

TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

**BID NO. 24-16**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**STATE LOBBYING AND LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION SERVICES**

**General Information**

The County Council of Talbot County (the “County Council”) is seeking proposals from qualified firms with experience working with local government or municipal organizations that have successfully developed and facilitated state lobbying and legislative representation services.

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###### Background

Talbot County, Maryland (“Talbot County” or the “County”), founded in 1661 and named for Lady Grace Talbot, sister of the second Lord Baltimore, is centrally located on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, bordering the Chesapeake Bay with five river systems, more than 600 miles of tidal shoreline and a mixture of farmlands and forests. Talbot County is a predominantly rural county with a population of approximately 38,000 with a median age of 50 years, five incorporated municipalities (Easton, Oxford, Queen Anne, St. Michaels and Trappe) and 22 unincorporated villages. A Charter form of government, there are five County Council members elected at large for four-year terms. For FY25 the approved budget is $163,970,000 with Property Tax revenues projected to generate 38% of total revenues and Income Tax projected to generate 22% of total revenues. Talbot County offers the lowest real property tax rate in the State and the second lowest income tax rate. Staffing includes approximately 310 full-time employees, 55 part-time employees and 74 seasonal part-time employees. There are over 20 boards and committees that report to the County Council.

The County’s proximity to major markets in the mid-Atlantic and its adjacency to tidal waters of the United States are assets that have supported the traditional seafood and shipbuilding industries in the county for over 300 years. The location of historic ferry landings and working waterfronts were important junctions for the transport of goods and people. It was these locations that grew into the water-oriented village settlements of present-day Talbot County, including the villages of Bellevue, Claiborne, Neavitt, Newcomb, Tilghman and Wittman. Accompanying the growing seafood and packing industries were water-related industries such as shipbuilding along with small retail and hospitality enterprises that supported these major water-dependent businesses, their populations and the visitors and seasonal homeowners that arrived from the west.

In the early 1900s, the County saw a loss of population as families relocated to more urban areas. The opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952 began the reversal of this population trend which led to substantial changes to the county, as well as other Eastern Shore counties, as they became more accessible and less isolated. The second half of the 20th century also saw a shift in the county’s economy, as it transitioned from agriculture and seafood production to a more diversified economy, including areas of construction, real estate, light manufacturing, trade, tourism and service-related industries. The county is still recognized for its open rural landscapes, woodlands, rivers, streams and wetlands and abundance of wildlife.

The county’s proximity and accessibility to the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area and the mid-Atlantic corridor, its scenic location and the appeal of its working waterfront, rural character, and unique heritage continue to bring second homeowners and retirees into the county. The continued influx of newcomers has the effect of increasing the desirability of waterfront properties for non-water-dependent uses, potentially increasing property values and real estate taxes on existing commercial waterfront properties.

The county’s undeveloped and working agricultural lands are precious resources that are critical to the rural character and quality of life that is so valued by the visitors and residents of the county. Agricultural conservation and preservation have been long standing goals of the County throughout its history. Currently the County participates in several agricultural land preservation initiatives with other organizations to include the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC). As of 2023, roughly 35,000 acres have been protected through some type of conservation easement. Other more localized efforts such as farm produce stands, farm-based recreation, and farm-based education have grown in popularity and help to support local farmers.

The County provides residents with a variety of recreational opportunities through various parks, public landings and areas of dedicated open space. The County’s system of parks includes four regional parks, six County owned community parks, and several other unique public recreation sites and amenities. The flagship of the County parks system is the Talbot County Community Center which is centrally located within the county and is easily accessible from U.S. Route 50. The indoor facility includes an ice rink, multipurpose space and a newly constructed gymnasium. Directly across U.S. Route 50 from the Community Center is Hog Neck Golf Course, which is owned and operated by Talbot County and offers an 18-hole championship course together with a 9-hole executive course and other ancillary golf-related amenities.

The position of County Manager is an appointed position and oversees the following departments:

Administrative Services

Easton Airport

Communication Management

Department of Corrections

Economic Development & Tourism

Emergency Services

Facilities Maintenance

Finance

Hog Neck Golf Course

Parks and Recreation

Planning & Zoning

Public Works

Roads and Facilities Maintenance

Technical Services

Both the Sheriff’s Office and State’s Attorney’s Office are elected positions. The County Attorney reports directly to the County Council.

1. **Scope of Work**

The County is seeking an experienced firm to provide lobbying and legislative representation services that promote the County’s interests before the Maryland General Assembly and other State governmental bodies. The County desires to enter into a professional services contract with the qualified firm who can demonstrate competency and experience in providing State lobbying services.

