



FRANKLIN COUNTY ENGINEER

CONSULTANT SELECTION POLICY

**AUGUST 2024
EDITION**

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FCEO MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Franklin County Engineer's Office is to provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods from place to place by designing, building and maintaining Franklin County's roads, bridges and infrastructure for multiple modes of transportation. We are an agency of action, innovation, and collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

The consultant selection process described herein applies for consultant selections for all projects with the Franklin County Engineer's Office and must comply with the Ohio Revised Code sections 153.65 through 153.71. Exceptions to this policy include:

- Selection of consultants for work on projects where the total projected estimated fee will not exceed \$50,000.00. (Per ORC. 153.71)
- Emergency projects, as determined by the Franklin County Commissioners, which require immediate action.

In the case where the consultant fees will be reimbursed with state and/or federal funds, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) regulations shall also apply. In addition, ODOT consulting services policies will apply, and the entire consultant selection process needs to be coordinated with the appropriate ODOT staff.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this consultant selection process is to ensure that consultant services for Franklin County roads and bridges are performed by qualified firms and those most experienced to perform the necessary tasks. The policy is also meant to ensure that all qualified firms are given an equal opportunity to be evaluated and considered for work with the Franklin County Engineer.

The Franklin County Engineer is responsive to the needs of the community. Please direct any questions or comments regarding this policy to:

Barbara Cox, P.E.
Planning & Programming Engineer
Franklin County Engineer
970 Dublin Road
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: 614-525-3020
Email: bcox@franklincountyengineer.org

A. CONSULTANT PREQUALIFICATION

The Franklin County Engineer will maintain a list of firms that are qualified to provide roadway, bridge, traffic, drainage engineering and real estate acquisition services. Firms will be added or removed from the list based upon their current state of personnel and experience. This will typically be documented through the firm's submission of a "Statement of Qualifications" (SOQ). Franklin County Engineer staff will use the SOQ's on file at the time of selection to determine whether the firm will be considered for providing services. The SOQ does not need to meet any specific format, but should address the following key items, at a minimum:

- A list of all of the services that the firm is qualified to provide. ODOT prequalification is preferred for engineering services, but not required. ODOT prequalification is required for real estate acquisition services.
- Short biographies of the staff that would typically be involved in providing each of the noted services.
- A summary of recent (within the last five years) projects completed by the firm. Details on the specific services the firm provided on the project should be clarified. In addition, it should be noted whether the firm was the lead consultant or a subconsultant on the project.
- An indication of the type and scope of projects for which the firm feels capable of providing services. This should be based upon typical staffing levels and average workload.
- A reference list of a least three public agencies for which the firm has recently (within the last five years) provided services. For each agency, include the name and contact information for the individual that directly supervised the firm's work.

The Franklin County Engineer's Office requires that firms provide updated SOQ's every year. Firms may submit initial SOQ's at any time. Firms are encouraged to submit updates to their SOQ's at any time when significant changes to their qualifications or staffing occur.

B. DETERMINING THE NEED TO USE CONSULTANT SERVICES

As consultant services are deemed necessary, the first step will be to determine if the work can be performed by Franklin County staff or if it would be more appropriately done by a private consultant firm. Factors to be taken into account include:

- The anticipated size of the project
- Technical expertise and experience required
- Estimated County staff workload
- Financial and/or funding considerations
- Other issues deemed important and relevant

This initial determination will be made by the Franklin County Engineer Chief Deputy – Engineering. The Chief Deputy – Engineering may solicit input from other Franklin County Engineer staff to help make a determination on whether to use County staff or a private consultant firm. If it is determined that a private consultant firm will be used, it will also be determined at this stage whether the selection will be made based upon a simple letter of interest, addition of the project to the bi-annual selection or whether a more detailed technical proposal will also be used in the ultimate selection. Once the Chief Deputy – Engineering has decided on a course of action, they will submit their recommendation to the County Engineer for approval.

C. PROJECT ADVERTISEMENT

The Ohio Revised Code 153.67 dictates the options for proper advertisement of consultant services. Franklin County Engineer may use the following means of advertisement:

- Email / letter to all consultants that have provided an SOQ to FCEO.
- Print advertisement in a newspaper of appropriate frequency and circulation.
- Post advertisement on the internet including the Franklin County Engineer website.

