



**EMERALD COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Emerald Coast Regional Council (ECRC) invites qualified independent auditors (hereinafter called "auditor") to submit a proposal provided that they have sufficient governmental accounting and auditing experience in performing an audit in accordance with the specifications outlined in this Request for Proposal (RFP).

Request for Proposal will be for the fiscal years ending September 30, 2025, 2026, and 2027. The contract for the fiscal years ending in 2026 and 2027 may be terminated by either party in writing no later than September 30, 2026 and September 30, 2027 respectively. Each year's contract price is to be determined at the award of the proposal.

All responses to this Request for Proposal shall be submitted via email to Dawn Schwartz, at dawn.schwartz@ecrc.org later than **4:00 p.m. CST on Wednesday, August 6, 2025** at which time no further proposals will be considered.

This RFP may also be viewed on ECRC's web site: www.ecrc.org under [https://www.ecrc.org/services we offer/requests for proposals.php](https://www.ecrc.org/services_we_offer/requests_for_proposals.php) "Proposals."

The email subject line should be, **"RFP #02-2025 Request for Proposal – Audit Services."**

All questions and correspondence regarding this RFP should be directed via email to Dawn Schwartz at dawn.schwartz@ecrc.org.

EMERALD COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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EMERALD COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Services Requested	ECRC Financial Audit services for FY2025, FY2026 and FY2027 with a CPA or CPA firm.
Duration	One (1) year term, with optional two one-year extensions
Payment method	Net 30 or ACH
Planned duration of RFP advertisement	21-days
Start of advertisement period for RFP	July 16, 2025
Deadline for questions about RFP	July 21, 2025
Deadline for response to questions	July 25, 2025
Deadline to submit proposals	August 6, 2025

INTRODUCTION

A. General Information for Proposals

1. The ECRC audit is to be performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, the standards set forth for financial audits in the U.S. General Accounting Office's (GAO) *Government Auditing Standards* (Yellow Book), the provisions of the Federal Single Audit Act of 1984 (as amended in 1996) and U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133, *Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations* and the provisions of the Florida Statutes concerning the State Single Audit Act.
2. There is no expressed or implied obligation for ECRC to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this request.
3. ECRC reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted and to use any ideas in a proposal regardless of whether that proposal is selected. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the firm of the conditions contained in this request for proposals unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between ECRC and the firm selected.

- B. Term of Engagement - A three -year contract is contemplated with the option to terminate year two and/or year three by either party by the end of current fiscal year.

SERVICES REQUESTED

A. General

ECRC solicits the services of qualified firms of certified public accountants to audit its financial statements for a term up to three (3) fiscal years. These audits are to be performed in accordance with the provisions contained in this request for proposals.

B. Scope of Work

1. ECRC desires the auditor to express an opinion on the fair presentation of its basic financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.
2. The auditor shall also be responsible for performing certain limited procedures for supplementary information required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.
3. The audit will encompass a financial and compliance examination. The financial and compliance audit will cover federal, state, and local funding sources in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards as set forth by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the standards for financial audits set forth in the U.S. General Accounting Office's *Government Auditing Standards*, the provisions of the Single Audit Act of 1984 (as amended in 1996) and U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133 *Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations* and the provisions of the Florida Statutes concerning the State Single Audit Act.
4. Following the completion of the audit of the fiscal year's financial statements, the auditor shall issue all reports as are appropriate and required by generally accepting auditing standards, the standards set forth for financial statements in the U.S. General Accounting Office's *Government Auditing Standards*, the provisions of the Single Audit Act of 1984 (as amended in 1996) and U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133 *Audits of States, Local Governments and Non-Profit Organizations* and the provisions of the Florida Statutes concerning the State Single Audit Act.
5. In the required reports on internal controls, the auditor shall communicate any reportable conditions found during the audit. A reportable condition shall be defined as a significant deficiency in the design or operation of the internal control structure which could adversely affect the organization's ability to

record, process, summarize and report financial data consistent with the assertions of management in the financial statements. A reportable condition shall be identified as a material weakness in the report.

6. The reports on compliance shall include all material instances of noncompliance.
7. All nonmaterial instances of noncompliance shall be reported in a separate management letter.
8. Reporting to the Council Members - Auditors shall ensure that ECRC's Council Members are informed of each of the following:
 - a. The auditor's responsibility under generally accepted auditing standards.
 - b. Significant accounting policies.
 - c. Difficulties encountered in performing the audit.

C. Special Considerations

1. It is expected that the auditors will provide guidance and/or assistance to ECRC to continue to meet any new or changing GASB statements.
2. It is expected that the auditors will provide guidance and/or assistance to ECRC on the schedule of expenditures of federal awards and state financial assistance and related auditor's reports.
3. It is expected that the auditors will assist with the preparation and submission of the reporting package to the Federal Single Audit Clearing House and the Florida Department of Financial Services Annual Financial Report (AFR) requirements.

D. Implied Requirements - All services not specifically mentioned in this request for proposals that are necessary to provide the functional capabilities described by the auditor should be included in the Scope of Services.

E. Timeline of Audit – ECRC's fiscal year ends September 30. The audit process timeline will be agreed upon annually by both ECRC staff and auditors. The final audit report should be submitted no later than two weeks prior to the ECRC board meeting which meets in advance of the June 30 compliance reporting deadline.

1. The auditor will provide a detailed audit list of schedules to be prepared by ECRC staff 2-3 weeks ahead of audit fieldwork.
2. ECRC will provide a draft Trial Balance, Schedule of Expenditures, and other records for audit.
3. Field work should not take place without the consent of ECRC's management. If interim field work is to take place, ECRC will be held liable for no more than one fifth of the actual billable amount per the contract at the time field work is performed.

F. Final Audit Report

1. The auditor shall provide all recommendations, revisions, suggestions of improvement and a draft of the auditor's report and audited financial statements, in addition to a trial balance, and adjusting journal entries to the Director of Finance.
2. The Director of Finance will complete a review of the draft report as expeditiously as possible. During that period, the auditor should be available for any meetings that may be necessary to discuss the audit report. Once all issues for discussion are resolved, the final signed report shall be delivered to the Chief Executive Officer.
3. The final report (a hard copy and electronic) along with twenty (20) copies should be delivered to the Director of Finance, 418 E. Gregory Street, Suite 100, Pensacola, FL 32502.
4. The Independent Auditor will be required to formally present the financial report and the auditor's opinion to the ECRC Council Members meeting in advance of the June 30 compliance reporting deadline.

G. Working Paper Retention and Access

1. All working papers and reports must be retained at the auditor's expense for a minimum of five (5) years after the issue date of the audit unless the firm is notified in writing by ECRC of the need to extend the retention period. The auditor will be required to make working papers available upon request.
2. The firm shall respond to the reasonable inquiries of successor auditors and allow successor auditors to review working papers relating to matters of

continuing accounting significance. Successor auditors will be responsible for costs associated with reviewing prior year working papers.

- H. Lobbying - Lobbying of Audit Committee Members, ECRC Board Members, and ECRC Staff regarding this RFP by any member of a Proposer's staff or those people who are members of or employed by any legal entity affiliated with an organization that is responding to the RFP is strictly prohibited. Such actions may cause your proposal, or the proposal you are supporting, to be rejected.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

A. General Requirements

1. Submission of Proposal – All responses to this Request for Proposal shall be submitted via email to Dawn Schwartz, at dawn.schwartz@ecrc.org no later than **August 6, 2025, at 4:00p.m. CST**. The email subject line should be, **“RFP #02-2025 Request for Proposal – Financial Audit Services.”**
2. The following material is required for a proposing firm to be considered:
 - a) A title page showing the request for proposal's subject; the firm's name; the name, address, and telephone number of the contact person; and the date of the proposal.
 - b) A table of contents.
 - c) A signed letter of transmittal briefly stating the proposer's understanding of the work to be done, the commitment to perform the work within the time period, a statement why the firm believes it to be best qualified to perform the engagement and a statement that the proposal is firm and an irrevocable offer for 90 days.
 - d) The proposer shall submit a separate email with their bid (Appendix C). This email shall be sent to Dawn Schwartz, at dawn.schwartz@ecrc.org and the subject line should be, “Bid Proposal – Professional Auditing Services.”

B. Technical Proposal

1. General Requirements
 - a. The purpose of the technical proposal is to demonstrate the qualifications, competence and capacity of the firms seeking to undertake an independent audit of ECRC in conformity with the requirements of this

request for proposals. As such, the substance of proposals will carry more weight than their form or manner of presentation. The technical proposal should demonstrate the qualifications of the firm and of the particular staff to be assigned to this engagement. It should also specify an audit approach that will meet the request for proposals requirements.

- b. THERE SHOULD BE NO DOLLAR UNITS OR TOTAL COSTS INCLUDED IN THE TECHNICAL PROPOSAL DOCUMENT.
 - c. The technical proposal should address all the points outlined in the request for proposal (excluding any cost information which should only be included in the sealed bid). The proposal should provide a straightforward, concise description of the proposer's capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the request for proposal. While additional data may be presented, the following subjects, items Nos. 2 through 6, must be included. They represent the criteria against which the proposal will be evaluated.
- 2. Independence - The firm should provide an affirmative statement that it is independent of ECRC as defined by generally accepted auditing standards and the U.S. General Accounting Office's *Government Auditing Standards* (2003).
 - 3. License to Practice in Florida – An affirmative statement should be included that the firm and/or its partners are properly licensed to practice in Florida and all supervisory staff are licensed or qualified to be licensed to practice in Florida.
 - 4. Firm Qualifications and Experience
 - a. The proposer should state the size of the firm, the size of the firm's governmental audit staff, the location of the office from which the work on this engagement is to be performed, and the number and nature of the professional staff to be employed in this engagement on a full-time basis along with the number and nature of the staff to be so employed on a part-time basis.
 - b. The firm is also required to submit a copy of the report on its most recent external quality control review, with a statement of whether that quality control review included a review of specific government engagements.
 - c. The firm shall also provide information on the results of any federal or state desk reviews or field reviews of its audits during the past three (3) years. In addition, the firm shall provide information on the circumstances

and status of any disciplinary action taken or pending against the firm during the past three (3) years with state regulatory bodies or professional organizations.

5. Partner, Supervisory and Staff Qualifications and Experience

- a. Identify the principal supervisory and management staff, including engagement partners, managers, other supervisors and specialists, who would be assigned to the engagement. Indicate whether each such person is registered or licensed to practice as a certified public accountant in Florida. Provide information on the government auditing experience of each person, including information on relevant continuing professional education for the past three (3) years and membership in professional organizations relevant to the performance of this audit.
- b. Other audit personnel may be changed at the discretion of the proposer provided that replacements have substantially the same or better qualifications or experience.

6. Similar Engagements with Other Government Entities (including ECRC)

- a. For the firm's office that will be assigned responsibility for the audit, list the most significant engagements (maximum 3) performed in the last five (5) years that are similar to the engagement described in this request for proposal.
- b. These engagements should be ranked based on total staff hours. Indicate the scope of work, date, engagement partners, total hours, and the name, email address, and telephone number of the principal client contact.

C. Sealed Bid

1. Total All-Inclusive Maximum Price - The sealed dollar cost bid should contain all pricing information relative to performing the audit engagement as described in this request for proposal. The total all-inclusive maximum price bid is to contain all direct and indirect costs including all out-of-pocket expenses. All out-of-pocket expenses should be included in Appendix C.
2. Rates for Additional Professional Services - If it should become necessary for ECRC to request the auditor to render any additional services to either supplement the services requested in this RFP or to perform additional work

as a result of the specific recommendations included in any report issued on this engagement, then such additional work shall be performed only if set forth in an addendum to the contract between ECRC and the firm. Any additional work agreed to between ECRC and the firm shall be performed at the same rates set forth in the Appendix C Schedule of Fees and Expenses included in the sealed bid.

3. Manner of Payment - qualification.

EVALUATION PROCESS

A. Audit Committee – Proposals submitted will be evaluated by the ECRC Audit Committee.

B. Review of Proposals

1. The Audit Committee will use a point formula during the review process to score proposals. The ECRC Audit Committee will convene to review and discuss these evaluations and to combine the individual scores to arrive at a composite technical score for each firm. At this point, firms with an unacceptably low technical score will be eliminated from further consideration.
2. After the composite technical score for each firm has been established, the sealed bid will be opened, and additional points will be added to the technical score based on the bid.

C. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using three (3) sets of criteria. Firms meeting the mandatory elements will have their proposals evaluated and scored for both technical qualifications and price. During the evaluation process, the Audit Committee reserves the right, where it may serve ECRC's best interest, to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors or omissions. The following represent the principal selection criteria which will be considered during the evaluation process:

1. Mandatory Elements

- a. The firm adheres to the instructions in this request for proposal on preparing and submitting the proposal.

- b. The audit firm is independent and licensed to practice in Florida.
- c. The firm has no conflict of interest regarding any other work performed by the firm for ECRC.
- d. The firm submits a copy of its last external quality control review report, and the firm has a record of quality audit work.
- e. The firm shall commit to the deadlines set forth by ECRC.

2. Technical Qualifications

- a. Expertise and Experience
 - 1) The firm's experience and performance on comparable government engagements.
 - 2) The quality of the firm's professional personnel to be assigned to the engagement and the quality of the firm's management support personnel to be available for technical consultation.
 - 3) Experience with the preparation of federal and state financial assistance and reports required for submission.
 - 4) Information Technology Ability
- b. Audit Approach
 - 1) Adequacy of proposed staffing plan.
 - 2) Proposed Audit Approach described.

3. Bid - COST WILL NOT BE THE ONLY FACTOR IN THE SELECTION OF AN AUDIT FIRM

- 4. Oral Presentations - At the discretion of ECRC or the Audit Committee, firms submitting proposals may be requested to make oral presentations as part of the evaluation process.

D. Final Selection - The Council will select a firm based upon the recommendation of the Audit Committee.

E. Right to Reject Proposals

- 1. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the firm of the conditions contained in this request for proposal unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between ECRC and the firm selected.

2. ECRC reserves the right without prejudice to reject any or all proposals.

DESCRIPTION OF ECRC

- A. Background Information - ECRC is a quasi-governmental agency formed and operating under the provisions of Chapter 186, of the Florida Statutes. It was organized in 1964 and is the official regional planning organization for seven counties including Escambia, Santa Rosa, Bay, Holmes, Okaloosa, Walton and Washington. The fiscal year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30.

ECRC receives membership dues from member local governments as well as state, federal and local funding to conduct comprehensive planning and transportation planning for the region. The ECRC serves as staff to three (3) transportation planning organizations. (More detailed information on ECRC and its finances can be found in the Annual Report posted on ECRC's website, www.ecrc.org.)

- B. Budgetary Basis of Accounting - ECRC prepares its budgets on an annual basis.
- C. Pension Plans - ECRC participates or offers the following pension plans:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Employees Covered</u>
Florida Retirement System	All eligible employees participate
457 Contribution Plan	Participating employees (elective) (No employer contributions)

- D. Computer Systems - ECRC uses proprietary Momentive Software Abila MIP Accounting software as its general accounting system, which includes integrated general ledger, payables, and receivables.

APPENDIX A

PROPOSER GUARANTEES

The proposer certifies it can and will provide and make available, as a minimum, all services set forth in Section II, Services Requested.

Signature of Official: _____

Name (typed): _____

Title: _____

Firm: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

PROPOSER WARRANTIES

- A. Proposer warrants that it is willing and able to comply with State of Florida laws with respect to foreign (non-state of Florida) corporations.
- B. Proposer warrants that it is willing and able to obtain an errors and omissions insurance policy providing a prudent amount of coverage for the willful or negligent acts, or omissions of any officers, employees or agents thereof.
- C. Proposer warrants that it will not delegate or subcontract its responsibilities under an agreement without the prior written permission of ECRC.
- D. Proposer warrants that all information provided by it in connection with this proposal is true and accurate.

Signature of Official: _____

Name (typed): _____

Title: _____

Firm: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

SCHEDULE OF PROFESSIONAL FEES AND EXPENSES FOR THE AUDIT OF THE 2025, 2026, AND 2027 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

		Quoted Hourly	
		<u>Rates</u>	<u>Total</u>
Partners		_____	_____
Managers		_____	_____
Staff		_____	_____
FY25: Annual Audit Fee			_____
	Major Program Fee (cost per)		_____
FY26: Annual Audit Fee			_____
	Major Program Fee (cost per)		_____
FY27: Annual Audit Fee			_____
	Major Program Fee (cost per)		_____

Note: Quote should include all out-of-pocket expenses and copies of prior year working papers.