

# Thurston County Auditor's Office

## Request for Proposal RFP #24-01 2024



## High Speed Mail/Ballot Sorting Machine

Proposals for the project named above should be:

**Mailed to:**

Thurston County Auditor's Office  
Elections Division  
Attn: Lynne Watanabe  
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW  
Olympia, WA 98502

**Delivered to:**

Thurston County Auditor's Office  
Elections Division  
Attn: Lynne Watanabe  
2400 Evergreen Park Drive SW  
Olympia, WA 98502

All proposals must be received on or before:  
4:00 p.m. (PDT) March 26, 2024

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Thurston County Auditor  
RFP #24-01

High Speed Mail/Ballot Sorting Machine

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Purpose**

Thurston County Auditor's Office (hereinafter referred to as county) is inviting responses for a ballot sorting machine for the county. The county is seeking a solution for a single, secure process of sorting all inbound mail. The machine should significantly increase the speed of the signature verification process and automate ballot intake.

It is the intent of the county to contract with a single vendor to purchase a high speed mail/ballot sorting machine as outlined in this Request for Proposal (hereinafter referred to as RFP.)

### **B. Period of Contract**

The term of the contract will be for a one (1) year time period starting May 1, 2024 and continuing until April 30, 2025 with annual options to renew for maintenance, licensing and software updates. The county may exercise the options by written notice to the vendor at any time prior to the expiration of the initial contract term or at a later date with the agreement of the vendor.

### **C. Mandatory Vendor Requirements**

All vendors must possess the ability, resources, and expertise to:

1. Provide two references from other agencies, demonstrating experiences and ability of the proposed sorting machine scanning and sorting large quantities of mail quickly and accurately. Provide agency, contact name/address, phone number, and dates services were provided. This information must be included on Attachment C – References.
2. Meet other presentation and participation requirements listed in this RFP.
3. Submit a proposal in the manner as stated in Section V of this RFP.

## **D. Questions**

Questions related to the RFP must be submitted to the designated county RFP representative Lynne Watanabe. Questions must be submitted via e-mail to (lynne.watanabe@co.thurston.wa.us), or via fax (360) 705-3518. Contact via phone is prohibited. The deadline for submitting questions is Tuesday, March 12, 2024, 4:00 p.m. PDT.

All questions must include:

1. Vendor name
2. Vendor contact person's name, e-mail address, telephone, and fax number
3. Reference to the specific section and reference number of the issue in question
4. Clearly and concisely worded questions

All questions and responses will be posted to the Auditor's website by Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

## **E. Correspondence**

All correspondence, except questions related to the RFP which shall be submitted in accordance with Section I, paragraph D; including proposals, shall be submitted to:

Mail: Thurston County Auditor's Office  
Elections Division  
Attn: Lynne Watanabe  
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW  
Olympia, WA 98502

In Person: Thurston County Auditor's Office  
Elections Division  
Attn: Lynne Watanabe  
2400 Evergreen Park Drive SW  
Olympia, WA 98502

Contact: E-mail: lynne.watanabe@co.thurston.wa.us  
Fax number: (360) 705-3518

## **F. Notice to Vendors**

Once this RFP has been issued, vendors are specifically directed not to contact county personnel for meetings, conferences, or technical discussions related to this RFP. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disqualification of the vendor. All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by e-mail or fax as indicated in Section I, paragraph D.

## **G. The Request for Proposal**

These RFP instructions are intended to provide vendors with a common, uniform set of instructions to guide them through the development of their proposal. Terms used and conditions imposed in this RFP are not intended to imply or denote a particular vendor nor are they to be construed as restrictive in any way. In responding to this RFP, vendors must follow the prescribed format as shown in Section V and use included forms or reasonable facsimiles thereof. The degree of compliance with the requirements of this RFP will be a significant factor in the subsequent evaluation of the proposal.

## **H. Proposal Submission Deadline**

One (1) original of the complete proposal must be received at the address listed in Section I, paragraph E, no later than Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 4:00 p.m. (PDT). Late or incomplete proposals will not be opened or considered.

## **I. Letter of Intent**

All vendors interested in responding to this RFP are required to submit a letter of intent to the address listed in Section I, paragraph E, no later than Wednesday, March 6, 2024, 4:00 p.m. (PDT). The letter should identify the following information:

1. Your company name
2. Your proposal contact person's name, e-mail address, telephone, and fax number.

## **II. Proposal Timeline**

The schedule that follows has been developed, in order to provide adequate information for vendors to prepare definitive proposals and to permit the county to fully consider various factors that may affect its decision. This schedule is subject to change at the county's discretion.

