

CITY OF TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA



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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES  
WATER & SEWER UTILITY  
BILLING AND PRINTING SOLUTION**

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Project Name: Professional Services for Water and Sewer Utility Billing and Printing Solution

Project Number: A22-0367

Issued by:

City of Tuscaloosa  
Infrastructure & Public Services  
2201 University Boulevard  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Date Issued: May 2, 2022

Deadline for Responses: May 23, 2022

**LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

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## **PART 1 – OVERVIEW**

The City of Tuscaloosa is requesting proposals from firms to provide Professional Services for the Water and Sewer Utility Billing and Printing Solution Project. Part 2 of this RFP provides a general description and abbreviated scope of work for the project.

The selected firm will be required to enter into a written professional services agreement. Such agreement shall reflect the terms and conditions included in the RFP and the selected firm's proposal, as well as any other provisions mutually agreed upon by both parties. The agreement is subject to authorization and approval by the Tuscaloosa City Council.

## **PART 2 – THE PROJECT AND SCOPE OF WORK**

### **2.1 The Project**

The City of Tuscaloosa is requesting a printing and mailing services solution, including options for customers to receive bills electronically for the City of Tuscaloosa's Utility Billing operations. The City generates roughly 60,000 bills per month, with an estimated 50,000 bills per month printed and mailed and 10,000 bills per month sent via Email. The City be capable of mapping our data via XML from MUNIS to a PDF bill.

Currently the City of Tuscaloosa has 10 billing cycles each month and produces roughly one final bill batch each week, resulting in 14 billings each month. Bill cycles may have between 3,500-10,000 bills, based on the cycles and final bill cycles may run between 150-600 bills.

The desired date to "go live" with printing and mailing will be December 21, 2022

### **2.2 Services and Scope of Work**

The scope of work for this project is to provide the City of Tuscaloosa a printing and mailing, as well as E-bill solution for utility bills.

The service provider will work with the City to design and create a bill and map the data via XML from our billing software, MUNIS by Tyler Technologies.

The City currently sends out single-sided bills on 8 ½" x 11" paper, with color. Bills are mailed in a #10 double window envelope and include a #9 single window reply envelope. Occasionally the city has need for "bill inserts" either as an "in-line" addition of an extra page or as a separately printed piece that needs to be printed and included with the bill (such as a pamphlet). Some inserts must be included in all bills in a cycle and some may be included in bills that match certain, mapped criteria (such as district count).

The primary objectives of the printing, mailing and electronic billing services are to:

- Ensure timely and accurate production and delivery of bills and any correspondence to utility customers in accordance with our billing schedule. Ideally, all bills will be mailed within 24 hours of electronic receipt.
- Reduce costs for bills and correspondence production and delivery to customers.
- Minimize mailing delays due to equipment failures and maintenance.
- Decrease mail delivery time due to proximity of mailing location from Tuscaloosa
- Maintain accuracy of piece counts.
- Maintain current postal discounts and achieve additional postal discounts where eligible and appropriate.
- Improve postal records through electronic reports.
- Provide a solution that allows for expedited changes to forms and envelopes to accommodate changes, additions or deletions and/or topical content on billing statements.
- Provide reporting on documents as they move through the printing, insertion and mailing processes.

### **PART 3 – CONTENT OF PROPOSALS**

In order to facilitate the Selection Committee’s evaluation, each response should include the following content, in the following order:

- Cover Letter
- Table of Contents
- Background Information & Experience
- Project Understanding and Approach
- Professional and Industry Standing
- Conflicts of Interest

Each of these items is discussed in more detail in the following sections:

#### **3.1 Cover Letter**

The primary purpose of the cover letter is to identify a representative of the Respondent who is authorized to answer questions about the Respondent’s response and to negotiate a Professional Services Agreement (“PSA”) with the City. The cover letter should provide the name, title, telephone number, email address, and mailing address for the Respondent’s designated representative.

The cover letter must be signed by the Respondent’s designated representative, and shall serve as a certification that all of the statements and information in the Respondent’s proposal are true, correct, and accurate.

### **3.2 Table of Contents**

Please include a table of contents for the proposal and any attachments or appendices.

