

**Town of Ipswich, Massachusetts**  
**Ad Hoc Audit Committee**  
**Ipswich School System Operational Review**  
**Request for Proposal**  
**Draft - July 28, 2014**



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## 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 Exhibits 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 1a)
  - b) 3.65% Budget (Exhibit 1b)
- (2) Finance Committee Annual Report For the Town Meeting Tuesday, May 13, 2014
- (3) Ipswich School Department, Review of Facilities Department Operations, February 24, 2014
- (4) Analysis of the Administration of Human Services, October, 2010
- (5) Energy Audit Reports, Part I & II, January 19, 2010
- (6) Clinical & Educational Services (Special Education) Analysis
- (7) Current salary schedule,

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- (8) Current contractual salaries, by position, for teachers, clerical, teacher assistants, athletic coaching and administrators, including the Superintendent,
- (9) Staffing levels at each school, plus the central office, showing position title and quantity at each position
- (10) Curriculum policy showing structure of curriculum committees,
- (11) Sample class schedules for students at each grade level including elementary, middle and high school,
- (12) List of last purchase date for new textbooks, at all grade levels in all core subjects
- (13) Recent IT consultant recommendations, current purchases and status of implementation.
- (14) Age and condition of all classroom technology equipment,
- (15) IT staffing by school and central office, including quantity and position title
- (16) Time with Joanne Cuff, School System Director of Finance and Operations to discuss purchasing practices
- (17) FY15 budget and FY14 actual costs for regular and special education transportation.
- (18) Current enrollment chart
- (19) Currently expected grant listing showing description and amount,
- (20) School facility rental policy and exhibits at each school showing how rentals and associated fees are tracked
- (21) FY15 planned and FY14 actual listing of professional development activities including description, funding level and level of participation
- (22) FY15 budgeted and FY14 actual listing of outside purchased services including description and funded amount
- (23) Feoffee court settlement with restrictions on Trust use highlighted.
- (24) School policy on use of Feoffee Trust funds,
- (25) List of FY13 and FY14 Feoffee Trust funded projects
- (26) Draft Contract for Services

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

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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 that should be expended and/or savings or that can be gained through the implementation of best practices, including potential collaboration with other municipal departments. Any cost savings opportunities that are identified must be accompanied by a reasonable, proposed, alternative. It is intended that the review shall not include areas described in any recently conducted outside audits documented in Exhibits 3, 4, 5 & 6 nor in areas described as the cafeterias or the Choice program. 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 preformed 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

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. Salaries and Staffing - To include review of all salaries for reasonableness as compared to peer communities including: teachers, clerical, teacher assistants, athletic coaching and administrators, including the Superintendent. To include review for reasonableness, as compared to peer communities and considering existing student enrollment, of staffing levels at each school (administrative, teaching within each subject area, nursing & custodial) and the Central office.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) current salary schedule, (2) current contractual salaries, by position, for teachers, clerical, teacher assistants, athletic coaching and administrators, including the

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Superintendent, (3) staffing levels at each school, plus the central office, showing position title and quantity at each position

2. Curriculum Management - Consider the cost and effectiveness of existing curriculum management practices and compare with those of peer communities. Review for adequacy of instruction facilities, tools and training and adequacy of class offerings as compared to peer communities. To include curriculum coordinator vs curriculum teams (Ipswich model), keeping textbooks current, cost and methods for curriculum development at each level. To include the cost and effectiveness of current student class schedules vs potential alternative scheduling systems, also considering time allotted to core subject areas (science, math, language arts, social studies, foreign language) vs non-core areas (physical education, fine arts, performing arts, etc). Are athletic offerings reasonable as compared to peer communities.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) Curriculum policy showing structure of curriculum committees, (2) sample class schedules for students at each grade level including elementary, middle and high school, (3) last purchase date for new textbooks, at all grade levels in all core subjects

3. Information Technology (IT) - To include review of the age and condition of existing equipment, including infrastructure and classroom technology, and compare for reasonableness with peer communities (provide detailed comparison with at least three other school systems). Take into consideration the level of investment currently being made in IT infrastructure and existing classroom technology. To include Information Technology (IT) staffing at each school and Central Office as compared to staffing in peer communities.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) Recent IT consultant recommendations, current purchases and status of implementation. (2) age and condition of classroom technology equipment, (3) IT staffing by school and central office, including quantity and position title

4. Purchasing - To include validation that state purchasing policies are being followed. To include review of purchasing practices to determine if purchases are consolidated within each school, among schools and between schools, and with municipal to minimize multiple purchases of the same item and to obtain best pricing. Are textbooks monitored to assure needed quantities are maintained and lost textbooks are replaced in a timely manner. Are adequate practices in place to minimize losses.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) Time with Joanne Cuff, School System Director of Finance and Operations

5. Transportation - To include review of regular and special education transportation costs for reasonableness and comparison with peer communities.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) FY15 budget and FY14 actual costs for regular and special education transportation.

