

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Legislative Representation and Lobbying Services



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PURPOSE OF REQUEST

Jefferson County is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or firms (hereinafter referred to solely as “firm”) to provide legislative representation, funding strategy assistance and lobbying services as described herein.

Jefferson County has engaged in a contract lobbyist firm to represent its interests in the past and its current contract expires on December 31, 2023. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the County is seeking competitive proposals to continue and potentially expand services as described in the section “Scope of Work.”

Preference will be given to firms with experience representing rural local governments, as well as proposals offering both state and federal legislative representation and lobbying services.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

This RFP will be made available on Jefferson County’s website at <http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/Bids>.

Proposals can be submitted electronically via email to mmccauley@co.jefferson.wa.us with the subject line, “Legislative Representation and Lobbying Services.”

Proposals must be received by 4:30 PM Pacific Standard Time on Friday, November 24, 2023 to be eligible for consideration. Late proposals will not be considered.

QUESTIONS

Members of the evaluation committee and Jefferson County Board of Commissioners may not be contacted or solicited by any firm intending to submit a proposal. All questions concerning this RFP and the review process should be directed to Mark McCauley, County Administrator at mmccauley@co.jefferson.wa.us.

SELECTION PROCESS

This RFP is intended to solicit proposals for the purpose of selecting a firm to provide legislative representation and lobbying services at the direction of the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners and under the management of the County Administrator’s Office.

Review of Submissions

Submissions will be kept on file and referenced on an as needed basis; confirmation of receipt of submission will be provided.

All proposals will initially be screened by Jefferson County staff. Those proposals determined to be late, incomplete, or noncompliant, and those respondents that do not meet the minimum qualifications identified in this RFP may be eliminated from further evaluation at that time. An evaluation committee will assess the written proposals based on the selection criteria provided in this RFP.

Interviews and References

Following the initial evaluation, the highest-ranking firms may be invited to attend an interview (in-person or virtually) with the evaluation committee to answer additional questions. The County may, at its discretion, interview one or more firms for further consideration. The key individual(s) that would work directly with the Board of Commissioners and County Administrator's Office representative(s), if selected, are expected to attend the interview.

The County may request additional information regarding the demonstrated competence and qualifications and intends to check references.

Scoring

Based on proposals evaluation, interviews (if any), and references, the evaluation committee will score and rank the proposals. (See "SELECTION CRITERIA" for more information.)

Contract Negotiations

The County will then enter into negotiations with the highest-ranking firm to develop a mutually acceptable contract for services which will be based upon the firm's submitted proposal and the sample personal/professional services agreement attached to this RFP.

If an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated, written notice will be provided, and negotiations with the next highest-ranking firm will commence.

Board Approval

Finally, County staff will provide the agreed upon contract to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, as a recommendation. The Board of Commissioners will vote on the recommendation in a public meeting, officially rejecting or approving the provided contract between the County and the selected firm for legislative representation and lobbying services.

Anticipated Timeline

- Distribution of RFP—November 7, 2023
- Deadline for proposals—November 24, 2023
- Review of submissions—November 29, 2023
- Interviews, references, and scoring—November 30 to December 7, 2023
- Final selection—December 8, 2023

- Contract negotiations—December 8 to December 13, 2023
- Board of County Commissioners’ approval—December 18, 2023
- Contract services commence—January 1, 2024

Limitations

All costs associated with preparing and submitting a proposal are solely the responsibility of the respondent. Jefferson County may reject any proposal not in compliance with prescribed procedures and requirements, may reject for good cause any and all proposals, and reserves the right to waive any informalities or irregularities in the proposals upon a finding of the County that it is in the public interest to do so.

This solicitation does not obligate Jefferson County to select any single respondent and the County reserves the right to cancel the procurement, to retain all proposal materials and to use any material included in the proposal regardless of whether it is selected.

Submissions are considered public records and are subject to the Public Records Act.

Selection Criteria

Jefferson County will select the firm that is determined to be most qualified to fulfill the terms of the contract. Preference will be given to firms with experience representing rural local governments, as well as proposals offering both state and federal legislative representation and lobbying services. Firms should demonstrate experience in securing funding for rural local governments and have a strong understanding of state and federal agency and legislative functions and resources.

The criteria listed below will be used by an evaluation committee to score and rank submitted proposals on a 100-point scale. If necessary, those firms that submit the highest rated proposals may be invited to participate in an interview in which additional points may be awarded. The County may request further clarification to assist the evaluating committee in gaining additional understanding of one or more proposals.

