

**WAC 480-107-023 Independent evaluator for repowering and bids from a utility or its subsidiary or affiliate.** (1) A utility must engage the services of an independent evaluator to assess and report on the solicitation process if:

(a) The utility or its subsidiary or affiliate participates in the utility's RFP bidding process;

(b) The utility intends to retain the option to procure resources that will result in the utility owning or having a purchase option in the resource over its expected useful life; or

(c) The utility is considering repowering its existing resources to meet its resource need.

(2) After consulting with commission staff and stakeholders, the utility may issue a solicitation for an independent evaluator and must recommend an independent evaluator for approval by the commission.

(3) The independent evaluator will contract with, and be paid by, the utility. The utility will also manage the contract terms with the independent evaluator.

(4) The utility must provide the independent evaluator with all data and information necessary to perform a thorough examination of the bidding process and responsive bids.

(5) The independent evaluator will, at a minimum:

(a) Ensure that the RFP process is conducted fairly, transparently, and properly;

(b) Participate in the design of the RFP;

(c) Evaluate the unique risks, burdens, and benefits of each bid;

(d) Provide to the utility the independent evaluator's minutes of meetings and the full text of written communications between the independent evaluator and the utility and any third-party related to the independent evaluator's execution of its duties;

(e) Verify that the utility's inputs and assumptions, including capacity factors and capital costs, are reasonable;

(f) Assess whether the utility's process of scoring the bids and selection of the initial and final shortlists is reasonable;

(g) Prepare a final report to the commission after reconciling rankings with the utility in accordance with WAC 480-107-035(3) that must:

(i) Include an evaluation of the competitive bidding process in selecting the lowest reasonable cost acquisition or action to satisfy the identified resource need, including the adequacy of communication with stakeholders and bidders; and

(ii) Explain ranking differences and why the independent evaluator and the utility were or were not able to reconcile the differences.

(6) The commission may request that additional analysis be included in the final report.

(7) Interested persons may file comments on the final report filed with the commission, including concerns about routine processes, such as administrative corrections or recommending removal of bids that do not comply with the minimum criteria identified in the RFP, but no stakeholder, including the utility or commission staff, shall have any editorial review or control over the independent evaluator's final report.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 80.01.040, 80.04.160, and chapters 80.28, 19.280, and 19.405 RCW. WSR 21-02-023 (Docket UE-190837, General Order R-602), § 480-107-023, filed 12/28/20, effective 12/31/20.]