

## **Request for Quotes – Depreciation Consultant to the Public Staff**

**January 24, 2022**

### **Introduction**

The Public Staff – N.C. Utilities Commission (Public Staff) is a state agency that represents customer interests in proceedings before the North Carolina Utilities Commission (Commission). The Public Staff is independent of the Commission.

The Public Staff may, with approval, hire independent contractors to provide subject matter expertise, pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 62-15(h):

The executive director is authorized to employ, subject to approval by the State Budget Director, expert witnesses and such other professional expertise as the executive director may deem necessary from time to time to assist the public staff in its participation in Commission proceedings, and the compensation and expenses therefore shall be paid by the utility or utilities participating in said proceedings. Such compensation and expenses shall be treated by the Commission, for rate-making purposes, in a manner generally consistent with its treatment of similar expenditures incurred by utilities in the presentation of their cases before the Commission. An accounting of such compensation and expenses shall be reported annually to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations and to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

The Public Staff seeks a consultant to assist with review of a depreciation study and the prudence and reasonableness of depreciation expense in a general rate case anticipated to be filed by Cardinal Pipeline Company, LLC, no later than March 15, 2022. The Depreciation Study was filed with the Commission on October 26, 2021, pursuant to Commission Rule R6-80, which requires each natural gas utility to submit a depreciation study for Commission approval every five years.

### **Scope of Work**

The consultant will review a Depreciation Study prepared by Brown, Williams, Moorhead & Quinn, Inc., which updates depreciable assets.

The typical general rate case timeline for Cardinal Pipeline, LLC, is approximately three months from the filing of the application to the issuance of an order by the Utilities Commission. The Public Staff normally has approximately two months to complete its review of the application and submit written testimony setting forth its findings and recommendations. An evidentiary hearing is usually held approximately one month later. The evidentiary hearing is likely to be held in June/July 2022. An investigation into the Depreciation Study and the prudence and reasonableness of the depreciation

expense will require more specialized expertise and resources than the Public Staff has available in-house. The Public Staff seeks to hire a consultant with the appropriate expertise and resources to conduct such an investigation. Ideally, we would like to have a contract in place with the consultant ready to perform by March 1, 2022.

The scope of work will include:

1. Review of a Depreciation Study prepared by Brown, Williams, Moorhead & Quinn, Inc;
2. Review of request for depreciation expense increase;
3. Preparing and submitting bi-weekly reports on the progress of the investigation or to-date results of the investigation as appropriate; and
4. Being available for weekly conference calls with the Public Staff.

As part of this scope of work, the consultant will

- Prepare written discovery questions and document requests for utility response;
- Participate with Public Staff personnel in site visits, interviews, and conference calls with the utilities;
- Communicate regularly with Public Staff personnel regarding project status and planning;
- Submit a final report to the Public Staff with detailed analysis and recommendations; and
- Attend evidentiary hearings before the Commission.

Issues related to the Depreciation Study and the prudence and reasonableness of depreciation expense will be governed by litigation deadlines, so the consultant must complete its duties within the time frames specified by the Public Staff. Thus, the consultant must have available sufficient staff resources to review and provide analysis of voluminous information within a few months. Time is of the essence in completing reviews for the Public Staff.

There is a possibility that the consultant will be called upon to provide written and oral testimony in a litigated proceeding before the Utilities Commission. Therefore, preference will be given for experience in testifying in legal proceedings, though that is not a requirement.

The Public Staff cannot easily predict the consultant's time commitment for this project, so in addition to a not-to-exceed total contract dollar value based on an estimated one-

year timeframe for the work, the Public Staff expects to receive quotes based on personnel hourly rates plus a schedule of any incidental charges (e.g., photocopying costs).

Consultant must bill at least monthly. Invoices must include a list of each consultant employee (or contractor if approved in advance by the Public Staff) who worked on the billed items, his/her hourly rates, the number of hours worked, the nature of the work, and the N.C. Utilities Commission docket number of the case.

Consultant may be required to execute confidentiality agreements with the utilities or other parties whose documents are being reviewed by the Public Staff and consultant.

Consultant shall be an independent contractor. The Public Staff shall have the right to unlimited use of all work product prepared by the consultant pursuant to the contract executed under this RFQ.

