Thurston County Auditor's Office

Request for Proposal RFP #23-03 2023



Mailing Services

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 28, 2023

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Thurston County Auditor RFP #23-03

Mailing Services

Mailing Services for Thurston County Auditor's Office – Elections Division 2023 – 2025 Elections

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This Request for Proposal (hereinafter referred to as RFP) announces the intent of the Thurston County Auditor's Office (hereinafter referred to as county) to enter into a contract with certified mailing house services (hereinafter referred to as vendors) to provide mailing services for the county.

It is the intent of the county to contract with a single vendor who will provide the products and services as outlined in this RFP.

B. Period of Contract

The term of the contract is for two years starting July 1, 2023 and continuing until June 30, 2025, with two optional contract extensions for two year durations. The county may exercise this option 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. Be able to load approximately 200,000 election ballot packets with contents ranging from three to six different pieces of election materials inside an outer mailing envelope.
- Provide two (2) references from other agencies or businesses, demonstrating
 experiences and ability in preparing large quantities of election ballot packets.
 Provide agency or business, contact name/address, phone number, and dates
 services were provided. This information must be included on Attachment C –
 References.
- Meet other presentation and participation requirements listed in this RFP.
- Submit a proposal in the manner as stated in Section VI 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 by 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 Monday, March 13, 2023, 4:00 p.m. (PDT).

All questions must include:

- 1. Your company name
- 2. Your RFP 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 March 20, 2023.

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 VI 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 and one (1) electronic copy (CD or USB), a total of two (2), of the complete proposal must be received at the address listed in Section I, paragraph E, no later than Tuesday, March 28, 2023, 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 Tuesday, March 7, 2023, 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, March 1, 2023
Deadline for Submission of Letter of	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Tuesday, March 7, 2023
Intent	
Deadline for Submission of Questions	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Monday, March 13, 2023
Questions and responses posted to the	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Monday, March 20, 2023
Auditor's web site	
Deadline for Proposals	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Tuesday, March 28, 2023
Proposal Withdrawal Deadline	4:00 p.m. (PDT) on Friday, March 31, 2023
Tentative Date for Awarding Contract	Friday, April 14, 2023

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 VI. 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, paragraphs B, C, D; Section V; Section VII, 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 on 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 an estimated population of more than 300,000, of which nearly 200,000 are registered voters. The county conducts up to four elections per year in February, April, August and November, with August and November elections generally being countywide.

Certified mailing services are essential to the successful administration of the voteby-mail process. Upcoming elections include, but are not limited to, the following dates:

- 1. August 1, 2023 Primary Election
- 2. November 7, 2023 General Election

B. Requirements

1. Authorized Representatives

The county shall designate employees as authorized representatives who will be responsible for coordinating scheduling of data for election, providing authorization to print addresses and election message on return envelopes, and coordinating mailing and deliveries to the USPS. The vendor shall act only on instruction from one of these designated employees. The vendor will likewise designate authorized representatives who will be responsible for coordinating printing and mailing under the contract. All references to the county in this proposal include the County Auditor and the designated authorized representatives.

2. Access to Vendor's Facility by the County

Representatives of the county will be given full access to the vendor's premises at any time (day or night) when work is being performed for the county. If subcontracting is approved, the vendor will inform the subcontractor of the access privileges of authorized county representatives. Space will also be made available on-site for county supervision, if required by the county.

C. Specifications – Mailing Services

The selected vendor will have the capability to perform all services required to address and mail approximately 200,000 printed ballot materials per election. Thirteen (13) days prior to the mailing date the vendor shall receive from the county a load list with return envelope color coding information and an electronic data file containing ballot ID, voter registration number, precinct ID, voter name, and mailing address information. This data is used to create election and address fields printed on each voters' return envelope. Addressing information shall be processed through postal certification software to insure addressing meets USPS standards, affording the county the lowest possible postal rate.

The selected vendor will have the capability to fold 200,000 ballots. Standard ballot sizes are 14 x 8.5, 17 x 8.5 or 19 x 8.5 inches. The folded ballot dimensions shall allow it to be placed easily into an 8 x 5 inch secrecy sleeve. The fold will display top front of the ballot with no folds in any timing marks or target areas. Folded ballots must remain separated by precinct and/or part. Ballot delivery to vendor will commence fifteen (15) days prior to the mailing date.

The vendor shall have the ability to store 200,000 return, secrecy, outer window envelopes and optional inserts that will be delivered to the vendor thirteen (13) days prior to the mailing date.

The dimensions of the Outer Widowed Envelope is 10 x 5 % inches. The dimensions of the Return Envelope is 9 3/8 x 5 % inches. The dimension of the Secrecy Sleeve is 8 x 5 inches. The dimensions of the Informational Inserts are 8 3/8 x 4 % s 8.5 x 4 2/3 inches.

