

**Town of Ipswich, Massachusetts  
Ad Hoc Audit Committee  
Ipswich School System Operational Review  
Request for Proposal  
July 24, 2014**



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## **SCHEDULE of EVENTS**

Release of Request for Proposal September 15, 2014

Proposals Due October 6, 2014

Interviews with Top Candidates week of week of October 20, 2014

Select Vendor – October 29, 2014

Novemer 12, 2014, Vendor Agreement

Final Report Due April 2, 2015

## Section 1. Introduction and Background

The Town of Ipswich, Massachusetts, acting through its School Committee, seeks detailed proposals for an Operational Review of the Ipswich School System.

At the Ipswich Annual Town Meeting on May 13, 2014, a citizen's initiative was presented, modified and duly adopted petitioning this effort. The result of this initiative was that an Ad Hoc Audit Committee (heretofore known as the "Committee") was constituted to draft a Request for Proposal, to secure proposals and to make a determination as to who might receive an award. While the Committee seeks to encourage competition and evaluate firms on a uniform basis, the Committee retains complete discretion as to the manner by which proposals shall be evaluated and services awarded and reserves the right not to make any award under this process.

**The fee for services will be negotiated and shall not exceed a total cost of \$50,000.**

The Ipswich School System serves the North Shore Massachusetts Town of Ipswich, located approximately 25 miles north of Boston and having a population of approximately 13,500 residents. The Ipswich School System provides educational services to the towns' school age children, comprising approximately 2050 students, including approximately 85 school choice students and 23 tuitioned out/collaborative students. The schools include Ipswich Middle School (6 – 8), Ipswich High School (9-12), Winthrop Elementary School (Pre-K-5), & Paul F Doyon Elementary (Pre-K-5), and Lord Sq administrative offices housing the Superintendent and other central administrative functions.

The firm selected to perform the operational review shall be familiar with the following documents and will utilize existing data and other information in their field work; the intent is not to replicate work that has recently been or is in the process of being completed, but rather compliment or be in addition to such work:

- (1) Ipswich Public Schools FY2015 School Department Budget
  - a) Override Budget (Exhibit A)
  - b) 3.65% Budget (Exhibit B)
- (2) Finance Committee Annual Report For the Town Meeting Tuesday, May 13, 2014 (Exhibit C)
- (3) Ipswich School Department, Review of Facilities Department Operations, February 24, 2014 (Exhibit D)
- (4) Analysis of the Administration of Human Services, October, 2010 (Exhibit E)
- (5) Energy Audit Reports, Part I & II, January 19, 2010 (Exhibit F)
- (6) Clinical & Educational Services (Special Education) Analysis (Exhibit G)

The Ipswich School System has agreed to cooperate with the Contractor and provide whatever assistance is necessary to the Contractor to complete the operational review.

## **Section 2. Scope of Services**

In May, 2014 at its Annual Town Meeting the Ipswich School System proposed a budget that included a \$2.75M Proposition 2-1/2 General Override. That request, supported unanimously by the Ipswich Board of Selectmen and the Ipswich Finance Committee and approved by Town Meeting, was rejected by a close ballot vote. The primary goal of this review is to judge the validity or lack thereof, and extent to which a general override in support of the Ipswich School System budget is needed.

The methodology by which the Contractor is expected to satisfy the requirements of this RFP is by the performance of an external review, involving all departments and operations within the Ipswich School System, of the adequacy of the educational and non-educational services delivered and the efficiency with which they are delivered and supported, and to identify short- and long- term costs and/or savings that should be expended or can be gained through the implementation of best practices, including potential collaboration with other municipal departments. It is not intended that the review shall include areas described in the Audit Reports documented in Exhibits D, E, F & G. The Contractor will document and present a written final report of its findings, commendations, recommendations and projected added costs and/or cost savings associated with each of its recommendations. During the performance of the contract a minimum of one meeting per week will be held in Ipswich with the Committee to resolve issues and to review findings that have occurred to date.