### **Required Information in Quotation**

All responses to this RFQ must be sent electronically to [gina.holt@psncuc.nc.gov](mailto:gina.holt@psncuc.nc.gov). Responses should include:

- A statement of the consultant's qualifications to perform the requested work, with a focus on experience in electric utility depreciation investigations to the extent possible;
- A list of personnel, to the extent known, who will provide the consulting services to the Public Staff, their hourly rates, and their credentials including academic background and work experience;
- A list of possible non-personnel costs and the associated rates where applicable. (E.g., any separate charges for communications, copying, or travel time.);
- At least two references who can speak to previous work done by the consultant, with a focus on experience in electric utility depreciation investigations to the extent possible;
- A description of similar prior projects performed by the consultant, including names of clients (if not confidential), the nature of the analysis performed, and the timeframe of that performance;

A statement affirming that the consultant has not performed work for Cardinal Pipeline Company, LLC, Public Service Company of North Carolina, Inc., Dominion Energy, Inc., Virginia Power and Light Company, Dominion Energy North Carolina, Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc., Duke Energy Corporation, Duke Energy Progress, LLC, Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC, or any of their affiliates. If the consultant has performed any work under contract for these companies or their affiliates in the past, or expects to perform work in the future, it must identify all such work, indicate whether any such work is ongoing, and explain why such work would not create a conflict of interest if the consultant is retained to work on behalf of the Public Staff;

- A statement of any past or present criminal charges (state or federal), and any government debarments from contracts, made against the consulting business or its current personnel;
- The consultant's federal employer identification number;
- The name, job title, mailing address, physical address, telephone number, and email address of the person who has the legal authority to issue the quotation on behalf of the consultant and to legally bind the consultant in a contract for consulting services pursuant to this RFQ;
- A statement that the consultant accepts all the provisions, terms, and conditions of this RFQ; and
- A statement of the not-to-exceed dollar amount for providing consulting services pursuant to this RFQ for the Public Service case.

### **Procedure**

All inquiries about procedures and responses to this RFQ should be directed in writing to the Business Officer of the Public Staff: Joyce Gwyn, email at [joyce.gwyn@psncuc.nc.gov](mailto:joyce.gwyn@psncuc.nc.gov).

Any questions about the RFQ scope of work may be sent to the Public Staff by email to Gina Holt until 5:00 pm (Eastern) on February 7, 2022. Responses will be sent via email and will be made available upon request.

**Quotations in response to this RFQ must be received by the Public Staff no later than 5:00 p.m. (Eastern) on February 9, 2022.**

All quotations will be kept confidential by the Public Staff until a contract for consulting services has been executed.

The Public Staff hopes to select a consultant from the quotation submissions in February 2022; however, the process may take longer if we have follow-up questions on the quotation, and we must also obtain approval thereafter from the State Budget Director. Acceptance of a contract for consulting services pursuant to this RFQ is subject to both the Public Staff's discretionary judgment, and approval by the State Budget Director.

The contract for consulting services pursuant to this RFQ shall consist of this RFQ, the written quotation in response to the RFQ, and a signed acceptance letter from an authorized employee of the Public Staff to the consultant.

## **GENERAL CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

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1. **CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION:** To the extent permitted by applicable statutes and rules, the State will maintain confidential trade secrets that the Consultant does not wish disclosed. As a condition to confidential treatment, each page containing trade secret information shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL" by the Consultant, with specific trade secret information enclosed in boxes or similar indication. Cost information shall not be deemed confidential under any circumstances. Regardless of what a Consultant may label as a trade secret, the determination whether it is entitled to protection will be determined in accordance with N. C. Gen. Stat. §132-1.2. Any material labeled as confidential constitutes a representation by the Consultant that it has made a reasonable effort in good faith to determine that such material is, in fact, a trade secret under N.C. Gen. Stat. §132-1.2. Consultants are urged and cautioned to limit the marking of information as a trade secret or as confidential so far as is possible.
2. **INFORMAL COMMENTS:** The State shall not be bound by informal explanations, instructions or information given at any time by anyone on behalf of the State during the competitive process or after award. The State is bound only by information provided in this RFQ and in formal Addenda issued.
3. **COST FOR QUOTE PREPARATION:** Any costs incurred by Consultant in preparing or submitting quotes are the Consultant's sole responsibility; the State of North Carolina will not reimburse any Consultant for any costs incurred prior to award.
4. **DEFAULT:** If, through any cause, Consultant shall fail to fulfill in timely and proper manner the obligations under this agreement, the State shall have the right to terminate this contract by giving written notice to the Consultant and specifying the effective date thereof.

