



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
CONVENTION FACILITIES
AUTHORITY**

COLUMBUS

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS:

Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority

Campus Master Plan

Issued: April 2, 2026

Due: April 29, 2026

Issued By:

Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority
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The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (the “FCCFA”) is seeking submittals of qualifications from architectural design firms interested in developing a comprehensive campus-wide master plan. The FCCFA is seeking firms that have extensive experience developing master plans similar in size and scope to the one described within this request for qualifications.

BACKGROUND

The FCCFA is the owner/developer of the Greater Columbus Convention Center (the “GCCC”), Hilton Columbus Downtown Hotel (the “Hotel”), Nationwide Arena (the “Arena”), and six parking facilities; all located in downtown Columbus, Ohio. Established by the Franklin County Commissioners in July 1988 pursuant to Chapter 351 of the Ohio Revised Code, the FCCFA is a special governmental unit governed by an eleven-member board appointed by the Franklin County Commissioners, Mayor of Columbus, and suburban mayors.

As owner/developer of these facilities, the FCCFA is responsible for their improvement, management, and successful operation. In addition, the FCCFA is responsible for ensuring the continued success and growth of the convention business within the Greater Columbus community. Both responsibilities are directly linked to the FCCFA’s continued investment in and support of services, resources, facilities, and community projects that enhance the use and improvement of the convention center, hotel, arena, and parking facilities.

Master Planning Services

The FCCFA desires to undertake a comprehensive master planning exercise to guide decisions regarding future developments that will best serve the needs of our clients and the local community.

Following the 2017 expansion and renovation of the GCCC, and the opening of the Hilton 402 Tower in 2022, the master planning effort will guide the FCCFA in determining what is next for convention business and continued market growth in Columbus. The master plan will allow the FCCFA to ensure the community has the resources – facilities, connectivity, amenities, and revenue streams – to position Columbus as an industry leader and a national destination of choice.

A successful master plan will provide innovative and industry leading recommendations, identify opportunities to maximize the economic potential of the campus (including utilization of vacant or underdeveloped land within, adjacent to, or near the campus), and enhance connectivity and integration with the surrounding community. This includes strengthening physical and experiential connections between the campus and adjacent districts while creating a safe, accessible, and welcoming pedestrian and visitor environment.

In addition, the master plan shall evaluate opportunities to expand and enhance the supply of full-service convention center hotel accommodations within walkable proximity to the GCCC, recognizing the relatively limited inventory of such rooms within approximately 0.5 miles of the

facility compared to peer convention destinations. This evaluation shall include consideration of new hotel development and/or expansion of existing hotel properties serving the campus, as well as strategies to improve physical and operational integration between hotel assets and the GCCC.

The master plan shall also consider strategic land acquisition, assemblage, and redevelopment opportunities that may enhance the long-term functionality, connectivity, and performance of the campus, including the potential repurposing of existing FCCFA-controlled sites.

To begin the master planning process, the FCCFA, in 2024, commissioned a [comprehensive facility condition assessment](#) of the GCCC. The assessment identified over \$190 million in capital needs over the next 20 years. Near-term opportunities identified within the report include a main kitchen expansion and renovation, back of house connectivity between the North and South Facilities, security enhancements, loading dock expansion and renovation, secondary food service enhancements, and exhibit hall expansion.

Beyond the near-term improvements described within the condition assessment report, the FCCFA identified several other areas of opportunity. First, the FCCFA owns the 7.5-acre East Lot. Previous proposals related to this surface parking lot included a multi-use event space, a sports field house, a multi-modal transportation hub, passenger rail station, or other mixed-use development. Identified challenges with this site include lack of physical connection to the GCCC and the status of the East Lot as the GCCC's primary truck marshaling yard. The master plan shall evaluate alternative operational strategies for truck marshaling and logistics that could enable partial or full redevelopment of the East Lot and identify redevelopment scenarios that integrate seamlessly with the surrounding area and complement other Downtown Columbus projects. The FCCFA is open to the involvement of a third-party developer to include mixed-use construction in any potential solution.