In carrying out these services, the qualified firm will assist the County with representation, information gathering, information dissemination, strategic advice and support services. The firm will provide a flexible level of support, depending on the depth or scope of the County’s legislative priorities at any given time.

The primary level of support will be provided between October 1 and April 30, when the County is engaged in pre-General Assembly Session activities; developing its State legislative agenda; and tracking and weighing in on legislation with impact to the County and/or region during the 90-day General Assembly Session. The County envisions that 80% of the firm’s time and work will occur during this timeframe. Services will focus on: 1) garnering support for the County’s legislative agenda; 2) identifying, tracking, and responding to legislation that affects and/or impacts the County; and 3) securing various State of Maryland funding for various County projects and initiatives.

A limited amount of support will be provided between May 1 and September 30 when interim activity is typically at a slower pace. The County anticipates a less significant level of service during this time period and services may focus on: 1) performing legislative research and communications requested by the County.

The qualified firm will be responsible for:

* Timely inform the County of developments coming out of the Legislative and Executive branches of the State Government that may impact Talbot County;
* Be available in a timely manner in person, by telephone or e-mail to provide consultation and advice;
* In response to County direction, act quickly on the County’s behalf to rapidly changing developments in State government with impact on policy and legislative matters;
* Represent the County as needed, at Task Force/Work Group meetings, bill hearings, Committee meetings, and provide timely written summaries to County staff;
* Provide timely written reports that track the status of the County’s legislative priorities and other legislation of interest on a bi-weekly basis during the Legislative Session, and no less than three reports pertaining to the work periods at other times of the year, delineating the firm’s activities and actions for the County;
* In between bi-weekly legislative session reports, provide timely updates to the County Manager by phone, e-mail or text on developments relating to priorities and legislation of interest for County staff to quickly share with the County Council;
* Work with staff to prepare written communications that convey the County’s position on State legislative, policy and intergovernmental issues;
* Handle the logistics related to County officials testifying at all bill hearings;
* Provide legislative and policy research on legislative proposals and executive agency regulations/issues/initiatives;
* Represent the County’s interests in Annapolis by interacting with key members of the General Assembly and staff and Executive agency officials and staff, as needed;
* Facilitate regular meetings between the County, local delegation (Legislative District 37B), and other State legislators to strengthen relationships, and to provide State officials with support as they work to successfully advance the County’s priorities and protect its interests;
* Work with County elected officials and staff on presentation of testimony and facilitate advocacy efforts for various projects and initiatives;
* Establish and maintain effective strategic relationships with the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), municipal and county representatives and stakeholders to achieve outcomes that support the County’s legislative and policy positions; and
* Utilize working relationships with executive agency officials to solve bureaucratic problems on behalf of the County as needed.

1. **SELECTION CRITERIA, EVALUATION AND AWARD PROCESS**

All firms submitting proposals under this RFP shall demonstrate the knowledge, experience, and products necessary to meet or exceed the following minimum qualifications:

* Experience lobbying at the State level with an understanding of the State legislative processes and State budget appropriation processes and experience identifying State grant opportunities; and
* Must be licensed and in good standing with the State of Maryland; and
* Demonstrate its ability to provide qualified personnel for the required services based on the individuals’ experience, training, education, or certification. Bidders are required to submit resumes, curriculum vitae or other documentation outlining the expertise and qualifications of personnel who will be assigned to the contract.

Selection criteria will include:

* Knowledge of, and previous work experience with, local and municipal governments
* Proven track record providing State lobbying and Legislative Representation Services
* Fee schedule
* Completeness of response to RFP as outlined in this solicitation

The following weighting and points will be assigned to the proposal for evaluation purposes:

Background and experience 30 maximum points

Personnel and references 20 maximum points

Fee schedule 30 maximum points

Quality of bid and responsiveness 20 maximum points

**TOTAL 100 points**

Detailed proposal information will be held in confidence during the evaluation process. The County reserves the right to ask for modifications or other alterations from any or all proposers after the RFP closing date. Subsequent to the selection of the winning proposal(s), with the exception of trade secrets and confidential business or financial information, all other information included in the proposals may be considered public information under the Maryland Public Information Act, in which case it may be subject to public production upon request.

The County reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any and all proposals received, without penalty, and not to issue a contract as a result of this RFP.

