



OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR AUDITING, ACCOUNTING AND  
REIMBURSEMENT SERVICES  
FOR  
Columbia County, New York  
February 2016**

**Introduction:**

Columbia County is accepting proposals for the purpose of retaining qualified, independent, certified public accountants, licensed to practice in the State of New York, to submit written fixed fee proposals to conduct an annual audit of the financial accounts and records for the 2016 and 2017 calendar year. Proposals must be received no later than **2:00 P.M. April 1, 2016** at the following address:

Michael Myers, General Services Director  
Columbia County  
401 State St  
Hudson, NY 12534  
(518) 828-8561

A total of five proposals shall be submitted. Proposals are to be enclosed in a sealed envelope, plainly marked as **“Proposals for Columbia County “Auditing Services.”**

RFP Documents and Instructions can be viewed on the Columbia County Government website – [www.columbiacountyny.com](http://www.columbiacountyny.com) by following the link to the “Columbia County Auditing Services.

## **COUNTY OF COLUMBIA**

### **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR INDEPENDENT AUDIT SERVICES**

#### **I. Purpose of Request**

Columbia County (County) is requesting proposals for the purpose of retaining qualified, independent, certified public accountants, licensed to practice in the State of New York, to submit written fixed fee proposals to conduct an annual audit of the financial accounts and records of the County, and including all work necessary for compliance with GASB Statement No. 34, in accordance with specifications outlined herein. The audit engagement period shall cover the calendar years ending December 31, 2016, through December 31, 2017.

#### **II. Background Information of the County**

The County, with a land area of 643 square miles and an estimated population based on the 2010 census of 63,116, is located in east-central New York State and extends from the Hudson River on the west to the Massachusetts border on the east between the Counties of Dutchess and Rensselaer. While major portions of the County are rural and agricultural in character, the County includes the City of Hudson and its surrounding area, which serve as the commercial, industrial and governmental hub of the County. The leading products manufactured in the County include plastics, furniture and fixtures, building products, paper products, and a cement storage plant which is located just south of the City of Hudson. Agricultural products include dairy, poultry, livestock and fruit production. The County is also a haven for passive recreation enthusiasts from the New York City region. The County's 2016 budget is over \$146,600,000.

#### **Form of Government**

In New York State, local government services are generally provided by counties, cities, towns and villages. The County provides law enforcement services, economic assistance, health and nursing services, maintains county roads, co-sponsors a joint community college and provides numerous other services.

The County Board of Supervisors is the main policy making body of the County. It has the power to levy taxes, adopt the County budget, make appropriations and adopt local laws. The County Board of Supervisors is a 23 member body consisting of one Supervisor from each of the 18 towns and one Supervisor from each of the five wards in the City of Hudson. Voting strength of each Supervisor is weighted to reflect population of that constituency. Supervisors are elected at large, within the area they represent, for two or four year terms in November of a given year. Annually, the Board of Supervisors elects a chairman from among its members. The Chairman of the Board of Supervisors is the chief executive officer who also acts on behalf of the County Board of Supervisors.

The County Treasurer, who is elected at large within the County for a four year term, is the chief fiscal officer of the County. The County Treasurer maintains the fiscal records, is responsible for receipt of, depositing of and disbursing of all funds of the County and issuance of bonds and notes of the County.

Other elected administrative officials of the County include the County Clerk, the District Attorney and the Sheriff, all elected to four year terms.

The other administrative officials of the County, including the County Attorney, County Controller/Auditor, Compliance Office, Budget Officer, Clerk of the Board, Deputy Clerk of the Board and the various Commissioners, are appointed by the County Board of Supervisors.

Additional information about the County and its operations can be obtained through its website at [www.columbiacountyny.com](http://www.columbiacountyny.com).

### **III. Description of Accounting Records**

The County maintains its general accounting records in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles for State and Local Governments. All accounting records are maintained using Munis/Tyler software on a hosted web based network. The County has presented its financial statements under the new reporting model required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement Number 34 & 45 beginning in 2009. The County's financial activities are accounted for as follows:

**Fund financial statements** - groupings of related accounts that are used to maintain control over resources that have been segregated for specific activities or objectives. The County like many other state and local governments uses fund accounting to ensure and demonstrate finance related legal compliance. These funds can be divided into three categories: governmental funds, proprietary funds and fiduciary funds.

**Governmental funds** are used to account for essentially the same functions reported as governmental activities in the government-wide financial statements. However, unlike the government-wide financial statements, governmental funds financial statements focus on near term inflows and outflows of spendable resources, as well as on balances of spendable resources available at the end of the fiscal year.

**Proprietary funds** in the County are enterprise funds. Enterprise funds are used to report the same functions presented as business typed activities in the government wide financial statements. The County uses these enterprise funds to account for the Nursing Home (Pine Haven) and Solid Waste Fund.

