

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
FOR  
Purchasing Card (P-Card) Services  
City of Ashtabula, Ohio**

Proposals must be submitted to:

City of Ashtabula

Finance Department  
Attn: Carolyn Sheldon  
4717 Main Ave  
Ashtabula, OH 44004

**By 4:30 P.M. EST on  
Friday, September 11, 2020**

PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE AND TIME

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is not a commitment or contract of any kind. The City of Ashtabula (City) reserves the right to pursue any and/or all ideas generated by this Request. Costs for developing the proposals are entirely the responsibility of the applicants and shall not be reimbursed. The City reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. The City reserves the right to waive any requirements of this RFP when it determines that waiving a requirement is in the best interest of the City.

***Note regarding the Public Records Act:***

ORC Section 149.43 defines a public record as any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public business. The City of Ashtabula provides that public records shall be disclosed upon written request and that any citizen has a right to inspect any public record unless the document is exempted from disclosure.

Be advised that all information and proposals submitted in response to this RFP, as well as any contract that may eventually arise from this RFP, are public records and shall be treated accordingly. Submission of any materials in response to this RFP constitutes a waiver by the submitting party of any claim against the City that the information is protected from disclosure. By submitting materials, (1) you are consenting to the release of such materials by the City if requested under the Public Records Act without further notice to you and (2) you agree to indemnify and hold harmless the City for release of such information. If the City receives a request for any document submitted in response to this request, it will not assert any privileges that may exist on behalf of the person or business entity submitting the proposal.

The City cannot represent or guarantee that any information submitted in response to this RFP will be kept confidential.

## **SECTION I - GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The City of Ashtabula (the City) is seeking proposals for implementing a purchasing card (P-Card) program. The objective of this RFP is to identify the financial institution (the Proposer) that will provide the highest quality services to the City. The benefits the City expects to receive from using the implementation of purchasing cards include efficient, cost-effective methods of purchasing goods and services, and the receipt of rebate revenues based on the purchasing volume. The target commencement date for the proposed services is November 1, 2020.

### **THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS PROCESS**

This RFP seeks the submission of proposals from any and all interested and qualified providers to provide the services described herein. The Finance Department, which is a part of the government of the City of Ashtabula, seeks by way of this RFP to obtain the listed solution requirements in a manner that maximizes value to the City and, by extension, to citizens of the City.

Proposers must be able to show that they are capable of providing the services requested. Such evidence includes, but is not limited to, the respondent's demonstrated competency and experience in delivering services of a similar scope and type.

## **SECTION II - RFP PROCEDURE**

This section describes the general RFP procedure used by the Finance Department, and the remaining sections of this RFP list detailed requirements.

### **A. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>TARGET DATE</b>
1. RFP Release Date	August 17, 2020
2. Deadline to Submit Written Questions	August 28, 2020
3. Release of Responses to Written Questions	September 4, 2020
4. Proposal Deadline – Proposals Must be <u>RECEIVED</u> by 4:30 p.m. EST on This Date	September 11, 2020
5. Elevation of Recommended Provider	September, 2020
6. Completion of Negotiation of Agreement	October, 2020
7. Commencement of Services	November 1, 2020

### **B. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS**

One (1) original and two (2) copies of the proposal must be received at the Finance Department no later than 4:30 p.m. EST on Friday, September 11, 2020 as listed in the TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS above. Proposals will be date stamped upon receipt and should be in the format required in Section V (Proposal Submission Requirements), below. There will be no public opening of proposals. All proposals shall be firm offers and will so be considered by the City, although the City reserves the right to negotiate terms upon evaluation of the proposals. Proposals shall remain valid offers for a period of ninety (90) days following the close of the RFP.

By submitting a proposal, each provider certifies that its submission is not the result of

collusion or any other activity which would tend to directly or indirectly influence the selection process. The proposal will be used to determine the provider's capability of rendering the services to be provided. The failure of a provider to comply fully with the instructions in this RFP may eliminate its proposal from further evaluation, as determined in the sole discretion of the City. The City reserves the sole right to evaluate the contents of proposals submitted in response to this RFP and to select a provider, if any.

