



GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Justice Center and Jail Planning Consultant

Responses Due:

Friday, September 18, 2026 at 4:00 PM EST

Issued by:

Grand Traverse County

Nate Alger, County Administrator

400 Boardman Avenue, Ste. 305

Traverse City, MI 49684

PREAMBLE

Grand Traverse County has been evaluating the long-term needs of its jail and broader criminal justice system for more than two decades. This RFQ is intended to build on that work, not restart it. The selected consultant will be expected to review, validate, and update prior findings using current data, current correctional standards, current County practices, and present-day community needs.

A 2008 Corrections Master Plan Update analyzed jail population characteristics, capacity forecasts, and population-management strategies. It emphasized that bed projections are driven not only by population growth, but also by admissions, length of stay, peak demand, classification requirements, and criminal justice policy choices. It also recommended active, system-wide management of the jail population, stronger interagency coordination, improved data collection, and continued evaluation of alternatives to incarceration.

The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Jail and Justice System Assessment completed in 2014 reinforced those themes. NIC documented significant physical and operational limitations in the existing jail, including poor sightlines, staff-intensive layouts, inadequate intake and holding conditions, undersized program and support spaces, and aging building systems. At the same time, NIC cautioned that a decision to add detention capacity should follow a comprehensive, data-driven needs assessment and criminal justice system master planning process that evaluates policies, case flow, alternatives, staffing, programming, site needs, and long-term operating impacts before architectural design begins.

Accordingly, this procurement is for pre-architectural jail and justice system planning. The County is seeking an independent planning consultant to convert the County's prior work and current conditions into a defensible basis for future decisions. The County does not intend for this RFQ to presume a particular facility size, site, configuration, or construction solution. The planning process must establish the need first, test reasonable alternatives, and then define the operational and facility requirements supported by the evidence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Grand Traverse County, Michigan, is requesting Statements of Qualifications from experienced criminal justice planning consultants to assist the County in planning for a future detention facility.

Grand Traverse County has an estimated population of 96,000. It is the most populated county in northern Michigan, and is an important regional hub for tourism, agriculture, health care and technology. Grand Traverse County government is considered a Michigan municipal corporation formed and operated pursuant to Michigan Public Act No. 156 of 1851, the County Board of Commissioners Act. An elected nine-member Board of Commissioners serves as the governing body.

The Board of Commissioners appoints a County Administrator who manages the day-to-day operations of the County and serves as a coordinator for the elected County officials. The elected officials include the Treasurer, Clerk, Register of Deeds, Drain Commissioner, Sheriff, and Prosecuting Attorney. Grand Traverse County also serves as the funding unit for the 13th Circuit Court, Probate Court, and the 86th District Court.

The County employs over 580 employees and provides various programs and services, including law enforcement, public health, emergency management, facilities management, central dispatch, parks and recreation, veteran services, and construction-related permitting and inspections. Bidders are

encouraged to learn more about Grand Traverse County, its programs its operations by reviewing information found at: <https://www.gtcountymi.gov>.

As the County's population grows there is a correlating demand for public services including increasing pressure on the criminal justice system, including the Jail. As explained below, the County's current jail cannot meet these justice related service demands.

The County seeks a nationally recognized jail planning firm with demonstrated expertise in criminal justice system analysis, detention population forecasting, operational assessments, and facility programming.

In 2025, the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to begin the process of building a new jail that could be incorporated into a larger criminal justice facility. Based on this resolution, the Board of Commissioners then created the following committees the Jail and Justice Facility Executive Steering Committee, Justice Facility Advisory Committee (JFAC), Justice Technical Advisory Committee (JTAC), The selected consultant is expected to work closely with these various committees, the Sheriff's Office, Courts, Prosecuting Attorney, community partners, and Board of Commissioners.

