FLINT HILLS
REGION

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND PROPOSALS (RFQP)

Engineering Services for U.S. Highway 24 Water Systems Regionalization Feasibility Study

Issued by: Flint Hills Regional Council, Inc. (FHRC)

Funding source and state administration: Kansas Water Plan funding; RFP review and approval, final scope approval, and state administration by the Bureau of Water, Kansas Department of Health, and Environment (KDHE)

Study area: Water systems along and near U.S. Highway 24 between Manhattan and Wamego, Kansas

Proposal Advertisement date: August 13, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. CDT

Question Due: August 21st, 2026, by 12:00 PM CT. Email questions to **rfp@flinthillsregion.org**

Proposals Due: Friday September 11th, 2026, by 12:00 PM CT. Email Proposals to **rfp@flinthillsregion.org**

Draft study due: March 31, 2027

Final study due: April 30, 2027

Purpose: FHRC seeks a qualified engineering firm or team to conduct a regional, multi-municipality feasibility study of water-system regionalization and coordination options. The final study will assist participating local governments, stakeholders, KDHE, and the Kansas Water Office with feasible technical, financial, governance, and implementation pathways.

1. Invitation and Background

The Flint Hills Regional Council, Inc. invites qualified engineering firms to submit proposals for professional engineering and related planning services for a Water Systems Regionalization Feasibility Study. The study will evaluate the feasibility of regionalizing or improving coordination among water systems for drinking water, wastewater, storm water, and fire suppression, located along and near the U.S. Highway 24 corridor between Manhattan and Wamego. It will examine technical, financial, governance, and operational alternatives to determine whether a regional approach could improve system reliability, resiliency, efficiency, and long-term sustainability while meeting the current and future water needs of the corridor. The selected firm will perform a planning-level feasibility analysis that documents existing conditions, evaluates reasonable alternatives across the full range of water systems, and uses, develops preliminary cost estimates, and identifies key constraints, implementation considerations, and recommended next steps. The consultant must also demonstrate meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout each phase of the study.

2. Procurement Approach and Kansas-Law Alignment

This RFP uses a competitive best-value procurement process in which technical qualifications and price are evaluated together. The selected contract and final scope are subject to FHRC approval and to review and approval by the Bureau of Water.

- Best-value selection. FHRC will evaluate proposals using the criteria and weights stated in this RFP, including project understanding, qualifications, technical approach, team capacity, stakeholder process, schedule, implementation value, and price. Award may be made to the respondent whose proposal provides the best overall value, rather than solely to the lowest-priced respondent or the highest-ranked firm on qualifications alone.
- Cost proposal. Respondents must submit the cost proposal with the technical proposal as directed in this RFP. Price will be scored as part of the overall best-value evaluation. FHRC may seek clarification, verify assumptions, and negotiate scope, terms, and price with the highest-ranked best-value respondent, subject to KDHE review and approval.
- Required state provisions. The final agreement will incorporate Kansas non-discrimination requirements and other applicable grant or state-agency conditions.
- No guarantee of award. FHRC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities, request clarifications, conduct interviews, negotiate scope, and fee, or cancel the procurement if doing so is in the best interest of the project and consistent with applicable law and grant requirements.

3. Study Objectives

- Define the existing water-systems conditions, capacities, deficiencies, regulatory issues, known planned improvements, and service-area constraints across participating jurisdictions and utilities, for each water system category.

- Identify technically feasible regionalization, interconnection, shared-service, governance, operational, and capital-improvement options, in each water system category.
- Estimate order-of-magnitude capital, operating, lifecycle, and implementation costs for feasible alternatives, in each water system category.
- Evaluate benefits, risks, constraints, sequencing, funding pathways, and governance considerations, in each water system category.
- Engage local governments, utilities, state agencies, major users, emergency-service stakeholders, and other affected parties in a structured process that informs an impartial analysis without presuming or negotiating toward a single predetermined outcome.
- Produce a draft report by March 31, 2027, for steering committee, stakeholder, and KDHE review, and a final polished report by April 30, 2027, for approval and transmittal to KDHE, the Kansas Water Office, and other required recipients.

4. Anticipated Scope of Services

The respondent should propose a complete method for conducting the study. At minimum, the scope should include the following work elements.

Work Element	Expected Content
Project initiation	Kickoff meeting; confirmation of study geography; data request list; communications protocol; schedule; risk register; stakeholder map.
Data collection and existing conditions	Collection and review of available engineering reports, utility maps, asset data, water-rights, or capacity information where relevant, regulatory records, capital plans, rates, service areas, fire-flow information, and known constraints.
Stakeholder conversations	Structured interviews or working sessions with participating municipalities, utilities, counties, emergency-service representatives, major institutional or industrial users, state agencies, and other stakeholders identified by FHRC.
Study design and screening framework	Definition of evaluation criteria, alternatives-screening method, assumptions, data limitations, and decision points before detailed analysis begins.
Alternatives development	Development of practical regionalization or coordination alternatives, which may include interconnections, shared treatment, or storage, phased capital improvements, shared staffing or operations, emergency redundancy, governance options, no-build, or baseline alternatives, phased strategies, or multiple complementary alternatives. The analysis may conclude that regionalization is not presently feasible.
Cost and feasibility analysis	Planning-level cost estimates; high-level constructability and permitting considerations; O&M implications; governance and implementation issues; funding and financing considerations.

Work Element	Expected Content
Draft study	Draft report, executive summary, findings, alternative comparisons, recommended next steps, and presentation materials delivered by March 31, 2027.
Review and finalization	Steering committee, stakeholder, and KDHE review period; comment log; revisions; final report and presentation package delivered by April 30, 2027, subject to required KDHE review and approval.

5. Required Deliverables

Deliverable	Minimum Expectation
Project management package	Kickoff agenda, project schedule, communications plan, data-request matrix, and monthly progress summaries.
Stakeholder engagement record	Interview list, meeting summaries, themes, unresolved questions, and comment-response log.
Existing conditions memorandum	A clear summary of systems, data gaps, constraints, and baseline issues.
Alternatives and screening memorandum	Study design, assumptions, evaluation criteria, options screened out, options carried forward. The memorandum may identify phased strategies or multiple preferred alternatives.
Planning-level cost estimates	Capital, operating, lifecycle, phasing, and implementation cost estimates with assumptions and limitations clearly stated.
Draft feasibility study	Draft delivered no later than March 31, 2027, allowing the steering committee and stakeholders time to review and suggest edits.
Final feasibility study	Final report delivered no later than April 30, 2027, suitable for KDHE approval and transmittal to the Kansas Water Office and required legislative and agency recipients.
Presentation materials	A concise slide deck or briefing packet for FHRC, the steering committee, stakeholders, KDHE, and Kansas Water Office review. Presentation of final study at the FHRC May 2027 Board Meeting.

6. Mandatory Final Report Contents

The final regional water-systems feasibility study must be sufficient in scope and detail to address drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, fire suppression, and other relevant water uses. At minimum, the final report must include the following:

1. Date of report submission.
2. An executive-level conclusion that identifies a recommended alternative only when the impartial analysis supports one. The conclusion may instead recommend a phased strategy, identify multiple preferred or complementary alternatives, or find that regionalization is not presently feasible.
3. Description of existing conditions for participating systems and affected neighboring systems, including system age and condition; treatment, collection, conveyance, storage, drainage, and fire-flow capacity where applicable; current and projected demand or flows; service areas; regulatory status; planned improvements; and other relevant characteristics.
4. Description and documented causes of the problems or opportunities being addressed, including applicable compliance, public health, water quality, wastewater, stormwater, drainage, fire-suppression, resilience, affordability, capacity, and service-reliability issues.
5. Future demand, flow, population, development, and land-use estimates for participating systems and affected neighboring systems, together with the expected regional impacts of each feasible alternative.
6. Discussion and evaluation of alternatives considered across drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, fire suppression, shared operations, governance, emergency redundancy, and other relevant water uses.
7. Justification for any recommended alternative, phased strategy, or set of multiple preferred alternatives, including the evaluation criteria, assumptions, limitations, and reasons other alternatives were not preferred. If no alternative is recommended, the report must explain why regionalization is not presently feasible and identify conditions that could change that conclusion.
8. If development of a new water source, treatment facility, conveyance system, collection system, storage facility, drainage improvement, or other major infrastructure is recommended, demonstration that reasonable use, rehabilitation, coordination, or expansion of existing facilities and resources is not feasible or would not meet the identified need.
9. Funding and financing options for each feasible alternative, including estimated annual and total costs, potential grant or loan programs, allocation considerations, and material assumptions.
10. Estimated annual operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, lifecycle, phasing, and implementation costs for each feasible alternative, with assumptions and limitations clearly stated.
11. Evaluation of feasible alternatives to help participating systems and affected neighboring systems achieve and maintain appropriate technical, financial, managerial, operational, regulatory, resilience, and service capacity.

12. Potential environmental, public health, community, land-use, permitting, and regulatory impacts for each feasible alternative.
13. Comparison of regional or shared-service alternatives with reasonable go-it-alone or baseline alternatives for each participating system, using relevant and understandable cost measures. For rate-supported utility alternatives, the comparison should include estimated customer impacts, such as monthly minimum charges and usage-based rates, where applicable.

The selected firm must identify any criterion that is not applicable to a particular water use, system, or alternative and explain the reason rather than omitting the subject from the report.

7. Anticipated Stage Gates

Gate	Stage	Purpose
1	Contract Execution and Project Kickoff	Confirm the final scope of work, project schedule, participating entities, communication protocols, deliverable expectations, and applicable procurement and compliance requirements with FHRC and KDHE
2	Existing Conditions and Data Assessment	Review available data, identify information gaps, document assumptions where data are unavailable, and confirm the technical approach for the study.
3	Stakeholder Engagement	Present initial findings from stakeholder outreach, validate regional issues and opportunities, and confirm that the study is addressing the appropriate regionalization and coordination questions.
4	Alternatives-Screening	Review the preliminary evaluation of alternatives and confirm the screening criteria before advancing selected alternatives for more detailed technical, financial, and governance analysis. The study may conclude that a phased implementation strategy, multiple preferred alternatives, or no currently feasible regionalization option is appropriate.
5	Preliminary Findings Workshop	Present preliminary recommendations, planning-level cost estimates, implementation considerations, risks, and potential next steps for review and discussion prior to preparation of the draft report.
6	Draft Study Submission	Deliver by March 31, 2027, for steering committee and stakeholder review.

Gate	Stage	Purpose
7	Final Study Submission	Submit the final study by **April 30, 2027**, incorporating review comments and delivering a final report suitable for KDHE approval, transmittal to the Kansas Legislature and Kansas Water Authority.

8. Proposal Content Requirements

Responses must be practical, specific, and tailored to a public-sector engineering review panel. Each proposal must include the following sections.

- **Transmittal lette**r signed by a person authorized to bind the firm.
- **Executive summary** describing the firm's understanding of the project and the central questions the study must answer.
- **Firm qualifications,** Kansas engineering licensure status, relevant water, wastewater, stormwater, fire-flow, regional utility, and public-sector experience.
- **Project team and roles**, including the project manager, technical leads, subconsultants, and availability through April 30, 2027.
- **Detailed study approach,** including stakeholder conversations, study design, data collection, impartial alternatives analysis, cost-estimating approach, governance considerations, quality-control process, and the method for considering phased strategies, multiple preferred alternatives, or a finding that regionalization is not presently feasible.
- **Proposed project management approach**, including anticipated stage gates, meeting cadence, stakeholder engagement activities, draft review procedures, and key decision points where FHRC and the Steering Committee will review progress, provide feedback, and approve the project direction before work advances to the next phase.
- **Project schedule** demonstrating the consultant's ability to complete the draft study by **March 31, 2027**, and submit the final polished study, incorporating FHRC, Steering Committee, and KDHE comments, by **April 30, 2027**.Cost proposal submitted with the technical proposal, including total proposed cost, labor categories and hours, subconsultant costs, direct expenses, assumptions, optional tasks, and any work excluded from the fee.
- **Recommended next steps** following completion of the study, including potential engineering, governance, funding, phasing, and implementation actions necessary to advance the preferred alternatives identified through the feasibility analysis. Disclosure of conflicts of interest, current work for participating entities, and any relationships that could affect impartiality. References for at least three comparable public-sector engineering, planning, or regional feasibility studies demonstrating the firm's experience with multi-jurisdictional infrastructure planning, water system evaluation, or similar regional planning engagements.

9. Evaluation Criteria

FHRC intends to evaluate proposals using a **best-value** selection process that considers both technical qualifications and price. The evaluation criteria and anticipated weighting are provided below to assist proposers in preparing responsive submissions. FHRC reserves the right to adjust the evaluation criteria or weighting if required by KDHE or other applicable requirements. Any such changes will be issued to all prospective proposers through a written addendum prior to the proposal submission deadline.

