

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
ENGINEERING SERVICES
SANITARY SEWER FORCE MAIN CONVEYANCE SYSTEM PROJECT**

RFQ NO. 26-1014



catawba county
MAKING. LIVING. BETTER.

Date of Issue: April 7, 2026

Qualifications Statement Due Date: May 5, 2026

Time: 5:00 PM ET

Issued for:

**Catawba County Utilities & Engineering
Water and Sewer Division
25 Government Drive
Newton, North Carolina 28658
(828) 465-8261**

Issued by:

**Catawba County Purchasing Manager
25 Government Drive
Newton, North Carolina 28658
(828) 465-8224**

INTRODUCTION

Catawba County (hereinafter “County”) is soliciting the submittal of qualification statements from experienced Engineering Firms (hereinafter “Firm”) interested in providing services for the development of a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) including route alternatives, project cost estimates, environmental impacts, etc.; Engineering design including all necessary drawings and specifications; All necessary permitting; Project bidding and award; Construction Administration and inspection services, for a force main sanitary sewer conveyance system project estimated to be 22,000 linear feet to 61,000 linear feet in distance connecting to the Future Slanting Bridge Sanitary Sewer Lift Station to the existing Hickory-Catawba Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Conveyance System will be designed to convey 1.5 MGD, and expandible to convey 3.0 MGD. This project is anticipated to include work within and outside the NCDOT right-of-way. The property acquisition for this project will be performed by others, but the Firm will be asked to obtain permits to locate the conveyance system in NCDOT right-of-way where applicable. Eligible firms must have demonstrated experience in the wastewater project development from PER through project certification.

Catawba County reserves the right to reject any and all submittals. This submittal request is neither a contractual offer nor a commitment to purchase services. The County assumes no contractual obligation as a result of the issuance of this request, the preparation or submission of a qualifications statement by a Firm, the evaluation of statements or final selection.

PURPOSE

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is being issued by County for the purpose of soliciting Statements of Qualifications from firms for providing services for the design and construction administration and inspection for a force main sanitary sewer conveyance project in the southeastern part of Catawba County.

RFQ SCHEDULE

The table below shows the *intended* schedule for this RFQ. Catawba County will make every effort to adhere to this schedule.

Event	Responsibility	Date and Time
Issue RFQ	County	April 7, 2026
Submitted Written Questions	Firms	April 23, 2026 at 5:00 PM
Provide Responses to Questions	County	April 27, 2026 at 5:00 PM
Submit Proposals	Firms	May 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM
Contract Award	County	TBA
Contract Effective Date	County	Upon execution

The qualifications statement shall be submitted no later than 5:00 PM on May 5, 2026. No submittals will be accepted after the deadline.

Once the submittals have been reviewed, the County reserves the right to shortlist Firm(s) and request that the Firm(s) conduct a presentation and be interviewed by the selection committee.

RFQ QUESTIONS

Written questions shall be emailed to tinawright@catawbacountync.gov by the date and time specified above. Firms should enter “RFQ # 26-1014 – Questions” as the subject for the email. Questions received prior to the submission deadline date, the County’s response, and any additional terms deemed necessary by the County will be posted in the form of an addendum to the Catawba County website, <https://www.catawbacountync.gov/county-services/purchasing/bid-notice/> and shall become an Addendum to this RFQ. No information, instruction or advice provided orally or informally by any County personnel, whether made in response to a question or otherwise in connection with this RFQ, shall be considered authoritative or binding. Firms shall rely *only* on written material contained in an Addendum to this RFQ.

SUBMISSION OF QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications statement must be submitted with one (1) original, one (1) copy and one (1) electronic copy on flash drive. When responding to this RFQ, please follow all instructions carefully. Please submit proposal contents according to the outline specified. Failure to follow these instructions may be considered a non-responsive submission and may result in immediate elimination from further consideration. The qualifications statement should be sent to the address indicated in the table below.

Mailing address for delivery of proposal via US Postal Service	Office Address of delivery by any other method (hand delivery, overnight, or any other carrier)
RFQ Number: RFQ 26-1014 Catawba County Government Center Attn: Purchasing Department Post Office Box 389 Newton, North Carolina 28658	RFQ Number: RFQ 26-1014 Catawba County Government Center Attn: Purchasing Department 25 Government Drive Newton, North Carolina 28658

IMPORTANT NOTE: All qualifications shall be physically delivered to the office address listed above on or before the submission deadline in order to be considered timely, regardless of the method of delivery. **This is an absolute requirement.** All risk of late arrival due to unanticipated delay—whether delivered by hand, U.S. Postal Service, courier or other delivery service is entirely on the Firm(s). It is the sole responsibility of the Firm to have the qualifications physically in this Office by the specified time and date of opening.

