

**Springfield International Charter School
School Year 2025/26**

Request For Proposal (RFP) For: Internal Controls Audit

REQ Number: FY26-011

RFP Timeline:

All proposals must be submitted electronically via email. No hard copy submissions will be accepted.

Milestone	Date	Time
RFP Release Date	8/29/25	
Pre-Proposal Questions Deadline	10/1/25	4:00 PM EST
Proposal Submission Deadline	10/3/25	4:00 PM EST
Initial Evaluation Period	10/6/25 - 10/9/25	
Finalist Interviews (if required)	Oct. 13-14, 2025	
Final Selection	10/16/25	
Contract Award	10/24/25	
Maximum Time for Proposal Acceptance	30 days from the award notification	
Project Start Date	December 2025	Following the completion of the annual financial audit

Note: All dates are subject to change at the discretion of Springfield International Charter School. Any changes will be communicated to all prospective bidders.

Introduction

Springfield International Charter School (SICS) is a high-performing public charter school serving approximately 1,550 students in grades K-12 across Western Massachusetts. As the

region's oldest and largest charter school, SICS has delivered over 30 years of academic excellence through a mission-driven, college-preparatory model.

Four years ago, SICS transitioned from management company oversight to full self-management. As part of our continued evolution and commitment to strong governance, we are seeking a qualified auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive internal controls audit. This engagement is separate from our annual financial audit and will focus on evaluating internal controls, risk management practices, board oversight, and compliance with state and federal requirements, including Massachusetts charter school regulations.

While charter public schools are not subject to M.G.L. c. 30B, SICS follows competitive procurement best practices—including public advertising, clear evaluation criteria, and fair competition—to promote transparency and accountability. This procurement process may be refined based on audit recommendations.

This procurement is being conducted at the specific direction of the Springfield International Charter School Board of Directors to evaluate and improve the school's internal controls and procurement procedures. The Board recognizes that this audit may result in recommendations to modify current procurement policies and procedures. This RFP and any resulting contract shall be administered in accordance with Springfield International Charter School's current Procurement Manual. While procurement procedures are included in the scope, the assessment will encompass broader administrative operations and internal controls.

Please note: This internal controls audit engagement is entirely separate from the school's annual financial audit. The selected firm will not be responsible for preparing audited financial statements, filing Form 990, or conducting any portion of the 501(c)(3) audit required for compliance with IRS or state reporting requirements.

RFP Justification: An RFP process has been selected over an Invitation for Bid (IFB) because this engagement requires evaluation of qualifications, methodology, specialized expertise, and approach beyond lowest price considerations. The complex nature of internal controls auditing requires assessment of professional credentials, charter school experience, and audit methodology that cannot be adequately evaluated through price-based bidding alone.

This RFP has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors in accordance with Springfield International Charter School's procurement manual.

Advertising Requirements

This RFP will be advertised in accordance with Massachusetts procurement law and best practices:

- COMMBUYS system posting
- Local newspaper of general circulation (at least once, not less than two weeks prior to proposal deadline)

- Posted in a conspicuous place at the SICS primary office
- Posted on the SICS website

All advertising will occur at least two weeks prior to the proposal submission deadline to ensure adequate notice to potential respondents.

Proposal Submission Instructions (Summary)

- See the “Submission Requirements” section for complete proposal submission instructions, deadlines, and format requirements.
- Deadline: October 3, 2025, at 4:00 PM EST
- Primary Contact: Dr. White (Board Chair) at BOT@sics.org

Scope of Services

Auditing Standards and Compliance

The internal controls audit shall be performed in accordance with:

- Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) and/or Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) Standards
- Standards promulgated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements
- Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F) if SICS expends \$750,000 or more in federal funds
- Charter school-specific regulatory obligations under 603 CMR 1.00

Primary Objectives

The selected auditing firm will conduct a comprehensive internal controls audit with the following objectives:

Initial Engagement Scope (Required):

- Develop a comprehensive Risk Assessment and identify any areas of weakness
- Review and assess the existing policies and procedures manual
- Review policies, procedures, and operations of the Business Office, Human Resources Department, and the School Director's responsibilities
- Assess business office operations, including grant compliance, segregation of duties, and cross-training programs
- Evaluate alignment with the school's DESE-approved charter and current Accountability Plan
- Assess the appropriateness of current procedures for self-managed charter school operations

- Identify areas of weakness in current internal control systems
- Identify operational gray areas and ambiguities requiring clarification
- Evaluate compliance with established policies and procedures
- Assess the adequacy of board governance and oversight mechanisms
- Review authorization and approval processes across all operational areas
- Evaluate segregation of duties and access controls
- Assess risk management frameworks and practices using established frameworks such as COSO (including the five components: Control Environment, Risk Assessment, Control Activities, Information and Communication, Monitoring)
- Propose a detailed testing scope to the Board following preparation of the Risk Assessment, including evaluation of accuracy, completeness, compliance, and proposed efficiencies
- Evaluate the adequacy and compliance of current administrative operations as part of the internal controls assessment, including recommendations for policy improvements and regulatory compliance
- Review this RFP process as part of the operational policy assessment to identify potential improvements for future operations

Deliverables:

- Comprehensive internal controls assessment report
- Detailed findings and recommendations for policy improvements
- Implementation timeline for recommended changes
- Assessment of board governance oversight effectiveness with optional recommendations for improvement
- Optional board training recommendations (if governance gaps are identified during the assessment)
- Optional board training recommendations and governance consultation, if gaps are identified during the assessment, and SICS requests follow-up support. This engagement does not include preparation of audited financial statements, Form 990, or any aspect of the school's annual 501(c)(3) financial audit.

Optional Future Services (including Governance Consulting)

SICS anticipates handling policy revisions and implementation internally following the initial audit. However, firms should provide pricing for the following optional services that may be requested based on audit findings, including governance-related support.

Implementation Support (Optional):

- Assistance with policy and procedure revisions
- Development of new internal control procedures
- Guidance on staff training approaches for revised policies and procedures
- Implementation guidance and consultation

- Board governance support, including policy implementation consultation and optional training sessions if gaps are identified during the audit

Follow-up Compliance Assessment (Optional):

- Review of implementation progress (6-12 months post-initial audit)
- Testing of compliance with revised policies and procedures
- Assessment of control effectiveness improvements
- Additional recommendations for refinement

HR Policy Assessment Component (Optional)

Important: All bidders must respond to this section regardless of their HR capabilities.

Springfield International Charter School seeks to evaluate HR policies and procedures as part of this engagement, but recognizes that not all internal audit firms provide comprehensive HR consulting services. Please clearly indicate your firm's capability:

HR Service Capability Declaration (Required Response)

Select ONE option below:

☐ **YES** - Our firm has the capability and experience to provide comprehensive HR policy assessment services, including:

- Staff evaluation processes and performance management systems
- Disciplinary procedures and documentation requirements
- Training and professional development programs
- Staff retention analysis and exit interview processes
- Job description adequacy and role clarity
- Succession planning and cross-training initiatives

☐ **NO** - Our firm does not provide HR policy assessment services

☐ **SUBCONTRACTOR** - Our firm can provide HR policy assessment services through a qualified subcontractor

Additional Requirements for HR Capability:

If you selected **YES** or **SUBCONTRACTOR**, you must also provide:

- Brief description of your firm's HR consulting experience with educational institutions
- Key personnel who would lead the HR assessment work and their qualifications
- Separate cost proposal for HR component (see Cost Proposal section)

Evaluation Impact:

- Firms selecting **YES** with strong HR credentials may receive additional consideration
- Firms selecting **NO** will not be penalized in the evaluation process
- All firms must provide cost estimates for HR services (enter "N/A - Service Not Available" if applicable)

Specific Areas of Focus

The internal controls audit shall include, but not be limited to:

Business Office Operations:

- Grant compliance and reporting procedures
- Segregation of duties across all financial functions
- Cross-training programs and backup procedures
- Authorization matrices and approval hierarchies for expenditures
- Cash handling and disbursement processes
- Check signing authorization compliance and dual approval requirements
- Expense reimbursement authorization and documentation procedures
- Purchase order and purchasing approval workflows
- Access controls for financial systems and check stock
- Supervisory review and approval processes for financial transactions

Other Operational Controls:

- Student information and data management
- Facilities and maintenance oversight
- Technology and information security controls
- Evaluation of cybersecurity risk management and data protection practices
- Vendor management and contract oversight

Student Records and Data Privacy: If access to student or personnel records is required during the audit, the selected firm must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Massachusetts student records regulations (603 CMR 23.00).

Board Governance and Oversight:

- Board oversight mechanisms and effectiveness
- Board policy implementation and monitoring
- Administrative delegation of authority
- Compliance monitoring and reporting
- Document retention and management
- Conflict of interest policies and procedures
- Review of whistleblower policy and fraud reporting mechanisms

Fraud Prevention and Reporting:

- Whistleblower policy implementation and effectiveness
- Fraud reporting mechanisms and response procedures
- Ethics training and awareness programs

Charter School Governance: All assessments and recommendations must reflect applicable requirements under 603 CMR 1.00 and the school's approved charter and DESE Accountability Plan.

Regulatory Compliance:

- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirements
- Federal grant compliance (if applicable)
- Charter school-specific regulatory obligations under 603 CMR 1.00
- Massachusetts conflict of interest law (M.G.L. c. 268A)
- Financial reporting and transparency requirements
- Student records privacy laws (603 CMR 23.00 and FERPA)

Required Qualifications (Pass/Fail)

All proposers must meet the following mandatory requirements. Failure to meet any required qualification will result in proposal rejection:

Professional Credentials (Required)

- Licensed to practice auditing/consulting in Massachusetts
- Minimum 10 years of internal controls auditing experience
- Minimum 5 years of experience with educational institutions

Organizational Qualifications (Required)

- Demonstrated expertise in internal controls assessment
- Experience with governance and risk management frameworks, particularly COSO
- Understanding of Massachusetts charter school regulations and requirements
- Sufficient organizational capacity and stability to complete engagement
- Team-based approach with dedicated project management

Experience Requirements (Required)

- Experience with policy and procedure development and assessment
- Experience with board governance consulting (preferred, but not required)
- Experience with organizational transition and change management
- Knowledge of the COSO framework or similar internal controls standards

Vendor Eligibility Requirements (Required)

Independence and Conflict of Interest:

- Firms that have provided any services to Springfield International Charter School within the past five (5) years are not eligible to respond to this RFP
- Firms currently providing financial audit services to SICS are specifically excluded from eligibility
- The selected firm must maintain independence from other current service providers to SICS
- Firms must disclose any potential conflicts of interest or relationships with SICS board members, staff, or related parties

Selection Criteria

The selection of a vendor shall be based upon the following criteria.

The contract will be awarded to the responsive and responsible bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to Springfield International Charter School, taking into consideration all selection criteria below, with price as the primary factor among factors considered. For each criterion, SICS shall assign one of the following ratings: Highly Advantageous, Advantageous, or Not Advantageous.

The selection criteria below are listed in order of importance:

Price: The Aggregate proposed price is the lowest

Highly Advantageous: Lowest price

Advantageous: Neither lowest or highest price

Not Advantageous: Highest price

Depth of Experience: Confidence in the provider's capability and experience based on years of prior experience and level of experience serving charter schools and educational institutions in Massachusetts

Highly Advantageous: Past/present performance involved essentially the same scope and magnitude of effort and complexities for at least five (5) years in multiple charter schools, specifically in Massachusetts, with demonstrated expertise in internal controls auditing

Advantageous: Past/present performance involved a similar scope and magnitude of effort and complexities for at least three (3) years in educational institutions in Massachusetts or another New England state.

Not Advantageous: Vendor has served one or fewer educational institutions, no charter schools, or lacks demonstrated internal controls, auditing experience in educational settings

References: Confidence in the vendor's quality of service from recommendations

Highly Advantageous: All of the vendor's references indicate that the internal controls audit services were performed seamlessly, in accordance with specifications, with no interruptions in service, that the vendor was responsive, and that the client was satisfied with the audit quality and recommendations

Advantageous: One reference indicates that there were issues with the vendor's quality, reliability, responsiveness, client satisfaction, or service delivery

Not Advantageous: More than one reference indicates that services were not performed seamlessly in accordance with specifications, that there were service issues, that the vendor was nonresponsive, and/or that clients were dissatisfied with the audit quality

Professional Qualifications and Team Expertise: Technical credentials and specialized certifications relevant to internal controls auditing

Highly Advantageous: Team includes professionals with CPA, CIA, and/or CRP credentials with specialized expertise in educational governance and Massachusetts regulatory requirements

Advantageous: Lead auditor holds a CPA and at least one additional relevant certification (CIA, CRP, CFE), team demonstrates solid internal controls auditing experience

Not Advantageous: Team meets only minimum CPA requirements but lacks specialized internal controls certifications, or demonstrated expertise in educational institution auditing

Methodology and Approach: Understanding of charter school operations and a comprehensive audit approach

Highly Advantageous: Vendor demonstrates deep understanding of Massachusetts charter school regulations, COSO framework implementation, and presents a comprehensive, tailored audit methodology that addresses all aspects of charter school governance and internal controls

Advantageous: Vendor demonstrates a good understanding of educational institution operations and presents a solid audit methodology that addresses most internal controls requirements

Not Advantageous: Vendor's proposed methodology is generic, fails to demonstrate understanding of charter school-specific requirements, or does not comprehensively address internal controls assessment needs

Detailed Description of Services: Compliance with RFP specifications and quality of proposal

Highly Advantageous: Vendor's response complies with all aspects of this RFP, with clear and comprehensive descriptions of the services and thorough responses to all requested information that demonstrate understanding of all service components and a clear and high-quality plan to provide the services as requested

Advantageous: Vendor's response reasonably complies with all material aspects of this RFP, with credible descriptions of the services and responses to requested information that demonstrate understanding of most service components and a realistic plan to provide the services as requested

Not Advantageous: Vendor's response does not reasonably or realistically address all aspects of the RFP, and descriptions of services do not comprehensively or adequately address the service components requested

Advantageous Qualifications

The following qualifications are **Advantageous**:

- Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) or Certified Risk Professional (CRP) credentials
- Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) designation
- COSO Internal Control Certificate
- Experience with HR policy development and staff retention strategies
- Experience conducting HR policy reviews, including staff evaluations, disciplinary procedures, and training programs
- Experience providing board governance consulting or training to public charter schools
- Experience with organizations transitioning from management company oversight
- Background in risk assessment and mitigation strategies
- Training and facilitation experience for board development
- Familiarity with educational technology and data security requirements

Highly Advantageous Qualifications

The following qualifications are **Highly Advantageous**:

- Previous experience with Massachusetts charter schools
- Direct experience with charter schools transitioning from management company oversight to self-management

Work Location and Approach

The selected firm should be prepared to conduct work both remotely and on-site as appropriate for the engagement. The firm should specify its preferred approach and any requirements for physical presence at SICS facilities.

Proposal Requirements

Firm Information

- Overview of firm size, structure, and organizational background
- Licenses and certifications held by the firm and key personnel
- Description of internal controls and governance consulting services
- Portfolio of comparable educational institution clients and description of the engagements.
- Statement of independence from other service providers to SICS
- Confirmation of eligibility under the five-year service restriction

Project Team

Detailed profiles of proposed team members, including:

- Professional credentials and certifications
- Years of experience in internal controls auditing
 - The team leader must have a minimum of 10 years of relevant experience
- Specific experience with educational institutions
- Role and responsibilities for this engagement
- Demonstration of team stability and low turnover

Methodology and Approach

- Detailed description of audit methodology and approach
- Timeline for completion of audit phases
- Communication and reporting protocols
- Quality assurance and review processes
- Risk assessment and testing procedures
- Approach to remote vs. on-site work

Project Timeline

- Preferred start date: December 2025 (following completion of annual financial audit in October)
- Phase 1 completion: March 2026
- Board presentation of findings: April 2026
- Implementation planning: May 2026
- Follow-up assessment (optional): Fall 2026

Cost Proposal

Cost Proposal (Include as Final Section)

Include the following cost information in a clearly marked section at the end of your proposal:

- Detailed fee structure, including hourly rates by team member, for initial engagement
- Total project cost estimate for the required initial audit scope
- Payment schedule options for initial engagement
- Expense reimbursement policies
- Separate pricing for optional services (implementation support and follow-up assessment)
- Separate pricing for HR Policy Assessment (Optional Services) - if capability indicated above
- Confirmation of HR service capability (Yes/No/Subcontractor)
- Hourly rates for potential future consultation services

References

Please provide a minimum of three (3) references from similar engagements, preferably including:

- At least one educational institution client
- One internal controls audit engagement
- (Optional) One governance consulting engagement (if applicable)

For each reference, include:

- Organization name and contact person
- Contact title and email address
- Scope and duration of engagement
- Key outcomes and deliverables

Submission Requirements

Proposal Submission Instructions

- **Deadline:** October 3, 2025, at 4:00 PM EST
- **Submission Method:** Email or sealed envelope
- **Email Address Submission Method:** BOT@sics.org
- **Address for Submission of Sealed Envelope RFP:** 160 Joan St., Springfield, MA 01129

Note: All proposals will be collected by the Board of Trustees and remain unopened until after the submission deadline. The evaluation committee will be established by Board designees in accordance with school procurement procedures, excluding procurement and business office

staff, except in providing technical oversight (compliance review and completeness) by the procurement officer, to ensure independence in evaluating operations.

- **Subject Line:** "Internal Controls Audit Proposal - Springfield International Charter School"

Important: Proposal Format Requirements

- PDF format preferred
- Maximum 35 pages (excluding appendices)
- Clear, concise presentation
- Professional formatting
- Include a clearly marked "Cost Proposal" section at the end
- Ensure cost information is separated from technical content for evaluation purposes

Questions and Clarifications

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed **in writing only** to: Dr. White (Board Chair) at BOT@sics.org.

All questions must be submitted by October 1, 2025, by 4:00 PM EST to Dr. White (Board Chair) at BOT@sics.org. Responses and any addenda will be posted on the Springfield International Charter School website under the "Procurement" section. Each proposer is solely responsible for regularly checking the website to ensure they have the most current information and for completing their proposal in accordance with any addenda issued.

Evaluation Process

Evaluation Committee

Committee members will be board designees only, excluding procurement and business office staff, except in providing technical oversight (compliance review and completeness) by the procurement officer, to ensure independence. Evaluators will provide written assessments with ratings and supporting rationale.

Proposal Handling

See the "Submission Requirements" section for proposal collection procedures. Cost sections will be reviewed separately from technical content to ensure fair evaluation.

Award Process

The contract will be awarded to the firm offering the most advantageous proposal, considering both price and evaluation criteria. If awarded to something other than the lowest-priced proposal, a written justification will be provided.

Selection Process

Evaluation Committee

A committee appointed by the SICS Board of Directors will evaluate all proposals. Committee members will include board members familiar with the scope of services required, excluding procurement and business office staff, except in providing technical oversight (compliance review and completeness) by the procurement officer, to ensure independence.

Award Criteria

The contract will be awarded to the firm that demonstrates the highest overall value based on the weighted evaluation criteria, including:

- All required professional qualifications and expertise
- Compliance with mandatory experience requirements
- Acceptable methodology and approach
- Organizational capacity to complete the engagement
- Best overall value proposition considering both price and non-price factors

Contract Execution and Authority

Any contract resulting from this RFP will be negotiated and signed by the School Director or Director of Finance, in conjunction with the Board of Trustees, with the Board of Trustees' approval. The selected firm will work with the designated board representative for all contract development and execution procedures. A formal Notice to Proceed will be issued by the Board of Trustees once the contract has been fully executed. No work shall begin prior to receiving the Notice to Proceed.

Tax Exempt Status

Springfield International Charter School is exempt from Massachusetts state taxes. The selected vendor will be provided with appropriate tax exemption documentation and forms as part of the contract execution process. The school's tax-exempt status may not be used for personal purchases or reimbursable expenses paid by individuals out of pocket.

Additional Provisions

Massachusetts Compliance

The selected firm must:

- Be authorized to conduct business in Massachusetts
- Comply with all applicable state regulations for charter school service providers

- Understand Massachusetts charter school governance requirements
- Maintain appropriate professional insurance coverage

Contract Terms

- Initial engagement period: December 2025 - March 2026
- Contract duration limited to a maximum of three (3) years per school procurement policy
- Optional follow-up services may be contracted separately within policy limits
- Confidentiality and non-disclosure requirements
- Termination clauses and dispute resolution procedures

Board Reporting

The selected firm will be required to:

- Present findings to the Board of Directors
- Provide an executive summary for board review
- Participate in board meetings as requested
- Provide clarification on audit findings and recommendations as needed

Springfield International Charter School reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals
- Request additional information from proposers
- Negotiate terms with the selected firm
- Award the contract without further discussion

This RFP represents Springfield International Charter School's commitment to excellence in governance, transparency, and operational effectiveness. We look forward to partnering with a qualified firm to strengthen our internal controls and governance practices.