The North Lot presents an opportunity for future hotel development and/or expanded GCCC offerings to include additional meeting space or a multi-purpose theater. The adjacent Goodale Garage was designed to accommodate an attached hotel property.

At the heart of the GCCC, the connector area has been the focus of discussions regarding a multi-modal transportation hub. The current Starbucks location is the leading candidate for a downtown passenger rail station should Amtrak expansion occur, while the east side of the connector may be activated by construction of a bus-rapid transit hub through the COTA LinkUS initiative.

Building upon prior [passenger rail feasibility studies](#), the master plan shall further evaluate the capability and capacity of the GCCC campus to support passenger rail service and the potential integration of passenger rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), and future light rail into a cohesive multimodal transportation hub. This effort may be undertaken as an alternate or phased component of the master planning process.

Outdoor event spaces are in high demand among event planners and many facilities in the GCCC's competitive set have included outdoor amenities in recent renovation and expansion projects. While the GCCC's Arnold Plaza may be used as an outdoor event space, the FCCFA is interested in solutions for maximizing the utilization of this space including opportunities for year-round activation. The FCCFA is also interested in roof-top amenities where feasible.

Aside from existing undeveloped properties, the FCCFA is curious about the possibility for vertical expansion of the GCCC, potentially through construction over the existing loading docks.

Finally, a successful master planning exercise should include comprehensive sustainability recommendations designed to promote energy independence. Solutions may include rooftop solar and/or geothermal energy. The selected firm may be tasked with performing an energy efficiency audit to support energy-as-a-service financing opportunities.

The examples provided herein are for illustrative purposes only and the selected firm shall utilize their best professional judgment based upon industry trends, demand analysis, stakeholder feedback, and economic feasibility in developing the master plan. The resulting master plan report will provide recommendations to position the GCCC as an industry leader and will further the FCCFA's mission to provide a world class experience for all residents, guests, and attendees.

An overview of the campus is attached as Exhibit A.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The scope of services requested through this RFQ will be for the completion of a comprehensive campus-wide master plan as described herein. The master plan will evaluate current conditions, forecast future needs based upon verifiable market data and industry trends, and provide a long-term roadmap for facility improvements, site optimization, campus expansion, guest experience, security enhancements, and sustainability initiatives. Master planning services shall include:

General Overview

- Site assessment
- Campus and Program Analysis
- Vision and objectives
- Campus maximum growth analysis
- Compliance analysis for all sites, parcels, and buildings
- 5-year immediate scope
- 10- and 15-year long range plan
- Staff and stakeholder workshops
- Master plan strategy development
- Master plan conceptual design and feasibility analysis
- Overall master plan report

- FCCFA Board presentation(s) on the final report

Stakeholder Engagement

FCCFA stakeholder engagement is a crucial component of the master planning process. It is critical that future developments are supported by community partners. To this end, the selected firm shall:

- Develop a stakeholder engagement plan identifying key participants from the FCCFA, Legends Global, Levy Restaurants, the City of Columbus, Franklin County, Experience Columbus, the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, the Hilton Columbus Downtown, the Hyatt Regency, and other community partners and surrounding hospitality businesses.
- Engage representatives from the private development community and regional planning organizations, including the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), to ensure alignment with broader development and mobility initiatives.
- Facilitate interviews, workshops, listening sessions and surveys with the identified stakeholders.
- Document findings and integrate stakeholder feedback into final planning recommendations.

Market & Competitive Analysis

The selected firm will build upon the market analysis contained within the FCCFA's comprehensive facility condition assessment report. This may include:

- A review of historical booking data, occupancy patterns, event mix, and space utilization.
- Market demand analysis for future meetings, convention and event trends including a review of the GCCC's competitive landscape.
- Comparative analysis of full-service hotel room supply within walkable proximity to the GCCC relative to peer convention destinations, including identification of gaps and opportunities.