BACKGROUND

History of Utilities in the SECC

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners (BOC) has long recognized the role of proactive infrastructure planning in establishing and maintaining a climate conducive to fostering quality growth and development. Over time, the BOC has governed in such a way that acknowledges the support role played by water and sewer infrastructure in facilitating and enabling market-driven development, rather than pushing or propelling that growth. In the early 2000’s, through an extensive public process involving design charrettes and citizen-based committees, Catawba County developed the Sherrills Ford Small Area Plan, in which the need for water and sewer investment and the notion of

land use driving infrastructure requirements was explicitly laid out. This Land Use Plan was updated in 2024.

The BOC also has a strong and long-standing tradition of partnership and collaboration. As such, Catawba County operates a water and sewer utility system through a series of partnership agreements involving municipalities within the region. Catawba County offers these services to its citizens through contract with partner jurisdictions for maintenance and operation of water and sewer systems, participating in various cost-share models for the funding of line extensions and infrastructure investments to support this approach. This series of agreements, some of which are specifically discussed below, has evolved over time to yield a service delivery system whereby County residents and businesses are afforded access to utilities provided by the County's municipal partners on behalf of the County.

WATER

The City of Hickory is the primary supplier of drinking water to the citizens of Catawba County. As such, Catawba County entered into a contract with the City of Hickory in August of 2000 for the provision of long-term supply of municipal water to Southeastern Catawba County (SECC) through 2040. Thus, the SECC water distribution loop was a needed benefit for the citizens of the SECC area, the towns of Maiden and Catawba, and the cities of Claremont and Conover, ensuring the continuous flow of drinking water by providing a fortified distribution system. All cities could benefit from the SECC loop in the event of a catastrophic event involving their water distribution systems.

The SECC water distribution loop was developed in three separate, but co-dependent phases. Between 2000 and 2016, Catawba County, in partnership with City of Hickory, constructed the water loop from the Conover interconnect, south along Sherrills Ford Road to NC Highway 150. From NC Highway 150, the waterline continued to East Maiden Road and Olivers Cross Roads, eventually interconnecting with Hickory's water system on Startown Road.

SEWER

While the final phase of water was under construction, the County began to extend sewer lines in the SECC area in an effort to expand service and spur economic development, primarily along the NC Highway 150 corridor. Sewer infrastructure began in 2010 with the northern section, a series of pump stations and force mains from Sherrills Ford Elementary School along Mollys Backbone Road, then along Brown Chapel Road, eventually connecting with City of Hickory's sewer system at the Hickory-Catawba Wastewater Treatment Plant. Sewer service then expanded along the NC Highway 150 corridor with a series of gravity sewers, pump stations and, force main sewers connecting to the northern project at Sherrills Ford Elementary School. Sewer along the NC Highway 150 corridor was completed in 2019.

While the sewer system along NC Highway 150 was under construction, the Hickory-Catawba Wastewater Treatment Facility expanded to 1.5 million gallons per day.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Firm shall provide professional engineering services to assist with the following:
Finding a sanitary sewer force main route from the future site of the Slanting Bridge

Sanitary Sewer Lift Station to the Hickory-Catawba Wastewater Treatment Plant. The force main will be designed to convey 1.5 MGD upon completion and be expandable to 3.0 MGD. The consultant selected for this project shall prepare design plans and specifications for force main; Obtain all necessary permits; Prepare bid documents and assist with bidding the project; Assist the County in evaluating the bids; Provide construction oversight and inspections services through the construction process; and prepare the final record drawings for the project. The following tasks comprise the general scope of work:

1. Project Kickoff Meeting
2. Develop Preliminary Engineering Report showing routing options and discussing pros and cons of each
3. Survey selected route
4. Prepare any easement maps and descriptions needed for selected route
5. Prepare construction plans and specifications
6. Provide Assistance in preparation of bid documents
7. Provide assistance in responding to bid questions
8. Bid evaluation assistance and recommendation
9. Construction Kickoff Meeting
10. Contract Administration
11. Review submittals and answer RFIs
12. Provide construction oversight and inspection services
13. Review contractor's invoices and make recommendation for payment
14. Prepare final record drawings in hardcopy and electronic/pdf format on a flash drive. Electronic record drawings will include surveyed attributes for inclusion in County's GIS. Attributes include, but are not limited to, air release valve location and pipe depth.