The County may, after evaluating the written proposals, elect to schedule the finalists for oral presentations. Should oral presentations be scheduled, the County will contact the top-scoring firm(s) from the written evaluation to schedule a date/time/location. Additional technical and/or cost information may be requested for clarification purposes.

1. **Insurance Requirements**

Proposers must submit copies of certificates of insurance for general liability and Workers’ Compensation with their proposal.

1. **Fee Schedule**

The proposed fee schedule shall include the following items:

* A detailed breakdown of all fees for the services offered.
* All personnel, equipment, transportation, supplies, tools, and materials necessary to maintain the level of service detailed in this RFP throughout the term of the agreement.

1. **Term of Contract**

The contract period for the successful firm shall be for a period of one (1) year with an option for a one (1) year renewal term. The contract may be terminated by either party with sixty (60) days prior notice in writing.

1. **RFP Submittal Requirements**

Instructions, forms and specifications may be obtained in person or by mail from the Talbot County Manager’s Office, South Wing, Talbot County Courthouse, 11 North Washington Street, Suite 13, Easton, Maryland 21601.

Interested firms shall submit one sealed copy of the completed proposal, as well as four (4) copies, clearly marked as: Bid No. 24-16, 2024 Request for Proposals – State Lobbying and Legislative Representation Services by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 11, 2024. Proposals shall be addressed to the Talbot County Manager, South Wing, Talbot County Courthouse, 11 N. Washington Street, Suite 13, Easton, Maryland 21601 and shall be mailed or hand-delivered at any time before the scheduled opening. **NOTE: E-mailed or faxed bids will not be accepted.**

By submitting a proposal, you represent that you have thoroughly examined and become familiar with the scope of services outlined in the RFP and are capable of performing quality work to achieve the County’s objectives. All proposals must be valid for a period of forty-five (45) days.

The following information must accompany your proposal:

* Cover letter which includes description of your firm, location, number of years in business, number and nature of the professional staff to be assigned to Talbot County Government during the duration of the contract, staff experience and training, including a brief resume for each key person listed;
* Statement of qualifications and description of experience, including any and all experience working with local governments or municipal organizations;
* List of at least three (3) reference providing names, telephone numbers and relationship; and
* Provide a sample legislative position statement of testimony, with confidential information redacted;
* Provide a sample legislative tracking report, with confidential information redacted;
* Provide information relating to industry ratings or special recognition received by the firm for lobbying/legislative representation services, if applicable;
* Provide your firm’s methodology in carrying out the services specified in this RFP and describe project management and logistical perspective;
* Explain the firm’s philosophy and strategy used to achieve the best possible lobbying/legislative representation outcomes before the Legislative and Executive branches of the State of Maryland;
* Document examples of success in providing lobbying services to clients in the following areas: 1) achieving passage of legislation; 2) defeating legislation; 3) amending legislation; and 4) identifying and applying for grants and/or bond bills;
* Describe and document the firm’s knowledge and expertise in legislative bill review and analysis, the State budget process, educating clients on the impact of legislation, advising clients on courses of action, conducting legislative history, and consultation with the County Attorney’s office, as necessary; and
* Demonstrate the firm’s established strategic relationships with stakeholders including Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and other organizations that the firm would partner with to achieve outcomes that support the County’s legislative and policy positions.

Legal Violations Statement and Conflict of Interest:

* Indicate whether your firm, or the staff assigned to this engagement, have been found guilty of any legal or regulatory violations to these services or been the subject of any non-routine investigation by a regulatory agency within the past five (5) years;
* Identify any current arrangements with other firms that might be recommended to do business with the County and list such items as finder’s fees or splitting arrangements;
* Provide an affirmative statement that your firm will not engage in activities on behalf of the County that produce a direct or indirect financial gain for the firm, other than agreed upon contractual compensation, without the County’s informed consent; and
* The County is interested in firms that can represent the County’s interests on State legislative and policy matters without conflicts of interest. Explain what the firm would do in a situation where two or more of your clients have conflicting views and/or positions on a matter in which you’ve been asked to advocate before the legislative and/or executive branches of the State of Maryland.

# Schedule For Bid 24-16, Request for Proposals – State lobbying and Legislative Representation Services – Talbot County, Maryland

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Task | Completion |
| RFP Issued | August 23, 2024 |
| Deadline to Submit RFP | September 11, 2024 |
| Award letter to selected bidder(s) | September 25, 2024 |
| Kickoff Meeting | September 30, 2024 |

# Submitting Proposals

# Sealed bids MUST be delivered to:

### Office of the Talbot County Manager

### Courthouse, South Wing

### 11 North Washington Street, Suite 13

### Easton, MD 21601

**Deadline:**

# Wednesday, September 11, 2024

**4:00 p.m.**

Envelopes MUST be marked: “**Bid No 24-16, 2024 Request for Proposals – State Lobbying and Legislative Representation Services – Talbot County, Maryland**” in the lower left corner.

***\**** *Proposals not received by the time and at the place indicated will not be considered* ***and will be returned unopened.***

**Inquiries Concerning This Proposal**

Please direct any questions or comments to:

Clay Stamp, Talbot County Manager

Courthouse, South Wing

11 North Washington Street, Suite 13

Easton, MD 21601

Telephone: 410-770-8010

*The County Council of Talbot County reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or in part, any and all proposals received in response to this* ***Request for Proposal****, to waive or permit cure of minor irregularities; and to conduct discussions with any or all qualified Service Providers in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of the County. This* ***Request for Proposal*** *creates no obligation on the part of the County to award a contract.*

# TALBOT COUNTY BID FORM

**BID NO. 24-16**

Clay B. Stamp Manager

Talbot County Courthouse

11 N. Washington Street

Easton, Maryland 21601

**TITLE:** **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – STATE LOBBYING AND LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION SERVICES – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**OPENING:** **Wednesday, September 11, 2024 – 4:00 p.m.**

Proposal of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter called "**Bidder**"), organized and existing under the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ doing business as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\* **(\* Insert "a corporation", "a partnership", “a joint venture, or "an individual", as applicable.)**

**Bidder** hereby submits proposal for the above titled project. Having carefully examined the specifications and requirements for the named project and having received clarification on all items of conflict or upon which any doubt arose, the under­signed hereby agree(s) to furnish all labor, material and equipment required to complete all work in strict accordance with the contract docu­ments. **Bidder** also understands that the Talbot County Council has the right to delete any portion of the work herein described and **Bidder** shall perform other approved items of the contract accordingly.

Bidder acknowledges receipt of the following addenda:

Bidder hereby agrees to perform all the work described in the specifications, and shown on the plans for the stipulated lump sum amount of:

**TOTAL BASE BID**

Dollars ($ )

Written Figures

If at the time this Contract is to be awarded, the lowest bid(s) submitted by a responsive bidder(s) does not exceed the amount of funds estimated by the County as available to finance the Contract, the Contract shall be awarded. If such bid(s) exceeds such amount, the County may elect to reject all bids. The County reserves the right to select the proposal(s) and alternate, which, in its judgment, better serve the public interest. It is understood that the proposal will be firm for a time period of forty-five (45) calendar days from the bid opening date. If the undersigned is notified of the acceptance of this proposal within this time period, s/he agrees to execute a contract for the above stated compensation. The undersigned also agrees to supply all required bonds, insurance forms, Workers’ Compensation and related documents within ten (10) calendar days of the notification.

Affidavits I and II are to be submitted by all bidders with the Bid Form(s). All submittals called for in the contract documents must be attached hereto.

Federal Employer I.D. Number \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE**

**SIGNATURE**

**PRINTED NAME AND TITLE**

**FIRM NAME**

**MAILING ADDRESS**

**TELEPHONE NUMBER**

**FAX NUMBER**

**EMAIL ADDRESS**

**AFFADVIT I**

**BID NO.: 24-16**

**TITLE: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – STATE LOBBYING AND LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION SERVICES – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATE**

The undersigned certifies under penalties of perjury that this bid or proposal has been made and submitted in good faith and without collusion or fraud with any person. As used in this certification, the “person” shall mean any natural person, business, partnership, corporation, union, committee, club, or other organization, entity, or group of individuals.

**AFFIDAVIT II**

**DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST BY PERSONS DOING BUSINESS WITH TALBOT COUNTY**

The undersigned does hereby declare that no officer or employee of Talbot County, whether elected or appointed, has in any manner whatsoever any interest in, or has received prior to, hereto, or will receive subsequent hereto, any benefit, monetary or material consideration from the profits or emoluments of this contract, job, work or service for the County, and that no officer or employee has accepted or received or will receive, directly or indirectly, any part of any fee, commission or other compensation paid or payable by the County in connection with the contract, job, work, or service for the County, excepting, however, the receipt of dividend or corporation stock.

I/WE do solemnly declare and affirm under the penalties of perjury that the contents of the foregoing affidavits are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

**SIGNATURE**

**PRINTED NAME AND TITLE**