For larger projects or solicitations for a number of different projects, the individual email / letter option will typically be employed (see Appendix A for a typical solicitation letter).

D. LETTER OF INTEREST SUBMISSIONS

All project solicitations will first require a Letter of Interest (LOI) to be submitted. Even when it has been determined that a more detailed technical proposal will ultimately be solicited from a limited number of consultants, the LOI submissions will be used to determine which consultants are invited to submit the more detailed technical proposal.

The Franklin County Engineer intends to provide up to two solicitations annually for private consultant services on a variety of projects. A presentation or open house to review and discuss the projects may be performed. For solicitations with a number of different projects included, the LOI will typically be the “selection form” (see Appendix B for example) and a one page cover letter from the firm. The cover letter should highlight the firm’s qualifications specific to their preferred projects. The letter should also include information regarding the anticipated sub-consultants that may make up their team on the project. The Franklin County Engineer encourages the use of certified businesses as project partners. If more than one project is selected on the selection form, firms are requested to rank the projects in order of their level of interest for each project. The cover letter should also address the plan for complying with the Franklin County Engineer’s Equitable Business Enterprise Program for Locally Funded Projects.

The LOI for small, individual projects will typically just consist of a response on a firm’s letterhead indicating they are interested, they understand the scope of work and that they are capable of meeting the desired schedule.

For large projects that the County will ultimately want a technical proposal submitted, the initial LOI will typically come as the “selection form” noted above. In the case where the project is the only project in the solicitation, the initial letter of interest format will typically follow that for a small, individual project.

It is important to highlight that, to satisfy the Ohio Revised Code requirements for “Qualification Based Selection”, costs or fees should not be included in an LOI. The cost for consultant services will be addressed after consultant selection during the negotiation phase.

E. TECHNICAL PROPOSALS

Only the larger, more complex projects will follow the technical proposal course. It is usually projects where County staff is looking for an innovative or unique approach to the overall scope of work; or where the overall project design skills deemed necessary may require a “team” of consultants to accomplish.

Because these projects are unique, the request for technical proposal will also need to be a unique document. There are two overall issues that should be considered when requesting technical proposals:

1. The type of information that should be provided to the potential firms are any design aspects, overall project schedules, cost limitations or other criteria that County staff have knowledge of and that will likely dictate the scope of the project. Clearly defined criteria, along with other issues that County staff have an already established opinion against, should be clearly stated in the solicitation for a technical proposal. The goal is to not have a consultant pursue a design option or direction that County staff already knows they will not consider.
2. After addressing the project guidance deemed necessary noted above, limit any further “guidance” in the proposal request. With a technical proposal meant to help County staff determine different approaches to the project or help differentiate the capabilities of the different firm and teams, further comments or ideas should be avoided. Too much information or suggestions may only inhibit the consultants from proposing their thoughts because of overly detailed or restrictive input by the County.

As with the LOI, costs or fees should not be included in a technical proposal. That will be addressed in the negotiation phase.

F. CONSULTANT SELECTION COMMITTEE

Upon receipt of LOI’s and/or technical proposals, the initial evaluation and recommendations will be made by the Consultant Selection Committee. The members of the Consultant Selection Committee will vary depending on the project(s), but may consist of the following Franklin County Engineer staff:

- Chief Deputy – Engineering
- Chief Deputy - Operations
- Highway Design Engineer
- Bridge Engineer
- Planning & Programming Engineer
- Mobility Engineer
- Construction Services Engineer
- Riparian and Environmental Engineer
- Real Estate Administrator

Other Franklin County Engineer staff will participate as dictated by the Chief Deputy – Engineering. In addition, staff from other agencies or private parties participating in some fashion on the project may also be invited to be part of the Selection Committee.

The Planning & Programming Engineer will act as the primary administrator for the Selection Committee. The Chief Deputy – Engineering will have the final decision on the recommendations sent forward to the Franklin County Engineer. The Franklin County Engineer will make the final selection.

G. LETTER OF INTEREST / TECHNICAL PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Consultant selections for project(s) solicited through the basic Letter of Interest process will typically be evaluated based upon the information provided in the firm’s respective Statement of Qualifications and submitted cover letter. Selection Committee members will use their evaluation of the firm’s staffing and experience to form their individual recommendations. The Selection Committee members will discuss the individual recommendations to arrive at a mutual agreeable final recommendation to submit to the Franklin County Engineer. In the case of a “tie”, the Chief Deputy – Engineering will make the final recommendation to submit to the Franklin County Engineer.