### **3.3 Background Information and Experience**

a. The background information should describe in general the Respondent's history and its experience in similar projects specifically including relevant experience providing water and sewer utility billing solutions for other public entities, as well as Respondent's customer retention rates. Please identify the firm's location, key team members and a brief firm biography.

b. For each public entity for which the Respondent provided similar professional services, please provide the following information:

- i. Project title, Client/Owner name and location
- ii. Client contact person, address, and phone number
- iii. Respondent's project manager for the project
- iv. Detailed description of the project and the services provided by the Respondent
- v. Year services performed and date(s) of project

c. Provide your past five year history of target, completion dates and accuracy of cost estimates for printing and mailing services solution implementations, including the implementation of electronic billing and payment programs in conjunction with printing and mailing solutions.

d. Explain your firm's approach to redundancy in cases where Respondent's main facility becomes inoperable. Provide evidence of backup disaster and recovery for downed equipment.

e. If the Respondent is a minority-owned or woman-owned business, please include a statement to that effect.

f. If the Respondent proposes to use subconsultants to perform any part of the work or services for the project, please provide the following information:

- i. The corporate or company name of each subconsultant, and names of the officer or principals of the subconsultant who will perform work on the project
- ii. A description of each subconsultant's role, the work or services to be performed, a description of previous joint work between the Respondent and the subconsultant
- iii. List the particular experience of the subconsultant's key personnel, including past projects; and
- iv. Indicate if any proposed subconsultant is a minority-owned or woman-owned business, please include a statement to that effect.

### **3.4 Project Understanding and Approach**

Please respond to your firm abilities to provide the following services:

- a. **BILL DESIGN, CREATION, MODIFICATION AND STORAGE**
  - i. Mapping water bill data from MUNIS via XML and creating a PDF bills for printing/mailling and /or Ebill.
  - ii. Ability for City to make changes to the base bill and have those changes implemented in less than 14 days
  - iii. Ability to electronically store PDF bills for a minimum of 12 months in a location accessible by the City
  
- b. **PRINTING AND MAILING**
  - i. Materials specific to utility bills must conform to the following
    - i. 8.5" x 11" 20-lb. white paper for billing statements
    - ii. #10 double window outer envelope
    - iii. #9 single window reply envelope
  - ii. Ability to mail documents within 12 hours to one business day of receipt of file transfer.
  - iii. Ability to take a small batch, less than 500 bills on any given day, and batch that with another customer in order for the City to qualify for the postage discounts
  - iv. Ability to combine bills at the same address and name into one envelope
  - v. Ability to postmark from Tuscaloosa or Birmingham or another location from which residents receive their bills within a 24-hour period of being mailed.
  - vi. Ability to offer "Selective Inserting" so that Bank Draft (ACH) customers will not receive a return envelope.
  - vii. Ability to omit the return envelope for customers with \$0 balances or credits.
  
- c. **BILL INSERTS**
  - i. Ability to provide inline inserts (selectively adding a page to all or specific bills)
  - ii. Ability to print and add insert into bill envelope (that can't be printed inline)
  - iii. Ability to selectively add inserts based on provide criteria (such as council district)
  
- d. **EBILL**
  - i. Ability to handle sending out bill electronically (and separating those from the printed bills based on provided criteria)
  - ii. Analytics: Ability for the City to track open, bounced mail, unsubscribes and spam report
  - iii. Ability to send in manner that reduces the probability of bill being marked as spam
  - iv. Ability for customers to unsubscribe
  
- e. **TRACKING AND SUPPORT**
  - i. Provide web-based interface for job tracking, reports, insert management, etc.

- ii. Ability to provide proof of delivery to USPS on an as-requested basis
  - iii. Ability to provide address cleansing services and reports indicating all incomplete addresses in a billing file that could not be certified by the USPS, along with a list of all address updates that have been implemented to reduce or eliminate any returned mail.
  - iv. Ability to subscribe to USPS Address Service Requested services for purposed of mail forwarding to customers who have moved.
  - v. Ability to provide live, direct (no third-party) technical support that is available via phone and/or email between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Central Time with initial response time of 30 minutes or less for critical technical issues. Critical issues are defined as those issues that negatively affect City business processes to the degree that City customers do not receive accurate utility bills, or utility bills cannot be delivered by the agreed upon schedule.
  - vi. Ability to ensure that any Confidential information is appropriately backed-up and shall have in place and maintain up-to-date business continuity procedures to ensure that in the event of a failure of, or disruption to, Contractor's infrastructure, Contractor is able to continue to perform its obligations under this Agreement to normal performance levels within the shortest practicable time period.
- f. FEES. Provide the following:
- i. Cost per printed bill (print and handle); cost of postage (bulk, first class)
    - A. Include the cost of outer and reply envelopes
    - B. Include color and black & white options for printed bills
    - C. Include one-side and 2 sided options for printed bills
  - ii. Cost per additional page (bill), as well as for inline inserts
    - A. Include color and black & white options
  - iii. Cost per Ebill