<u>Evaluation Factor</u>	<u>Total Points Available</u>
Qualifications and Experience	20
Project Understanding and Approach	20
Project Team	20
Values and Culture “Fit” with County	20
Budget	20

Background

Jefferson County is nestled in the northeast corner of the Olympic Peninsula, sandwiched between Clallam County to the north and Mason County to the south. It is the home of people who love to play in the ocean, fish, hike, garden, ranch, create, and to those who foster this unique, welcoming and resilient community. Home to about 34,000 residents, the County's primary industries are maritime, paper products, and tourism/recreation. While residents here enjoy a beautiful place to call home, there is significant poverty, with many low wage jobs that do not keep up with the high cost of living. Jefferson County is the oldest median age county in the state, with many residents on fixed incomes.

Patrolling roads, inspecting restaurants, issuing building permits, maintaining roadways, vaccinating kids and adults, conducting elections, holding court – Jefferson County provides a wide variety of services to our residents, businesses and visitors. Currently, the County employs more than 360 personnel.

There are a variety of taxing districts that use County dollars to perform a number of functions, such as rural fire departments, water, health, transportation, recreation, sewer, schools, roads, and diking districts.

Governance

Jefferson County is governed by a three-member elected Board of Commissioners, each elected from one of the three geographic districts, and voters also elect eight other county officials. The County promotes and thrives on collaboration among its elected officials, staff, and residents, as well as local jurisdictions, businesses, and community partners.

The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners establishes policies, [sets the vision](#) of the County, and appoints a County Administrator. The County Administrator carries out the Board's policies and oversees the day-to-day operations of the organization.

The Board of Commissioners is progressive and seeks to establish Jefferson County as a unique and forward-looking rural county, committed to addressing modern problems with innovative solutions.

Unique Challenges

Jefferson County takes a proactive approach to addressing the issues identified below and frequently engages governments at various levels in developing solutions. A strong presence during each State legislative session and healthy relationships with legislators, public officials, industry organizations, state and federal agencies and other local government agencies are necessary to expand the County's level of engagement and influence. The Commissioners comprise a "working board" who will frequently be found in Olympia or Washington DC] in efforts to further the County's goals for safe communities, healthy people, a resilient economy,

and quality service delivery. Additionally, frequent contact with our congressional delegation and other members of Congress is vital year-round and especially when budget proposals are being formulated. Jefferson County seeks a firm that welcomes active participation from County Commissioners in myriad advocacy and lobbying venues.

As a small local government with limited staff capacity, Jefferson County relies on a contracted lobbying firm in order to stay up to date on funding opportunities, relevant policy and political happenings that effect our region.

General Fund Revenues

The County's general fund is composed of two primary revenue sources; property taxes and sales taxes. General Fund revenues have not kept pace with inflation and have grown more slowly than the County's expenses for a number of years. The County's needs and expenses are outpacing its revenue. While property taxes are dependable and don't decline during recessions, this is not true of sales tax and other revenues. IN addition, Washington State frequently imposes unfunded mandates on local governments they simply can't afford.

Tourism

Within a two-hour ferry ride/drive to the Seattle metropolitan area, Jefferson County hosts a large visitor population year around. While these visitors are vital in supporting the local economy, the County is limited in its ability to recoup costs that tourism imposes on public infrastructure and services. During peak tourism season, the County, in essence, provides services and infrastructure to a community of approximately 120,000 people with a revenue mix supporting 34,000 residents. This revenue gap creates significant strains on the County's ability to effectively serve residents and visitors.

Housing

The lack of affordable and transitional housing is a critical issue impacting individual and family decisions regarding staying in or moving to Jefferson County. Jefferson County is one of the most expensive housing markets in the entire state with median incomes inadequate to afford rentals for home purchases.

The County declared a housing emergency in 2019 and has focused much of its energy on addressing the critical local issue with mixed results.

More recently, in response to the pandemic and increased remote work options, some people are choosing to leave more densely populated cities/counties and relocate to more rural areas. These people in addition to climate refugees and recent retirees relocating from other states are driving housing prices inexorably upwards.

Service Capacity and Access to State Funds

Jefferson County frequently lacks the resources required to pursue or participate in Federal and State funding opportunities or pilot programs/initiatives. Funding formulas for award

distributions regularly do not account for the unique challenges faced by rural and coastal communities.

Most commonly, the County lacks the pre-existing social service infrastructure or administrative support required to access available State and Federal funds.

Overarching Legislative Goals

- Support legislation that balances economic interests and growth with a healthy and sustainable environment.
- Help develop innovative strategies for unique rural challenges: GMA, small tax base, lack of capacity, etc.
- Oppose unfunded mandates.
- Serve as an active participant with other local and regional governments, including the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) and the North Olympic Legislative Alliance (NOLA) to address legislative/regulatory issues that are important to the County and the region.