Release of RFP	Wednesday, February 28, 2024
Deadline for Submission of Letter of Intent	4:00 p.m. (PST) on Wednesday, March 6, 2024
Deadline for Submission of Questions	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Tuesday, March 12, 2024
Questions and responses posted to the Auditor's web site	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Tuesday, March 19, 2024
Deadline for Proposals	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Tuesday, March 26, 2024
Proposal Withdrawal Deadline	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Wednesday, March 27, 2024
Tentative Date for Awarding Contract	Wednesday, April 10, 2024

## **III. Proposal Conditions**

### **A. Contingencies**

This RFP does not commit the county to award a contract. The county reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals if the county determines it is in the best interest of the county to do so. The county will notify all vendors in writing if the county rejects all proposals.

### **B. Modifications**

The county reserves the right to issue addenda or amendments to this RFP.

### **C. Proposal Submission**

To be considered, all vendors must submit a letter of intent in accordance with Section I, paragraph I, and proposals must be submitted in the manner set forth in Section V. It is the vendor's responsibility to ensure that its proposal arrives on or before the specified time.

### **D. Incurred Costs**

This RFP does not commit the county to pay any costs incurred by vendors in the preparation of a proposal in response to this request, and vendors agree that all costs

incurred by vendors in developing this proposal are the vendor's responsibility.

#### **E. Negotiations**

The county shall require the selected vendor to participate in negotiations and to submit price, technical, or any other revision(s) of their proposals as may result from negotiations.

#### **F. Acceptance or Rejection of Proposal**

Proposals shall remain open, valid and subject to acceptance any time within one hundred eighty (180) days after the proposal opening.

The county realizes that factors other than price are important and will award contract(s) based on the proposal that best meets the needs of the county. While cost may not be the primary factor in the evaluation process, it is an important factor.

#### **G. Formal Contract**

Vendor will be required to enter into a formal contract with the county. This RFP sets forth some of the general provisions which will be included in the final contract. In submitting a response to this RFP, the vendor will be deemed to have agreed to each of the following, unless the proposal identifies an objection, and the county agrees to a change of language in writing: Section I, paragraph B; Section IV, paragraph B; Section VI, paragraph C; Attachment B; and Attachment D.

Failure to raise any objections to the contract language at the time of submittal of a response to this RFP will result in a waiver of objection to any of the contract language.

#### **H. Final Authority**

The final authority to award a contract rests solely with the Thurston County Auditor.

#### **I. Commercial General Liability – Insurance requirements**

The vendor shall maintain Commercial General Liability coverage for bodily injury, person injury and property damage, subject to limits of not less than \$1 million per loss.



## **IV. Scope of Work**

### **A. Background**

Thurston County is located in the Southwestern part of the state of Washington and has a population of over 300,000, of which approximately **197,000** are registered voters. The county conducts up to four vote by mail elections per year in February, April, August and November, with August and November elections generally being countywide.

Upcoming elections include, but are not limited to, the following dates:

1. August 6, 2024 Primary Election
2. November 5, 2024 General Election

### **B. Specifications – High Speed Mail/Ballot Sorting Machine**

1. System operating software which interfaces with the county voter registration system (VoteWA) and the county Local Area Network.
2. System must be able to read and process up to 300 different precincts. Data will be provided listing all voter registration and precinct number barcodes associated with the voter.
3. System must be able to sort ballot return envelopes by precinct and/or precinct part level.
4. System must provide a count of ballot return envelopes processed.
5. System must produce and print a date and time stamp to each incoming ballot return envelope produced on the first sort pass.
6. System must be able to capture signature and envelope images and store these images in a directory that can be accessible to operator.
7. System should provide image archive of all envelopes processed with time and date stamp for all pieces.
8. System must be modular in construction in that it will be capable of adding additional sorting trays or other upgrades at a later date. All upgrades must be done at county site.

9. The system should be equipped with an on demand tray tag printer with a button located on each tray that allows the operator to request a tray tag whenever the tray is filled.
10. System should include an audit summary report to allow the county personnel to audit and verify each precinct. Report should list precinct name and piece counts.
11. System must have a thickness detection capability to identify ballot return envelopes that may not contain all contents expected to be returned or contain more than expected and sort into separate trays from complete envelopes. This ability needs to be adjustable between elections, as the ballot size is subject to change.
12. System must have a minimum of 16 sort trays with a minimum of 250 pieces per tray.
13. System must be able to read a Code 39 barcode on the ballot envelopes. Changes in type of barcode, size of barcode or printing quality may require modifications.
14. System must be able to identify and sort (into a separate tray) any mail pieces identified as a non-ballot return envelope.
15. System must have the ability to sort ballot return envelopes with signatures identified as invalid into a separate tray.
16. System must be ergonomically designed to minimize operator fatigue.
17. Service: Vendors must provide a call back within one (1) hour and service within three (3) hours, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Vendors should also have additional coverage seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day. Vendors must have multiple trained technicians in the area where the system is to be installed who are capable of providing maintenance within the above mentioned response time.
18. The system software must be Windows based with the capacity to display reports on the system computer screen before printing. The system must allow for the printing of only selected pages of reports. The system must be able to export run data to PC based programs, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, etc.
19. The system feeder must be able to sort and process 5.25" high x 9.375" long and

.020”-.050” thickness ballot envelope.

20. Vendor must specify delivery date of equipment. Proposed delivery date of each vendor will be a factor in the decision making process.
21. Vendor must provide on-site operator training.

## **V. Proposal Submission**

### **A. General**

1. All interested and certified vendors are invited to submit a proposal for consideration. Submission of a proposal indicates that the vendor has read and understands the entire RFP, including all appendixes, attachments, exhibits, schedules, and addendums (as applicable) and that all concerns regarding the RFP have been satisfied.
2. Proposals must be submitted in the format described in Section C herein. Proposals are to be prepared in such a way as to provide a straightforward, concise description of capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this RFP.
3. Expensive bindings, colored displays, promotional materials, etc., are neither necessary nor desired. Emphasis should be concentrated on conformance to the RFP instructions, responsiveness to the RFP requirements, and on completeness and clarity of content.
4. Proposals must be completed in all respects as required in this section. A proposal may not be considered if it is conditional or incomplete.

All proposals and materials submitted become property of the county.

### **B. Proposal Presentation**

1. All proposals must be submitted on “8½ x 11” recycled paper, neatly typed, double-sided, with 1-inch margins and single-spaced. Typeface must be no more than 12 characters per inch. Each page, including attachments, must be clearly and consecutively numbered at the bottom center of each page.
2. One (1) original of the complete proposal must be received by the deadline for receipt of proposal specified in Section II - Proposal Timeline. The original must be enclosed in a sealed envelope or container and identified on the outside as

follows: vendor name, address, telephone number, RFP title and number, and proposal due date.

3. Hand carried proposals may be delivered to the address found in Section I, paragraph E, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays observed by the county. Vendors are responsible for informing any commercial delivery service, if used, of all delivery requirements, and for ensuring that the address information appears on the outer envelope used by such service.

### **C. Proposal Format**

Vendors must provide the following information in the following format:

1. Cover Page

Attachment A – Cover page is to be used as the front page for the proposal. This form must be fully completed and signed by an authorized officer of the vendor.

2. Table of Contents

All pages of the proposal, including the enclosures, must be clearly and consecutively numbered and correspond to the Table of Contents.

3. Statement of Experience

Include the following in this section of the proposal:

- a. Business name of the prospective vendor and legal entity such as corporation, partnership, etc.
- b. Number of years the prospective vendor has been in business under the present business names as well as related prior business names.
- c. A statement that the prospective vendor has a demonstrated capacity to perform the required services.

4. Mandatory Vendor Requirements

Complete, initial, sign, and include in the submitted proposal, Attachment B - Mandatory Vendor Requirements.

5. References

Provide two (2) references from other agencies. The references should be from agencies that you have established a contract with for this type of service. Provide agency, contact name/address, phone number, and dates services were provided **as well as a letter of reference from each agency**. This information must be included/attached on Attachment C - References.

6. Statement of Certification

Complete, initial, sign, and include in the submitted proposal, Attachment D - Statement of Certification.

7. Proposal Description

Provide a brief description of the proposal.

- a. Brief synopsis of the vendor's understanding of the county's needs and how the vendor plans to meet those needs. This should provide a broad understanding of the vendor's entire proposal.
- b. Brief narrative description that demonstrates the vendor's ability to provide the products and services as indicated in the technical requirements detailed in Section IV, Scope of Work.
- c. A Technical Proposal providing a detailed description of the equipment being offered, and any information relevant to this solicitation.

8. Cost Sheets

Complete proposed cost details on Attachment E - Proposed Cost Sheet.

## **VI. Evaluation Process**

### **A. General**

All proposals will be subject to a standard review process developed by the county's Evaluation Committee. The committee will be comprised of appropriate county personnel with the appropriate experience and/or knowledge, striving to ensure that the committee is balanced. Scoring proposals will be based on a ranking system.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

#### **1. Initial Review**

- a. All proposals will be initially evaluated to determine if they meet the mandatory requirements.
- b. The proposal must be complete, in the required format, and in compliance with all the material requirements of this RFP.
- c. Prospective vendor must meet the requirements as stated in the Mandatory Vendor Requirements outlined in Attachment B - Mandatory Vendor Requirements.
- d. Prospective vendor must provide two (2) references from other agencies to which they have provided the same or similar service as being requested in this RFP, Attachment C - References.

#### **2. Final Review**

Proposals meeting the above requirements will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria (not necessarily in order of priority):

- a. Cost will be used as a determining factor between equally qualified vendor proposals, Attachment E – Proposed Cost Sheet.
- b. Quality control and project management proposals.
- c. Experience and references from other jurisdictions using the same voting system for which the same range of services is provided.
- d. References from other elections customers.

**C. Contract Award**

- a. A contract will be awarded based on a competitive selection from the proposals received. A recommendation will be made by the Evaluation Committee to the Thurston County Auditor. The Auditor makes the ultimate determination regarding the award of contract.
- b. The contents of the proposal of the successful vendor will become contractual obligations, and failure to accept the obligations in this contract may result in cancellation of the award.
- c. The county anticipates awarding a single contract. The county does, however, reserve the option to make the award it deems to be in the best interest of the county.
- d. The cost of the sorter equipment and services is an important factor in the evaluation process, but the county is not obligated to accept the lowest cost proposal. The ability to provide products and services in a timely manner at a low or reasonable cost in accordance with the RFP requirements is critical to a successful proposal.

**ATTACHMENT A – COVER PAGE**  
**HIGH SPEED MAIL/BALLOT SORTING MACHINE**

Vendor’s Name (name of firm, entity or organization):

\_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title of Vendor’s Contact Person:

\_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Vendor’s services or business activities other than what this RFP requests:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Vendor’s Authorized Signature:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_



**ATTACHMENT B  
MANDATORY VENDOR REQUIREMENTS**

**The following requirements apply to all prospective vendors:**

	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree with Qualification (Initial and attach explanation)</b>
1.	<p>The county intends to award the contract to an experienced and responsible firm. Please answer the following questions to help us assess your firm's stability and capability to perform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Has your firm defended against any litigation within the past 5 years? If yes, please explain.</li><li>b. Has your firm completed all contracts it was awarded? If no, please explain.</li><li>c. Has your firm been found in default on any contract? If yes, please explain.</li><li>d. Has your firm filed for protection under bankruptcy law or is it considering such a filing?</li></ul> <p>Comments:</p>		
2.	<p>Provide two (2) references from other agencies or businesses that you have previously contracted with for this type of service. Provide agency or business, contact name/address, phone number, and dates services provided. This information must be included on Attachment C - References</p>		

3.	Meet other presentation and participation requirements listed in this RFP.		
4.	Submit proposal in the manner stated in Section V of this proposal.		

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTACHMENT C  
REFERENCES**

<b>Agency or Business</b>	<b>Contact Name/Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Dates Services Provided</b>

**ATTACHMENT D  
STATEMENT OF CERTIFICATION**

The following statements are incorporated as part of our proposal for Mail/Ballot Sorting Machine in response to Thurston County's RFP.

	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Agree (Initial)</b>	<b>Agree with Qualification (Initial and attach explanation)</b>
1.	The offer made in this proposal is firm and binding for 180 days from the date the proposal is received.		
2.	All aspects of this proposal, including cost, have been determined independently and without consultation with any other prospective vendor or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition.		
3.	All declarations in the proposal and attachments are true, and this shall constitute a warranty, the falsity of which shall entitle the county to pursue any remedy by law.		
4.	All aspects of this RFP and the proposal submitted shall be binding if the proposal is selected and a contract awarded.		
5.	The county will be provided with any other information the county determines is necessary for an accurate determination of our ability to provide the services being proposed.		
6.	If selected, we will comply with all applicable rules, laws, and regulations.		

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTACHMENT E  
PROPOSED COST SHEET**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Price per</b>	<b>Notes/Comments</b>
Mail sorting equipment		
Software - Annual License & Support		
Hardware – Annual License & Support		
Installation		
On-Site Training		
Shipping Cost		
Tray Tag Printer		
Additional Costs: List here for additional items/costs not mentioned above		