### **3.5 Professional and Industry Standing**

For the five year period preceding submission of the proposal, please identify:

- a. All contracts terminated (in whole or in part) by clients for convenience or default, including contract value, description of work, project owner, contract number, and name and telephone number for a representative of the project owner;
- b. All claims made against the Respondent arising out of the Respondent's professional services; and

c. All litigation (including any arbitration or mediation proceedings) to which the Respondent has been a party.<sup>1</sup>

d. If no contracts have been terminated, or if the Respondent has not been a party to any claims or litigation, please include a statement to that effect.

### **3.6 Conflicts of Interest**

Please identify all actual or potential conflicts of interest that would prevent the Respondent from entering into a professional relationship with the City generally or for this project specifically.<sup>2</sup> If no such conflicts exist, please include a statement to that effect.

## **PART 4 – INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROPOSALS**

Before submitting a response, the Respondent should carefully review the entire RFP and be familiar with its contents. Submission of a response shall be considered evidence that the Respondent has fully studied the RFP and is familiar with the general conditions to be encountered in performing any services.

### **4.1 Submissions**

**Respondent firm submissions must be received by the City by May 23, 2022 12:00 midnight Central Daylight Time.** Late responses will not be accepted or reviewed. It is the Respondent's responsibility to ensure that their submission is received within the time required by this RFP.

Respondents must submit responses electronically. Electronic submissions should be made in Portable Document Format (PDF) file format, and should be sent via email to:

**Stacy Vaughn, Director of Public Services**  
**City of Tuscaloosa**  
[svaughn@tuscaloosa.com](mailto:svaughn@tuscaloosa.com)

The Respondent's email should reference "RFP Response for Professional Services for Water and Sewer Utility Billing and Printing Solution (A22-0367)". The Respondent is responsible for obtaining confirmation that the City received their response.

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<sup>1</sup> The disclosure of terminated contracts, claims, or litigation will not automatically disqualify a Respondent from consideration. The Selection Committee will review any matter disclosed, and make an independent determination as to whether the matter should disqualify the Respondent from consideration.

<sup>2</sup> The disclosure of actual or potential conflicts of interest will not automatically disqualify a Respondent from consideration. The Selection Committee will review any disclosed conflicts, and make an independent determination as to whether the potential conflict should disqualify the Respondent from consideration.



## **4.2 Inquiries**

The City will accept inquiries on the contents and requirements of the RFP in electronic form only. Inquiries may only be submitted by email. Inquiries should be submitted to:

**Stacy Vaughn, Director of Public Services**  
**City of Tuscaloosa**  
[svaughn@tuscaloosa.com](mailto:svaughn@tuscaloosa.com)

Inquiries can be submitted regarding this RFP until May 16, 2022 12:00 midnight Central Daylight Time, after which time no further inquiries will be addressed by the City.

If the City chooses to respond to an inquiry, the City will do so in writing, in the form of an addendum to this RFP. The addendum will be sent to all recipients of the RFP, and will be posted to the City's website at [www.tuscaloosa.com/bids](http://www.tuscaloosa.com/bids).

Each addendum issued by the City shall become part of this RFP and responses shall include any work or requirements described in the addendum. No addendum will be issued or posted less than 72 hours before the deadline for submission of responses to this RFP.

## **4.3 Additional Items Related to submissions by Respondent Firms**

### **a. Submission rejection/costs**

By issuing this RFP, the City does not commit to entering into a contract, to paying any costs incurred in the preparation of a submission, response, or to procuring or contracting for services. The City reserves the right to cancel this RFP in whole or in part, to reject any and/or all submissions and responses, to accept the submission and response it considers the most favorable to the City's interests in its sole discretion, and to waive irregularities or informalities in any submissions/responses or in the submission procedures. The City reserves the right to reject all submissions or responses and issue a new RFP, at its sole discretion. All submissions and responses and other materials submitted in response to this RFP will become property of the City.