Legislative Priorities

Jefferson County's legislative priorities continue to evolve to proactively address emerging community needs and respond to recent and proposed changes to state and federal policy.

Current priorities include, but are not limited to:

1. Rural Infrastructure
2. Growth management/ LAMIRD flexibility
3. Financial sustainability
4. Affordable housing for non-urban communities

Scope of Work

The selected firm will be responsible for providing legislative representation and lobbying services on behalf of the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners. Services to be provided may include, but are not limited to, the responsibilities, tasks, and activities listed below. Firms may include additional services with the knowledge that Jefferson County may select all or a portion of those proposed and will negotiate a final contract price based on the range chosen.

Primary Objectives

1. Act as Jefferson County's representative to our congressional delegation, the full Congress, Washington State Legislature and the Governor's Office and lobby on behalf of the County in accordance with priorities set by the County.

2. Both proactively and at the direction of the County, advise and assist the County and its Board of Commissioners in developing and executing effective legislative and funding strategies to protect and advance the County's needs and priorities.
3. Educate legislators, legislative staff, State agencies, State advisory boards/committees, and other stakeholders with legislative influence or decision-making authority on the impact of legislation on the County's ability to serve its residents.

Overview of Services

Both proactively and at the direction of the County:

- Work with County Commissioners to develop and execute legislative and funding strategies that are important to the County
- Establish, strengthen, and maintain relationships with legislators, legislative staff, State agencies, State advisory boards/committees, and other relevant stakeholders to gain support for the County's legislative priorities.
- Assist the County in researching and preparing position papers, exhibits, testimony, correspondence, proposed bill text, funding requests and amendments as necessary.
- Secure sponsors for County proposed legislation.
- Facilitate a process to identify and prioritize bills introduced during legislative sessions which may be of interest to the County and which may require active lobbying on the County's behalf.
- Monitor and track proposed legislation, programs, and proposals of interest to the County. Furnish comprehensive reports regarding the status of such at the following frequency:
 - o Weekly – during State legislative sessions
 - o Monthly – outside of State legislative sessions
 - o As-necessary – regarding time sensitive information
- Review periodic revenue forecasts and the proposed biennial State budget and alert the County to opportunities and obstacles. Identify funding opportunities and assess program requirements and guidelines.
- Coordinate and facilitate remote meetings with County Administrator's Office representative(s) and as requested to provide timely updates and strategic direction.
- Report on legislative progress at the Board of County Commissioners' meetings as requested.
- Provide introductions to individual legislators, and arrange meetings, manage logistics, and prepare County officials for interaction with legislators, legislative staff, committees,

interim work groups, and other public officials. This may be in Olympia, Washington DC or other remote locations.

- Work directly with members of Congress, legislators and staff, the Governor's Office, public officials and State agencies, special interest and industry groups, local governments, AOC, and other professional organizations to develop support for or opposition to proposed legislation, funding, policy, and regulatory decisions that may affect the County.
- Attend meetings (e.g. briefings, informational meetings, public hearings, work sessions, etc.) as necessary and appropriate to influence outcomes of legislation.
- Work with the Washington Association of Counties lobbyists on bills of interest to Jefferson County to further impact of lobbying efforts.
- Assist Jefferson County in preparing and submitting Community Funding and Congressionally Directed Spending requests to representatives in Congress.

Minimum Qualifications

Firms must:

1. Be registered with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission to conduct lobbying with State legislators and public officials and be in good standing concerning standards of conduct and the filing of periodic expenditure and other required reports.
2. Be able to certify that, in performing the specified work, that they will not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, religion, political affiliation, sex, gender identify, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, marital or family status, physical or mental disability, national origin, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), military status, genetic information, or ancestry unless the reasonable demands of employment are such that they cannot be met by such a person.
3. Maintain an accounting and financial management system which complies with generally accepted accounting principles and which is adequate to meet federal and state government requirements. The system must provide adequate documentation, monitoring, access and reporting concerning the organization's financial position.
4. Have experience and a successful track record of representing progressive rural counties in Washington State and the federal government. This includes familiarity with legislative and congressional delegations, a demonstrated understanding of political forces and happenings, and strong working relationships with state and federal agencies.

Compensation

Based on the information provided in the proposal, the County may select all or a portion of the services itemized and will negotiate a total contract price with the successful firm accordingly.

The services will be evaluated annually during the term of the contract to assess effectiveness. Continuation of the contract will be dependent on evaluation results.

Contract Duration

The contract term for legislative and lobbying services resulting from this RFP is intended to begin January 1, 2024 and will extend through December 31, 2024. The contract may be extended under the same or new terms depending on the mutual desires of the parties but in no case will the contract extend beyond December 31, 2028. The County may also decide to initiate a new RFP process at the close of any contract period or upon termination.

Proposal Requirements

Format

Proposals shall be submitted in PDF format and may not exceed 20 pages of single-spaced text (excluding the appendix). The contents of each proposal must be organized as follows:

1. Table of Contents
2. Cover Letter
3. Qualifications and Experience
4. Project Understanding and Approach
5. Project Team
6. Budget
7. Appendix: Supporting Documents

Contents

Cover Letter

1. Confirm understanding and agreement of the terms and conditions of this RFP.
2. Provide a statement of intent to perform the services as outlined.
3. Provide a brief summary of qualifications and experience.
4. State, if any, exceptions taken to the scope of work.
5. Outline any contractual terms and conditions the firm requires that are not already addressed in this RFP.
6. A single person for possible contact during the RFP review process. Qualifications and

Experience

1. Describe the nature and scope of the firm's experience in providing legislative and lobbying services for local government agencies.
2. Describe the firm's understanding of current trends and issues for Washington's rural, coastal, and/or recreational counties.

3. Describe the firm's knowledge and experience in analyzing and reviewing proposed legislation, participating in administrative rule development and interim work groups, analyzing the proposed State budget, educating clients about the impact of legislation, advising clients on potential courses of action, and preparing legislative strategies and plans in advance of the legislative session;
4. Outline a process for establishing and maintaining strong working relationships with Federal and State legislators and staff representing all political affiliations, public officials and State agencies, special interest and industry groups, local governments, and other organizations involved in the legislative process; and
5. Describe legislative information and bill-tracking software used by the firm to identify and monitor introduced legislation of interest to the County and to generate weekly status reports.

Project Understanding and Approach

1. Describe from a project management and logistical perspective how the firm would carry out the scope of work specified in this RFP.
2. Explain the firm's philosophy and strategy used to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients as a result of the legislative session.
3. Document examples of success in providing lobbying services to clients in the following areas:
 - a. achieving passage of legislation
 - b. defeating legislation
 - c. amending legislation
4. Provide assurance that the firm is capable of providing the described services to Jefferson County in addition to other responsibilities or commitments of the firm.
5. Describe the firm's overall knowledge and understanding of issues that are likely to be of specific concern to Jefferson County.
6. Describe the firm's process for identifying, avoiding, and resolving and/or managing conflicts or potential conflicts that may arise from representing various clients who hold opposing views on legislative issues.
7. Outline internal procedures and/or policies related to work quality and cost control.

Project Team

1. Describe the firm's management and organizational structure.
2. Explain the extent of involvement with the contracted services by the firm's owner or chief executive officer.
3. Provide names and locations of key staff members and provide brief biographical data describing their background, qualifications, and experience. Identify those who would be assigned to work with Jefferson County.
4. Describe how the assigned staff members will interact with Jefferson County Commissioners and staff.

5. Estimate the number of hours key project staff members will dedicate to the contractual obligations.
6. Describe team experience with similar or related contractual services.

Budget

Provide a detailed budget for the full contractual period itemized in accordance with each of the responsibilities, tasks, and activities outlined in the scope of work as well as any additional elements proposed. The budget should be organized in such a way that each item is priced individually, allowing Jefferson County to select all or a portion of the services and negotiate a total contract price accordingly.

Appendix: Supporting Documentation

Please attach the following supporting documents:

1. Proof of registration with the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission to conduct lobbying with State legislators and public officials.
2. A list of clients from the 2021, 2022, and 2023 congressional and state legislative sessions.
3. Recent audit report by an independent certified public accountant.
4. An organizational chart.
5. Resumes of key project staff.
6. A sample legislative tracking report.
7. Three references, including a contact name, phone number, and email address, of agencies for which similar services have been performed.

Confidential Information

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP shall become the property of the County and may be utilized in any manner and for any purpose by the County. Be advised that proposals and all documents submitted in response to this RFP are subject to public disclosure as required by applicable state and/or federal laws. If you intend to submit any information with your proposal which you believe is confidential, proprietary, or otherwise protected from public disclosure (trade secret, etc.), it must be provided as a separate document and clearly identify all such material. The cover page of the separate document must be **red**, and the header or footer for each page must provide as follows: "Not Subject to Public Disclosure". Where authorized by law, and at its sole discretion, the County will endeavor to resist disclosure of properly identified portions of the proposals.

Attachment

- Jefferson County 2024-2028 Strategic Plan