

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

**BILL #:** PCS for HB 781 Unsolicited Proposals for Public-private Partnerships

**SPONSOR(S):** Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee

**TIED BILLS:** **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
Orig. Comm.: Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee		Villa	Miller

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Public-private partnerships (P3s) are contractual arrangements between public and private entities that facilitate increased private sector involvement in the funding and execution of public building and infrastructure projects. Current law authorizes a responsible public entity (RPE) (i.e., local government) to receive unsolicited proposals or to solicit proposals for a qualifying P3 and thereafter enter into a comprehensive agreement for the building, upgrading, operating, ownership, or financing of facilities.

If the RPE intends to execute a comprehensive agreement for a project arising from an unsolicited proposal, the RPE must publish notice in the Florida Administrative Register (FAR) and a newspaper of general circulation, and mail a copy of the notice to each affected local government, stating that the RPE has received the proposal and will accept other proposals for the same project. After the public notification period has expired, the RPE ranks the proposals received in order of preference and begins negotiations. However, before approving a comprehensive agreement, the RPE must determine the proposed project: is in the public's best interest, is for a facility that is owned by the RPE or one for which ownership will be conveyed to the RPE, and the facility will be owned by the RPE upon completion, expiration, or termination of the comprehensive agreement and upon payment of the financed amounts.

The PCS authorizes an RPE to proceed with an unsolicited proposal for a qualifying project without engaging in a public bidding process. To do so, an RPE must hold an initial duly noticed public meeting at which the proposal is presented and affected public entities and members of the public are able to provide comment. The RPE then must hold a second duly noticed public meeting at which the RPE determines that the proposal is in the public's interest based on specified factors.

The PCS provides that an RPE is authorized, but no longer required, to publish notice in the FAR and a newspaper of general circulation and mail a copy to each affected local government in the affected area if the RPE intends to execute a comprehensive agreement for a project arising from an unsolicited proposal. If the RPE decides to proceed with an unsolicited proposal without engaging in the public bidding process, the RPE must publish a report that provides the public interest determination, and specifically detailed information, in the FAR for at least 7 days.

The PCS amends the agreement approval process by no longer requiring the RPE to determine that an unsolicited proposed project will be owned by the RPE. If ownership will not be conveyed to the RPE within 10 years after the initial public operation begins, the public benefits apart from ownership must be identified and stated by the RPE. The RPE will only be required to determine the proposed project is in the public's best interest if the proposal was solicited.

The PCS may have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state and local governments. See Fiscal Comments.

# FULL ANALYSIS

## I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

### A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

#### Present Situation

##### Public-private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships (P3s) are contractual arrangements between public entities and private sector entities<sup>1</sup> that facilitate increased private sector involvement in the funding and execution of public building and infrastructure projects. These agreements enable the collaboration of skills and assets from both sectors to provide services or facilities for the benefit of the general public. In addition to resource sharing, both parties assume shared risks and potential rewards throughout the delivery of the service or facility.<sup>2</sup> Several statutes promote and offer direction for P3 projects, including those for services and facilities related to transportation,<sup>3</sup> housing,<sup>4</sup> and education.<sup>5</sup>

Current law grants responsible public entities (RPEs)<sup>6</sup> the authority to engage in P3 projects aimed at developing an extensive array of public-use facilities or projects that fulfill a public purpose. Examples of qualifying projects include those for mass transit, vehicle parking, airports or seaports, educational facilities, and public sector buildings or complexes such as courthouses or city halls.<sup>7</sup> The P3 law outlines specific requirements to which RPEs must adhere, including protocols for reviewing and approving proposals.<sup>8</sup>

##### *Procurement Procedures*

An RPE may receive unsolicited proposals or may solicit proposals for a qualifying P3 and thereafter enter into a comprehensive agreement for the building, upgrading, operating, ownership, or financing of facilities. To cover the costs associated with evaluating unsolicited proposals, a reasonable application fee may be established. The RPE opting not to assess the unsolicited proposal must refund the application fee.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Private entity" means any natural person, corporation, general partnership, limited liability company, limited partnership, joint venture, business trust, public benefit corporation, nonprofit entity, or other private business entity. S. 255.065(1)(g), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> See Florida Department of Transportation, *Public-Private Partnerships*, <https://www.fdot.gov/comptroller/pfo/p3.shtm> (last visited January 7, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> See 334.30, F.S., relating to public-private transportation facilities.

<sup>4</sup> See 420.0003(2)(b), F.S., relating to state housing strategy.

<sup>5</sup> See 1013.35, F.S., relating to school district educational facilities plans.

<sup>6</sup> "Responsible public entity" means a county, municipality, school district, special district, or any other political subdivision of the state; a public body corporate and politic; or a regional entity that serves a public purpose and is authorized to develop or operate a qualifying project. S. 255.065(1)(j), F.S. "Develop" means to plan, design, finance, lease, acquire, install, construct, or expand. S. 255.065(1)(b), F.S. "Operate" means to finance, maintain, improve, equip, modify, or repair. S. 255.065(1)(f), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> "Qualifying project" means a facility or project that serves a public purpose, including, but not limited to, any ferry or mass transit facility, vehicle parking facility, airport or seaport facility, rail facility or project, fuel supply facility, oil or gas pipeline, medical or nursing care facility, recreational facility, sporting or cultural facility, or educational facility or other building or facility that is used or will be used by a public educational institution, or any other public facility or infrastructure that is used or will be used by the public at large or in support of an accepted public purpose or activity; an improvement, including equipment, of a building that will be principally used by a public entity or the public at large or that supports a service delivery system in the public sector; a water, wastewater, or surface water management facility or other related infrastructure; or notwithstanding any provision of this section, for projects that involve a facility owned or operated by the governing board of a county, district, or municipal hospital or health care system, or projects that involve a facility owned or operated by a municipal electric utility, only those projects that the governing board designates as qualifying projects pursuant to this section. S. 255.065(1)(i), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> "Proposal" means a plan for a qualifying project with detail beyond a conceptual level for which terms such as fixing costs, payment schedules, financing, deliverables, and project schedule are defined. S. 255.065(1)(h), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> S. 255.065(3)(a), F.S.

An unsolicited proposal from a private entity for approval of a qualifying project must be accompanied by the following material and information, unless waived by the RPE:

- A comprehensive description of the qualifying project;
- A detailed account of the method proposed by the private entity to secure the necessary property interests required for the qualifying project;
- A description of the private entity's general plans for financing the qualifying project;
- The name and address of a designated contact person who can provide additional information about the proposal;
- The proposed user fees,<sup>10</sup> lease payments,<sup>11</sup> or other service payments throughout the term of the comprehensive agreement, along with the methodology for and circumstances allowing adjustments to these payments over time; and
- Any additional material or information reasonably requested by the RPE.<sup>12</sup>

If the RPE intends to execute a comprehensive agreement for a project arising from an unsolicited proposal, the public entity must publish notice in the Florida Administrative Register (FAR) and a newspaper of general circulation and mail a copy of the notice to each local government in the affected area.<sup>13</sup> The notice must be published at least once a week for two weeks stating that the public entity has received a proposal and will accept other proposals for the same project. The specific timeframe for accepting proposals varies for each project based upon the complexity of the project and the public benefit derived from allowing a longer or shorter submission period. However, the duration for accepting additional proposals must range from a minimum of 21 days to a maximum of 120 days, unless an alternative timeframe that more adequately suits the needs of the qualifying project is approved by a majority vote of the RPE's governing body.<sup>14</sup>

### *Project Qualification and Approval*

For an unsolicited proposal, after the public notification period has expired the RPE ranks the proposals received in order of preference. The RPE may then begin negotiations for a comprehensive agreement with the highest-ranked firm. If the negotiation outcome is unsatisfactory, the RPE may terminate negotiations and engage with each subsequent-ranked firm in order of preference. The RPE may reject all proposals at any point in the process until an agreement is reached.<sup>15</sup>

Before approving a comprehensive agreement, the RPE must determine that the proposed project:

- Is in the public's best interest;
- Is for a facility owned by the RPE or for which ownership will be conveyed to the RPE;
- Has adequate safeguards to prevent additional costs or service disruptions for the public in case of material default<sup>16</sup> or cancellation of the comprehensive agreement by the RPE;
- Includes measures to allow the RPE or the private entity to add capacity to the proposed project or other facilities serving similar predominantly public purposes;
- Will be owned by the RPE upon completion, expiration, or termination of the comprehensive agreement and upon payment of the financed amounts.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Fees" means charges imposed by the private entity of a qualifying project for use of all or a portion of such qualifying project pursuant to a comprehensive agreement. S. 255.065(1)(c), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> "Lease payment" means any form of payment, including a land lease, by a public entity to the private entity of a qualifying project for the use of the project. S. 255.065(1)(d), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> S. 255.065(4), F.S. Any pricing or financial terms included in an unsolicited proposal must be specific as to when the pricing or terms expire.

