

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5 (District 127.5) Cook County, Illinois invites qualified legal firms to submit responses to this Request for Proposal (RFP) - Legal Services. Although the RFP is for a full range of legal services, District 127.5 reserves the right to retain individual firms for discreet areas of legal service. Qualified attorney firms are encouraged to review the Request for Proposal Specifications and return the responses via email to:

Dr. Adam J. Thorns  
Superintendent of Schools  
[athorns@crsd1275.org](mailto:athorns@crsd1275.org)

Or delivered to:

Dr. Adam J. Thorns  
Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
6135 West 108<sup>th</sup> Street  
Chicago Ridge, IL 60415

Response must include the subject heading: **Legal Services** and are to be submitted **no later than 9:00 A.M. on Tuesday, January 19, 2021.**

**Questions regarding the RFP should be directed to:**

Dr. Adam J. Thorns, [athorns@crsd1275.org](mailto:athorns@crsd1275.org) no later than 9:00 A.M. on Monday, January 4, 2021.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Overview/Intent**

**Chicago Ridge School District 127.5** (“District 127.5” or “District”) is soliciting proposals from qualified law firms to represent the District School Board and Superintendent in all legal matters, including but not limited to participating in human resource management, contract management and affairs, employment/labor relations, special education issues, business affairs, and property tax appeals issues.

The services contemplated are professional in nature. Proposers shall be of professional status, licensed to perform in the State of Illinois and licensed for all applicable professional discipline(s) requiring licensing and will be governed by professional ethics in its relationship to District 127.5. All reports, information, or data prepared or assembled by the Respondent will be confidential and will not

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

be made available to any individual or organization, except District 127.5 representatives, without the prior written approval of District 127.5.

The two (2) bargaining units in the District are the Chicago Ridge Education Association and the Chicago Ridge Educational Support Staff.

**1.2 Purpose**

The purpose of this RFP is to gather information regarding legal firms that are able to provide Legal Consultation and Representation Services and contract for services on an as-needed basis.

**1.3 Instructions**

This RFP provides potential Proposers with sufficient information to enable them to prepare and submit proposals. This RFP also contains the instructions governing the submittal of a proposal and the materials to be included therein, including District 127.5 requirements, which must be met to be eligible for consideration. All proposals must be complete as to the information requested in this RFP in order to be considered responsive and eligible for award. District 127.5 is not obligated to purchase the full services proposed, nor to enter into an agreement with any one proposer.

**1.4 Chicago Ridge School District 127.5 Background**

The District serves approximately 1,500 students from Pre-Kindergarten through Eighth Grade in three (3) schools which are Ridge Lawn Elementary, Ridge Central Elementary and Elden D. Finley Junior High. The District serves a major portion of the Village of Chicago Ridge and a small part of the Village of Oak Lawn. The District employees approximately 200 individuals.

**1.5 Availability of Documents**

District 127.5 will publish this RFP and any issued addendum on its website at [www.crsd1275.org](http://www.crsd1275.org). Proposers intending to respond to this RFP are encouraged to visit the website above to insure they have received a complete and current set of documents.

**1.6 Uniformity**

To provide uniformity and to facilitate comparison of Proposals, all information submitted must clearly refer to the page number, section, or other identifying reference in this RFP. All information submitted must be noted in the same sequence as it appears in this RFP. District 127.5 reserves the right to waive minor variances or irregularities.

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

**1.7 Proposal Material**

The Proposal material submitted in response to the RFP becomes the property of District 127.5 upon delivery to the Superintendent and Board President and may be part of any contract formal document for the services which are the subject of this RFP.

**1.8 Cost of Proposals**

The Proposer bears all costs of preparing the Proposal to the RFP, including but not limited to, completing all information required for the Proposal, delivery and mailing expenses in connection with the Proposal or travel expenses.

**1.9 Addenda**

Should any Proposer have questions concerning conditions and specifications, or find discrepancies in or omissions in the specifications, or be in doubt as to their meaning, they should notify the Superintendent in writing no later than 9:00 A.M. on January 4, 2021 to obtain clarification prior to submitting a Proposal. Any clarification addenda issued to Proposal prior to the Proposal due date will be made available on the District's website.

**1.10 Proposer's Responsibility for Services Proposed**

The Proposer must thoroughly examine and will be held to have thoroughly examined and read the entire RFP document. Failure of Proposers to fully acquaint themselves with existing conditions or the amount of work involved will not be the basis for requesting extra compensation after the award of a Contract.

**1.11 Confidentiality and Response Cost and Ownership**

From the date of issuance of the RFP until the due date, the Proposer will not make available or discuss its Proposal, or any part thereof, with any employee or agent of District 127.5. The Proposer is hereby warned that any part of its Proposal or any other material marked as confidential, proprietary, or trade secret, can only be protected to the extent permitted by Illinois Statutes.

**1.12 Pricing**

All price and cost information requested for this solicitation should be provided by the Proposer. While price is a factor in the evaluation of responses received, the relevant importance of price may vary based on the nature of the services being requested. District 127.5 will be the sole determinant of the relevant and appropriate cost factors to be used in evaluating the pricing proposals.

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

**1.13 Period of Firm Proposal**

Prices for the proposed service must be kept firm for at least one hundred and eighty (180) days after January 19, 2021.

**1.14 District 127.5 Rights**

District 127.5 reserves the right to reject any and all offers, to waive any informality in the offers and, unless otherwise specified by the Proposer, to accept any item in the offer. District 127.5 also reserves the right to accept or reject all or part of your Proposal, in any combination that is economically advantageous to the District.

**2. SCOPE**

The legal firm will be required to represent District 127.5 as general counsel in all aspects of law and specifically school law. Typical duties include the following:

- Act as general legal counsel to the Board of Education and the District Administration.
- Advise the Board of Education and the District Administration on the best course of action to minimize the probability of litigation against District 127.5.
- Represent the Board of Education in all present, pending and future litigation matters.
- Be knowledgeable about issues facing the Board of Education and be fully prepared to offer legal opinions.
- As requested by the Board of Education and/or Administration, prepare, review, consult and approve contracts.
- As requested by the Administration, prepare, review, consult and approve District policies and administrative procedures including, but not limited to, student discipline.
- Advise the Board of Education and the District Administration on human resource issues, including but not limited to FMLA, ADA, FFCRA, employment issues and workers' compensation.
- Advise the Administration on all legal matters pertaining to special education.
- Conduct student discipline hearings and prepare recommendations to the Board of Education based on the law and the evidence submitted in hearing.
- Advise the Administration on all legal matters pertaining to external matters (i.e., tax objections, TIFs, bidding services).
- As requested by the Board President or Superintendent, attend meetings and/or workshops of the Board of Education.
- As requested by the Administration, review action(s) to be considered by the Board of Education in its upcoming meetings for possible legal implications or complications.
- Report to and receive assignments from the Administration.

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

- Be able to advise and represent the District on issues not normally considered to be within the scope of daily business conducted by the School District. (i.e., purchase of land, referendum issues, tort liability, construction law, cyber bullying, identity theft, etc.)
- As required, upon request, assist the District Negotiation Teams in its contract negotiations with the collective bargaining units, including, but not limited to, representation of the District at the negotiation table.

### **3. QUALIFICATIONS**

District 127.5 is seeking responses from law firms who specialize in Illinois school law and whose client list includes Illinois Public School Districts. In addition to the items listed under Scope of Work, the legal firm must also meet the following qualifications:

- Established Law Firm in Illinois and Cook County (established means currently representing clients in (Cook County)
- Designated in-house attorney who will handle the daily matters of Chicago Ridge School District 127.5
- Possess in-house attorneys who will handle specialized areas of law and school law such as:
  - Special education, student discipline and student rights,
  - Property assessment appeals, Cook County PTAB hearings and tax rate objections
  - Tax Increment Finance (TIFs)
  - Collective Bargaining
  - Grievance and mediation procedures
  - School code and school policy and human resources
- Ability to provide, as a part of your standard services, professional development opportunities through both workshops for School Board Members and School Administrators and through newsletters or updates published by said law firm.
- Substantive knowledge and experience in the legal areas matching the District's needs, e.g. bidding, civil rights, collective bargaining, education reform, employment law, Freedom of Information Act, Open Meetings Act, other records laws, special education, etc.
- Experience/expertise in working with school Districts regarding the discipline, remediation and/or removal of staff.

For proper consideration, please inform us on:

- How many Illinois Public school District clients you currently serve as general counsel?

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

- How many of your Illinois clients where you serve as general counsel have been with your firm for at least three (3) years?
  
- How many of your attorneys have experience in:
  - Special education and student disability issues?
  - Student discipline and rights?
  - Property assessment appeals and County PTAB hearings, tax objections?
  - TIFs?
  - Collective Bargaining, grievance and mediation procedures?
  - School code and school policy?
  - Human resources?
  - Discipline, remediation and removal of employees?
  
- Is the firm currently on the list of attorneys serving the District's insurance cooperative, specifically, CLIC?

#### **4. PROPOSAL RESPONSE FORMAT**

Law firms are to submit their responses in the format specified within this document and return their responses on or before the due date.

##### **4.1 Proposal Information**

To achieve a uniform and fair evaluation process, law firms are asked to submit responses to each section and bullet point contained in #3 Qualifications. In addition, please include:

1. Resumes/Biographies: Include the resume or biographies of the following: Lead attorney assigned to District 127.5 and all attorneys who specialize in different aspects of school law that District 127.5 may use in the future.
2. A Schedule of the Firm's Fees: Include the following items in this section:
  - a. The hourly fee and minimum time increment for billing purposes for all partners, associates, paralegals and administrative staff.
  - b. Describe how telephone calls are billed.
  - c. Any reimbursable expenses.
  - d. A description of any alternative fee services, such as flat fees and blended fees.
  - e. A sample monthly invoice.
3. References: Provide a list of at least three (3) Illinois Public School Districts that your firm services in the Chicagoland area. Include the contact information of the

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

Board President, Superintendent, Human Resources Director and Finance Director. Provide a separate listing of all Illinois Public School Districts who are new clients in the last five (5) years, as well as a list of any former clients who you have discontinued providing services to in the last five (5) years (with contact information, if possible).

#### **4.2 Conflict of Interest Certification**

Provide information regarding any real or potential conflict of interest for your firm, key personnel or any relative of key personnel in conflict as outlined below. Failure to address any potential conflict of interest in the RFP process may be cause for rejection of the Proposal. All Proposers must complete this Conflict of Interest Certification.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST CERTIFICATION**

**In order for District 127.5 to assess whether the proposed personnel to be assigned by the successful Proposer to provide the requested services have a conflict of interest, this form must be completed by each person that the Proposer intends to assign.**

(a) Have you been employed/retained or previously employed by anyone likely to be affected by or involved in a proposed assignment?

(b) Is your spouse or a dependent employed/retained presently or previously employed by anyone likely to be affected by or involved in a proposed assignment?

**If the answer is yes to any of the above questions, please provide name of the individual, the name of the Employer, the nature of services provided and the dates employed or retained.**

#### **Relationships**

Do you have any official, professional, financial, personal or familial relationships with any person or firm that might affect your judgment or your ability to provide services to District 127.5 that are fair and impartial?

**If the answer is yes, please provide the nature of the relationship and the name of the person or firm.**

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

## **5. SELECTION AND NAMING OF THE DISTRICT 127.5 LAW FIRMS**

After the due date, a screening committee consisting of members of the Board of Education, Superintendent and representative members of the District Administration staff will screen the proposals submitted. The screening committee, at its option, may request that all proposers make a presentation, provide other customer testimonials, submit clarifications, provide a best and final offer, provide additional references, respond to questions, or consider alternative approaches. District 127.5 may conduct an interview of the law firms it judges to be the most qualified to perform the services required, based upon the criteria in this RFP and the recommendation of the screening committee. If so, law firms will be notified in advance of the proposed interview date. Interviews may be conducted in person or by a video conference call. The proposed lead attorney assigned to represent District 127.5 must be present during the interview process. The Superintendent and Board of Education reserve the right to reject any or all Proposals or any part thereof, to waive informalities, and to accept the Proposal deemed most favorable to District 127.5

District 127.5 intends to enter into a contract or engagement with the most responsible responsive law firms whose proposal is determined to be in the best interest of the District. District 127.5 reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or part thereof for any reason, to negotiate changes to proposal terms, to waive minor inconsistencies with the RFP, and to negotiate a contract with the successful legal firms. District 127.5 will initially review all proposals to determine responsiveness. Any proposal that does not address all requested requirements or is incomplete may not be considered.

### **5.1 Selection Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed and selected based on the following criteria:

1. Qualifications and specialized experience for the Proposer to successfully perform the services under the categories proposed, as evidenced by the successful performance of similar services for other clients, particularly other School Districts or School Boards
2. Qualifications and experience of the proposed key personnel as evidenced by relevant experience of the individuals recognized within each category
3. Understanding of the District's needs, goals and objectives
4. Financial stability of the Proposer
5. Legal actions associated with ethical matters or negligence of its employees



Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

6. The legal firm’s technical understanding of the scope of services and proposed professional services as evidenced by the proposal submitted
7. Location of Firm’s office
8. Proposed fees and costs, although District 127.5 is not bound to select the legal firm who proposes the lowest fee, the District reserves the right to negotiate fees with the selected legal firm
9. Information obtained by the District from firm’s references or other clients
10. It is the goal of the committee to conclude the process so that a recommendation can be presented to the Board of Education at a monthly meeting on or before March 9, 2021 and the selected firm shall commence its relationship with District 127.5 as soon as possible thereafter.

The District anticipates the following Schedule:

RFP Published	December 23, 2020
Proposer Inquiry Deadline	January 4, 2021 9:00 A.M.
Response to Inquiries	January 11, 2021
Proposal Due Date	January 19, 2021 9:00 A.M.
Interviews	February 9, 2021
Proposal Awarded	February 9, 2021 or March 9, 2021

### **5.2 Hold Harmless Agreement**

In addition to its obligation to provide insurance as specified above, the legal firm, their consultants, agents and assignees shall indemnify and hold harmless District 127.5, including but not limited to, its elected officials, its officers, and agents from any and all claims made against the District, including but not limited to, damages, awards, costs and reasonable attorney fees, to the extent any such claim directly and approximately results from the wrongful, willful or negligent performance of services by the legal firm during the firm’s performance of its Agreement. The District agrees to give the legal firm prompt notice of any such claim and absent a conflict of interest, an opportunity to control the defense thereof.

### **5.3 Conditions**

Proposers responding to this RFP will be expected to adhere to the following conditions:

- 5.3.1** Have an office or facility in the Chicagoland area. The specific location of the facility must be identified in the proposal submitted.

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

**5.3.2** Have personnel/resources reserve sufficient to assure service continuity, and agree to maintain an adequate level of qualified personnel for the term of the Agreement.

**5.3.3** Agree to maintain and preserve confidentiality in all matters relating to the resultant contract and services provided under it.

**5.3.4** Agree that District 127.5 and the law firm may terminate the contract at any time within thirty (30) days written notice. In the event of termination, District 127.5 shall pay the law firm for any services rendered prior to termination.

**5.3.5** Agree to accept and follow direction from the District Superintendent/Board President or any assignee they designate (i.e. Chief School Business Official).

**5.3.6** Agree to conform to all applicable laws and ordinances and statutes of the Federal Government, State of Illinois and policies of the District 127.5 School Board.

**5.3.7** Agree that if the District cannot in good faith negotiate a written contract within a reasonable time with the selected legal firms, District 127.5 may unilaterally cancel its selection of that legal firm.

**5.3.8** Agree that periodic payments to the law firm will be made as agreed upon in the contract.

**5.3.9** Agree that the contract between District 127.5 and the law firm shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois.

## **6. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATEMENT**

As a condition of doing business with District 127.5, the proposer must comply with all Federal laws, and state statutes pertaining to non-discrimination.

## **CERTIFICATIONS**

### **1. BID-RIGGING AND BID-ROTATION**

The undersigned Participant or law firm hereby certifies that he/she is not barred from proposing on this contract as a result of a violation or conviction of either the bid-rigging or bid-rotation provision of Article 33E of the Criminal Code of 1961 as amended.

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

**2. NON-COLLUSION AFFIDAVIT**

The undersigned Participant or agent states that he/she has not, nor has any other member, representative, or agent of the firm, company, corporation or partnership represented by him/her, entered into any combination, collusion or agreement with any person relative to the price to be proposed by anyone at such letting, nor to prevent any person *from* proposing nor to induce anyone to refrain from proposing, and this proposal is made without reference to any other proposal and without any agreement, understanding or combination with any other person in reference to such proposal.

**3. SEXUAL HARASSMENT CLAUSE**

The undersigned Participant is in full compliance with the requirements of section 2-105 of the Illinois Human Rights Act (Public Act 87-1257) effective July 1, 1993, with respect to sexual harassment policies. The terms of that law, as applicable, are hereby incorporated into this contract.

**4. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY CLAUSE**

The undersigned hereby certifies that the Participant is in compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Clause and the Illinois Fair Employment Practices.

**5. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS**

Contractor/law firm is in compliance with Senate Bill 540, P.A. 86-411, effective as of January 1, 1990, which states that criminal background investigations must be conducted by the Department of State Police on all employees working for contractors doing business with the School District who come in daily contact with children.

**6. ILLINOIS DRUG FREE WORKPLACE ACT**

The undersigned, having 25 or more employees, does hereby certify pursuant to section 3 of the Illinois Drug-Free Workplace Act (30 ILCS 580/3) that it shall provide a drug-free workplace for all employees engaged in the performance of work under the contract by complying with the requirements of the Illinois Drug Free Workplace Act and, further certifies, that it is not ineligible for award of this contract by reason of debarment for a violation of the Illinois Drug-Free Workplace Act.

Chicago Ridge School District 127.5  
Request for Proposal – Legal Services  
December 23, 2020

7. NO SMOKING CLAUSE

Participant agrees that he/she, his/her employees and sub-contractors, will abide by the District 127.5 no smoking policy on any District 127.5 property.

***By signing and notarizing this document, I state and declare that the Participant/Law Firm listed below and I are in compliance, and will comply, with all of the Certifications listed herein.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firm

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant/Contractor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
NOTARY signature/date

NOTARY STAMP