**Fiduciary funds** are used to account for resources held for the benefit of parties outside the government. Fiduciary funds are not reflected in the government-wide financial statements because the resources of those funds are not available to support the County's own programs. The accounting used for fiduciary funds is much like that used for proprietary funds.

**Component units** in the County are The Tobacco Asset Securitization Cooperation, Industrial Development Agency (IDA) of the Columbia, Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District, Columbia Development Leasing Corporation, and Columbia

Economic Development Corporation. Although legally separate, these component units are important because the County is financially accountable for them.

#### **IV. Scope of Services**

The audit engagement period shall cover the period beginning with the calendar year ending December 31, 2016, and ending with calendar year ending December 31, 2017, and the auditors shall render opinions on the financial statements for the years then ended. The audit will be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards, the Single Audit Act of 1984, the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and related OMB Circular A-133 and GASB Statement 34. The firm chosen must perform testing of the estimated liabilities recorded by the County, including a funding level analysis of the County's Worker's Compensation Self-Insurance Program. A Management Letter shall also be prepared with recommendations for improving internal accounting controls.

At the conclusion of the audit, a senior representative of the accounting firm shall appear before the Controller/Auditor and the Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors, and if requested, the full County Board, to discuss the findings of the resulting audit and recommendations for improving the County's systems of internal control.

Over the course of the audit engagement period, the accounting firm shall, at no additional cost to the County, make qualified staff members available to the County for general consultation regarding financial accounting and reporting issues.

#### **V. Audit Report Requirements**

The following reports are required at the completion of each fiscal year of the engagement:

- A. An auditor's opinion whether the general purpose financial statements present fairly the financial position and results of financial operations of the County in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principals for the state and local governments. This opinion is to be expressed on the financial statements at the combined level. The audit must also contain an auditor's opinion as to whether the supplemental schedule of Federal and State Financial Assistance presents fairly the actual grant data in relation to the general purpose financial statements.
- B. An auditor's statement whether an internal control system exists to provide reasonable assurance that all funds are managed in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
- C. An auditor's statement on compliance with grants requirements Financial Fund Statements prepared under the financial reporting model as it relates to GASB 34 for the December 31, 2016, financial statements and beyond.
- D. A management letter of comments and recommendations.

The accounting firm shall print, bind, and submit 5 copies of the aforementioned reports to the Controller/Auditor and Treasurer.

The accounting firm shall conduct an annual audit planning meeting with the Controller/Auditor and Treasurer prior to the beginning of each year's work, and shall conduct an annual exit conference with the Controller/Auditor and Treasurer to review draft copies of the aforementioned reports, prior to issuance in final form. The final reports shall be provided no later than August 31st of each year.

Correspondence or telephone response time between the County and the accounting firm shall not exceed 24 hours, and shall occur between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

## **VI. Instructions to Proposers**

An original and three copies of the Proposal and other required documents must be submitted in a sealed opaque envelope clearly marked with the name of the Proposal and the name and address of the accounting firm. If the proposal is sent through the mail, the sealed envelope shall be enclosed in a separate envelope with the notation "PROPOSAL ENCLOSED" on the face thereof. Firms mailing proposals shall allow sufficient time for delivery. Proposals must be received no later than **4:00 P.M. on April 1, 2016**, at the following address:

County of Columbia  
Attn: Michael Myers, General Services Director  
Columbia County  
401 State St  
Hudson, NY 12534  
(518) 828-2331

Those submitting Proposals do so entirely at their expense. The County will not reimburse any firm or individual for any costs incurred in preparing or submitting Proposals, preparing or submitting additional information requested by the County, or for participating in any selection interviews.

Submission of a Proposal indicates acceptance of the conditions contained in the RFP, unless clearly and specifically noted otherwise in the Proposal.

The County reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or any portions thereof and to negotiate with any one or more of the proposers, when it determines to do so is in the best interests of the County.

The County reserves the right to waive any informality and to disregard all non-conforming, non-responsive, or conditional Proposals.

The County may, at any time by written notification to all firms, change any portion of this RFP.

Proposals will be examined and evaluated by the County Controller/Auditor, Treasurer together with the County's Finance Committee. The County Board of Supervisors will make the final approval and award.

Proposals may be modified or withdrawn at any time prior to the opening date and time by an appropriate document executed and submitted in the same manner as a Proposal.

If within 24 hours after the Proposals are opened, any firm files a written notice with the County demonstrating to the reasonable satisfaction of the County that there was a material and substantial mistake in the preparation of its Proposal, that firm may withdraw its Proposal. Thereafter, that firm will be disqualified from making a further proposal on the work contemplated by this RFP unless all the proposals are rejected and the process is begun anew.