Proposals received after 4:30pm EST on Friday, September 11, 2020 will not be opened or given any consideration for the proposed services unless doing so is deemed to be in the best interest of the City, as determined in the sole discretion of the City.

All proposals must be delivered as required by Section V (Proposal Submission Requirements), below, to:

City of Ashtabula  
Finance Department  
Attn: Carolyn Sheldon  
4717 Main Ave  
Ashtabula, OH 44004

Upon receipt by the Finance Department, all proposals will be date/time stamped. All proposals received prior to the deadline for proposals will be kept unopened in a secure place.

### **C. CONFIDENTIALITY OF PROPOSALS**

Be advised that the City will treat all information and proposals submitted in response to this RFP, as well as any contract that may eventually arise from this RFP, as a public record. Submission of any materials in response to this RFP constitutes a waiver by the submitting party of any claim against the City that the information is protected from disclosure. By submitting materials, (1) you are consenting to the release of such materials by the City if requested without further notice to you and (2) you agree to indemnify and hold harmless the City for release of such information. The City cannot represent or guarantee that any information submitted in response to this RFP will be kept confidential.

If the City/Finance Department receives a request for any portion of a document submitted in response to this RFP, the City will not assert any privileges that may exist on behalf of the person or entity submitting the proposal, and the City reserves the right to disclose the requested materials without notice to the party who originally submitted the requested material. To the extent consistent with the Ohio Revised Code and applicable case law interpreting those provisions, the City/Finance Department and/or its officers, agents, and employees retain discretion to release or withhold any information submitted in response to this RFP.

Submission of a proposal constitutes a complete waiver of any claims whatsoever against the City and/or its officers, agents, or employees that the City has violated a provider's right to privacy, disclosed trade secrets, or caused any damage by allowing the proposal to be inspected.

### **D. PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

All proposals received will be evaluated by the Finance Director. During the evaluation

process, the City may require a provider's representative to answer specific questions orally and/or in writing. Once a provider is elevated for contract negotiations, additional interactions or information may be required. The City reserves the right to stop negotiations at any time with that provider and begin negotiations with another provider. The most qualified provider will be recommended based on the overall strength of each proposal, and the evaluation is not restricted to considerations of any single factor such as cost. The City also reserves the right not to award any contract after receiving and evaluating the proposals received.

Execution of an agreement has been tentatively scheduled for November 1, 2020.

Responses to this RFP must adhere to the format for proposals detailed in **Section V - PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**. The criteria used as a guideline in the evaluation will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Firm qualifications and experience, including capability and experience of key personnel and experience with other public or private agencies to provide these services/solutions
2. Proposed approach, including clarity of understanding of the scope of services to be provided and appropriateness of the proposed solution/services
3. Customer service
4. History of successfully managing other contracts with public or private agencies
5. Ability to meet any required timelines or other requirements
6. Claims and violations against you or your company
7. Cost to the City for the primary services/solutions described in this RFP
8. Cooperative purchasing options (if any) and cost of possible additional services
9. References
10. Compliance with City RFP and contractual requirements

The City may consider any other criteria it deems relevant, and is free to make any recommendations it deems to be in the best interest of the City. Inaccuracy of any information supplied within a proposal or other errors constitute grounds for rejection of the proposal. However, the City may, in its sole discretion, correct errors or contact a provider for clarification.

Note that the City reserves the right to evaluate proposals solely based on each provider's written submission. In relation to written materials, evaluation will be performed only on the material included directly in the proposal itself unless otherwise indicated or requested by the City. The Finance Director will not access company websites or read sales brochures, marketing materials, or white papers in evaluating provider experience or proposed methodology unless doing so is in the City's best interest. You may submit additional materials or reference on-line information in your proposal if you wish, but these will not necessarily be considered during the proposal evaluation process.

The City reserves the right to accept a proposal other than the one with the lowest costs and to negotiate with providers when the best interests of the City are served by doing so.

## **E. PROPOSAL RECOMMENDATION**

The Finance Director will recommend a provider to City management for elevation to the contract negotiations phase or may recommend that the proposals be rejected. City management will then make its own decision as to whether to accept or reject such recommendations.

