OFFICE, CITY OF HOT SPRINGS, HOT SPRINGS, AR 71901 (501) 321-6830.
15. Requests for clarification of any items, requirements or specifications contained herein must be received by the City, **IN WRITING**, (fax permissible) no later than the close of business on October 16, 2020. Upon receipt of a request for clarification, the City shall respond in writing no later than October 20, 2020 and shall furnish a copy of said response to all prospective respondents who have obtained copies of the "Request for Proposals" at the time the City's response is mailed if the response materially changes the RFP or is deemed significant. The procedure outlined above shall be followed in order to ensure competitive fairness by providing all prospective respondents with the same information. Except when in the City's best interest, the names of prospective proposers will not be divulged.
16. Proposals must be signed by a corporate officer authorized to commit the submitting firm and shall remain in full force and effect for ninety (90) calendar days following the date of opening shall not constitute a right to withdraw the proposal after it is opened.

17. Respondents should also be available for oral presentations if such presentations are deemed necessary to determine the most qualified firm. Any such oral presentation will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.
18. Any contract resulting from this “Request for Proposal” may be terminated by either party to the contract upon ninety (90) days written notice.

IV. PROTEST PROCEDURES

Protest of proposal procedures, specifications or proposal selections shall be made in accordance with the following procedures. Such protests may only be initiated by an authorized representative of a person, firm, or corporation who has direct economic interest in the particular procurement in question.

1. **Protest Filing.** Any protest must be filed with the purchasing agent at the address specified in the RFP specifications. The protest must be in writing and describe in full detail the basis for the protest and the particular proposal in controversy. In order to meet the time frames enumerated hereinafter, a protest may be received in person, by U.S. mail, facsimile or electronic means; provided, however, that facsimile or electronic filing shall be followed with documents bearing original signatures as soon as practical thereafter.
2. **Specifications (Pre-Award).** Protest of proposal specifications or procedures must be received by the purchasing office no later than five (5) business days prior to the scheduled RFP opening or deadline period. Protests received the day of proposal opening or deadline period will not be considered.
3. **Award.** Protests of procurement decisions shall be filed by the protestant within five (5) business days of the proposal award decision. Upon a determination of vendor selection from the proposal process, a “Notice of Intent to Award” will be posted on the City’s bid website. The purchasing agent, in consultation with the City Attorney and City Manager, shall have authority to settle and resolve the protest. If the protest is not resolved by mutual agreement, the City Manager or his designee shall issue a decision in writing to the protestant within ten (10) business days after receipt of the protest stating the reasons for the action taken.
4. **Post award protests and protest timelines.** All post proposal award protests shall be referred to the City Manager for action. Furthermore, the City Manager, at his/her discretion, may extend the protest timelines.
5. **Stay of procurement award.** In the event of a timely protest pursuant to this section, the city shall not proceed with the solicitation or procurement until the protest is resolved by mutual agreement, the City Manager or his designee issues a final decision, the board of directors approves the procurement in controversy or a court decision is rendered if the controversy is filed in court. Provided, however, that the City may proceed with a procurement in controversy if a written determination is made by the purchasing agent, in consultation with the City Attorney, that the items to be purchased are urgently required, the delivery or performance will be unduly delayed by failure to make the award promptly, or failure to make award will otherwise cause undue harm to the City.
6. **Award notification.** Notification of procurement decisions shall be available as soon as such decisions are final. Proposal or contract award recommendations to be considered by the board of directors shall, whenever possible, also be available in the office of the City Clerk seven (7) calendar days prior to the board of directors meeting at which the proposal or contract award is scheduled for consideration. It is the responsibility of all proposers to make inquiry of the purchasing office regarding procurement decisions for rendering protests.
7. **Federal grants.** Protest of any procurement funded in whole or in part with federal grant funds may also be filed subsequently with the funding agency. The Department with primary oversight responsible for a particular federal grant shall ensure that federal agency bid protest procedures, if any, are made available and shall

provide assistance in the administration of such agency protest procedures.

V. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Hot Springs is accepting proposals for after-hours answering service for the Utilities Water and Wastewater Departments. The city provides water and wastewater service to over 80,000 customers, and has three production plants that are manned and operated 24/7. The answering service will be receiving calls from utilities customers with water or wastewater emergencies, and employee safety calls. The city's Lakeside Water Plant, Ouachita Water Plant, and Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant have minimal staff after hours, weekends, and holidays; as a safety protocol we require the employee at each plant to report in every 2 hours to the answering service. In the event that a safety call is not received from an employee a call flow chart will be provided for proper personnel to be notified of a possible issue. Our average after-hours customer calls are 350 per month with the length of the call varying depending on the nature of the emergency. The average employee safety calls are 650 per month, with the length of these calls being less than 20 seconds each. Monthly average is 1100 minutes per month for all calls.

