

Lake County Utilities Department Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Lake County Solid Waste Facility (LCSWF) Solar Energy Project

Introduction:

The Lake County, Ohio Utilities Department is soliciting responses to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the purpose of identifying a qualified, experienced firm to act as the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) entity for the LCSWF Solar Energy Project. The goal of this project is to harness solar energy on a closed portion of LCSWF's landfill for the purpose of electricity generation, while contributing to sustainability goals, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and potentially creating revenue streams for the County.

Scope of Work:

Lake County is seeking a qualified firm to support the design, permitting, installation, and operational optimization of ballasted (non-penetrating) racking systems with mounted photovoltaic (PV) panels on a capped portion of its landfill. The selected firm will play a key role in the planning, engineering, and implementation of the project, while considering the specific conditions of the LCSWF.

Project Objectives:

1. **Collaborative Approach:** Both parties will engage in a collaborative effort to recognize the overall project potential, identify risk-reward partnerships, and optimize outcomes based on Lake County's unique conditions. The County expects realistic expectations for the long-term commitment to project returns.
2. **Operational Integration:** Given the separation between landfill operations and solar energy recovery, it is essential to integrate these two components into the planning process. Potential changes to current landfill operation and maintenance practices will need to be incorporated into the solar energy project design. The selected firm will need to evaluate these operational changes and their effects on system design and operations.
4. **Site Conditions:** The firm selected will be expected to focus on the variable site conditions at the LCSWF, and how they might affect the solar energy system design, the landfill cap, and ongoing monitoring. These conditions include differential settling, changing weight distribution, heavy snowfall, and the risk of cap puncture. The system design should allow for remote construction of modular components, with efficient installation and system integration once on-site.
5. **Project Schedule:** The EPC team will be responsible for establishing a realistic and comprehensive project schedule, ensuring it accounts for planning, permitting, equipment ordering, and installation timelines. The team must be prepared to dedicate appropriate resources to ensure timely completion of these tasks. The EPC entity will also work with the County team to track and review progress, adjusting the schedule as needed to accommodate unforeseen developments.
6. **Long-term Relationship and Risk Mitigation:** The County understands the long-term nature of this project, which may involve a relationship with the developer for twenty years or more. The selected EPC entity will be expected to establish a relationship of trust with the County, ensuring that risk management strategies are in place, and both parties share a commitment to the project's success.

Qualifications and Proposal Requirements:

The County invites responses from qualified firms or teams that can provide the following information. Note that each of the four areas of concern is weighted by importance, as a percentage of 100%.

1) Project Team (20%)

- a. Office location(s)
- b. Total number of personnel
- c. Management structure
- d. Qualifications (education and experience) of key executives and project leaders
- e. Technical expertise in the selection, design, and integration of solar energy projects
- f. Safety record, environmental compliance history and certifications

2) Project Approach Specific to Lake County (30%)

- a. Outline of the implementation and management of the project from construction to operations phase
- b. Overview of solar energy recovery process
- c. Detailed profile of solar energy recovery technology
- d. Detailed profile of solar array ballast system and PV panel mounts (fixed tilt vs. unfixe d tilt)
- e. Seasonal energy recovery efficiency
- f. How the system would be monitored to prevent puncture of the landfill cap.
- g. Operational efficiency: uptime rate vs. downtime rate
- h. Benefits for the environment

3) Provide Individual Profiles for up to Four Current or Past Projects (30%)

- a. Locations, including any that are within a one to two-day drive time from the LCSWF.
- b. Permit acquisition process
- c. Project footprint
- d. Overall project design, including PV arrays, racking systems and electricity offtake
- e. Project site maintenance
- f. Proximity to populated areas
- g. Challenges and resolutions
- h. References

4) Corporate Financial Profile (20%)

- a. Ownership structure
- b. Length of time in solar energy business
- c. Portfolio summary: List of completed/operating solar energy projects, including at landfills
- d. Key financial highlights: Summary metrics for the last 3-5 years:
 - i. Annual revenue and growth
 - ii. Operating income
 - iii. Total assets, liquidity ratios and debt levels
- e. Pending or past legal criminal, civil or environmental suits

Conclusion:

This RFQ represents an exciting opportunity for qualified firms to engage in a collaborative effort with Lake County to maximize the potential of electricity generation via a solar energy project at the LCSWF. The County seeks a partner who can bring innovative solutions, technical expertise, and a commitment to the long-term success of the project. Responses will be reviewed based on the firm's experience, qualifications, and approach to managing the project's complexity and scope.

Submission Instructions:

Please note that this RFQ represents phase one of a two-phase evaluation process. RFQ submittals will be reviewed by the Lake County Department of Utilities (LCDU). This review will determine which firm(s) will be invited to engage in phase two. Phase two will be comprised of a request for proposals process, and involve more detailed discussions around approach parameters, cost considerations, additional questions from LCDU and financing alternatives.

Firms interested in responding to this RFQ should submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) that outlines the qualifications of the firm, the proposed approach (including preliminary thoughts on technology and landfill integration), relevant experience (with specific examples of landfill or similar solar projects), and key personnel.

The submission deadline is **April 3, 2026**. Please submit through email to Timothy Gourley (Tim.Gourley@lakecountyohio.gov).