The list of tasks above is not meant to be a full description of the work, but a summary breakdown of the scope in the design and construction of the gravity sewer.

CONTENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS STATEMENT

Respondents must carefully read the information in this "Contents of Qualifications Statement" section and submit a complete Qualifications Statement responding to each request for information. Incomplete Qualifications Statements will be considered non-responsive and are subject to rejection.

Qualifications shall be submitted on 8-1/2 x 11 paper, side bound with Table of Contents and reference tabs for key sections. Qualifications Statements shall be limited to 30 pages, printed front and back.

The qualification statement must be submitted with one (1) original, one (1) copy and one (1) electronic copy on flash drive.

Qualification Statement shall include the following information:

1. Introduction – Letter of Transmittal

- Summarize in a brief and concise manner the Firm's understanding of the scope of work and make a positive commitment to perform the work in a professional and timely manner.

2. Qualifications of Firm

Please provide:

- General work plan that demonstrates the consultant's complete understanding of the scope of work.
- Company's recent history and experience in sanitary sewer force main design in the last three years as it relates to projects of same or similar scope as this project.
- Overall qualifications of project's managers and key personnel.
- Previous project success for projects similar in scope to this project.
- Overall experience with:
 - Developing written technical specifications
 - Sanitary Sewer Conveyance Systems to include Gravity Sewer, Lift Stations, and Forcemain Design
 - Project Construction oversight and inspection.
 - Project administration.
 - Project closeout.
- Provide a summary of any litigation, claim(s), or contract dispute(s) filed by or against the Firm in the past five (5) years that are related to the services that the Firm provides in the regular course of business. The summary shall state the nature of the litigation, claim, or contract dispute; a brief description of the case; the outcome or projected outcome; and the monetary amount involved. If no litigation claim(s) or contract dispute(s) have been filed by or against the Firm in the past five (5) years, please state that.
- List any regulatory or license agency sanctions. If no license sanctions against the Firm, please state that.

3. Project Management and Key Personnel

Please provide:

- Firm staff resumes that show project comparable experience in North Carolina for staff assigned to this project.
- State qualifications of the firm and its key personnel who will be assigned to work with the County.
- List of personnel who will work on the project including their specific qualifications and experience on projects of similar scope.
- List any professional training and experience, especially in relation to the type and magnitude of work required for this particular scope of services.
- List any licenses or certifications related to the scope of work described in this Request for Qualifications.
- Describe the Firm's approach to and/or method of cost control and project scheduling.
- Current workload and percentage of availability of key personnel.
- Hourly billing rates charged by your Firm for each position type.

4. References – Past Performance and Existing Contracts

Please provide:

- List of previous and current clients for work similar to this scope of work within the past three years. Include names and location of project, brief description and firm’s key personnel’s involvement, name of project manager and telephone number, date, and value of project. In addition, please complete Attachment A: Reference Disclosure Form and submit with qualifications.

EVALUATION METHOD - SELECTION PROCESS

Catawba County will use the following selection process. This process is designed to ensure that consultants are selected in a fair and uniform manner, those selected for work are qualified and experienced in the professional services desired, and to ensure that every qualified consultant has the opportunity to be considered for providing professional services to Catawba County.

A Selection Committee will evaluate responses to the Request for Qualifications and determine the most qualified applicants. Upon receipt of the packages from respondents, the Selection Committee will review using a scoring program that has been determined by the committee and detailed below. Past performance will be scored based on responses from the references submitted by the responder and/or the experience of the Selection Committee with particular firm’s past performance. Only one reviewer will contact any given reference.