Technical Proposals will be similarly evaluated, but with any other specific criteria evaluated included that County staff deemed appropriate for the given project.

Upon completion of the evaluation and selection process, the Chief Deputy – Engineering will seek approval of the recommendation(s) from the County Engineer.

H. SCOPE OF SERVICES and FEE NEGOTIATIONS

The selected consultant will be contacted by the appropriate County staff member (the county’s project manager) to attend a scoping meeting. The details of the project and needed professional services will be discussed at this meeting. The consultant will develop a scope (task list) and their proposed fees to perform the work detailed in each task. The consultant can submit this electronically to the County project manager for review. The County staff will perform a review of both the tasks and the fees. Comments will be provided to the consultants. The firm can request a meeting to discuss the comments provided. Revised scopes and fees can be submitted electronically.

Should County staff be unable to come to agreement on the fee with the initially chosen firm, the firm will be notified in writing. Staff will then begin discussions and negotiations with the next highest rated firm.

Upon successful negotiations, the consultant agreement will be processed in accordance with Chapter 4 of the current Franklin County Specifications for Consulting Services.

APPENDIX A – Example Solicitation Letter



CORNELL R. ROBERTSON, P.E., P.S.
FRANKLIN COUNTY ENGINEER

March 4, 2022

Mr. John Smith
Engineering Company, Inc.
123 Main Road, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Mr. Smith

I am pleased to announce the availability of professional engineering services contracts for a number of upcoming projects for the Franklin County Engineer's Office. The enclosed form provides a short summary of 7 projects. The form should be used to indicate your interest in one, any, or all of the projects with a rating of 1 – 7 (1 signifying the project most interested in and 7 least interested). A fillable PDF version of this form will be available on our website on Monday, March 7, 2022.

We encourage interested firms to submit a short, one-page letter highlighting what aspect of their staffing, or recent project experience, would make them the best choice for one or more of the projects. Additional information you feel is pertinent regarding your qualifications for the project, including sub-consultants you plan to utilize if selected, should be included.

Per the recently updated Franklin County Engineer's Equitable Business Enterprise (EBE) Program for Locally Funded Projects, a minimum ten percent (10%) EBE participation goal will be established on agreements that have sub-consulting opportunities. Please include in your letter of interest if your firm or any of your sub-consultants are certified business enterprises (MBE, WBE, EDGE, VBE, etc.).

The interest form and one-page letter are to be submitted to Barb Cox at the Franklin County Engineer's Office via email at bcox@franklincountyengineer.org no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 1, 2022. Please address any questions to Barb at the same email address or at (614) 525-3020.

I appreciate your past support of this office and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cornell R. Robertson".

Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S.
Franklin County Engineer

CRR:bc
Enclosure

970 Dublin Road, Columbus, OH 43215 (614) 525-3030 Fax: (614) 525-3359
www.franklincountyengineer.org

APPENDIX B – Example Project Interest Form



Project Interest Form for Franklin County Engineer Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S.

March 19, 2021

[Redacted]

(name of firm)

would like to express an interest in providing

engineering services to Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S., Franklin County Engineer on the following projects. Our preference of projects is as follows (“1” for most preferred project; “4” for least preferred project; leave the project line blank if you are not qualified and/or not interested in the project):

[Redacted]

Frank Road 7.31 over Early Run: Develop plans to replace the existing structure.

[Redacted]

Frank Road at Hardy Parkway Street - Brown Road (C142) and Frank Road at Brown Road (T142): Develop plans for two multi-lane modern roundabouts at these intersections including right of way plans and utility relocations.

[Redacted]

Drainage Improvement Study – Hott Ditch: Provide watershed analysis and potential drainage improvements for Hott Ditch (Madison Township).

[Redacted]

General Engineering Services: Contract for “on-call” services to assist the County on roadway, traffic, drainage and other miscellaneous, yet to be determined, tasks.

[Redacted]

Signature

[Redacted]

Printed Name

[Redacted]

Title

Return form no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 16, 2021 to Barb Cox via email at bcox@franklincountyengineer.org. Direct questions to Barb at the same email address or by phone at 614-525-3020.