Ultimate acceptance or rejection of the recommended proposal to elevate and execution of a contractual agreement is the independent prerogative of the City, notwithstanding any recommendations made by the Finance Director.

The City reserves the right to negotiate with any provider in working to finalize an agreement in relation to the proposer's response. A provider may be de-elevated during the contracting process and another provider elevated should the negotiated contract not be acceptable for any reason to the City.

## **F. NOTICE TO PROPOSERS**

The Finance Department is not required to give notice to proposers (providers) in any specific format or on any particular timeline. At some point prior to execution of a final agreement for the requested services, the Finance Department will notify those who submitted proposals of their non-selection. Proposers may be notified at different times depending on the needs of the Finance Department.

## **G. PROTEST PROCESS**

If a provider desires to protest the selection decision the proposer must submit by facsimile and email a written protest within five (5) business days after the delivery of the notice about the decision to execute a final agreement with selected provider. The written protest should be submitted to Carolyn Sheldon, Assistant Finance Director, as outlined below. Protests received after the deadline will not be accepted. Protests must be in writing. Protests must include the name and address of the proposer and must state the specific ground(s) for the protest. A protest that merely addresses a single aspect of the selected proposal (for example, comparing the cost of the selected proposal in relation to the non-selected proposal) is not sufficient to support a protest. A successful protest will include sufficient evidence and analysis to support a conclusion that the selected proposal, taken as a whole, is an inferior proposal.

The Assistant Finance Director will respond to a protest within ten (10) business days of receiving it, and may at his/her election, set up a meeting with the protesting proposer to discuss the concerns raised by the protest. The decision of the City will be final.

The protest letter must be sent by facsimile and email to:

Ashtabula City Finance Department  
Attn: Carolyn Sheldon [CSheldon@ashtabulacity.com](mailto:CSheldon@ashtabulacity.com)  
FAX: (440) 992 7111

## **SECTION III – GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. **Read all Instructions.** Please read the entire RFP and all enclosures before preparing your proposal.

2. **Proposal Includes the RFP.** This RFP constitutes part of each proposal and includes the explanation of the Finance Department's needs, which must be met.
3. **Proposal Costs.** Costs for developing proposals are entirely the responsibility of the proposer and shall not be charged to the Finance Department or otherwise reimbursed by the City.
4. **Proposal Becomes City Property.** The RFP and all materials submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the City.
5. **Questions and Response Process.** Submit all questions relating to this RFP by one of two methods:

A.           Mailed to:            Finance Department  
   Attn: Carolyn Sheldon  
   4717 Main Ave  
   Ashtabula, OH 44004

B.           E-mailed to:            [CSheldon@ashtabulacity.com](mailto:CSheldon@ashtabulacity.com)

All questions must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. EST on Friday, August 28, 2020

All questions and answers will be posted on the Finance Department website at <http://cityofashtabula.com>

The Finance Department may, at its option, email prospective providers with these questions and answers in addition to posting them on the website listed above. If you wish to receive such notice, you may email Carolyn Sheldon at the email address above before you submit a proposal.

If changes to the RFP are warranted, they will be made in writing, clearly marked as addenda to the RFP, and posted to the website. It is the responsibility of each proposer to check the website listed above for changes and/or clarifications to the RFP prior to submitting a response, and a proposer's failure to do so will not provide grounds for protest.

6. **Alteration of Terms and Clarifications.** No alteration or variations to the terms of this RFP are valid unless made or confirmed in writing by the City. Likewise, oral understandings or agreements not incorporated into the final contract are not binding on the City.

If a proposer discovers any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other error in the RFP, the proposer must immediately notify the Finance Department of such error in writing and request modification or clarification of the document. If a proposer fails to notify the Finance Department of an error in the RFP prior to the date fixed for submission, the proposer shall submit a response at his/her own risk, and if the proposer enters into a contract, the proposer shall not be entitled to additional compensation or time by reason of the error or its later correction.

