CONNECT
CONGRESS OF NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Professional Services: Materials Management Authority Planning, Feasibility Analysis, Rate Study, and Market Strategy

Issue Date: August 20, 2026

Responses Due: September 25, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST

Submit to: info@connectgovs.org with subject line "MM Authority RFP Submission"

Contact: Courtney Ehrlichman, Executive Director, courtney@connectgovs.org

1. Background and Purpose

About CONNECT

CONNECT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that unites Pittsburgh and its neighboring municipalities to solve problems none can tackle alone — from innovation to implementation. Since 2009, CONNECT has convened municipal leaders around shared challenges in public safety, transportation, infrastructure, land use, and environmental resilience and now serves 43 municipalities across the Allegheny County region. The Materials Management Initiative, launched in August 2025, represents one of CONNECT's most significant multi-year regional efforts.

More information about CONNECT and the Materials Management Initiative is available at www.connectgovs.org.

This RFP was developed with input from the Materials Management Steering Committee, CONNECT staff, PA Resources Council, and the City of Pittsburgh, with support from Posner Foundation and U.S. Conference of Mayors funding. Questions or comments about this RFP can be directed to Courtney Ehrlichman at CONNECT.

Since 2021, CONNECT member municipalities have prioritized regional materials management as a critical governance challenge. Allegheny County's 130 municipalities currently procure solid waste and recycling services individually or through separate Councils of Government (COG) bids, resulting in fragmented bargaining power, inconsistent service levels, duplicative administrative overhead, and escalating costs.

In response, CONNECT members have passed four joint resolutions directing staff to explore the formation of a Joint Municipal Authority (JMA) capable of centralizing procurement, standardizing service, managing customer service and billing, collecting performance data, and creating regional infrastructure for materials diversion, particularly organics management.

CONNECT, in partnership with PA Resources Council, has spent eleven months conducting discovery through a 20-member steering committee, contracting university research on hauler markets and service models, and developing operational and legal frameworks for a proposed authority. The discovery phase is substantially complete. What is now required is independent expert validation, pricing, and financial modeling to support municipal decision-making and move the project from planning to commitment and implementation.

This RFP seeks a consultant to provide four focused deliverables that validate CONNECT's recommended model, produce the financial evidence municipalities require, and equip the project for the 2027 formation and 2027–2028 procurement timeline.

2. Scope of Work: Four Phased Deliverables

The consultant will complete four deliverables over an engagement period of October 2026 through February 2027. Deliverables 1 and 2 should be completed by February 1, 2027; Deliverables 3 and 4 by February 15, 2027. Each deliverable shall include a two-page council-ready executive summary.

2.1 Deliverable 1: Independent Model Validation and Best Practices Review

The consultant shall review CONNECT's proposed authority model (legal structure, governance, service design, rate methodology) against national best practices, Pennsylvania precedent and regulatory requirements, and regional waste management authorities in comparable markets, and advise on any directional changes to consider.

Scope:

- Review the CONNECT recommended model (provided to the consultant) against the Pennsylvania Municipality Authorities Act, Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, and Act 101; confirm statutory feasibility and identify any cost considerations, material compliance or structural risks.
- Conduct a comparative scan of municipal waste authorities in Pennsylvania and nationally; assess governance structure, municipal participation architecture, contracted services, rate design, and results achieved. Specifically compare entry of new municipalities, withdrawal rights, bond lock mechanisms, material flow ordinances, and any other comparable methods authorities have used to manage the political risks around loss-of-control perceptions.
- Validate the recommended authority's service model against current regional practices and the documented interests of founding-municipality candidates. Consider feasibility of additional materials diversion and pilot projects over time, particularly for food waste, while keeping costs to customers consistent. Also consider other municipal infrastructure such as yard waste facilities, and regional efforts including PA Resources Council's development of a Center for Hard to Recycle Materials.

- Develop and stress-test a rate-methodology design based on the proposed model, with allowances for flexibility of municipal participation in particular programming, against cost-of-service principles and council concerns around predictability and equity.
- Assess the proposed governance structure (representative board, appointment rights, voting, committee structure) against the steering committee's stated priorities: equal municipal stakes, cost management, and diversion goals. Identify any apparent conflicts between these priorities that the formal structure should address explicitly.