Site and Campus Master Planning

Utilizing the information gathered from stakeholders and the market analysis, the selected firm will develop a comprehensive master plan with data supported recommendations for growth and improvement. This may include:

- Conceptual illustrations of recommended or potential improvements, expansion, or reconfigurations which consider long-term phasing, infrastructure needs, and integration with the surrounding community.

- Evaluation of existing facility conditions, including aging infrastructure and meeting space competitiveness, improved circulation, and stronger connections to adjacent hotel properties and the downtown business district.
- Conceptual planning to reimagine the south building, including enhanced entry experience, improved circulation, and stronger connections to adjacent hotel properties and the downtown business district.
- Enhancements to streetscapes, pedestrian zones, public plazas, and connectivity to the Short North Arts District, Arena District, and 4th Street Corridor.
- Recommendations to position the GCCC as a community connector, including strategies to enhance walkability, wayfinding, and connectivity between surrounding neighborhoods and districts.
- Integration with community transportation initiatives such as COTA LinkUS and Amtrak expansion.
- Incorporation of environmentally responsible planning approaches, including energy efficiency, water management, material sustainability in construction, carbon reduction strategies, and energy independence.

Final Master Plan Report

The final report shall include, at a minimum:

- High-level cost estimates for recommended options.
- Prioritization of recommendations.
- An executive summary, market analysis, conceptual design illustrations, phasing and implementation strategies, a final recommended plan, appendices as needed to support recommendations.

SELECTION PROCESS and EVALUATION CRITERIA

The FCCFA will review, evaluate and select an architectural/engineering firm (“Respondent”) that is deemed to be the most qualified, as determined by the criteria stated in this document. The FCCFA reserves the right to select one or more firm(s) depending upon the qualifications submitted and the requirements for the project. Evaluation will be made by members of the FCCFA staff with the FCCFA Board providing final approval. The FCCFA will review and evaluate all statements of qualifications and may short-list Respondents for interviews based upon the criteria listed below and requirements of law. The FCCFA does not require any form of fee estimate, fee proposal, or other estimate or measure of compensation prior to selection of the most qualified firm.

Upon completion of its review the FCCFA will rank no fewer than three Respondents considered to be most qualified (unless fewer than three qualified Respondents are available) and will enter into contract negotiations with the Respondent(s) considered to be most qualified.

In no particular order of priority, the criteria used for selection will include:

- Experience of the professionals that will work on the project;
- Scope and nature of the services the firm will provide;
- Availability of personnel, equipment, facilities, and other resources to perform the services within the required timeframe;
- Experience of the firm to complete the services required for this project as well as the firm's demonstrated knowledge and understanding of essential requirements involved in providing such services;
- Proposed technical approach to completing the project and schedule for completion of services; and
- Quality of references.

The anticipated timeline for selection/project completion is as follows:

RFQ Submittal Due: April 29, 2026
Short-list Interviews: Week of May 18, 2026
Selection of Most Qualified Firm: May 26, 2026
Master Planning Analysis: June 2026 – June 2027
Delivery of Final Report: June 2027

REQUIRED SUBMITTALS

One original, seven paper copies, and one electronic copy of submittals shall be delivered to the following addressee on or before **April 29, 2026, by 4:00 p.m. EST.**

Jordan Edmonds, In-House Counsel
Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority
400 North High Street, Fourth Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: (614) 827-2807

Submittal Content

To enable the FCCFA to efficiently evaluate the submittals, Respondents should prepare their submittal on 8.5 x 11 paper utilizing the general format guidelines described below. Please feel free to include other materials, such as covers, table of contents, a transmittal letter, appendices, brochures, etc., at your discretion.

Questions regarding this RFQ must be submitted in writing to Jordan Edmonds at jedmonds@fccfa.org on or before close of business on **April 13, 2026**. Responses to all questions submitted before the deadline will be distributed to Respondents on record that have received a copy of this RFQ. Responses to questions will be distributed on or before **April 16, 2026**.