Each Proposal shall state that it is a firm offer for a period of 90 days from the Proposal opening date. After expiration of the firm-offer period, if no award has been made, a Proposal may be withdrawn if the accounting firm does so in writing directed to the Columbia County General Services Director; otherwise, Proposals remain in effect consistent with the terms of this RFP.

During the evaluation of Proposals, the County may require clarification of information or may ask the firms to make an oral presentation to amplify or confirm Proposal contents.

All questions concerning this RFP shall be submitted in writing to the person designated below as the primary County contact. Replies will be issued by completing section XI (F) (2) mailed or delivered to all parties recorded as having received this RFP. Questions received less than four days prior to the date of submission of proposals will not be answered. Only answers issued by written Addenda will be binding. Oral interpretations or clarifications will be without legal effect.

The Controller/Auditor will be the primary contact person for the County and all inquiries should be directed to:

Ronald J. Caponera, Controller/Auditor  
401 State St  
Hudson, NY 12534  
(518) 828-8561

All material submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the County.

Copies of the Audit, which includes the audited financial statements and the Single Audit Report for FYE 12/31/14 may be obtained by contacting the Controller/Auditor at the above-referenced address and number. The Controller/Auditor will meet with any interested firms and will make monthly reports available for examination.

## **VII. Accounting Firm Qualifications**

Provide a statement of qualifications responding to the following:

- A. The County is seeking firms with experience conducting audits of local government with operating budgets of at least \$100 million dollars, as well as significant experience with GASB Statement No. 34.
- B. The firm must be licensed to practice in New York.

- C. Provide as references at least five clients that are New York State municipalities for which audits have been conducted. References shall include contact names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- D. Describe the professional experience in government audits of each senior and higher level person to be assigned to the audit. Relevant experience with GASB No. 34 should be clearly communicated.
- E. Annual fees for services to be rendered.
- F. Provide any additional information, including additional services provided to government clients that will distinguish your firm in its service to the County of Columbia.
- G. Be advised that the County may make such investigations it deems necessary to determine the ability of the accounting firm to perform the work. The accounting firm shall furnish to the County, within five days of a request, all such information and data for this purpose as may be requested.
- H. Conditional Proposals will not be accepted.

### **VIII. Selection Criteria**

Selection of the firm to conduct the audits for the County will be based on the following:

- A. Responsiveness to the terms and conditions of the RFP, and the completeness and thoroughness of the written proposal. Please respond to the sections following the same order as in this RFP. For each step, be sure to detail what technical and support services you would have available.
- B. Reputation and professional qualifications of the professional personnel assigned to the audit.
- C. Fee structure.
- D. Experience providing similar services based on references of former or current New York State municipal clients.
- E. Demonstrated experience with GASB Statement No. 34.

### **IX. Contract Terms and Conditions**

The County requires that the firm selected enter into the County's standard Professional Services Agreement, which will embody the terms of this RFP, and that the firm provide the County with a standard engagement letter. If the firm selected does not execute an agreement within 30 days after being presented with one, the County reserves the right to award the auditing work to the next qualified firm.

The firm selected will not discriminate against any person in violation of any federal, state, or and local laws while conducting auditing services for the County.

The County shall furnish all information, data, reports, and records necessary for performing the audit, and the County shall cooperate with the firm in every way possible.

The firm shall not assign or transfer any interest in this agreement without the prior written consent of the County.

No reports, information, or data given to or prepared by the firm under this agreement shall be made available to any individual or organization by the firm without prior written approval of the County.

All work received by or produced by the firm under this agreement shall be the property of the County without restriction or limitation upon its use.

The County shall pay for services on the basis of the approved fee schedule per the agreement. Progress payments may be billed monthly, beginning on January 1 of each calendar year, for services rendered to date. The County will retain 1/3 of the total contract price until submission and delivery of the final audit reports.

The firm at its expense shall procure and shall maintain the following insurance:

a) Worker's Compensation and Employees Liability Insurance: A policy or policies providing protection for employees of the obligor in the event of job related injuries.

b) General Liability, including Comprehensive Form, Contractual, Premises/Completed Operations and Broad-Form Property Insurance shall be furnished with limits of not less than:

Liability	Each Occurrence	Aggregate
Bodily Injury & Property Damage	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000

c) Professional Liability Insurance: A policy providing coverage for damages and costs associated with liability and defense based upon the firm's professional errors or omissions with limits not less than \$2,000,000.

No work shall be commenced under the agreement until the firm has delivered to the County proof that all required insurance has been procured. Each policy of insurance shall be in form and content satisfactory to the County, shall name the County as an additional insured, and must provide that the policy will not be changed or canceled until 30 day's written notice has been given to the County.