The Selection Committee will use the total point scores to rank the prospective Firms. The Selection Committee will determine the most highly qualified Firm based upon the ranking scores. Once the firm is selected, contract award and authorization will be sought from either the County Manager or the Catawba County Board of Commissioners, whichever is applicable.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Content of Qualifications Statement, as referenced above, shall be evaluated as follows:

Description	Total Possible Points
Qualifications of Firm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of Previous Projects (i.e. still in operation, how long in operation, etc.) • Developing Written Technical Specifications • Project Understanding • Overall Gravity Sewer, Lift Station & Force Main Design Experience • Previous/Pending Litigation 	30
Project Management and Key Personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience on similar projects. • Projects on time and in budget. • Gravity sewer project experience. • Professional Training/Qualification • Workload and Availability 	60

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost Control/Scheduling • Relevant Licenses/Certifications 	
References – Past Performance and Existing	10
	100 Points

FIRM INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

The successful Firm will be required to provide the County with Certificates of Insurance meeting the County’s insurance requirements as specified below. Failure to provide the required insurance will result in cancellation of the selection and the County will have the right to enter into an agreement with the Firm with the next highest ranking. Firm shall maintain at all times during the term of this Agreement, at the Firm’s sole expense:

I. Commercial General Liability Insurance

Firm shall maintain Commercial General Liability insurance written on an occurrence basis, including coverage for products and completed operations liability, contractual liability, liability from independent contractors, property damage liability, bodily injury liability, and personal injury liability with limits of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 annual aggregate. The aggregate limit shall apply separately to each location. The limits may be satisfied by a combination of primary and excess insurance.

II. Professional Liability Insurance

Firm shall maintain Professional Liability insurance with limits of not less than \$1,000,000 per claim and \$2,000,000 aggregate.

III. Business Automobile Insurance

At all times while the Firm’s representatives are conducting on-site work, the Firm shall maintain Automobile Liability insurance for any owned, hired, rented, or borrowed vehicle with a limit of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage liability. The limit may be satisfied by a combination of primary and excess insurance.

IV. Workers Compensation & Employers Liability Insurance

At all times while the Firm’s representatives are conducting on-site work, Firm shall maintain statutory Workers Compensation insurance in accordance with the laws of North Carolina. Firm shall also maintain Employers’ Liability insurance with limits of not less than \$500,000 per accident and \$500,000 each employee for injury by disease.

V. General Requirements

1. Catawba County shall be named as an additional insured under Firm’s automobile and general liability insurance. In the event of a loss arising out of, or related to the Firm’s services performed under

this Agreement, Firm's Liability insurance shall be primary (pay first) with respect to any other insurance which may be available to the County, regardless of how the "other insurance" provisions may read.

2. The Firm's General Liability, Automobile Liability, and Workers Compensation insurance must contain a waiver of subrogation in favor of the County.
3. Firm shall be responsible for insuring all of its own personal property, improvements, and betterments.
4. All insurance policies put forth to satisfy the above requirements shall require the insurer to provide a minimum of sixty (60) days' notice to the County of any material change in coverage, cancellation, or non-renewal.
5. All insurance put forth to satisfy the above requirements shall be placed with insurance companies licensed to provide insurance in the state of North Carolina. Any deductibles or self-insured retentions in the required insurance shall be subject to approval by the County.
6. Prior to beginning the work, Firm shall provide written evidence of insurance as requested by the County to confirm that these insurance requirements are satisfied. Firm agrees to provide complete copies of policies if requested. Failure of Firm to provide timely evidence of insurance, or to place coverage with insurance, or to place coverage with insurance companies acceptable to the County, shall be viewed as Firm's delaying performance entitling the County to all appropriate remedies under the law including termination of the contract.

**ATTACHMENT A
REFERENCE DISCLOSURE FORM**

Firm shall provide information regarding experience in work similar to this scope of work by listing FIVE (5) RECENT CLIENTS, ONLY ONE OF WHICH MAY BE A CATAWBA COUNTY GOVERNMENT LISTING. References should be clients of a similar scale as the services requested in this RFQ.

1. COMPANY NAME: _____
PERSON TO CONTACT: _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED: _____
SIZE: _____
JOB DATES:
BEGINNING _____ END _____

2. COMPANY NAME: _____
PERSON TO CONTACT: _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED: _____
SIZE: _____
JOB DATES:
BEGINNING _____ END _____

3. COMPANY NAME: _____
PERSON TO CONTACT: _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED: _____
SIZE: _____
JOB DATES:
BEGINNING _____ END _____

4. COMPANY NAME: _____
PERSON TO CONTACT: _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED: _____
SIZE: _____
JOB DATES:
BEGINNING _____ END _____

5. COMPANY NAME: _____
PERSON TO CONTACT: _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS: _____
TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED: _____
SIZE: _____
JOB DATES:
BEGINNING _____ END _____