The following outlines the information to be included in the qualifications submitted by Respondents. This outline is not all-inclusive, and information may be added and organized as deemed necessary. Submittals are to be paginated, and the section number, title of section, and each sub-part should also be identified.

Section I – Firm Description

General information should include, but not be limited to:

1. The name, address, telephone number, fax and email address of an individual who will serve as the Respondent's contact for any questions or correspondence regarding the submittal and RFQ process.
2. A certification of accuracy provided by the highest ranking individual responsible for the Respondent's submittal.
3. Certification that Respondent has not, is not, and will not engage in discriminatory practices and is compliant with the nondiscrimination policy set forth in the last section of this RFQ.
4. A summary highlighting why Respondent is uniquely qualified to successfully fulfill the requirements of this RFQ.

Section II – Approach and Schedule

1. Include a preliminary project schedule and proposed timeframe for completing the requested deliverables. The FCCFA intends for the master planning exercise to commence in mid-2026 and be completed in 2027.
2. A description of the Respondent's approach to the project and how this approach will impact not only the implementation of the services requested in the RFQ, but the potential success of the project included in the RFQ. Identify possible challenges associated with the project described in the RFQ and discuss how these challenges will be addressed through the management of the project.
3. A discussion of how the Respondent will control the quality, budget, and schedule for the project.

Section III – Profile & Organization

The profile should include but not be limited to:

1. Information describing the Respondent's current organization, date of incorporation, ownership, corporate office, number of years in business, size of business, services offered, operating philosophy, number of employees and employee demographics.
2. If applicable, information describing any other participating Respondents' current organization, date of incorporation, ownership, corporate office, number of years in

business, size of business, services offered, operating philosophy, number of employees and employee demographics.

3. Provide a description of the Respondent's proposed organization for the project. Identify key team members and describe the services, roles, and responsibilities of each. Discuss the relationship of key team members throughout the project. Information should be provided that describes the Respondent's current workload as well as outlines the availability of necessary personnel, equipment and resources needed to satisfy the requirements of this RFQ.

Section IV – Resumes of Key Individuals

Provide professional resumes and job descriptions of the key individuals that will be assigned to this project, describing each member's education, qualifications and experience completing similar master planning exercises.

Section V – Experience

Provide brief descriptions of projects that Respondent has participated in during the past five years that are similar in size, scope, and type to the master planning exercise referenced in this RFQ. Specific attention should be paid to previous convention center and tourism/hospitality related projects. The firm's role in each project should be clearly identified as well as the role of the team members proposed for this project. Information should include a description of services provided; examples of successful strategies implemented that improved the outcome of the project; and unique characteristics of the project. Include references for each project. References should include a contact person, address, phone number, and email. References should be prepared to be contacted by the FCCFA.

Section VI – Other Requested Information

To respond to this RFQ, Respondents should provide specific information describing the Respondent's understanding of required services for the project along with a description of any services not provided by the firm and any other pertinent information to the Respondent's work on this project.

Respondents shall provide information pertaining to any outstanding legal actions or potential claims against the Respondent, including a brief description of the pending action. Respondent shall also provide a description of any settlements, or judgments, against the Respondent during the previous 5 years.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS, NOTIFICATIONS, AND INFORMATION

FCCFA's Best Interest – the FCCFA reserves the sole right to (1) evaluate the qualifications submitted; (2) waive any irregularities therein; (3) select candidates for the submittal of more

detailed qualifications; (4) accept any submittal or portion of a submittal; and/or (5) reject any or all responses to the RFQ, should it be deemed in the FCCFA's best interest to do so. This RFQ is not intended to be an offer, contract, obligation, or commitment of any kind.

Addenda and Modifications – Changes in the specifications or terms and conditions of this RFQ may be made in writing by the FCCFA prior to the required due date. Results of informal meetings or discussions between a Respondent and any FCCFA or GCCC official may not be used as a basis for deviations from the requirements contained within this RFQ and may subject the Respondent to immediate disqualification.