Any modifications or clarifications to the RFP, prior to the proposal submission deadline,

will be posted to the Finance Department website as outlined in Section III.5 above without divulging the source of the request for same. The Finance Department may, at its discretion, also give electronic notice by email to all parties who have notified the Finance Department of their electronic contact information in response to this RFP, but no party that fails to receive email notice has any basis for protest given that all clarifications will be available online. It is the obligation of all proposing parties to check the Finance Department website for updates regarding the RFP if they wish to be kept advised of clarifications prior to submitting a proposal.

Provider agrees by submitting a proposal that the responses to the RFP may be included as an exhibit to the contract, are within the scope of the contract, and are the responsibility of the provider to adhere to.

7. **Selection of Provider(s).**

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals without penalty. The City's waiver of an immaterial deviation in the proposal shall in no way modify the RFP documents or excuse the provider from full compliance with the specifications if the provider enters into a contract.

Once a provider is elevated, the Agreement with that provider must still be negotiated and may require submission to the Ashtabula City Council for approval, and there is no contractual agreement between the elevated provider unless and until the City accepts and signs the Agreement, if needed. Elevation of a proposal for negotiation of contract terms and eventual submission to City leadership by way of an Agreement does not constitute an offer, and providers acknowledge by submission of a proposal that no agreement is final unless, and until, executed by the City following approval by the Board of Supervisors, if needed.

8. **Incomplete Proposals May be Rejected.** If a proposer fails to satisfy any of the requirements identified in this RFP, the proposer may be considered non-responsive and the proposal may be rejected.

9. **Contact with City/Finance Department Employees.** As of the issuance date of this RFP and continuing until the final date for submission of proposals, all proposers are specifically directed not to hold meetings, conferences, or technical discussions with any City employee for purposes of responding to this RFP except as otherwise permitted by this RFP. Any proposer found to be acting in any way contrary to this directive may be disqualified from entering into any contract that may result from this RFP.

Proposers should submit questions or concerns about the process as outlined in Section III.5 above. The proposer should not otherwise ask any City or Finance Department employee's questions about the RFP or related issues, either orally or by written communication, unless invited to do so.

10. **Miscellaneous.** This RFP is not a commitment or contract of any kind. The City reserves the right to pursue any and/or all ideas generated by this RFP. The City reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and/or terminate the RFP process if deemed in the best interest of the City. Further, while every effort has been made to

ensure the information presented in this RFP is accurate and thorough, the City assumes no liability for any unintentional errors or omissions in this document. The City reserves the right to waive or modify any requirements of this RFP when it determines that doing so is in the best interest of the City.

## **SECTION IV – SCOPE OF SOLUTION**

The City is seeking proposals for implementing a (P-Card) program. The objective of this RFP is to identify the Proposers that will provide the highest quality services to the City. The benefits the City expects to receive from the implementation of purchasing cards include efficient, cost-effective methods of purchasing goods and services, and the receipt of rebate revenues based on the purchasing volume.

### **A. Description of Purchasing Card (P-Card) Program**

- i. Describe your company's P-Card services.
- ii. Describe your company's organizational structure and personnel dedicated to support your company's P-Card services.
- iii. Are there any limitations or restrictions for participating in your P- Card program?
- iv. How long has your company been offering P-Card services?
- v. Does your P-Card program include other services? Are they optional or required? What are the fees, if any, associated with such optional and/or required services?
- vi. Would the City need to enter into a long-term agreement with your company to participate in your P-Card services?
- vii. Would the City be able to terminate your P-Card service at any time? What are the program's termination terms?

### **B. Card Issuance**

- i. Describe the process in which P-Card are issued to cardholders.
- ii. Is there any fee for the initial issuance of a P-Card or the replacement issuance of a card?
- iii. Will the City of Ashtabula employees/departments receiving P- Cards be required to submit to a credit check?
- iv. Will card user's credit information regarding the issuance of a P- Card under this service be reported to any credit reporting agency or reflected on any City employee's credit report?