Criterion	Anticipated Weight	What FHRC Will Look For
Project understanding and approach	25%	The proposal clearly demonstrates a practical understanding of regional, multi-jurisdictional feasibility studies involving drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, fire suppression, and related water infrastructure. The consultant should recognize the complexity of evaluating multiple systems, present an impartial and data-driven approach to assessing alternatives
Relevant qualifications and experience	25%	Demonstrates similar water, wastewater, stormwater, fire-flow, public infrastructure, regionalization, and Kansas public-sector project experience.
Stakeholder process and communication	15%	Provides a disciplined plan for conversations, review points, conflict management, and usable briefing materials.
Team capacity and schedule	15%	Delivery of the draft by March 31, 2027, and final draft by April 30, 2027.
Cost reasonableness and clarity	15%	Provides a transparent, realistic cost proposal, submitted with the technical proposal, which is aligned with the scope and ability to complete the required services within the budget.
Implementation strategy and recommendations	5%	Establish a clear path from the study's findings to implementation. The roadmap should include practical recommendations; identify potential engineering, governance, funding, and partnership opportunities; and outline phased or alternative implementation pathways, as appropriate, to help FHRC, KDHE, and participating communities advance future projects.

10. Schedule

Event	Date
RFP issued	August 13, 2026
Deadline for written questions	August 21, 2026, at 12:00 PM CT
Responses to questions posted on FHRC website: **https://flinthillsregion.org/rfps/**	August 24, 2026
Proposals due	September 11, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. CT
Interviews	Week of September 21st, 2026
Draft feasibility study due	March 31, 2027
Final study due	April 30, 2027

11. Submission Instructions

Submit proposals in PDF format via email - Late proposals will be rejected.

- **Submission contact:** Kent Glasscock, Executive Director, Flint Hills Regional Council, to rfp@flinthillsregion.org. No phone calls please.
- Proposal length: A concise response of no more than twenty pages, excluding resumes, references, required forms, and cost proposal.
- **Questions:** Questions must be submitted in writing to the FHRC Executive Director at **rfp@flinthillsregion.org** by August 21, 2026, by 12:00 PM CT. FHRC will issue written responses by addenda at https://flinthillsregion.org/rfps/. No phone calls please.
- Validity: Proposals should remain valid for at least 90 days after the due date.

12. Contract and Compliance Requirements

- The selected firm must be authorized to provide professional engineering services in Kansas and must identify the Kansas-licensed professional engineer(s) responsible for the work.
- The final contract must include provisions of the Kansas Act Against Discrimination (K.S.A. 44-1001, et seq.) and the Kansas Age Discrimination in Employment Act (K.S.A. 44-1111, et seq.) and the applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.) (ADA), and Kansas Executive Order No. 19-02.
- Project records must be maintained for the period of three years after project completion. The firm must cooperate with reasonable audit, inspection, and documentation requests.
- No work is authorized until the final contract is fully executed and KDHE has completed all required reviews.

13. Reservation of Rights

FHRC reserves the right to amend this RFP by written addendum, reject proposals, request additional information, conduct interviews, negotiate with one or more respondents, require revised scopes or fees, and make no award. FHRC will coordinate procurement and study review with the Director, Bureau of Water, KDHE, whose review and approval responsibilities and binding requirements govern state administration of the study. The Kansas Water Plan is the source of study funding, and the Kansas Water Office may participate in review as appropriate.

Appendix A: Draft Response Checklist

Item	Respondent Confirmation
Transmittal letter	Included
Executive summary	Included
Firm qualifications and Kansas licensure	Included
Project team, roles, and availability	Included
Study approach and stakeholder process	Included
Stage gates and schedule	Included
Draft deadline of March 31, 2027	Acknowledged
Final deadline of April 30, 2027	Acknowledged
Cost proposal	Included with technical proposal
Suggested next steps after study	Included
Conflict-of-interest disclosure	Included
References	Included

Appendix B: Source Scope Summary

The source materials identify Kansas Water Plan funding for a consultant study to evaluate regionalization feasibility and costs for water systems along and near U.S. Highway 24 between Manhattan and Wamego. The study must include drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, fire suppression, and other relevant water uses. KDHE is responsible for RFP review and approval and final scope approval.