All printing, folding, inserting, and mailing processing services will be performed by the vendor "in-house" in the vendor's facility. Subcontracting these services is not acceptable without prior written approval. The county will provide materials including ballots and envelopes. The county may choose to furnish printed informational inserts that the vendor will store in their facility until inserted in the ballot packet.

D. Technical Requirements – Mail-in Ballot Preparation

Election ballot packets will be created, assembled, prepared for USPS Marketing Mail nonprofit automated rate, and put into the USPS mail stream by the vendor on agreed upon dates.

Creation of the election ballot packets include:

- a. Receiving and processing the election voter file(s) provided by the county via electronic means.
- b. Printing of barcode, election and voter addressing information on color coded return envelope. The vendor shall provide samples to be tested on the county ballot processing sorting machine prior to production.
- c. The completed ballot packet will consist of a Return Envelope with the printed election data and address field visible through the Outer Windowed Envelope, followed by the optional Informational Insert(s), and Secrecy Sleeve. The Ballot(s), of the precinct matching the Return Envelope will be last, facing to the rear of the Outer Envelope for verification.

Assembly of ballots packets should be in precinct and precinct part order.

Project management and quality control measures will ensure a 100% accurate assembly of the ballot packets. Control measures will be in place to ensure that the correct ballots are bundled together and properly labeled with the quantity for each precinct part. Representatives of the county will be present during the assembly process to ensure that the measures are in place and are being followed. Travel and lodging expenses for the Auditor's Office or other county employees will be the responsibility of the county.

Ballot packet assembly shall commence no later than 8 business days prior to the mailing date, unless approved by the Auditor.

V. Contract Requirements

1. Representative of the County

In the performance of the contract, the vendor, its agents and employees, shall act in an independent capacity and not as officers, employees, or agents of Thurston County.

2. Vendor Primary Contract

The vendor will designate an individual to serve as the primary point of contact for the contract. The vendor or designee must respond to the county inquiries within two (2) business days. The vendor shall not change the primary contact without written notification to the county.

3. Subcontracting

The vendor agrees not to enter into any subcontracting contracts for work contemplated under the Contract without first obtaining written approval from the county. Any subcontracting shall be subject to the same terms and conditions as the vendor. The vendor shall be fully responsible for the performance and payment of any subcontractor's contract.

4. Contract Assignability

Without the prior written consent of the county, the contract is not assignable by the vendor either in whole or in part.

5. Contract Amendments

The vendor agrees that any alterations, variations, modifications, or waivers of the provisions of the contract shall be valid only when submitted in writing, executed and attached to the original contract and approved by the required person(s).

6. Termination of Convenience

The county for its convenience may terminate the contract in whole or in part upon thirty (30) calendar days' written notice. If such termination is effected, an equitable adjustment in the price provided for in this contract shall be made. Such adjustment shall provide for payment to the vendor for services rendered and expenses incurred prior to the effective date of termination. Upon receipt of termination notice, the vendor shall promptly discontinue services unless the notice directs otherwise. The vendor shall deliver promptly to the county and transfer title (if necessary) all completed work, and work in progress, including drafts, documents, plans, forms, data, products, graphics, computer programs and reports.

7. <u>Licenses and Permits</u>

The vendor shall ensure that it has all necessary licenses and permits required by federal, state, county, and municipal laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations. The vendor shall maintain these licenses and permits in effect for the duration of this contract. Vendor will notify county immediately of loss or suspension of any such licenses and permits. Failure to maintain a required license or permit may result in immediate termination of this contract.

8. Notification Regarding Performance

In the event of a problem or potential problem that could impact the quality or quantity of work, and/or services, or the level of performance under this contract, the vendor shall notify the county within one (1) working day in writing <u>and</u> by telephone.

9. <u>Inaccuracies or Misrepresentations</u>

If in the course of the RFP process, or in the administration of a resulting contract, the county determines that the vendor has made a material misstatement or misrepresentation or that materially inaccurate information has been provided to the county, the vendor may be terminated from the RFP process, or in the event a contract has been awarded, the contract may be immediately terminated.

In the event of a termination under this provision, the county is entitled to pursue any available legal remedies.

10. Payment

The vendor shall be paid for product and services under this contract upon inspection and 100% (one hundred percent) completion of delivery unless otherwise agreed upon. The county will not pay for product delivery or handling of any items that do not meet the specifications of this proposal. Terms of less than 30 days will not be considered.

11. Delivery

Failure to deliver on time may result in termination of the contract. Acceptance by the county of a late delivery shall not waive the right to claim damage for such breach of contract nor constitute a waiver of the requirements for the timely performance of any obligation remaining to be performed by the vendor. The county reserves the right to procure the products and services from another source and may bill the vendor or deduct unpaid balances due the vendor for excess costs so paid, and the prices paid by the county.

12. Authorized Delays

Under unusual circumstances such as, but not limited to a court injunction, it may become necessary for the county to request the vendor to delay or stop production of certain materials. Such request will be made by telephone by an authorized representative of the county and confirmed in writing as soon as possible. In the event of an authorized delay, the county shall notify the vendor of a revised schedule concerning materials.