<sup>13</sup> "Affected local jurisdiction" means a county, municipality, or special district in which all or a portion of a qualifying project is located. S. 255.065(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>14</sup> S. 255.065(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> S. 255.065(5)(c), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> "Material default" means a nonperformance of its duties by the private entity of a qualifying project which jeopardizes adequate service to the public from the project. S. 255.065(1)(e), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> S. 255.065(3)(d), F.S.

## *Comprehensive Agreement*

The RPE and the private entity must enter into a comprehensive agreement before developing or operating a qualifying project. The comprehensive agreement must provide for:

- Delivery of performance and payment bonds, letters of credit, or other security related to the qualifying project's development or operation;
- Review of the qualifying project design by the RPE. This does not require the private entity to complete the project's design before executing the comprehensive agreement;
- Inspection of the qualifying project by the RPE;
- Maintaining a public liability insurance policy, a copy of which together with proofs of coverage are filed with the RPE, or satisfactory proof of self-insurance;
- Monitoring the maintenance practices of the private entity by the RPE to ensure proper upkeep of the qualifying project;
- Periodic filing of financial statements pertaining to the qualified project by the private entity;
- Procedures governing the rights and responsibilities of both parties in the event of a termination of the comprehensive agreement or a material default by the private entity;
- User fees, lease payments, or service payments that do not discourage use of the project, as may be established in the agreement; and
- Duties of the private entity, including the terms and conditions that the RPE determines serve the public purpose of the qualifying project.<sup>18</sup>

### **Effect of the PCS**

The PCS authorizes an RPE to proceed with an unsolicited proposal for a qualifying project without engaging in a public bidding process. Accordingly, the RPE will no longer be required to provide notice of accepting additional bids or to rank received proposals in order of preference. However, an RPE may only abstain from the public bidding process if the RPE holds a duly noticed public meeting at which the proposal is presented, affected public entities and members of the public are able to provide comment, and the RPE then conducts a second duly noticed public hearing at which the RPE determines that the proposal is in the public's interest. In making the public interest determination, the RPE must consider all of the following factors:

- The benefits to the public;
- The financial structure of and the economic efficiencies achieved by the proposal;
- The qualifications and experience of the private entity that submitted the proposal and such entity's ability to perform the project;
- The project's compatibility with regional infrastructure plans; and
- Public comments submitted at the meeting. The RPE must provide a statement that explains why the proposal should proceed and addresses such comments.

The PCS provides that an RPE is authorized, but no longer required, to publish notice in the FAR and a newspaper of general circulation, and mail a copy of the notice to each local government in the affected area, of receiving an unsolicited proposal if an RPE intends to execute a comprehensive agreement for a project arising from an unsolicited proposal. If the RPE decides to proceed with an unsolicited proposal without engaging in a public bidding process, the RPE must publish in the FAR for at least 7 days a report that provides the public interest determination, includes the factors considered in making such public interest determination, and the RPE's findings based on each considered factor.

The PCS amends the comprehensive agreement approval process. An RPE no longer will be required to determine that an unsolicited proposed project will be owned by the RPE upon completion, expiration, or termination of the comprehensive agreement and upon payment of the amounts financed. However, if ownership will not be conveyed to the RPE within 10 years after the initial public operation begins, the public benefits apart from ownership must be identified and stated by the RPE. In addition, an RPE will only be required to determine a proposed project is in the public's best interest if the proposal was solicited.

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<sup>18</sup> S. 255.065(7)(a), F.S.  
**STORAGE NAME** pcs0781.CRG  
**DATE** 1/30/2024

**B. SECTION DIRECTORY:**

Section 1 amends s. 255.065, F.S., relating to public-private partnerships.

Section 2 provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

**II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

**A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:**

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

**B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:**

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

**C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:**

The PCS authorizes RPEs to proceed with an unsolicited proposal for a qualifying project without engaging in a public bidding process if certain conditions are met. Accordingly, private entities may experience less competition when contracting with RPEs through such means resulting in more economically attractive contracts for the private entities. The financial impact to the private sector is indeterminate at this time.

**D. FISCAL COMMENTS:**

The PCS authorizes RPEs to proceed with an unsolicited proposal for a qualifying project without engaging in a public bidding process if certain conditions are met. Accordingly, private entities may experience less competition when contracting with RPEs through such means resulting in contracts more economically attractive for the private entities but possibly less advantageous to the taxpayers. Such costs may be offset, at least in part, by reducing the workload expenditures associated with the public bidding process. The fiscal impact to the state and local governments is indeterminate at this time.

**III. COMMENTS**

**A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:**

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. This PCS does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

**B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:**

The PCS neither authorizes nor requires additional executive branch rulemaking.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

**IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES**