

RFP REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
MUNICIPAL ADVISORY SERVICES
COLUMBIA CT
Project NO. 2024-001



TOWN OF COLUMBIA

323 Jonathan Trumbull Highway, Columbia, CT 06237
(860) 228-0110 Fax: (860) 228-1952

The Town of Columbia is seeking proposals from qualified firms to provide Municipal Advisory Services in connection with the Town's debt program and in accordance with specifications outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP) - **Project NO. 2024-001**. All sealed proposals will be at the Town Administration Office at Town Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia, Connecticut until **11:00 A.M. on April 5, 2024**. Bids received will be publicly opened and read aloud at the same location **immediately following the RFP's deadline time of 11:00 A.M.**

Interested firms may obtain copies of the RFP specifications from the Town Administration Office at Town Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia, Connecticut, telephone number (860) 228-0110 or the Town's website, www.columbiact.gov.

Questions regarding the RFP should be referred to Mark Walter, Town Administrator, (860) 228-0110. Addendums will be prepared as necessary and distributed to all interested firms.

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STANDARD INSTRUCTIONS TO PROPOSERS

No oral or facsimile bid proposals are permitted or shall be considered as valid for the purposes of the Municipal Advisory Services **Project NO. 2024-001**.

After bids are received, the Town Administrator may analyze whether vendors have submitted comparable bids and meet the requirements called for. In reviewing the bids, the Town Administrator may consider the past performance, financial responsibility, and sales and service experience of the vendors. The Town in its sole discretion, reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defects in same, or to choose to make purchases other than strictly in accordance with price considerations, and/or to choose other than the lowest bidder, if it be deemed in the best interest of the Town of Columbia.

KEY EVENT DATES

Advertisement of RFP	March 22, 2024
RFP Due Date	April 5, 2024, 11:00 A.M.
Public Opening of Responses	Immediately following the RFP's

OBTAINING RFP DOCUMENTS

Specifications and RFP documents may be obtained from the Office of the Town Administrator, Mark Walter, 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT 06237, telephone number (860) 228-0110 or the Town's website, www.columbiact.org.

RFP RESPONSE SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS AND NEGOTIATIONS:

The Town will review all proposals submitted and the final firms may be invited to make a presentation to Town representatives, at a location to be determined, at no cost to the Town. Based upon this further evaluation, the Town will select the proposal which best fulfills the Town's requirements. The Town will negotiate with that firm to determine final pricing, and contract form. There will be no public opening and reading of the Request for Proposals. Overall responsiveness to the Request for Proposals will be an important factor in the evaluation process.

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Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Firm's overall qualifications and experience in municipal finance, with an emphasis on general municipal financing and refinancing of existing debt.
- Qualifications of the proposed primary financial advisor and other staff members, depth of the firm and experience providing financial advisory services to other public agencies of similar size and complexity as the Town of Columbia.
- Firm's legal issues and conflicts of interest, if any.
- Responsiveness to the Request for Proposal process and general provisions and understanding of the scope of work as evidenced by the services offered in the proposals and during the evaluation period.
- References.
- Costs.

SUBMISSION OF BIDS:

Seven (7) signed copies of the proposal as well as the cost proposals shall be submitted in one sealed package clearly marked "Municipal Advisory RFP" on the outside and addressed to:

Town of Columbia
Town Administrator's Office
323 Route 87
Columbia, CT 06237

Responses must be at the office of the Town Administrator by the time of the Public Opening of Responses date noticed in Key Event Dates. Postmarks are NOT an acceptable waiver of this policy. Corrections and/or modifications received after the first response is publicly opened will NOT be accepted.

All information must be submitted in ink or typewritten. Mistakes may be crossed out and corrections inserted. Corrections must be initialed by the person signing the response.

Responses are considered valid for ninety (90) days after response(s) are opened. Consultants submitting responses may not withdraw, cancel or modify their response for a period of ninety (90) days after response(s) are opened.

Responses must be signed by an authorized person representing the legal entity of the firm submitting the response.

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The inability to meet any specified requirements(s) must be stated in writing and attached to the response form or written on the response form.

Submission of a Bid signifies that the Bidder will sign the contract presented by the Town (if awarded) without alteration. Refusal to sign or exceptions taken to the contract will give the Town of Columbia the right to reject the bid in its entirety without obligation or liability.

The Bid Specifications must be followed and complied with in all respects.

The successful bidder shall comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations and all Town of Columbia requirements.

1. PROPOSAL POSTPONEMENT AND ADDENDUM:

The Town of Columbia reserves the right to revise or amend the specifications or any other part of the proposal up to the time set for opening. Such revisions and amendments, if any, shall be announced by addendum to this solicitation. Copies of such addendums will be provided to all vendors that have obtained copies of the Request for Proposal via the Columbia Town Administrator's Office.

2. LEGAL NAME

Proposals shall clearly indicate the legal name, address and telephone number of the proposer (company, firm, partnership and individual). Proposals shall be signed above the typed or printed name and title of the signer. The signer shall have the authority to bind the proposer to the submitted proposal.

- 3. AWARDING THE CONTRACT:** The TOWN of COLUMBIA in its sole discretion reserves the right to accept or reject, any, all, or any part of responses, to waive formalities or informalities, and to make awards that are deemed to be in the best interests of the Town. It is the Town's policy to not award to those who owe TOWN of COLUMBIA prior year(s) property taxes. The contract will be awarded to "The Lowest Responsible and Qualified Bidder". The lowest responsible and qualified bidder is the bidder whose bid is the lowest of those bidders possessing the skill, ability and integrity necessary to faithfully perform the work.

- 4. LICENSURE AND/OR CERTIFICATES:** IF APPLICABLE, THE successful Contractor awarded the bid shall provide to the Town his applicable and active license and/or Certificates required to successfully perform the work contemplated under this RFP.

- 5. FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES:** The successful bidder shall participate and comply with all applicable affirmative action, equal opportunity employment, non-discrimination and local hiring preferences established by the Town of Columbia for

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Municipal Advisory Services. The Town of Columbia is An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. Minority/Women's Business Enterprises are encouraged to apply.

6. **INTERPRETATION OF ACCEPTABLE WORK:** The specifications, response and contract documents are to be interpreted as meaning those acceptable to the TOWN of COLUMBIA. Any substantive changes or interpretations will be issued by the Town in writing as an addendum.
7. **TAX EXEMPTIONS:** The TOWN of COLUMBIA is exempt from Federal Excise taxes and Connecticut Sales and Use taxes. Firms shall avail themselves of these exemptions.
8. **WARRANTY OF WORK:** The successful bidder shall provide a minimum of a one (1) year warranty for all work, material installations conducted under the Scope of Work and this contract.
9. **COMMENCEMENT OF WORK:** No work shall commence under the contract without the issuance of a Notice to Proceed or Award and a Purchase Order from the Town of Columbia Administration. The successful Contractor shall not exceed the total contract price without advance written approval from the Town of Columbia Administration.
10. **TERM OF CONTRACT:** The contract shall be for a term of six (6) weeks from the start of work. This term may be modified by the Town of Columbia at any time or by the Contractor with written consent and approval by the Town of Columbia administration.
11. **INSURANCE:** The firm awarded this contract must provide a current Certificate of Insurance to the Town Administrator PRIOR to commencement of work, with the following requirements:

1) General Conditions:

Within ten (10) business days of the award or notice, or prior to the start of work, whichever comes first, the contractor/insured will provide, pay for, and maintain in full force and effect the insurance outlined here for coverage's at not less than the prescribed minimum limits of liability. Such coverage is to remain in force during the life of the contract and for such additional time as may be required, and will cover the contractor/insured's activities, those of any and all subcontractors, or anyone directly or indirectly employed by any of them, or by anyone for whose acts of them may be liable.

- A. **Certificates of insurance:** The contractor/insured will give the Town of Columbia a certificate of insurance completed by a duly authorized

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representative of their insurer certifying that at least the minimum coverage's required here are in effect and specifying that the liability coverage's are written on an occurrence form and that the coverage's will not be canceled, non-renewed, or materially changed by endorsement or through issuance of other policy(ices) of insurance without sixty (60) days advance written notice to the Town of Columbia's, Town Administrator. Failure of the owner to demand such certificate or other evidence of full compliance with these insurance requirements or failure of the town to identify a deficiency from evidence provided will not be construed as a waiver of the contractor/insured's obligation to maintain such insurance.

- B. **Insurer Qualifications:** All Insurance will be provided through companies authorized to do business in the State of Connecticut and considered acceptable by the Town.

- C. **Additional Insured:** The policy or policies providing insurance as required, with the exception of professional liability and worker's compensation, Contractor shall add the Town of Columbia on all insurance policies as an additional insured. Contractor shall provide the Town of Columbia with a certificate of insurance. Contractor insurance shall be primary and non-contributory.