All addenda, amendments, and interpretations to this RFQ shall be in writing. Any amendment or interpretation that is not in writing shall not legally bind the FCCFA. Only information supplied by the FCCFA in this RFQ, or in connection with this RFQ, shall be used in preparing submittals. All contact that a Respondent may have had before or after receiving this RFQ with any individuals, employees, or representatives of the FCCFA and any information that may have been read in any news media or seen or heard in any communications regarding this RFQ should be disregarded by Respondents in preparing responses to this RFQ.

Clarification – the FCCFA reserves the right to conduct discussions with Respondents who submit proposals, or statements of qualifications, for the purpose of clarifications or corrections regarding a submittal to ensure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the requirements of this RFQ.

No Gratuities – Respondents shall not offer any gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value to any official, director or employee of the FCCFA nor its advisors for any purpose or reason that could be construed as influencing the selection process. Any attempt by the Respondent to influence the selection process by any means, other than disclosure of qualifications and credentials through the proper channels, shall be grounds for exclusion from the selection process.

No False Information – Respondents who provide false or misleading information, whether intentional or not, in any of the documents presented to the FCCFA for consideration in the selection process shall be excluded.

Conflicts of Interests – All Respondents must disclose, within their statement of qualifications, the name(s) of any officer, director, agents, or immediate family member (spouse, parent, sibling, child) who is also an employee of the FCCFA or Legends Global or have a familial or business relationship with any FCCFA director. Further, all statements of qualifications must disclose the name of any FCCFA or GCCC employees who own, either directly or indirectly, an interest of 10% or more in the Respondents or any of its affiliates or subcontractors.

Preparation Costs – Under no circumstances will the FCCFA be responsible for any costs incurred by anyone in (a) the submittal of qualifications, (b) in any subsequent follow-up to the submittal,

(c) in any subsequent negotiations of a contract, or (d) in any other aspect of the effort to select the most qualified Respondent.

Confidentiality – To the extent permitted by law, the FCCFA will make reasonable efforts to safeguard the confidentiality of confidential information submitted in response to the RFQ, provided that the information is conspicuously marked “CONFIDENTIAL”. The FCCFA will not be required to defend any litigation seeking disclosure of confidential information. The FCCFA will make reasonable efforts to notify a Respondent to give the Respondent opportunity to defend any request or litigation seeking disclosure.

Note that the wholesale use of headers/footers bearing designations such as “confidential”, “proprietary”, or “trade secret” on all or nearly all of a proposal is not acceptable and may be deemed by the FCCFA as a waiver of any exemption claim. The identification of exempt information must be sufficiently specific to allow for the FCCFA to identify the exempt data in responding to public records requests.

Public Records – Respondents are hereby notified that all proposals and qualifications, including without limitation, any and all information and documentation submitted therewith, will be available for public inspection after the award of the contract, in compliance with Ohio Revised Code 149 and other applicable public records laws.

By submitting to the FCCFA a document that the Respondent designates as “confidential” or “trade secret”, the Respondent agrees that in the event a third party brings any action against the FCCFA or any of its officials or employees to obtain disclosure of the document, the Respondent will indemnify and hold harmless the FCCFA and any affected officials and employees from all costs, including attorney’s fees incurred by or assessed against any defendant, of defending against such action. The Respondent also agrees that at the FCCFA’s request, the Respondent will intervene in such action and assume all responsibility for defending against it, and that the Respondent’s failure to do so will relieve the FCCFA of all further obligations to protect the confidentiality of the document. The FCCFA assumes no responsibility for disclosure or use of unmarked data for any purposes.

FCCFA Policies and Ordinances – Respondents should be aware of and therefore familiar with all pertinent ordinances and policies that will relate to contracting with the FCCFA. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict between the process of requirements set forth in this RFQ and FCCFA policies and ordinances, or other requirements of law, such policies, ordinances, or other requirements shall take precedence.

Right of Refusal – the FCCFA reserves the right to reject any proposal in which the Respondent takes exception to the terms and conditions of this RFQ; or fails to meet the terms and conditions of this RFQ, including but not limited to, the standards, specifications, and requirements specified in this RFQ.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (NON-DISCRIMINATION) POLICY

Through the adoption of this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy (“DEI Policy”) the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (“FCCFA”) affirms its commitment to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all aspects of its operations including, but not limited to, contracting and procurement, employee recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, professional development and training, promotions, transfers, layoffs, and terminations. Pursuant to this DEI Policy the FCCFA will not participate in either active or passive unlawful discrimination of any type and will strive to maintain an open, diverse, and inclusive workplace for all employees, officers, contractors, and subcontractors.

It is the position of the FCCFA that discrimination of any kind based upon age, sex, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, genetic information, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family or marital status, military or veteran status, or any other basis prohibited by the laws of the United States, the State of Ohio, or the City of Columbus (“Protected Status”) is prohibited. No person shall be unlawfully denied the benefit of, or otherwise be discriminated against in connection with their employment, the award or performance of any contract, or the modification of any contract or award.

The fundamental tenets of this DEI Policy are as follows:

- All Contractors shall have an equal opportunity to compete with respect to contracting and procurement activities of the FCCFA, regardless of age, sex, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, genetic information, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family or marital status, military or veteran status, or any other Protected Status;
- No Contractor or FCCFA employee shall have engaged or shall engage in any kind of unlawful discrimination involving age, sex, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family or marital status, or any other Protected Status, whether or not such unlawful discrimination is related to the FCCFA or any contract with the FCCFA;
- The FCCFA and any Contractor seeking to do business with the FCCFA shall, whenever possible, craft bid specifications which enable MBE/WBE participation that is consistent with demographics for the City of Columbus;
- The FCCFA through its staff, facility management companies and other contractors will (i) monitor and provide periodic reports to the FCCFA Board of Directors regarding compliance by the FCCFA and its Contractors with this DEI Policy; (ii) collect and record information on the inclusion of minorities and women in their contracting, procurement, and workforce activities; and (iii) analyze data to evaluate the inclusion of minorities and women in the FCCFA’s contracting, procurement, and workforce activities. Specific reporting requirements shall include:

- Semi-annual diversity profile updates from all key service partners and facility management companies;
 - Documentation of contractor compliance with this DEI Policy in any recommendation of award presented to the FCCFA Board of Directors;
 - Monthly board reports describing MWBE participation rates for all ongoing construction projects.
- The FCCFA shall review this DEI Policy periodically to ensure that it effectively promotes and achieves diversity, equity, inclusion, non-discrimination and equal opportunity in connection with the FCCFA's operations, and all contracting and procurement activities; and
 - All Contractors and employees shall comply with this DEI Policy. A Contractor's success or failure to comply with this DEI Policy will be a factor in any award of a contract to such Contractor. An employee's success or failure to comply with this DEI Policy will be a factor considered in connection with any disciplinary measures or continued employment with FCCFA.

The FCCFA through its staff, facility management companies and other contractors shall be responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this DEI Policy.

If the FCCFA determines that the objectives of this DEI Policy are not being achieved, the FCCFA Board of Directors may, in their discretion, direct the Executive Director to conduct further investigations into the reasons for not achieving such objectives.

This DEI Policy applies to all contracting and procurement activities of the FCCFA, including contracting for construction, professional and non-professional services and procurement of goods and supplies.

This DEI Policy shall be referenced in each bid and Request for Proposal or Qualifications document issued by the FCCFA. A Contractor's failure to comply with this DEI Policy may result in (a) debarment from participation in future FCCFA contracting opportunities, (b) liability for breach of contract and (c) the enforcement of any other remedies available under the related contract or applicable law.

