

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Exploring Governance at the County Level: A Fact Based, Data Driven Assessment of Options From Functional Shared Services up to and Including Full Consolidation

Schuyler and Yates Counties, invite qualified consultants to submit responses to this Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a study to explore collaboration between the two counties ranging from functional shared services to full consolidation. Schuyler County, in partnership with Yates County, has received a Local Government Efficiency (LGE) Grant award from the New York State Department of State to undertake this study.

In recognition of the continued fiscal challenges associated with county government's role as the administrative arm of state government, the counties of Schuyler and Yates wish to explore options designed to lessen the cost of government while improving the delivery of services to their respective constituents. Each county has committed to fully study all options associated with the delivery of state/county services up to and including the possible merger of the two. Given the similar demographics and the contiguous nature of each, common sense alone would indicate that there is a significant potential to realize economies of scale without sacrificing quality of service. Additionally, should this project result in unit consolidations or merger, this could become a model for other governments within New York State and beyond. Consultant services are requested to identify opportunities and challenges associated with shared governance within the participating counties.

Introduction

Schuyler County <http://www.schuylercounty.us/> has a land mass of 342 square miles (population density 56/sq. mile) and is part of the Southern Tier Economic Development Region of the State. With a population of 18,343 (2010 Census) Schuyler County is the second smallest County in the State. Median income is \$41,441 annually. Local government units include 8 towns, four villages, and three school districts. The main economic sectors within the county consist of tourism, services, manufacturing, and agriculture. The County has enjoyed a number of successes in recent years in consolidating the delivery of public sector services. County wide assessing, shared records management, shared public works and shared fuel facilities are examples of recent collaborative partnerships within the County.

Schuyler County has 212 full-time and 43 part-time or less than full time employees. Services provided by Schuyler County are handled through the following departments: Highway, Sheriff's Office (includes communications, corrections, dispatch, law enforcement, civil office, STOP DWI and animal control), District Attorney, Probation (includes Alternative to Incarceration), County Attorney, Buildings & Grounds, Historian and Records Management, Personnel and Civil Service, County Administrator and Risk Management, Elections, Veterans, Purchasing, Office For The Aging, County Clerk and Division of Motor Vehicles, Planning, Real Property Tax Services, Treasurer, Social Services (includes Youth Bureau and Workforce Development), Public Health, Community Services, Information Technology, Public Defender, and Weights and Measures.

Yates County <http://www.yatescounty.org/> has a land area of approximately 334 square miles (population density 75/sq. mile) and is a part of the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council. With a 2010 Census reported population of 25,348, Yates County is contiguous to Schuyler sharing a north south border. A total of 65 miles of shoreline of three of the Finger Lakes – Seneca, Keuka and Canandaigua Lakes – are within Yates County’s boundaries. The county includes nine towns, four villages and three school districts. The main economic sectors within the county consist of tourism, services, manufacturing, and agriculture.

Yates County has 230 full-time and 61 part-time employees. Services provided by Yates County are handled through the following departments: Highway, Sheriff’s Office (includes communications, corrections, dispatch, law enforcement, civil office, court security, STOP DWI and animal control), District Attorney, Probation (includes Alternative to Incarceration), County Attorney, Buildings & Grounds, Historian and Records Management, Personnel including Civil Service and Risk Management, County Administrator, Elections, Veterans, County Clerk and Division of Motor Vehicles, Planning, Real Property Tax Services, Treasurer, Social Services (includes Youth Bureau and Workforce Development), Public Health, Community Services, Information Technology, Public Defender, and Weights and Measures.

Because numerous aspects of this proposal are unprecedented it is difficult to predict the actual level of benefits associated with future collaborations. However, due to the magnitude of even small successes, it is assumed that any benefit will be substantial. Our collective approach is to utilize a consultant to identify viable options up to and including merger that can realistically be implemented. In that both County’s provide almost identical services, at a minimum, opportunities for reducing administrative overhead appear to exist. It is our desire to explore other potential benefits such as consolidating facilities without sacrificing the mission or level of service. Additionally, cost avoidance opportunities should be identified including but not limited to equipment and facilities.

Scope

Schuyler and Yates County seek a study to determine the feasibility of sharing or consolidating individual services or facilities that each county currently provides so that these services are provided jointly to the population of both counties. Additionally, if it is determined that enough of the services each county currently provides can be consolidated; Schuyler County and Yates County also seek for this same study to determine the feasibility of merging both counties.

The chosen consultant will evaluate and recommend alternatives to the current structure of governance, identifying opportunities for consolidation of services between the two counties. Deliverables include:

- **Public Information and Outreach.** The consultant will interview staff and other stakeholders to assess existing cooperative arrangements, identify opportunities for additional cooperation, and determine challenges that may affect efforts to consolidate service delivery. The consultant will hold at least two (2) public forums (one in each county) to review and discuss potential opportunities to increase efficiencies through consolidation, cooperation or other means.
- **Kickoff Meeting with Project Steering Committee.** Steering committee to consist of representatives from each county to include County Administrator,

legislative, elected, judicial, administration, and staff. The steering committee will select the consultant, provide information to assist the consultant, coordinate public involvement, and provide periodic updates to respective jurisdictions regarding the status of the study. The steering committee also will coordinate media updates. For purposes of contract execution, the consultant will report to the Schuyler County Administrator, who will disperse the grant funds as needed.

- **Data collection and Assessment.** Consultant will conduct a baseline review of the existing operations and administration of each county government. Interviews and data requests will seek to gain quantitative and qualitative information documenting service levels and costs associated with same. Stakeholder meetings within each County government will be included as part of this task. Data to be gathered includes *but is not limited to*:
 - Review of budget documents and financial statements for each county for past three years
 - Salary and benefit schedules
 - Collective bargaining agreements from each county
 - Post-employment benefit costs for each county
 - Department specific organizational structure and mission
 - Existing shared service or collaborative arrangements within each county
 - Debt service and amortization schedules for each county
 - Asset inventory to include property and fixed assets
 - Other items as identified by the steering committee or selected consultant
- **Regulatory Issues.** Research and identify regulatory issues at the state and federal level that may pose barriers to collaboration, consolidation, or merger.
- **Analysis of Restructuring/Consolidation Options.** Baseline report will serve as the analytical framework to review options, including the status quo.
- **Recommendation and Implementation Planning.** The potential exists for recommendations of organizational change that will be complex to say the least. It is important that the selected consultant have the capacity and experience to provide quantifiable guidance in moving the parties to achievable goals. Based on a review of the study's analysis of alternatives, the Steering Committee will select a preferred alternative or alternatives. The consultant will work with the Steering Committee to develop an implementation strategy, which will include a specific course of action to implement the preferred alternative(s) and identify timeframes, cost and responsibilities of various entities to implement each recommendation. The study's recommendations will be presented to the County Legislature of both Counties'.
- **Project Closeout** The project is to be completed within one year of commencement. A final report will be submitted to the Steering Committee and will map out a pathway toward the most desirable outcome for the two counties, as identified collaboratively by the Steering Committee and other stakeholders within each County. It should contain specific implementable actions that will have been identified during the process by members of impacted departments, elected officials, and the general public.

Submittal Requirements

Proposals must be succinct and in no case exceed 20 pages. Boilerplate and glossy promotional materials are discouraged; any such materials deemed necessary should be included as a separate appendix and may or may not be considered as part of the evaluation. Proposals exceeding 20 pages will be disqualified from consideration. Questions regarding clarification of the RFP must be submitted in writing before 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, March 7, 2014** to Schuyler County Administrator Tim O’Hearn. Questions can be submitted through email. The response will be provided to all parties who request a copy of this RFP.

Deadline for Receipt of Proposals

The deadline for receipt of proposals is **March 21, 2014** at the office of the Schuyler County Administrator. Ten (10) print copies and one electronic copy of the proposal must be submitted. Proposals should include:

1. Firm identification and qualifications
Provide a brief description of the consultant's firm, size and organizational structure, number of full-time and part-time employees, area of practice, and number of years the firm has been in the business of conducting the described services. Provide a brief description of the consultant's qualifications for this project including a short history of the consultant's experience in similar projects. The firm's background, resources (financial and personnel), and capabilities in the relevant areas shall be described.
2. Project understanding
A demonstration of the consultant understands of the proposed project and its various tasks must be submitted as part of the Proposal.
3. Technical Approach, Scope of Work, and Schedule
Provide a detailed description of the consultant's proposed technical approach and scope of services for the completion of the tasks identified in this RFP. The consultant may propose alternate tasks that will meet the study objectives. A preliminary schedule for completing the study along with key study tasks should be included.
4. Project Staffing
The proposal should include information on how the consultant proposes to staff this project. This should include identification of the consultant's key project team members by name, field of expertise, specific responsibilities on the project and the estimated number of hours they will work on the project. Include any relevant experience, such as the number of similar projects in which the employee has directly participated.
5. Recent Clients
The proposal must include a list of three (3) most recent clients for whom the consultant has provided services similar to those required herein. The list should include the name, address, and telephone number of the client contact person. Identify when work was performed and the type of work and services performed. The Steering Committee may contact these references.
6. Fees
Responses are to include a summary sheet titled “Proposed Fees” that describes in detail the basis on which the consultant proposes to be compensated for this project along with a timetable for project work and deliverables.

This Request for Proposals does not commit Schuyler or Yates County to award a contract or to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of a contract for services. Schuyler and Yates County reserve the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, or to cancel, in part or in whole, this Request for Proposals.

All proposals shall be submitted to:

Schuyler County Administrator
105 9th St., Unit 37
Watkins Glen, NY 14891
tohearn@co.schuyler.ny.us

All questions shall be directed to:

Tim O'Hearn, Schuyler County Administrator
(607) 535-8106
tohearn@co.schuyler.ny.us

or

Sarah Purdy, Yates County Administrator
(315) 536-5509
sarahp@yatescounty.org