- D. **Retroactive Date and Extended Reporting Period:** Any coverage written on a claims made basis requires an extended reporting period of at least 36 months upon final payment or date of project completion, whichever occurs later.

- E. **Subcontractors' Insurance:** The contractor will require and cause each subcontractor hired and/or employed by the contractor to purchase and maintain insurance of the types specified below. The contractor will furnish copies of certificates of insurance evidencing coverage and additional insured status of Town for each subcontractor. Any coverage written on a claims made basis requires an extended reporting period of at least 36 months upon final payment or date of project completion, whichever occurs later.

- F. **Waiver of Subrogation:** The contractor and any subcontractor who will perform work on this project shall waive subrogation and all rights of recovery against the Town of Columbia. Contractor will require all insurance policies related to the work and secured and maintained by the contractor to include clauses waiving subrogation in the certificate of insurance. The contractor/insured will require of subcontractors, by appropriate written

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agreements, similar waivers each in favor of all parties enumerated in this section. This applies to general liability, Auto, Excess and workers' compensation insurance policies.

- G. Indemnification and Hold Harmless:** To the fullest extent permitted by law, Contractor shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the Town of Columbia, and their boards, employees and agents from and against all claims, damages, losses, judgments and expenses, including but not limited to attorney fees of counsel selected by the Town, that arise from or may arise from the performance of the work, the supplying of materials and/or the breach of this Agreement provided that such claim, loss, damage, judgment and/or loss expense is attributable to bodily injury, sickness, disease or death, or to injury or destruction of tangible property (other than the work itself) but only to the extent caused by the negligent acts or omissions, in whole or in part, of the Contractor, subcontractors, anyone directly or indirectly employed by them or anyone for whose acts they may be liable, regardless of whether or not such claim, damage, loss, or expense is caused in part by a party indemnified hereunder. This provision will survive the termination of the Agreement.

2) Insurance Limits and Coverage:

- A. To the extent applicable, the amounts and types of insurance will conform to the minimum terms and conditions and coverages of the national Insurance Services Office (ISO) policies, forms, and endorsements.
- B. If the contractor/insured has self-insured retention's or deductibles under any of the following minimum required coverage's, the contractor/insured must identify on the certificate of insurance the nature and amount of such self-insured retention's or deductibles and provide satisfactory evidence of financial responsibility for such obligations. All self-insured retention's or deductibles will be the contractor/insured's sole responsibility.
- C. Commercial General Liability: The contractor/insured will maintain commercial general liability insurance covering all operations by or on behalf of the contractor/insured on an occurrence basis against all claims for personal injury (including bodily injury or death) and property damage (including loss of use).

Such insurance will have these minimum limits:

- \$ 1,000,000 each occurrence.
- \$ 1,000,000 each occurrence if blasting is required.
- \$ 2,000,000 general aggregate with dedicated limits per project site.
- \$ 2,000,000 products and completed operations aggregate.
- \$ 1,000,000 personal and advertising injury.

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- D. Automobile Liability: The contractor/insured will maintain business auto liability coverage for liability arising out of any auto, including owned, hired, and non-owned autos of at least 1 million dollars.
- E. Workers' Compensation: The contractor/insured will maintain workers' compensation and employer's liability insurance in the following minimum limits:
- Workers' Compensation: statutory limits.
 - Employer's Liability: \$1,000,000 bodily injury for each accident.
 - Employer's Liability: \$1,000,000 bodily injury by disease each employee.
 - Employer's Liability: \$1,000,000 bodily injury disease aggregate.
- F. Professional Liability: \$1,000,000 if the project requires it.
- G. Governing Law: This agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Connecticut.
- H. These are minimum insurance limit requirements only. Additional insurance coverage's and amounts may be required or waived by the Town of Columbia on a per project basis.
- I. All coverages, excluding professional liability, require waiver of subrogation in favor of the Town. All coverages, excluding WC and professional liability, require Town to be an additional insured per contract on a primary and non-contributory basis.
- J. All contractors and subcontractors are independent contractors. No employment relationship, express or implied, exists between the Town and Contractor / subcontractor.

END OF STANDARD INSTRUCTIONS TO PROPOSERS

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PURPOSE:

The Town of Columbia is seeking proposals for the purpose of obtaining the services of a qualified municipal consultant to act as the Town's municipal advisor for all current and future bond and short-term note issues.

BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Town of Columbia, Connecticut is a rural community located in Tolland County with a population of 5,246 and an area of 22 square miles. The Town's approved operating budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024 is \$18,443,673. The Town's credit rating as of its last review is Aa2 rated by Moody's. As of June 30, 2023, the Town has no bond principal outstanding.

The Town is updating their ten-year capital plan for its roads, bridges, heavy equipment, buildings and other major assets. These include investments in parks, equipment and infrastructure to serve growth and general municipal service provisions.

The Town is in the process of evaluating several major capital improvements to include the Horace Porter School HVAC Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project and to repair, rebuild or replace multiple roads/culverts. For more information on the Horace Porter School HVAC Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project, the explanatory text is located in Appendix B.

The new municipal advisor will play a significant role in evaluating financing options to include the opportunity to utilize State and possible Federal funding. The advisor will provide data and assistance to the Finance Director and Town Administrator in order to respond to financial questions from the public and elected officials.

SCOPE OF WORK:

The Town of Columbia is seeking to retain a qualified municipal advisory firm to provide advice and services related to the sale of bonds and notes as well as general capital finance planning. The financial advisor will work closely with the Town's Finance Director including making recommendations and performing activities related to the issuance of debt and the maintenance of the Town's credit rating.

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The Town expects to award a contract for a three-year term with a two-year option to renew. The Town prefers that the Contract be a fixed price but may allow for cost escalations as determined by an agreed-upon price index. Specifically, the financial advisor may:

- Review and evaluate the Town's existing capital financing plans and work closely with the Finance Director to determine whether current borrowing strategy needs to be amended.
- Design and conduct sales for the Town for competitive marketing of debt issues.
- Assist the Town in reviewing opportunities to refinance and restructure its existing debt in order to reduce costs or to otherwise implement the Town's financial objectives.
- Advise on methods of bond sales (where appropriate).
- Develop RFPs for paying agent and other services related to the sale of the securities.
- Recommend timing of bond sales.
- Identify tasks, responsibilities, and dates for completing activities leading up to bond sales. Assist with coordinating all tasks associated with a sale, including preparation of the offering statement.
- Design or actively participate in the design of debt structure.
- Provide advice on approaches to ratings and assist with rating presentations and the preparation of the presentation.
- Assist in preparing and reviewing documents, including preliminary and final official statements.
- Conduct pre-marketing of issues (competitive sale).
- Evaluate bids, including accuracy of TIC calculation, and recommend award (competitive sale).
- Review pricing, underwriter roles, and allocation of bonds (negotiated sale).

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- Coordinate closing arrangements with the Town, bond counsel and underwriter. Assist the Finance Director in coordinating receipt and disbursement of funds on the settlement date.
- Provide assistance on investment of bond proceeds (if appropriate).
- Provide advice related to compliance with arbitrage regulations.
- Assist with the presentation of recommendations to Town management, the Financial Planning & Allocation Commission, Selectmen, and the public. Prepare and update a debt amortization schedule for new and existing debt at the request of the Finance Director.
- Assist the Town in securing, or providing, Paying Agency services for bonds and notes.
- Should circumstances require municipal bond insurance, assist the Town in coverage qualifications and, if necessary, making presentations to municipal bond insurance companies. Analyze premium costs and the impact on the financing rate.
- Preparation of analytical data and/or projections related to internal evaluations of capital projects and Town liabilities including outstanding indebtedness. Provide assistance to the Finance Director during the budget process to assist in answering questions from elected officials.
- Develop financial analyses and special reports as requested.

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PROPOSAL PROCESS:

Proposals must clearly articulate how those services identified in the scope of work will be provided, costs for services, and include vendor qualifications, experience and references.

The services provided, qualifications, experience, and reference portions of the proposals will be weighted more heavily than the costs. Proprietary data or trade secrets should be clearly identified as such in your proposal.

a. **Legal Issues/Conflicts of Interest:**

Proposals should also include for your firm:

- Any violations of Federal, state or local regulations/laws within the past three (3) years.
- Any pending or current litigation.
- Arrangements with other parties that could pose a conflict of interest including affiliation of the firm or its main personnel with broker-dealers.
- If none of the above applies, then a statement to that effect should be included.

