

In Bahrain and beyond

POWER SUPPLY

Group Brokers First Powerplant

Powerplant design and contracting specialist Spectrum Energy has been hired to manage construction of a 95-Mw gas combustion turbine powerplant for the Alabama Municipal Energy Agency in the first deal of its kind brokered by Hometown Connections, a unit of the American Public Power Association.

APPA, the national organization for over 2,000 municipal utilities, in 1998 set up Hometown Connections in Evergreen, Colo., as a for-profit subsidiary to qualify suppliers of equipment and services and to promote their goods to the membership, often at a discount. In 2001, Hometown selected Spectrum from 12 candidates to offer plant construction services as an exclusive "partner," says Hometown chief operating officer Dennis Melton.

Spectrum, based in Charlotte, N.C., and Irvine, Calif., was formed in 1998 and specializes in design and construction of powerplants in the 45-Mw to 300-Mw range, which it thought bigger contracting groups were ignoring, says Spectrum Vice President Mark Gilliss. It has built eight projects for a mix of private energy companies and small municipal and cooperative utilities. While the "field of dreams" merchant power market now is dead, there is continued demand among small publicly owned utilities that want to build small plants tailored to their own needs, says Gilliss.

Under the APPA deal, Spectrum offers engineering, procurement and contracting services to members at a 10% discount from average market costs. Gilliss says his group has several deals in the pipeline.

AMEA, which supplies power to 11 municipal utilities, is building its first peaking plant in Sylacauga, Ala. Spectrum will start work in August and finish next May. Officials have not disclosed the total cost of the plant but say they will get a discount from Spectrum and a one-third savings on two new GE ML6000 turbines. ■