

# Request for Information



State of Alaska  
Department of Health  
Division of Finance and Management Services

**Date Issued: 9/19/2024**

## ALASKA DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH – RURAL COMMUNITY WASTEWATER MONITORING

### **Introduction:**

Alaska faces unique public health challenges due to its vast and diverse landscapes, remote communities, and varying access to healthcare. Wastewater monitoring offers a non-invasive and efficient means to monitor the spread of infectious diseases within communities. This program aims to implement a comprehensive wastewater surveillance system to detect and monitor infectious disease pathogens, thereby enhancing public health response and prevention strategies. The Alaska Division of Public Health, Section of Epidemiology, is seeking a partner to support rural community coordination efforts for its Wastewater Monitoring Program. This initiative will provide additional disease monitoring information through testing and analysis of wastewater in rural communities across Alaska.

### **Background Information:**

The Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Health's (DPH) Wastewater Monitoring (WWM) Program is designed to track and analyze pathogens and contaminants in wastewater, providing early detection of public health threats such as infectious diseases and environmental hazards. This proactive approach allows for timely intervention and prevention measures, ensuring the health and safety of Alaska's rural populations.

A key component of the initiative involves the use of Cepheid GeneXpert, a PCR testing device, in rural communities for wastewater monitoring. This technology enables communities to perform their own sample collection and testing on-site, eliminating the need for sample transport to larger laboratories. By empowering communities with the ability to conduct real-time testing, the program enhances the responsiveness and efficiency of public health interventions.

Alaska DPH is looking for a partner/organization to serve as our WWM Rural Program Coordinator. Alaska DPH hopes to bring at least five (5) separate communities online with point of collection WWM testing in the next twelve (12) months. We are seeking a partner to take lead on engaging potential new communities for testing, assessing their ability to perform testing locally, and ensuring their needs are met as they continue to engage with the Alaska Division of Public Health.

The project is funded through the CDC's ELC Grant (NWSS). Funding is available to support the rural coordinator initiative through June of 2027.

We are looking for a program partner to perform the following duties:

- **Engage Rural Communities:** Work with wastewater treatment plant operators, health authorities/entities, and other relevant stakeholders to determine the feasibility of setting up a testing program.
- **Coordinate Sample Collection:** Organize and manage regular, consistent sample collection efforts from participating communities.
- **Support Testing Facilities:** Ensure the designated laboratory has the necessary staff and resources to perform consistent testing of the samples.
- **Develop Communication Plans:** Collaborate with stakeholders and community health authorities to develop plans for the communication of wastewater monitoring data.
- **Serve as Liaison:** Act as a liaison between participating communities and the State of Alaska (SOA) Wastewater Monitoring program staff.
- **Data Management:** Alaska DPH will perform data management, analysis, and storage. Program partners should develop an understanding of WWM data to help communities by making recommendations for public health action based upon the derived data.

Potential project partners should have the following qualifications, experience, and infrastructure:

- 1) Their own programmatic funding to support testing efforts in rural communities for infectious disease pathogens of public health concerns (i.e. SARS-CoV-2, influenza, respiratory syncytial virus, etc.) Funding to support testing supplies (test cartridges), facilitate travel to the rural communities, and to provide the overhead/infrastructure necessary to support a rural coordinator position.
- 2) Established relationships with wastewater treatment plant operators within rural communities throughout Alaska. Initial target locations for testing include Ketchikan, Bethel, and communities located within Alaska's North Slope Borough.
- 3) Additional staff support to aid the rural program coordinator in making determinations about the correct wastewater testing scheme for rural communities (GeneXpert testing onsite vs. sending in samples to a lab in Anchorage, AK). Additional staffing support includes administrative staff, social/psychological support staff, and staff to provide technical assistance when required.
- 4) A thorough understanding of wastewater-based epidemiology (WBE). Potential partners do not need to be experts in this emerging field, but we are seeking a partner who has grasped the core concepts of this science and understands the unique challenges of implementation within Alaska. Potential vendor's will be assessed for their experience, and ability to quickly develop a knowledge base of WBE core principles.
- 5) Not required, but preferred, current affiliation with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and/or other federal grantors to conduct wastewater or similar surveillance testing.

**Response Information:**

**Interested vendors are invited to submit responses to the following:**

1. Provide the vendor's complete company name, address, telephone number and email address for the vendor's contact person for its RFI response.
2. Provide a general overview of the vendor's profile including a detailed description of its capabilities and experience related to providing WBE coordination efforts in rural Alaska, including but not limited to current funding, organizational infrastructure, and staff available with the desired experience and/or skill sets.

3. Describe any specific services provided by the vendor in the following areas within the past five years, and identify the states and jurisdictions in which the services were provided, including the name of the agency or department utilizing the vendor's services:

- Microbiology
- Social Science
- Admin Support
- Data management and analysis
- Communications
- Engagement and work with local utilities in Alaska
- **With tribal organizations**

4. Describe the vendor's proposed approach(es) or innovative strategy(ies) to meet or exceed the Rural Program Coordinator project goals and objectives described in this RFI. Alaska DPH is interested in the staffing plan, estimated costs, and implementation and transition timelines associated with the proposed approach(es) and strategy(ies).

**Response Submission:**

Interested vendors must submit their response in writing via email by **2:00 p.m. (Alaska Time) on Monday, September 30, 2024** to the following person:

**Ashley Palembas**

Procurement Officer

Department of Health

Division of Finance and Management Services

Email: [doh.procurement.proposals@alaska.gov](mailto:doh.procurement.proposals@alaska.gov)

**(Please also copy [Ashley.Palembas@alaska.gov](mailto:Ashley.Palembas@alaska.gov) on the submission)**

Responses in Microsoft format are preferred, with attachments submitted in pdf, Microsoft Word, Adobe, Microsoft Excel or PowerPoint file.

It is the interested vendor's responsibility to follow up with the person identified above to ensure its response was received prior to the time and date specified. Please ensure the response includes the vendor's company name and correct contract information (email) for the individual(s) who should be notified if DOH releases a solicitation or seeks an alternative procurement method related to the services described in this RFI.

**Important Notice:**

This RFI does not extend any rights to prospective vendors or obligate the state to conduct a solicitation or purchase any goods or services. Nor will the State be financially responsible for any costs associated with the preparation of any response for the requested information. This RFI is issued for the sole purpose of obtaining information as described in this notice. However, the information obtained from this request may be used to prepare a purchase, contract, or solicitation in the future.