6. Collaboration - based on knowledge of other similar towns and school districts, identify areas where greater collaboration within and between schools or between schools and municipal would yield significant cost savings. Consider such areas as IT, payroll, HR, purchasing, and field maintenance.

Exhibits to be provided: (None)

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7. Elementary grade configuration - 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 proposed changes on increased transportation costs and the possible loss of Title 1 funding.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) current enrollment chart

8. Outside funding - Does the school's outside funding levels compare reasonably with peer communities. Would a part time grant writer increase federal, state and/or private grants sufficiently to justify the salary of a part time grant writer. Are we charging enough for school facility use by outside groups. Is every outside group that is using our facilities paying their policy appropriate rental rate.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) currently expected grant listing showing description and amount, (2) school facility rental policy and exhibits at each school showing how rentals and associated fees are tracked

9. Professional development - Is professional development funded at a reasonable level based on need to stay current and as compared with peer communities.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) FY15 planned and FY14 actual listing of professional development activities including description, funding level and level of participation

10. Are outside purchased services such as legal, grounds & buildings maintenance, security & virtual high school reasonable and comparable with peer communities.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) FY15 budgeted and FY14 actual listing of outside purchased services including description and funded amount

11. Feoffee funding - Ipswich receives an annual distribution from a Feoffee Trust. Given school policy and the court settlement agreement that defined the terms of the Trust, is Ipswich allocating these funds in a reasonable manner given the needs of the school system.

Exhibits to be provided: (1) Feoffee court settlement with restrictions on Trust use highlighted. (2) School policy on use of Feoffee Trust funds, (3) list of FY13 and FY14 Feoffee Trust funded projects

### **Section 3. Schedule**

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

November 12, 2014, Vendor Agreement

Final Report Due April 2, 2015

#### **Section 4. 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.
3. The firm must have knowledge of and demonstrated experience in working with Massachusetts Department of Education standards and requirements.

#### **Section 5. 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 **January, 2015** 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 6. 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. Skype meetings would be acceptable.

#### **Section 7. Final Report and Presentations**

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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. One formal presentation shall be provided to within 15 days of receipt of the Final Report. The presentation will be open to the public and attendees, along with the Committee, may include the Ipswich School Committee, the Ipswich Board of Selectmen and the Ipswich Finance Committee. It should be understood that questions from the general public will be entertained at the 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. **Section 7. Proposal**

### **Requirements**

1. Provide the name and location of your firm.
2. 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 and 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 project organization chart listing the individuals that will be associated with this audit, including their responsibilities. 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.
8. Include an executed Certificate of Non-Collusion.
9. Sealed proposals (two (3) originals and five (5) copies) must be received on or before 2:00 PM, on **Monday, October 6, 2014**, at which time all proposals 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. **Late proposals will not be accepted.**

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10. At the time of contract execution, the successful respondent will be required to provide a certificate of professional liability insurance indicating minimum coverage of \$1,00,000. A draft Contract for Services is provided as Exhibit 26.

11. Proposal must be accompanied by any exceptions the Contractor is taking to the RFP Proposal Requirements and any data or exhibits required for the Contractor to perform the audit.

11. 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.

12. Proposal must include a quote pricing sheet and reference form.

13. Proposals must be signed as follows: 1) if the vendor is an individual, by him/her personally; 2) if the vendor is a partnership, put the name of the partnership, followed by the signature of each general partner; and 3) if the vendor is a corporation, by the authorized officer, whose signature must be attested to by the Clerk/Secretary of the corporation and the corporate seal affixed.

14. The successful vendor may arrange for sub-contract work to be done by others, however responsibility for such work remains with the vendor.

15. The Town of Ipswich require all persons and companies performing work and/or services for the Town of Ipswich to carry workers' compensation insurance for all employees. The vendor agrees to hold the Town and its employees, agents and officials harmless from loss or damage due to claims for personal injury and/or property damage arising from, or in connection with the contract. The contractor shall provide the Town of Ipswich proof of valid insurance for worker's compensation, general liability and automotive.

16. 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

[franka@ipswich-ma.gov](mailto:franka@ipswich-ma.gov)