An adequate number of employees must be staffed at the answering service during after-hours and holidays to accept our calls and leave no call unanswered. Records of calls must be archived, and available if needed for the term of the contract. Answering service must have backup generator in the event of a power outage to assure that calls can still be received from customers and employees. **Contract may be extended for four 12 month additional terms upon mutual agreement..**

VI. SCOPE OF SERVICES

1. Answer incoming calls for 501-321-6200, 501-623-7963, 501-623-5502. and 501-623-7473 from 3:30 pm till 7:00 am Monday thru Friday, 3:30 pm Friday thru 7:00 am Monday, and 24 hours daily during City Holidays.
2. Answering service will record the customer's name, address, phone number, time and date, and the nature of the emergency. Answering service will then forward this information by text to the cities on-call personnel. On-call personnel will reply with verification of receipt. In the event that on-call personnel does not reply within 30 minutes answering service is to follow the call flow chart.
3. City of Hot Springs personnel on duty at each plant will call every 2 hours for a safety check from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am Monday thru Friday, and 24 hours daily on Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays. In the event that there are two employees at the plant they will notify the answering service and 2 hour safety check calls will not be required.
4. Answering service must provide (by email) a written daily report with all emergency call information. This report must be received by 7:30 am each business day.
5. City will provide a list of on-call numbers and a call flow chart in the event that on-call personnel cannot be reached or a safety call is not made.
6. City staff prefers a toll free number for transferring calls to be provided by the successful respondent. Indicate in your response the availability of the toll free line.

VII. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS / EVALUATION

Proposers must submit proposals which include the categories enumerated hereinafter. Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the City's evaluation criteria (Section VII) based solely upon the proposal contents; therefore, respondents should carefully address each of the following proposal content categories.

- A. **Qualifications.** Describe and provide detail of the firm's qualifications and experience to perform this work. Include expertise, training, etc.
- B. **Experience/References.** Describe the entity's general and municipal experience performing this type of work. Provide references with entity name, individual contact name, phone number, etc.
- C. **Method of Accomplishing the Project, Capability and Availability of Staffing.** Describe how the scope of work will be performed. Include proposed method of performing the work and any exceptions or alternative methods
- D. **Cost.** Describe in detail the total cost the proposer will charge the city to perform the services the proposer offers. The cost shown must be all inclusive -
- E. **DBE/WBE.** Proposers who are **certified** disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) or women owned business enterprises (WBE) or minority owned business enterprises (MBE) may qualify for five (5) points as a DBE/WBE/MBE. To claim these points, proposers must include a copy of a current DEB/WBE/MBE certification issued by a governmental agency with their proposal..

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The City's purpose in soliciting proposals is to determine and select the best qualified firm with which to award an agreement at the best possible price. In order to accomplish this objective, the following evaluation criteria and procedure will be used:

	<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Max. Points</u>
A.	Qualifications	20
B.	Experience, References	20
C.	Method/Capability/Availability/Staffing	25
C.	Cost	30
D	DBE/WBE/MBE	<u>5</u>
	Total Points Possible	100

Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee using the above criteria. Each reviewer will evaluate the five sections of each proposal based on the proposal's content. Reviewers will then assign a point score between zero and the criteria's maximum possible points for each section. Points for each proposal will then be totaled and proposals ranked from the highest to the lowest total point score. The City reserves the right to invite two or more of the highest rated firms to make oral presentations (short list). Firms invited to make oral presentations will be reevaluated using the above criteria based on their oral presentation. The firm selected for a bid award will be expected to incorporate, in the agreement their assurances, offers or guarantees made in their oral presentation. Negotiations will be conducted initially with the firm adjudged to be the best qualified firm following the ranking and rating process. If a mutually satisfactory contract cannot be negotiated with the selected firm, the firm will be requested to submit a best and final offer in writing, and, if not approved, negotiations with that firm will be terminated. Negotiations will then be initiated with the subsequently qualified firm, and this procedure will be continued until a mutually satisfactory contract has been negotiated. The objective of negotiations will be to reach an agreement on the plans for the services to be provided and an acceptable cost proposal that outlines the cost for each task and final products.

IX. AWARD OF CONTRACT

The City Manager or his designee will review the selection committee's recommendation and make the final decision regarding recommending bid award to the Board of Directors.

The City reserves the right to request the modification of any and all proposals and/or to reject all proposals. The detailed provisions of the contract may be prepared by the City Attorney. Any significant work alterations or additions during the term of the contract shall be renegotiated by the City and the selected respondent. The selected respondent may be required to obtain a City business license. The City reserves the right to request the modification of any and all proposals and/or to reject all proposals.



Dorethea Yates, Finance Director



Date

EXHIBIT A

This is an example of the basic cost elements to be addressed in your response. Also include with your response any other information you deem pertinent to your response to provide an efficient and money saving plan.

RATE FOR ANSWERING SERVICE

_____ Minutes for \$ _____ Monthly
_____ Minutes for \$ _____ Monthly

Cost per Minute for Overages _____
Monthly Charge for Daily Reports _____
Monthly Charge for Hourly Safety Call In _____
One Time Programming Fee if applicable _____
Holiday Related Fees _____
Indicate if hourly _____ or flat fee _____
Number of Days in billing cycle _____

ALSO INDICATE IF THE TOLL FREE NUMBER IS AVAILABLE AND PROVIDED IN YOUR PROPOSAL.

COMPANY

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

DATE

**UTILITES DEPT
CALL FLOW CHART**