The operational Review shall be performed recognizing that the goals of the Ipswich School System include, but are not limited to the following priorities:

1. To prepare students for college acceptance and completion
2. To provide a current, well defined, and comprehensive K-12 curriculum delivered by well trained, highly competent instructors
3. To limit class sizes such that goals (1) and (2) can be reasonably accomplished given the diversity of student capabilities within each classroom
4. To offer and provide a superior fine and performing art program within the curriculum
5. To offer a diverse program of extra-curricular and athletic programs

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The operational audit shall be performed in the following areas and disciplines within the Ipswich School System. Areas are to be reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness with efficiencies highlighted and potential cost savings identified.

1. Personnel policies and procedures including compensation, benefits, and performance evaluation process for all staff. (The number of personnel and staffing in each school, which would include instructional related staffing and student-teacher ratios, teaching assistant's, & administrative staff, and staffing in the Superintendents office) Consider HS block and MS models in reference to teacher staffing and also AP class/test results.

2. *Union contracts negotiations, procedures and management. Eliminate*

3. School District Administration staffing (including professional and clerical staffing) policies and procedures. Eliminate - same as 1

4. Instructional Staffing,. Include an evaluation of the number, allocation, and composition of all instructional-related staffing, including but not limited to student-staffing ratio analysis. Eliminate - same as 1

5. Accounting system - policies, practices and procedures including payroll, accounts payable and accounts receivable and the overall budget process and associated budget controls. (What are we looking for here?)

6. *Time keeping policy, procedures, practices and controls. Eliminate*

7. Purchasing policy, procedures, practices and controls. (What are we looking for? Need to be more definitive.)

8. Inventory control procedures and practices including store minimum/maximum items and capital expense items. (Do we need this? What savings or problems would we find?)

9. Curriculum policies, procedures, management and controls Pre K - 12. **Common Core implementation. (Cost of curriculum management including curriculum coordinator vs curriculum teams, current textbooks, cost, need for or lack thereof of keeping curriculum current?** Are we spending significantly more on the arts vs. other towns. Does spending on the arts have a negative impact on core classes when compared to the overall budget?

~~10. SPED (Special Ed.) policies, procedures, management and controls of Special Education Services.~~

11. Transportation policies, procedures and management including buses, cars and communications.

12. Cafeteria staffing policies, procedures, management and controls. (Did we perform a recent audit of this?)

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~~13. Building maintenance staffing, policies, procedures and management including Heating, AC, Electrical, Plumbing, routine maintenance, etc. The review should evaluate the efficacy of consolidating functions within the town.~~

~~Potential impacts of energy plan recommendations pertaining to the Ipswich School System~~

14. Information Technology (IT) systems, staffing, procedures and controls. (including potential collaboration with the municipal government?) Include comparison of IT systems and management with other similar towns)

14a. Are there other opportunities for Collaboration or consolidation with the municipal or utilities departments - IT, payroll, HR, purchasing, field maintenance, etc (consider combining 14 and 14a into one)

~~15. Comparison of available IT systems at, at least 3 nearby schools. - Eliminate - included in 14~~

~~15. Medical / Nurse staffing policies and controls. Eliminate~~

16. Athletic Programs - staffing, management, controls and financial reporting.

~~17. Status of Athletic Field Study Committee Report recommendations regarding additional land purchases, field use agreements, field maintenance plans. - combine 16 & 17~~

17a. Misc. extracurricular programs non-athletic staffing, management, controls and financial reporting.

~~18. Liaison - Costs associated with interaction between Ipswich School System, State Departments, Associations, and other Towns. Travel costs and expenses.~~

19. School Committee – Administrative costs, expenses and financial reporting. Is there much cost here; is it worth including?)

20. Review the enrollments, grade configurations, staffing, administrative and support staff of Doyon and Winthrop elementary schools and report on the potential cost savings and the pros and cons of consolidating Pre-K to grade 2 into one school and grade 3 to 5 into the other. Or any other grade consolidation configuration that would generate program efficiencies and cost savings. Consider the impact of any changes on transportation costs.

21. Evaluation of the Lord Sq offices as a site for Administrative Services.

22. Middle School and High School class configuration and sizes, to include adequacy and to examine space/facility utilization options.

23. Elementary, Middle and High school curriculum for currency, breadth and depth and adequacy of instruction facilities, tools and training. Curriculum - what are the current offerings and are we providing our students with similar class offerings as other districts

24. A review of the School Department's participation in School Choice and recommendations for School Choice enrollment and recommendations for decreasing the number of students leaving for other schools under School Choice.