### **b. Contract and Insurance Requirements**

The City has standard contract and insurance requirements for professional services contracts, and is unable to make substantial changes to the requirements for the contract to be used for this project. The laws of the State of Alabama shall govern the contract executed between the successful Consultant and the City, as well as any interpretations or constructions thereof. Further, the place of performance and transaction of business shall be deemed to be in the City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and in the event of litigation, the exclusive venue and place of jurisdiction shall be in the Tuscaloosa County, Alabama.

**c. Requests for Additional Information**

The City reserves the right to request additional information from Respondents to clarify the submissions.

**4.4 Public Records**

Each Respondent is hereby informed that, upon submission of its response to the City in response to this RFP, the response becomes the property of the City.

Unless otherwise compelled by a court order, the City will not disclose any response while the City conducts its deliberative process in accordance with the procedures identified in this RFP. However, after the City either awards an agreement to a successful Consultant, or the City rejects all responses, the City shall consider each response subject to the public disclosure requirements of the Alabama Open Records Act (Ala. Code § 36-12-40) and Tuscaloosa City Code § 2-4, unless there is a legal exception to public disclosure.

If a Respondent believes that any portion of its response is subject to a legal exception to public disclosure, the Respondent shall: (1) clearly mark the relevant portions of its response “Confidential”; (2) upon request from the City, identify the legal basis for exception from disclosure under the Open Records Act; and (3) defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City regarding any claim by any third party for the public disclosure of the “Confidential” portion of the qualifications submittal.

**PART 5 – SELECTION PROCEDURE**

The City will use a Selection Committee of qualified City employees for the evaluation of responses.

The Selection Committee will review the responses submitted in response to this RFP, and rate the responses based on the following grading system, which includes both numerical and pass/fail criteria:

<b><u>Numerically-Scored Criteria</u></b>	<b>Max. Points</b>
Background Information & Experience	30
Project Understanding and Approach	35
Professional and Industry Standing	15
Compliance with RFP Instructions	10
Minority- or Woman-Owned Business	10
<b><u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u></b>	
Conflicts of Interest	P/F

The Selection Committee will eliminate from consideration any response that receives a “Fail” grade on any one or more of the pass/fail criteria for evaluation.

After review and evaluation of the responses, the Selection Committee may select one or more Respondents for interviews or demonstrations in-person or virtually. However, the Selection Committee is not required to conduct interviews. The Selection Committee may determine that interviews are not necessary for the selection process, and such decision is within the sole discretion of the Selection Committee.

When the Selection Committee concludes its work, it will make a recommendation to the City Council’s Public Projects Committee, and request authority to begin negotiating a PSA, including final scope of work and fees for services, with the successful Respondent.

Upon approval by the Projects Committee, City staff will begin contract negotiations with the successful Respondent. If the negotiations are unsuccessful, or if an agreement cannot be reached within a reasonable time, as determined by the City, then City staff will terminate negotiations the firm, and will request authority from the Projects Committee to begin negotiations with another Respondent. Any compensation discussed with one Respondent will not be disclosed or discussed with any other Respondent.

Upon the conclusion of negotiations, the successful Respondent will enter into a PSA with the City. The PSA shall not be in force until it is approved by the Tuscaloosa City Council, and it is signed by the Mayor. The City cannot pay for any work or services performed prior to the approval of the PSA by the City Council, and the issuance of a notice to proceed by the City.

The City’s anticipated schedule for the RFP and selection process is as follows:

<b><u>Event/Milestone</u></b>	<b><u>Anticipated Date*</u></b>
RFP Issued	May 2, 2022
Deadline for Inquiries	May 16, 2022
Deadline for Responses	May 23, 2022
Consultant Interviews (if necessary)	June 2-7, 2022
Consultant Selection / Begin Negotiation of PSA	June 8, 2022
Approval and Execution of PSA	June 22, 2022
Utility Billing Live Date	Dec 21, 2022

**\*Note:** The anticipated dates are for informational purposes only, and the timeline is subject to change without notice at the City’s sole discretion.

This RFP does not guarantee that the City will make any contract award. The City reserves the right to modify, amend, or withdraw this RFP, in whole or in part, at any time and for any reason, in its sole discretion. The City also reserves the right to reject all responses, in its sole discretion.

**END OF RFP DOCUMENT.**