b. **Costs:**

Proposals should include all costs associated with providing the services described in the Scope of Work. Proposals may include a compensation approach that includes the hourly rate for each individual who would be assigned to the Town of Columbia or a cost by category for all major activities, including a bond issuance. Your firm's normal compensation method, which may include minimum hourly rates for assigned personnel, should also be proposed. Cost proposals should specify which fees are proposed on a "not-to-exceed" basis, describe any conditions attached to the fee proposal and explicitly state which costs are included in the fee proposal versus those that are to be reimbursed. In no case should any MSRB fees imposed upon the advisor be passed on to the Town.

c. **Vendor Qualifications and Experience:**

Proposals must contain a statement as to qualifications of the proposing firm, identify the financial advisor and other staff that will be assigned to work with the Town under this agreement and provide resumes that fully describe their

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qualifications and experiences. This section is also to include a list of a minimum of 5 (five) other municipalities in Connecticut for which your firm is presently under contract to provide financial advisory services, and the name of the primary financial advisor for each.

The municipal advisor must be registered with the SEC and MSRB and provide a statement to that effect as part of the proposal. The firm should be knowledgeable about local political, economic, legal and other issues that may affect borrowings in the Town of Columbia and should be familiar with GFOA's Best Practices related to the selling of bonds.

d. **References:**

Provide the names, phone number, contact person and mailing address of at least five references for which similar services have been provided in the last three years. Indicate for which of the references the proposed primary financial advisor has provided services and the capacity of these services.

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**APPENDIX A
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Town of Columbia
NON-COLLUSIVE BID STATEMENT**

Bid Opening Date: _____

Bidder's name and address: _____

Name of person signing this statement [please print]

To the Town of Columbia

1. The bid has been arrived at by the bidder independently and has been submitted without collusion and without any agreement, understanding or planned common cause of action with any other vendor of material, supplies, equipment or services described in the invitation to bid, designed to limit independent bidding or competition.
2. The contents of the bid have not been communicated by the bidder or its employees or agents to any person not an employee or person prior to the official opening of the bid.

Dated at: _____

On: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

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**APPENDIX B
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
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Horace Porter School HVAC Indoor Air Quality Improvement Project

Explanatory Text prepared pursuant to CGS Sec. 9-369b.

Question: "Shall the Town appropriate \$1,800,000 from the Town of Columbia General Fund for HVAC system and indoor air quality improvements at the Horace W. Porter School A-Wing?"

YES _____ NO _____

On February 23, 2023 the above question will be on the ballot of an adjourned Town Meeting for consideration. The proposed project focuses on upgrading the HVAC systems at the Horace W. Porter School A-wing for the following proposed scope of work.

The Columbia Board of Education has identified the need to improve the Indoor Air Quality in the A-Wing (i.e., temperature and humidity control, adequate ventilation, and mitigation of potential exposure to microbiological airborne particles, including, but not limited to, fungi, mold, and bacteria).

Proposed Project:

- New HVAC system for the A-Wing of the school
 - Ventilation - to meet indoor air quality state standards which go into effect in 2024.
 - Humidity control - to mitigate the potential for mold growth in classrooms.
 - Maintain consistent temperatures.
 - Air filtration - to meet State of Connecticut indoor air quality standards.
- Full building electrical upgrade to allow for the new HVAC system and to bring the entire building up to current electrical codes.

Connecticut Department of Administrative Services HVAC Grant Program

A new State Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) grant was adopted with the FY 23 State Budget which provides towns with the opportunity for school air improvements.

Total proposed project cost is estimated to be \$1.8 million. Columbia has submitted an application for a grant (pending) for over \$932,220 which would cover approximately 51.79% of eligible expenses, leaving Columbia's portion estimated at \$ 867,780.

Appropriation for the Project shall be funded from grants, undesignated fund balance and/or other sources of funds received by the Town for the Project, provided that in no event shall less than forty-five percent (45%) of the entire appropriation approved hereby be funded with grant monies received from the State of Connecticut and/or such other granting entity.

A "yes" vote will mean you are in favor of the town proceeding with the project pending the projected grant award.

A "no" vote will mean you are not in favor of the town proceeding with the project.

The foregoing question will be submitted to the qualified voters of the Town for a vote on Thursday, February 23, 2023 during the hours between 12:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. Electors and voters who are entitled to vote by reason of Section 7-6 of the CT General Statutes, as amended, may vote at Columbia Town Hall, Yeoman's Hall, 323 Route 87 Columbia, CT. Absentee Ballots will be available at the Office of the Town Clerk during business hours.