Deliverable 1 output:

A written analysis (12–18 pages) presenting: (i) statutory feasibility assessment; (ii) comparative scan findings with specific recommendations adapted from successful models; (iii) assessment of opportunities for organics and new stream diversion; (iv) rate design; and (v) governance-structure analysis. A two-page council executive summary and a 10–12 slide presentation deck shall accompany the deliverable.

2.2 Deliverable 2: Rate Study and Financial Pro Forma

The consultant shall commission or conduct a cost-of-service study and produce a comprehensive financial pro forma for the proposed authority serving the Allegheny County region.

Scope:

- Conduct a baseline cost analysis of current municipal waste management spending across Allegheny County, disaggregated by service component (collection, transfer, disposal, recycling processing, customer service, enforcement, administration). Much of this information has already been collected by CONNECT.
- Consider feasibility of three authority-revenue-requirement scenarios, representing: (a) a founding cohort of 8–12 municipalities (~30,000 household service units); (b) an expanded Phase 1 cohort aligned to QVCOG and North Hills COG contract expirations (~70,000 units); and (c) full build-out assuming regional participation (~200,000+ units). Advise on a critical mass required at launch to satisfy objectives of keeping costs to customers consistent and incentivizing diversion of materials.
- For each scenario, consider: (i) startup capitalization requirements (legal, technology, initial staffing, formation); (ii) year-one through year-three operational budgets; (iii) annual container capital amortization; (iv) required rate revenue per household per month, disaggregated by service stream (trash and recycling to start, with options for yard waste, food waste drop off, C&D, etc.); and (v) comparison of projected authority rates against each municipality's documented status-quo rate trajectory over the same period, using renewal-increase data as the baseline do-nothing benchmark.
- Specifically address the "Swissvale test": demonstrate hard-dollar municipal savings or cost-avoidance for at least 75% of founding municipalities, with a conservative commodity-revenue assumption (no upside on recycling pricing).

- Specify reserve requirements (operational, capital improvement, rate stabilization) and financing structure for initial container procurement and startup costs, including revenue-bond feasibility at a minimum 1.25× debt-service coverage ratio.
- All financial outputs shall be presented in formats suitable for presentation to municipal councils, including charts, tables, and one-page rate-impact summaries for representative municipalities across size/service-level categories.

Deliverable 2 output:

A written financial analysis (15–25 pages plus appendices); three complete pro-forma spreadsheet models; and a two-page council executive summary. The models shall be provided in editable Excel format for future Authority board use, with all assumptions and formulas documented. A public presentation slide deck (15–20 slides) suitable for municipal manager meetings and borough councils shall accompany the deliverable.

2.3 Deliverable 3: Hauler Market Sounding and First-Procurement Specifications

The consultant shall conduct independent market outreach to haulers and disposal/processing vendors, validate the proposed service zone architecture, and produce RFP-ready specifications for the Authority's first hauling procurement.

Scope:

- Conduct confidential outreach to major regional haulers and processors (Waste Management, Republic Services, Noble Environmental, Valley Waste, Vogel, Michael Brothers, AgRecycle, Zero Waste Wrangler and others) to assess: (i) interest in serving a multi-municipal regional authority; (ii) capacity constraints; (iii) feedback on the proposed zone structure and service level definitions; (iv) preliminary pricing signals; and (v) any anticipated operational or contractual issues.
- Validate or refine the zone design developed by CONNECT's university research partners (Pitt and Chatham), which proposes service zones based on mechanization compatibility, service level, and demographic density rather than political boundaries. Confirm feasibility and hauler feedback on zone sizes, borders, standardizing recyclable materials collected across the authority's municipalities, and competitive depth.
- Review and validate the contract-best-practices specifications developed by the steering committee (fuel surcharges, tipping contracts separate from hauling, liquidated damages, reporting requirements, contamination standards, customer service performance metrics for diversion of materials, etc.). Recommend refinements for the first Authority RFP.
- Produce hauling RFP core language suitable for the Authority's use, including: (i) service specifications by zone; (ii) equipment, personnel, and operational standards; (iii) performance metrics and liquidated damages; (iv) reporting and data-collection requirements; (v) rate structure and escalation mechanisms; and (vi) contract administration and monitoring provisions. Specifications shall assume a regional three-stream system with customer choice by container size and additional-container subscriptions.

- Identify any hauler or market conditions that pose risk to the Authority's formation timeline or service model; recommend mitigation strategies.

Deliverable 3 output:

A written market-sounding summary (8–12 pages) with anonymized hauler feedback and zone-validation findings; RFP-ready hauling specifications (20–30 pages) in a form the Authority can use without substantial revision; and a two-page council summary. Provide all hauling spec language in editable Word format.

2.4 Deliverable 4: Financing and Funding Strategy

The consultant shall develop a comprehensive financing and funding plan supporting the Authority's formation, startup, and ramp-up through operational stability.

Scope:

- Assess revenue-bond feasibility for the Authority under Pennsylvania law, specifying: (i) estimated initial bond size and purpose (container procurement, startup capitalization); (ii) bond structure (maturity, coupon assumptions, required coverage ratios); (iii) rating-agency considerations; and (iv) timeline for bond issuance within a formation scenario.
- Develop a bridge-financing strategy for the gap between incorporation and revenue stabilization, including: (i) founder-municipality contribution sizing and structure (loans vs. equity); (ii) working-capital line-of-credit recommendations; (iii) timing and sequencing of cash flows through the formation period.
- Identify and sequence available grant funding: PA MAP grants (50% of municipal coordination costs, due April 1 annually); PA DEP 902 grants (90% reimbursement, multi-municipal collection/processing/marketing); PA DEP 904 recycling performance grants; and other state or federal programs. Recommend which grants to pursue in which funding cycles, with preliminary budget sketches for each.
- Quantify the funding gap between founder revenue and full-build-out, and recommend a philanthropic and federal funding strategy to close the gap. Identify potential sources (Posner Foundation, Heinz Endowments, local and national foundations, federal programs, congressional, etc.) and propose a phased ask strategy.
- Address the compost pilot parallel track (Posner $50K, City of Pittsburgh US Conference of Mayors $25K) and its interaction with Authority formation financing; clarify which costs flow to which budget and what happens post-pilot.

Deliverable 4 output:

A written financing and funding plan (10–15 pages) with: (i) bond feasibility memo; (ii) bridge-financing structure; (iii) grant sequencing calendar with preliminary budgets; (iv) philanthropic/federal strategy and prospect list; (v) timeline integration with formation phases. A two-page council summary and a 10–slide presentation deck shall accompany the deliverable.

3. Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

3.1 Proposal Content

Proposers shall submit:

- Executive summary (2 pages maximum) describing the proposer's understanding of the project and approach to the four deliverables.
- Qualifications statement (3–5 pages) including: (i) description of the firm/consultant's experience with municipal waste authorities, multi-municipal solid waste procurement, and rate studies; (ii) minimum three client references from work on regional or multi-municipal waste management projects within the past seven years; (iii) relevant staff resumes (highlighted team lead, rate analyst, municipal relations lead).
- Approach and methodology (4–6 pages) describing how the consultant will conduct the work, including proposed timeline, stakeholder engagement (haulers, municipalities, COGs), deliverable production, and communication cadence.
- Fixed-price proposal with payment structure: total fee not to exceed $70,000; proposed breakdown by deliverable; payment schedule (recommend: 20% upon execution, 30% upon Deliverable 1 completion, 30% upon Deliverable 2 completion, 20% upon final deliverable completion).
- References (name, title, phone, email; contact permission required).
- Conflict-of-interest disclosure: any current or past relationships with major waste haulers, COGs, municipalities in Allegheny County, or other parties that might present a conflict.