The objective is to produce a data-driven roadmap that enables Grand Traverse County to determine the appropriate size, operational model, and long-term facility program for a contemporary detention facility.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Grand Traverse County currently operates an aging correctional facility that has been expanded and renovated over time. Prior assessments found that County staff maintained and operated the facility effectively despite substantial physical constraints, but the building configuration limits direct observation, staff efficiency, intake and classification functions, programming, support services, and the ability to adapt to changing inmate needs. The County now seeks to determine how those longstanding constraints, together with current system demands, should inform future detention and justice planning.

The County previously completed:

- Criminal Justice System Master Planning
- National Institute of Corrections Jail and Justice System Assessment (2014), together with subsequent County/NIC planning activity
- Numerous facility condition studies
- Community engagement efforts
- Operational reviews

The 2008 Master Plan and 2014 NIC Assessment should be treated as foundational reference documents. These documents are available at request. Respondents should explain how their methodology will distinguish findings that remain relevant from assumptions, forecasts, facility conditions, and policy considerations that must be updated or replaced.

Since those studies, the County has experienced:

- Significant population growth
- Changes in inmate demographics
- Increased behavioral health needs
- Increased out-of-county boarding
- Evolving correctional best practices

- Changes in criminal justice policies
- New technologies
- Updated correctional standards

Accordingly, the County seeks an updated planning effort that reflects today's operational realities while providing a roadmap for the next 30 years.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The County expects the consultant to connect system policy, population drivers, operations, staffing, programming, and facility requirements rather than treating bed capacity as a stand-alone forecasting exercise. These objectives are interdependent. The consultant shall assist the County in:

- Preparing the Jail Needs Assessment
- Forecasting detention needs through at least 2055
- Evaluating diversion opportunities
- Determining future bed requirements
- Developing operational concepts
- Creating a Facility Program
- Preparing conceptual space requirements
- Developing staffing models
- Preparing high level capital cost estimates
- Preparing high level operational cost estimates
- Providing recommendations for implementation

IV. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The County anticipates the following tasks:

Task 1: Project Management

The planning process must be transparent, disciplined, and capable of supporting decisions by multiple elected and appointed stakeholders. The consultant shall establish a decision framework, data request schedule, issue log, and milestone-based review process so that assumptions and recommendations are documented as the work progresses.

- Kickoff meeting
- Detailed project schedule
- Monthly progress meetings
- Executive Steering Committee briefings

Task 2: Existing Conditions Assessment

The 2014 NIC assessment identified longstanding facility limitations, including poor sightlines, a dispersed and staff-intensive layout, intake/holding concerns, limited natural light, and undersized support and program areas. This task shall determine which prior observations remain applicable, identify material

changes since 2014, and document current code, operational, safety, accessibility, technology, and building-system constraints that affect future planning.

Review:

- Existing jail
- Booking
- Classification
- Medical
- Mental health
- Behavioral health
- Court security
- Transportation
- Community corrections
- Juvenile interfaces
- Evidence and support functions

Task 3: Criminal Justice System Assessment

Both prior planning efforts emphasized that jail crowding and detention demand are products of the broader criminal justice system. This task shall examine the policies and decision points that influence admissions, pretrial detention, length of stay, sentencing, holds, release, diversion, treatment, and reentry, and shall identify practical opportunities to manage detention demand without compromising public safety or court operations.

Evaluate:

- Sheriff's Office
- Prosecutor
- Courts
- District Court
- Circuit Court
- Probation
- Community Mental Health
- Public Defender functions
- Diversion programs
- Specialty courts
- Community partners

Task 4: Population Analysis

The 2008 Master Plan demonstrated that capacity forecasts are sensitive to admissions, average length of stay, peak population, classification requirements, and policy choices. The consultant shall update the County's population profile and forecasting model using current, reproducible data and shall clearly identify assumptions, sensitivity ranges, and the effect of alternative policy or program scenarios on future bed need.

Develop:

- Historical trends
- Arrest trends
- Booking trends
- Average Daily Population
- Peak population
- Seasonal variation
- Classification analysis
- Housing analysis
- Female population
- Behavioral health population
- Medical population
- Special management populations
- Forecast needs over 10-, 20-, and 30-year planning horizons.