### **C. Card Controls and Restrictions**

- i. Describe the controls and features available within your P-Card services to reduce the risk of unauthorized transactions and fraud.
- ii. Can administrative changes be made through a web-based program management system, by electronic mail, or in writing?
- iii. Does your service provide the ability to de-activate and re-activate individual cards in real-time?
- iv. Does your service provide the ability to establish: purchase limit per individual card, restrictions to certain types of vendors/merchants and, restrictions to certain types of goods or services?
- v. Does your service provide the ability to restrict purchases on a card until authorization for a specific amount and purpose has been given by an approver?
- vi. Does your service provide the ability to obtain declining balance cards (pre-paid cards)?
- vii. Include information regarding any additional controls both at corporate and individual card level that are available as a part of your service. Please describe.
- viii. Describe how questionable or fraudulent charges are resolved by your service.

### **D. Liability**

- i. The City or cardholder shall not be held liable for any activity on cards that have been reported lost, stolen or due to fraudulent activities. Please confirm.
- ii. Describe how the provider will mitigate the risk for unauthorized card use.

### **E. Lost or Stolen Cards**

- i. Describe your lost/stolen card procedures.
- ii. Please describe the method(s) available to deactivate and/or cancel an individual card account.
- iii. The provider shall facilitate immediate cancellation and emergency issue of a replacement card, and shall make card cancellation available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please confirm.
- iv. Are you able to provide inactive temporary replacement cards to the P-Card administrator for emergency activation and usage? This would help reduce the timeframe to obtain a new replacement card via mail.

## **F. Interface with City Accounting System**

- i. Does your service provide the ability to interface with the City's financial accounting system, Software Solutions, VIP Fusion, known as SSI.
- ii. Can your service provide a csv and/or other file types containing transaction data for import into Software Solutions VIP? If so, can the file format be customized to meet the City's requirements?
- iii. Does your P-Card service provide the ability to automate the assignment of account codes, to individual transactions, based on the department that the individual card holder works for? For example, purchases of gas by an employee who works for the Police Department would be automatically coded to the police operating budget (i.e., 101.118.5420 ).
- iv. Does your P-Card service provide the ability to automate the assignment of account codes, to individual transactions, based on the type of goods/services purchased? For example, purchases of gas would be coded to the account for Fuel (i.e., 5420 =operating)

## **G. Reporting**

- i. Does the provider offer a report of transaction level detail data by card, as well as a consolidated Citywide detail report?
- ii. Can report data be downloaded in PDF, csv, Excel and other formats?
- iii. Ad-hoc online reports should have the flexibility for filtered modifications. Please confirm.
- iv. Reports should be available directly to individual cardholders and City departments via on-line website. Describe the type of security that will prevent intra-viewing of City purchases by City card holders.
- v. Does your service provide the ability to limit viewing access to citywide transactions to only the designated P-Card administrator(s) and other selected users? Please confirm.
- vi. Does your P-Card service provide the ability to check on the status of a particular payment to an individual transaction charge?
- vii. Does your P-Card service provide the ability to check on the status of a particular payment from the City to the P-Card service provider?
- viii. Describe your reporting capabilities and provide samples of reports available.

## **H. Billing Statements**

- i. What is the frequency (how often) or available frequencies your company is able to provide billing statements? Are billing statement provided via email, mail, and/or downloadable format?

- ii. Please confirm whether billing statements will include, at a minimum, the following information:
  - Card account numbers (truncated)
  - Cardholder name
  - The name of the merchant
  - The date goods or services were purchased
  - The cost for the goods or services
  - A unique identifier for each transaction.

## **I. Payments**

- i. Please describe available payment terms and options related to the payment cycles and grace periods. Also, what is the timeframe in which payments will be credited to the City department/ employee card accounts?
- ii. Describe available payment methods.

## **J. Implementation**

- i. Describe the activities required to implement your P-Card services? Provide a list of activities along with a typical timeline.
- ii. Describe the City's program implementation and on-going maintenance roles and responsibilities.
- iii. Describe your company's program implementation and on-going maintenance roles and responsibilities.
- iv. What testing activities would be performed by your company?
- v. What testing activities would be performed by the City before going live with your P-Card services?

## **K. Customer Support**

- i. What training will City receive to administer the P-Card program?
- ii. Will the City have an assigned company representative to manage this program?
- iii. Does your program offer a dedicated customer service group for the City?
- iv. What is your company's problem resolution process?
- v. Is customer support provided on 24/7 basis? Is it live (you get to speak with a person), partially live, partially internet based? If it is not 24/7, which days/hours would customer support be available for City personnel?

## L. Technology & Security

- i. Describe the software/application/system that the City will use to operate your P-Card program.
- ii. What are some key features of your software's functionality?
- iii. How long has your company been using this software?
- iv. How often does your company release software changes, if any, which require testing by the City?
- v. Are file transfers (to and from the City) secured? What security methodologies are employed?
- vi. Does your company need any data file transfer from the City? Does your company provide the resources and capabilities to convert the City's data file?
- vii. Is your internet site secure and protected? How?
- viii. What are the security features of your software? How is the information protected?
- ix. What are the City's hardware requirements, if any, to implement/use this software?

## M. Fees

- i. Are there implementation fees associated with this service?
- ii. Are there late payment fees?
- iii. Are there fees for custom reports?
- iv. Are there fees for data file feeds into City's accounting system?
- v. Will you provide the resources and capabilities to create the file(s) needed for import to the City's accounting system in the format specified by the City?
- vi. Are there annual service or maintenance fees?
- vii. Are there any other potential fees or required services the City must participate in association with your P-Card program?
- viii. Provide a fee schedule, similar to below, listing **ALL applicable and optional/potential implementation and on-going fees** to implement and continue using your company's P-Card program.

	Basis of Fee	Amount	Waived (Yes / No)	Required, Optional or Potential
Implementation Fees				
-				
-				
-				
On-going Fees				
-				
-				
Other Fees				
-				

**N. Revenue Sharing**

- i. Please describe any rebates and discounts that are available based on volume of spend or otherwise. Specify how the rebate and discount will be remitted to the City.
- ii. Describe any incentive and prompt-payment discounts that encourage and reward the City for expanding its P-Card program.
- iii. Provide a revenue sharing schedule. Does revenue sharing percentage vary by: payment volume tier, type of payment, size of payment, and/or type of vendor? If so, provide all details.
- iv. Do revenue share percentages change? What would be the basis of such change?
- v. Must City meet a minimum spending amount before revenue sharing is paid?
- vi. What is the frequency or frequencies in which revenue sharing amounts are distributed to the City?
- vii. Provide a sample revenue sharing statement that the City would receive.

**O. References**

- i. List at least five client references, which include government agencies, for which you have recently provided similar services. Include contact names and phone numbers for all references provided.

**SECTION V – PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

The proposal should be submitted in the following format:

**A. General Instructions**

All proposals should be typewritten or prepared on a computer and have consecutively numbered pages, including any exhibits, charts, or other attachments.

All proposals should adhere to the specified content and sequence of information described by this RFP.

Submit one (1) original and two (2) copies. All printing shall be double- sided (duplex).

**B. Cover Letter**

Provide a one page cover letter on your letterhead which includes the address, voice and fax numbers, and e-mail address of the contact person or persons and an indication of who is authorized to represent the proposer in negotiations.

All proposals must be signed with a firm/company/partnership/entity name and by a responsible officer or employee indicating that officer or employee's authorization to commit the proposer to the terms of the proposal. Obligations assumed by such signature must be fulfilled.

**C. Specified Content and Detailed Sequence of Information in the RFP**

Each proposal should include sections addressing the following information in the listed order. The proposer should be sure to include all information that it feels will enable the Finance Director and, ultimately, the City, to make a decision. Failure of the proposer to provide specific, detailed information may result in its proposal being rejected in favor of a sufficiently-detailed proposal. Any necessary exhibits or other information, including information not specifically requested by this RFP but that you feel would be helpful, should be attached to the end of the proposal. The party submitting the materials should keep in mind the limitations on confidential information described by Section II.C, above.

This request for proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Traci Welch, Finance Director for the City of Ashtabula on August 17, 2020.



Traci Welch, Finance Director



Date