Upon the Consultant filing a petition for bankruptcy or the entering of a judgment of bankruptcy by or against the Consultant, the State may immediately terminate, for cause, this Contract.

Upon termination by the State for Consultant's inadequate performance or bankruptcy, the State may terminate all other existing Contracts the Consultant has with the State, and debar the Consultant from doing future business with the State.

5. **SOURCE AND AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS:** Consultant invoices for services under this Contract shall be sent to the Business Officer of the Public Staff. The Public Staff will forward the invoices to the utility responsible for payment, and payment will be made from the utility to the Consultant. Otherwise, any and all payments to the Consultant are dependent upon and subject to the availability of funds to the agency for the purpose set forth in this agreement.
6. **SITUS:** The place of this Contract, its situs and forum, shall be North Carolina, where all matters, whether sounding in Contract or tort, relating to its validity, construction, interpretation, and enforcement shall be determined.
7. **GOVERNING LAWS:** This Contract is made under and shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of North Carolina, without regard to its conflict of laws rules.
8. **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:** The Consultant will take affirmative action in complying with all Federal and State requirements concerning fair employment and employment of people with disabilities and the treatment of all employees without regard to discrimination by reason of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability.
9. **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INDEMNITY:** Consultant shall hold and save the State, its officers, agents, and employees, harmless from liability of any kind, including costs and expenses, resulting from infringement of the rights of any third party in any copyrighted material, patented or unpatented invention, articles, device, or appliance delivered in connection with this contract.
10. **ADVERTISING:** Consultant agrees not to use the existence of this Contract or the name of the State of North Carolina as part of any commercial advertising or marketing of products or services. A Consultant may inquire whether the State is willing to act as a reference by providing factual information directly to other prospective customers.
11. **ACCESS TO PERSONS AND RECORDS:** During and after the term hereof, the State Auditor and any using agency's internal auditors shall have access to persons

and records related to this Contract to verify accounts and data affecting fees or performance under the Contract, as provided in Gen. Stat. §143-49(9).

**12. ASSIGNMENT:** No assignment of the Consultant's obligations or the Consultant's right to receive payment hereunder shall be permitted.

However, upon written request approved by the issuing purchasing authority and solely as a convenience to the Consultant, the State may:

- a. Forward the Consultant's payment check directly to any person or entity designated by the Consultant; and
- b. Include any person or entity designated by Consultant as a joint payee on the Consultant's payment check.

In no event shall such approval and action obligate the State to anyone other than the Consultant and the Consultant shall remain responsible for fulfillment of all Contract obligations. Upon advance written request, the State may, in its unfettered discretion, approve an assignment to the surviving entity of a merger, acquisition, or corporate reorganization, if made as part of the transfer of all or substantially all of the Consultant's assets. Any purported assignment made in violation of this provision shall be void and a material breach of this Contract.

**13. GENERAL INDEMNITY:** The Consultant shall hold and save the State, its officers, agents, and employees, harmless from liability of any kind, including all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any other person, firm, or corporation furnishing or supplying work, services, materials, or supplies in connection with the performance of this Contract, and from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any person, firm, or corporation that may be injured or damaged by the Consultant in the performance of this Contract and that are attributable to the negligence or intentionally tortious acts of the Consultant provided that the Consultant is notified in writing within 30 days that the State has knowledge of such claims. The Consultant represents and warrants that it shall make no claim of any kind or nature against the State's agents who are involved in the delivery or processing of Consultant goods to the State. The representation and warranty in the preceding sentence shall survive the termination or expiration of this Contract.

**18. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS:** Consultant shall comply with all laws, ordinances, codes, rules, regulations, and licensing requirements that are applicable to the conduct of its business and performance in accordance with this contract, including those of federal, state, and local agencies having jurisdiction and/or authority.

**19. ENTIRE AGREEMENT:** This RFQ and any documents incorporated specifically by reference represent the entire agreement between the parties and supersede all prior oral or written statements or agreements. This RFQ, any Addenda hereto, and

the Consultant's quotes are incorporated herein by reference as though set forth verbatim.

All promises, requirements, terms, conditions, provisions, representations, guarantees, and warranties contained herein shall survive the contract expiration or termination date unless specifically provided otherwise herein, or unless superseded by applicable Federal or State statutes of limitation.