If at any time any of the policies becomes unsatisfactory to the County, the firm shall promptly obtain a new policy and submit proof of such insurance to the County for its approval. Upon failure of the firm to maintain such insurance as above provided, the agreement may be declared suspended or terminated, at the County's election. Failure of



the firm to maintain any required insurance will not relieve the firm from any liability under the agreement.

The firm and the County will mutually indemnify each other from claims or damages arising from negligence.

**X. County Assistance to the Accounting Firm**

The County will provide the accounting firm with the following assistance in the preparation of the required reports:

- A. Preparation of year-end individual fund balance, revenues and expenditures, debt, fixed assets, and draft 34 worksheets/statements.
- B. Completion of all written confirmation documents.
- C. Production of appropriate records, and pulling and filing of additional, necessary records and documents.
- D. The County will also provide copies of official documents for inclusion in work papers (tax schedules, appropriations, cash reconciliation and debt reports).
- E. Reasonable workspace and access to a dedicated telephone line, and photocopy and FAX machines and access to the County Financial System.

**XI. Proposal Submission Requirements**

In order to simplify the evaluation process and obtain maximum comparability, the County requires all accounting firms to submit proposals in the following format. Deviation from this format may result in disqualification of the proposal.

A. Title Page

- RFP Project Title
- Name of Firm
- Address, telephone number, e-mail address, and web address of the firm
- Name of Contact person
- Date of Submission

B. Letter of Transmittal (not to exceed 2 pages)

- 1. Briefly state the firm understanding of the work to be done and make a positive commitment to complete all work and deliver all reports within the required time period.
- 2. Specify an all-inclusive fixed fee for which the work is to be performed, for each engagement year.

3. Provide the name and title of person authorized to bind the accounting firm, together with the main office address and telephone number.

C. Table of Contents

D. Professional Experience (in addition to the information required under “Accounting Firm Qualifications”)

1. Describe the firm’s experience with New York State local government finances during the past five years.
2. Identify the specific supervisors who will be assigned to the County and provide copies of their resumes. Supervisory staff resumes must identify the specific education, training, and experience with municipal work these individuals have.
3. Describe the firm’s participation in professionally sponsored quality control review programs and provide a copy of the peer review letter.
4. Describe the firm’s experience with GASB Statement No. 34 including staff’s education and training.

E. Approach to Audit Engagement

1. State the firm understanding of the services to be performed and the work product to be delivered.
2. Submit a proposed work plan to accomplish the required services for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2016, within the required time frame. The work plan must include time estimates for each major component of the audit, by staff level, and staff assignments. Please include a brief discussion of the audit procedures to be employed in each major component of the audit.
3. Provide a description of what services the auditor would provide to the County at no additional cost related to compliance with GASB Statement No. 34.

F. Compensation

1. State the total number of hours and hourly rate required by staff classification, for each major component of the engagement.
2. The proposal must include an annual fixed fee, inclusive of all travel, clerical, printing, administrative and overhead expenses for each of the following periods:

COUNTY OF COLUMBIA  
Calendar Year ending December 31, 2016 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Calendar Year ending December 31, 2017 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## G. Additional Information

Provide additional information not specifically requested considered necessary for fair evaluation of the proposal.

NON-COLLUSION STATEMENT

GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW SECTION 103-d

By submission of this proposal, each Vendor and each person signing on behalf of any Vendor, certifies, and in the case of a joint proposal, each party thereto certifies as to its own organization, under penalty of perjury, that to the best of his knowledge and belief:

- 1) The prices in this proposal have been arrived at independently without collusion, consultation, communications oral agreement, for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such prices with any other Vendor or with any competitor;
  
- 2) Unless otherwise required by law, the prices which have been quoted in this proposal have not been knowingly disclosed by the Vendor and will not knowingly be disclosed by the Vendor prior to opening, directly or indirectly, to any other Vendor or to any competitor; and
  
- 3) No attempt has been made or will be made by the Vendor to induce any other person, partnership or corporation to submit or not to submit a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition.

\_\_\_\_\_  
FIRM

\_\_\_\_\_  
BY

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINTED NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

NOTICE TO PROPOSERS

COUNTY OF COLUMBIA

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

TAKE NOTICE that sealed Proposals shall be received at the General Services Office of Purchasing, 401 State Street, Hudson, New York 12534 no later than 4:00 P. M. Local Time on April 1, 2016 at which time they shall be opened and the Accounting firm's name read aloud for Independent Audit Services for the Columbia County Controller/Auditors Office.

Specifications and General Information will be available at the Office of Purchasing after the date of this notice. Complete Request for Proposal documents may be available for download from the County's web site at <http://www.columbuacountyny.com>.

Michael Myers  
General Services Director

DATED: February 29, 2016