

Request for Proposals
Water Infrastructure Competitiveness Analysis

1. Introduction and Purpose

The North Carolina Chamber Foundation seeks experienced firms or academic institutions to conduct an in-depth study on North Carolina's water resources and water infrastructure compared to other U.S. states and regions. This research is intended to provide valuable insights for policymakers, economic developers, and industry leaders, helping them make informed decisions to advance North Carolina's infrastructure competitiveness and economic resilience. The research study should provide an inventory of current systems, as well as benchmarking and analysis about North Carolina's current water resources and water infrastructure compared to other states and regions. Metrics that articulate or illustrate competitiveness should be included.

2. Project Scope and Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to analyze North Carolina's current standing in water resources and water infrastructure in relation to other states and regions. The comprehensive analysis should encompass multiple dimensions of infrastructure, including but not limited to:

1. **Current state of Water and Wastewater Management in NC:** Conduct an in-depth assessment of the existing water infrastructure systems, encompassing water supply systems, distribution networks, treatment facilities, and wastewater management. Scope should include water supply, wastewater systems, and wastewater/stormwater management, both municipal, as well as regulated investor-owned utilities operating in the state. Pertinent factors may include infrastructure age, capacity, maintenance needs, energy consumption, environmental impacts, and current limitations.
2. **Current state of competitive states/regions:** Identify how other states/regions manage their water/wastewater systems, investment and maintenance, long-term planning, regulatory environment, policies that support growth or sustainability.
3. **Benchmarking and Comparative Assessment:** Perform a comparative analysis with regional, national, and international benchmarks. Evaluate systems in comparable states and regions, focusing on best practices for efficiency, adaptability to climate variance, service quality, and economic feasibility. Identify factors contributing to infrastructure competitiveness, such as regulatory environment, labor and talent access, technology adoption, and funding sources or mechanisms.
4. **Future State Projections/Recommendations and Modeling:** Develop projections for the future-state infrastructure that consider potential environmental shifts, urbanization trends, demand changes, and regulatory requirements. Use modeling tools to simulate water resource demands, identify optimal treatment and distribution methods, and project long-term sustainability.

Key characteristics of future-state infrastructure should include:

- Sustainability (assess alternative energy options, water reuse systems, and green infrastructure approaches);
- Resilience (consider system adaptability to climate variability, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity);
- Technology/Automation (what opportunities for smart technology integration, automated monitoring, and predictive maintenance may be relevant);
- Accessibility (ensure access to water resources and address socio-economic, rural/urban disparities); and
- Economic Viability (analyses of costs of recommended future state, prioritizing solutions that minimize long-term operational costs while maximizing operational efficiencies and capacity management).

3. Products/Deliverables:

1. Thorough report on the current infrastructure state, benchmarking data, and future-state scenarios. The report should include a review of relevant research literature, emerging technologies, applicable policy initiatives, and best practices. Field research is not relevant to this exercise.
2. Feasibility analysis for each future-state recommendation, including technological, operational, and financial impacts.
3. Recommendations for a phased implementation roadmap with a focus on measurable, sustainable outcomes.
4. Data Appendices: All raw data sets, analysis workbooks, and methodology documentation.

4. Submissions must not exceed seven (7) pages and must include:

1. Overview of the firm/organization, including relevant experience and past work in infrastructure research and comparative studies/analysis.
2. Proposed Methodology
3. Project Timeline and Milestones: An estimated schedule, including key milestones for deliverables. A first draft of the research shall be submitted for review within 45 days of project award. The final report shall be completed within 90 days of project award.
4. Budget and Cost Breakdown: detailed budget proposal, including any anticipated expenses and fees.
5. References: Contact information for two references from similar projects.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Technical Approach and Methodology
- Experience and Expertise
- Project Timeline and Management
- Cost and Budget



Evaluation of submissions may be a two-part process with initial review and possible subsequent interview.

Award of the contract is solely in the discretion of the NC Chamber Foundation. Nothing herein shall be construed to create any right or entitlement. The NC Chamber Foundation may reject any and all proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in email format to dmagliola@ncchamber.com by 5:00 pm EST on Monday, December 9, 2024.

Any questions regarding the RFP should be directed to Dana Magliola, NC Chamber Foundation (dmagliola@ncchamber.com). Bidders may also request a conference with the NC Chamber Foundation to review expectations and answer any questions.