Task 5: Operational Analysis

The 2014 assessment found that the existing configuration drives staffing inefficiencies and limits direct observation and effective movement between housing, intake, programs, and support functions. This task shall establish the operational philosophy for a future facility, including the feasibility and implications of direct supervision, and translate that philosophy into staffing, security, technology, programming, medical/behavioral health, and reentry requirements.

Evaluate:

- Staffing
- Direct supervision opportunities
- Security concepts
- Classification system
- Intake processes
- Visitation
- Technology
- Food service
- Laundry
- Programs
- Medical delivery
- Mental health
- Reentry

Task 6: Facility Programming

Facility programming shall occur only after the consultant has established the supported population, classification, operational, staffing, program, and service assumptions. The resulting program must define what spaces are needed, why they are needed, how they relate functionally, and how the facility can accommodate future change without unnecessary initial construction.

Develop:

- Recommended operational model
- Housing unit concepts
- Functional relationships
- Departmental space program
- Gross square footage
- Site requirements
- Expansion strategy

Task 7: Alternatives Analysis

Consistent with the prior studies, the County expects alternatives to be evaluated before a preferred physical solution is advanced. The analysis shall compare reasonable custody and non-custody strategies and facility approaches on a common set of criteria, including capacity, operations, staffing, public safety, service delivery, expandability, implementation risk, capital cost, and long-term operating cost.

Evaluate multiple alternatives including:

- New construction
- Phased development
- Campus concepts

Task 8: Cost Modeling

Prior planning recognized that construction cost is only one component of the County's long-term obligation. Cost modeling should therefore connect each viable alternative to its staffing model, annual operating implications, lifecycle considerations, and major capital assumptions so that the Board can compare alternatives on a total-cost basis.

Prepare:

- Staffing impacts
- Annual operating costs
- Life-cycle considerations

Task 9: Implementation Plan

The final planning work must leave the County positioned to move deliberately into the next phase. The implementation plan shall identify decisions, approvals, additional investigations, procurement steps, site or property actions, architectural/programming activities, public engagement milestones, and sequencing required to advance a preferred alternative.

Prepare:

- Prioritized recommendations
- Project schedule
- Procurement roadmap
- Recommended next steps into architectural programming

V. DELIVERABLES

Deliverables should be written for both technical and policy audiences, identify key assumptions and data limitations, and show how findings in one workstream affect conclusions in the others. Minimum deliverables shall include the following:

- **Criminal Justice System Assessment** - A system-wide analysis of policies, case flow, agency roles, decision points, diversion and alternative programs, and opportunities that may affect jail admissions, length of stay, detention demand, rehabilitation, and reentry.
- **Population Forecast Report** - A reproducible analysis of historical and current detention use, inmate characteristics, admissions, length of stay, average and peak populations, classification needs, seasonal effects, and 10-, 20-, and 30-year forecasts. The report shall include assumptions, sensitivity analysis, and scenario testing showing how policy or program changes could affect bed requirements.
- **Operational Assessment** - A current-state and future-state assessment addressing staffing, supervision, security, intake, classification, movement, visitation, technology, food and laundry, programs, medical and behavioral health services, and reentry. The assessment shall identify operational inefficiencies attributable to the existing facility and define the recommended operating philosophy for future planning.
- **Facility Program** - A pre-architectural program translating the approved operational model and population assumptions into functional components, housing types, support functions, program areas, medical/behavioral health areas, staff functions, and other departmental requirements.
- **Conceptual Space Program** - A room/space-level planning schedule showing net and gross area assumptions, functional relationships, circulation and support factors, site considerations, expansion allowances, and the basis for recommended gross square footage. This is a planning document, not architectural design.
- **Planning-Level Cost Estimate** - Order-of-magnitude capital and operating cost information for viable alternatives, including major assumptions, escalation basis, staffing implications, lifecycle considerations, and sufficient detail to support comparative decision-making. Estimates shall be clearly identified as planning-level and not construction bids.
- **Executive Summary** - A concise decision document for the Board and public summarizing the problem statement, evidence, alternatives considered, recommended direction, key risks, estimated capacity and space needs, cost implications, and next decisions.
- **Final Comprehensive Report** - An integrated master planning document that incorporates all final analyses and recommendations, responds to material stakeholder and County comments, and provides a clear evidentiary path from data and policy findings to the recommended operational and facility program.
- **Digital copies of all datasets** - Editable source data, calculations, forecasting models, assumptions, data dictionaries, and other analytical work products used to develop the recommendations, in formats reasonably usable by the County for future updates.
- **GIS-compatible planning information where applicable** - Geospatial data or mapping inputs developed for site, service-area, transportation, demographic, or other planning analyses, with sufficient metadata for future County use.

- **Prior Studies Validation Memorandum** - A concise matrix identifying major findings and recommendations from the 2008 Corrections Master Plan and 2014 NIC assessment, their current status, whether they remain valid, and how they are addressed in the current planning recommendations.

VI. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant shall demonstrate:

- Minimum ten years of jail planning experience
- Completion of at least ten comparable county jail planning projects
- Experience with facilities between 100+ inmates
- Experience working with elected governing bodies
- Expertise in direct supervision detention facilities
- Expertise in behavioral health and special populations
- Ability to provide population forecasting using accepted correctional methodologies

VII. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Responses shall include:

1. Letter of Interest
2. Firm Profile
3. Understanding of the Project
4. Proposed Methodology
5. Project Team
6. Relevant Experience
7. Five Similar Projects
8. References
9. Proposed Schedule
10. Required Disclosures (ie- Affiliations with Grand Traverse County or employees, use of sub-consultants, litigation history)

No fee proposal shall be submitted at this stage.

Submissions shall be due **by September 18, 2026, at 4:00 PM EST**. The preferred method of submission is the MITN Purchasing Network. Grand Traverse County will also accept responses in sealed packages delivered to:

Grand Traverse County
Attn: Nate Alger, County Administrator
400 Boardman Avenue, Suite 305
Traverse City, MI 49684

Late submissions will not be considered. Signature on the proposal by the submitter constitutes acceptance of all terms, conditions, and requirements set forth herein. Upon submission, all proposals

and supporting documents become public information subject to the State of Michigan Freedom of Information Act.

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Qualifications will be evaluated using the following weighted criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Relevant Jail Planning Experience	25%
Project Team Qualifications	25%
Technical Approach	20%
Michigan and Regional Experience	10%
References and Past Performance	10%
Capacity to Perform	10%

The County may interview the highest-ranked submissions before selecting the preferred consultant.

IX. ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

The expected schedule is listed below. Grand Traverse County reserves the right to change the schedule. If changes are made, notification will be in the form of an addendum to the RFQ.

Milestone	Date
RFQ Issued	9/4/26
SOQs Due	9/18/26
Selection	TBD

X. COUNTY RESERVATIONS

Grand Traverse County reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all submissions
- Waive informalities
- Request additional information
- Conduct interviews
- Negotiate scope and fees
- Cancel or modify the solicitation

XI. DESIRED OUTCOME

At the completion of this project, Grand Traverse County expects to possess a comprehensive, data-driven and publicly understandable roadmap for the future of its detention and related justice functions. The work must enable the County to answer, with evidence: what drives current jail use; what policy, program, and operational changes can reasonably affect that demand; how many beds and what classifications are required over the planning horizon; what operating model and staffing approach should guide the future facility; what spaces and site characteristics are required; what alternatives are viable; what each alternative is likely to cost to build and operate; and what steps are required to move from planning into design and implementation. The final recommendation must be traceable to the data and must not assume that additional construction is the only response to detention demand.