3.2 Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria (total 100 points):

Criterion	Points	What we are looking for	Scoring
PA municipal-authority experience	25	Demonstrated expertise with PA Municipality Authorities Act; work with PA waste authorities, or multi-municipal shared services under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act. In-state experience weighted heavily.	Excellent (25): Multiple PA authority projects, deep statutory knowledge. Acceptable (15–20): Some PA work or closely analogous multi-state experience. Poor (0–10): No PA work.
Regional waste-procurement expertise	20	Track record on rate studies, hauler procurement strategy, cost-of-service analysis, and contract specifications for multi-municipality waste systems. Midwest/PA waste markets a plus.	Excellent (20): 3+ regional waste procurements with documented outcomes. Acceptable (12–18): Strong

Criterion	Points	What we are looking for	Scoring
			hauler-market knowledge. Poor (0–10): Limited procurement.
Team qualifications	15	Lead consultant and key staff have relevant credentials (professional engineer, rate analyst, finance background). Resumes show depth.	Excellent (15): Lead has 10+ years in waste/utility rate work. Acceptable (10–13): Relevant experience; team reasonable. Poor (0–8): Weak credentials.
Proposed approach and methodology	20	Clear, realistic work plan within the $70K cost cap (see Section 4 for CONNECT's priorities); stakeholder engagement strategy; deliverable quality standards; communication cadence. Demonstrates understanding of CONNECT's decision-making timeline and political context.	Excellent (20): Detailed phased plan; clear risk mitigation; realistic timeline. Acceptable (13–18): Competent approach; plausible timeline. Poor (0–12): Vague or unrealistic.
Fixed-price cost and payment terms	10	Proposed fee (max $70K); transparent breakdown by deliverable; payment schedule aligns with delivery. Preference for performance-based milestones.	Excellent (10): Clear $70K or under; sensible milestone payments. Acceptable (7–9): Reasonable cost structure. Poor (0–6): Unclear or unfavorable.
References	10	Quality and verifiability of references; demonstrated success on comparable projects; client feedback evident.	Excellent (10): Strong references; clear past success. Acceptable (7–9): Acceptable references; no red flags. Poor (0–6): Weak references.

Total: 100 points. CONNECT reserves the right to conduct interviews with top-ranked proposers (scoring 70+) before final selection.

4. Key Constraints and Conflict Provisions

- Timing: All deliverables must be completed and submitted no later than February 15, 2027. Late submissions will not be accepted without prior written approval from CONNECT.
- Consultant shall not bid on, propose for, or accept any contract with the Authority for hauling, disposal, transfer station, recycling processing, or container services for a period of five years after this engagement concludes. This ensures no conflict between formation-phase advice and procurement-phase competition.
- All work products, including models, analyses, draft specifications, and presentation materials, shall be owned by CONNECT and made available to the Authority upon formation. Deliverables shall be in formats suitable for ongoing Authority use (editable Excel, Word, PowerPoint files; original fonts and formulas preserved).
- Consultant shall sign a Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement covering steering committee discussions, proprietary municipal contract information, and market intelligence gathered during hauler outreach. However, final deliverables (Deliverables 1–4) will be public documents available to CONNECT member municipalities and the eventual Authority.
- This RFP is issued under the U.S. Conference of Mayors subrecipient agreement with the City of Pittsburgh (US Conference of Mayors). The consultant engagement is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local procurement laws and regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Guidance). CONNECT will conduct a defensible competitive procurement process.

5. Submission Instructions and Timeline

Responses must be submitted by email to info@connectgovs.org with the subject line "MM Authority RFP Submission" by September 21, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST. Include the proposer's name, contact information, and submission date in the email.

Submissions should be in PDF format (preferred) or Word; file size should not exceed 10 MB.

Anticipated selection timeline:

- September 25: Submission deadline, 5pm
- September 28–30: Evaluation and scoring by CONNECT selection panel
- October 5: Finalist interviews (if needed)
- October 8: Contract award and execution
- October 19: Engagement commences

Questions about the RFP may be directed to Courtney Ehrlichman, courtney@connectgovs.org. All questions must be submitted by September 1, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST. Responses to clarifying questions will be posted on the CONNECT website by September 2.

6. Selection Panel, Decision Authority, and Debriefing

The RFP will be evaluated by a selection panel including representatives from: CONNECT staff, the CONNECT board, the Materials Management Steering Committee chair, the City of Pittsburgh (US Conference of Mayors funder), and others. The selection panel will make a recommendation to the CONNECT board, which holds final award authority.

Proposers not selected for award may request a debriefing within 10 days of the award announcement. Debriefing calls will be limited to discussion of scoring, evaluation results, and feedback on the proposal; trade secrets of other proposers will not be disclosed.