25. STEAM status and Future Improvement Needs. (Too vague??) (Can we combine with 23?)

26. Opportunities for collaboration and/or coordination between school and town; (Too vague; need to identify potential areas of collaboration)

27. Outside funding - Does the school outside funding levels match a peer group of communities. Will a part time grant writer increase federal, state and private grants. Are we charging enough or too much for facility use by outside groups. Is every outside group using our facilities paying their fair share.

### Section 3. Minimum Qualifications

Interviews will be conducted by the Committee with final selection determined by the Committee. **The respondent must certify in its cover letter that it meets the following minimum requirements.** Failure to include such certification in the cover letter demonstrating that these criteria have been met will result in your proposal being rejected without further consideration.

1. The firm must be well versed with at least seven (7) years experience performing similar such audits and also having significant, direct experience conducting such audits in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
2. The firm must have knowledge of and demonstrated experience in evaluating: educational program requirements, best practices in public education, and accounting practices and procedures.

### Section 4. Rule for Award

Applications will be assessed with regard to the following factors:

1. Relevant experience of the firm and proposed project staff;
2. Staffing plan and methodology;
3. Proposer's demonstrated ability to complete projects on a timely basis;
4. Clarity and comprehensiveness of proposed plan;
5. If submitted, evaluation of written product.

The Committee will determine whether to award the contract to a responsive bidder pursuant to this Request for Proposal on or before October 2014 or to choose a provider through another process. The Committee reserve the right, as set forth in Section 1, to make no award at all or to choose a service provider through any other method permitted by law. A poor reference may be the basis for a determination that the respondent is not a responsible bidder.

## **Section 5. Meetings and Communication**

It is expected that the selected firm will maintain a high level of communication with the Towns' representative during the study. The selected firm is expected to attend work and review meetings as necessary, but at a minimum of at least once per week with the Committee to provide progress updates.

## **Section 6. Final Report and Presentations**

All work must be completed and the Final Report must be submitted to the Towns' representative no later than **April 2, 2015**. The selected firm shall prepare and present a final written report documenting the findings, commendations, and recommendations and projected costs or cost savings associated with the recommendations. Two presentations shall be provided within 15 days of receipt of the Final Report; one to the Ipswich School Committee and one to the combined Ipswich Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. It should be understood that questions from the general public will be entertained at each public meeting. Provide twelve (12) black and white copies of the final report and an electronic copy in a format agreeable to the Committee. The RFP will be appended to and become part of a Contract for Services. At the time of contract execution, the successful respondent will be required to provide a certificate of professional liability insurance indicating minimum coverage of **\$1,000,000**. **A draft Contract for Services is provided as Exhibit G.**

## **Section 7. Proposal Requirements**

1. Please provide the name and location of your firm.
2. Please provide a summary of the ownership and organizational structure of your firm.
3. Provide a summary of the expertise, capacity and resources of your firm. Identify all of your municipal government/regional school district clients for which you have provided services of similar scope and size to those contemplated by this Request for Proposal. Include a contact name and telephone number for each such client.
4. Provide a list of the auditors to be used in the execution of the proposal along with a resume of each auditor. Any changes to the list of auditors must be approved by the Committee.
5. Provide a business information report or business profile from a credit reporting agency dated no earlier than 60 days prior to the bid submission date.
6. Discuss any potential conflicts of interests the firm or any individual within the firm might have representing the Town of Ipswich.
7. Include the basis by which the fee for services shall be assessed, whether by an hourly rate with an amount not to exceed, a flat fee, or some other fee structure.

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8. Include an executed Certificate of Non-Collusion.
9. Proposals (two (2) originals and five (5) copies) must be received on or before 2:00 PM, on **Monday, October 6, 2014**, at which time all applications will be opened and reviewed by the Committee. Responses should be printed double-sided and bound in such a manner that the pages lie and remain flat when opened.
10. Proposals must be accompanied by a concise cover letter that is a maximum of two pages in length that describes why the applicant is the best candidate to complete the operational review in a timely manner.
11. Proposals and written questions and clarifications shall be addressed to:

**Frank Antonucci**

**Town of Ipswich Purchasing Agent**

25 Green St

Ipswich, MA 01938

(978) 356-6608

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