13. Release of Information

No news releases, advertisements, public announcements or photographs arising out of this contract or out of the vendor's relationship with the county may be made or used without prior written approval of the county.

VI. Proposal Submission

A. General

- All interested 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 appendices, 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 and one (1) electronic copy (CD or USB), a total of two (2), of the complete proposal must be received by the deadline for receipt of proposal specified in Section II, Proposal Timeline. The original and the electronic copy must be enclosed in a sealed envelope or container and identified as follows on the outside: 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 cover 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 name 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 or businesses. The references should be from agencies or businesses that you have established a contract with for this type of service. Provide agency or business, contact name/address, phone number, and dates services were provided **as well as a letter of reference from each agency or business**. 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.

8. Cost Sheets

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

VII. 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 Attachment B-Mandatory Vendor Requirements.
- d. Prospective vendor must provide two (2) references from other agencies or businesses to whom 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 F Proposed Cost Sheet.
- b. Quality control and project management proposals.
- c. Experience and references from other jurisdictions for which the same range of services is provided.
- d. Reference from other elections customers, mailing customers, and Post Office officials.

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 (see sample contract, Attachment E, which contains required contractual language). 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 service 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.

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ATTACHMENT A – COVER PAGE MAILING SERVICES

Vendor's Name (name of firm, entity or organization):				
Name and Title of Vendor's Contact Person:				
Mailing Address:				
Business Address:				
Telephone Number:				
Fax Number:				
Email Address:				
Vendor's services or business activities of				
Vendor's Authorized Signature:				
Signed:	Date:			
Print Name:	Title:			
February 24, 2023	19			

ATTACHMENT B MANDATORY VENDOR REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements apply to all prospective vendors:

	Requirement	Agree	Agree with
		(Initial)	Qualification
			(Initial and
			attach
			explanation)
1.	The vendor shall be a full service supplier that prints and mails ballot material packets from one facility.		
2.	The vendor shall keep all data confidential and use secure network practices to keep data safe, provide a means for secure data transmission, and shall be able to accept data transmission by email and/or internet anytime.		
3.	The vendor's business must be located in an established business location. All work shall be performed at a location that provides security and supervision form start to finish, including a well-defined quality assurance program.		
4.	It is preferred that vendor's primary facility be located in Thurston County, Washington. Please provide information regarding which Post Office the vendor will deliver mail to, and the anticipated delivery time to customers.		
	Comments:		

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5.	The vendor shall store and secure all elections materials (ballots, inserts, secrecy envelopes, return envelopes, and mailing envelopes) during ballot packet assembly.	
6.	The vendor shall confirm receipt of the proper data file via email within two hours of receipt of the county's file. (The number of records contained in the file and the columns that will be used as confirming data).	
7.	The vendor shall use software for "Coding Accuracy Support System" (CASS) program which shall be United States Postal Service (USPS) approved.	
8.	The vendor shall provide a CASS report of address correction, address validation, and address correction service upon request.	
9.	The vendor shall not intermingle the county's mail with mail from other clients. Mail shall be packaged in trays that contain only county's ballot packets and shall be delivered to the USPS by the vendor on behalf of the county.	
10.	Does your firm have a process for managing postage? Describe how the payment of postage will be handled.	
11.	Does the vendor have a disaster recovery plan? Are you capable to perform the contract work should your primary operation become inoperable?	
	Comments:	

12.	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: a. Has your firm defended against any litigation within the past 5 years? If yes, please explain. b. Has your firm completed all contracts it was awarded? If no, please explain. c. Has your firm been found in default on any contract? If yes, please explain. d. Has your firm filed for protection under bankruptcy law or is it considering such a filing?	
	Comments:	
13.	Provide two (2) references from other agencies or businesses that you have established a contract 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.	
14.	Meet other presentation and participation requirements listed in this RFP.	
15.	Submit proposal in the manner stated in Section VI of this proposal.	

Signed:	 	
Print Name:	 	
-		
Title:		
Date:		

ATTACHMENT C REFERENCES

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

ATTACHMENT D STATEMENT OF CERTIFICATION

The following statements are incorporated as part of our proposal for Mailing House Services in response to Thurston County's RFP.

	Requirement	(Initial)	Agree with Qualification (Initial and attach explanation)
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.		
Signe	d:		
Print I	Name:		
Title:			
Date:			

ATTACHMENT F PROPOSED COST SHEET

Ballot Packet Assembly Cost (per packet):

Packet size	1 to 20,000	20,001 to 100,000	100,001 to 250,000
Outer with 3 inserted items	\$	\$	\$
Outer with 4 inserted items	\$	\$	\$
Outer with 5 inserted items	\$	\$	\$
Outer with 6 inserted items	\$	\$	\$

Other Costs (Please be specific on the reason and the basis for the charge):

Type of charge:	Basis for the charge: