

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

### **State Government Relations Services**

#### **Cleveland–Cuyahoga County Port Authority (Port of Cleveland)**

**Issuance Date: December 1, 2025**

The Cleveland–Cuyahoga County Port Authority (“Port of Cleveland” or “Port”) invites qualified government relations and lobbying firms to submit proposals to represent the Port before the Ohio legislative and administrative branches. The Port seeks an experienced, strategically oriented partner to help advance its policy priorities, funding opportunities, and collaborative engagement with state policymakers and agencies.

### **About the Port of Cleveland**

With new leadership in place, the Port is entering a pivotal period of renewal and forward-looking planning. The organization is committed to elevating its role as a regional economic catalyst, strengthening its value as a collaborative public partner, and ensuring that its investments and operations advance Northeast Ohio’s long-term competitiveness and livability.

The Port operates across three primary lines of business:

- **Maritime Operations:** Connecting regional businesses to global markets through the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Seaway system.
- **Development Finance:** Delivering catalytic financing tools that spur job creation, private investment, and economic growth.
- **Sustainability and Public Infrastructure:** Advancing transformational projects—such as CHEERS and Irishtown Bend—that enhance lakefront access, resilience, and environmental stewardship.

More information is available at [www.portofcleveland.com](http://www.portofcleveland.com).

### **State Policy Priorities and Issues of Concern**

The Port regularly engages with the Ohio General Assembly and numerous state agencies on matters essential to its economic development and infrastructure mission. Priority issues include:

- **Updates to Port Authority Statutes:** The Port is monitoring potential changes to the Port sections of ORC 4582 that could affect operations, authorities, or financing capabilities.
- **Property Tax Legislation:** Proposed changes to property tax law that may impact the Port’s levy revenue and long-term fiscal stability.
- **State Capital Budget:** Advocacy for maritime, infrastructure, and public investments.
- **Brownfield Remediation Funding:** Ensuring adequate state support for cleanup and redevelopment aligned with economic growth priorities.
- **OMAP Funding:** Monitoring and advocating for Ohio Maritime Assistance Program (OMAP) resources that support critical port infrastructure and modernization.
- **Transportation, Maritime, and Environmental Policy:** Issues affecting logistics competitiveness, sediment management, resilience planning, and shoreline or riverfront project implementation.
- **Economic Development Tools:** Statutory and regulatory changes affecting development finance, port authority incentives, and public–private project structuring.

### **Scope of Work**

The Port is seeking a firm to serve as its primary representative before the Ohio legislative and administrative branches, responsible for:

- Monitoring legislation, regulatory activity, budget developments, and administrative actions relevant to the Port's lines of business.
- Developing and executing advocacy strategies aligned with the Port's priorities.
- Facilitating engagement with state legislators, agency leaders, and policy stakeholders.
- Providing strategic counsel on emerging opportunities and risks.
- Supporting communication, coalition-building, and policy positioning at the state level.
- Communicating proactively, regularly, and effectively with the Port team on the above items

### **Proposal Requirements**

Interested firms are asked to submit a concise proposal (not to exceed 10 pages) that includes:

1. Firm Overview & Key Personnel
  - Bios and roles of individuals who will be assigned to the Port.
  - Identification of the primary day-to-day contact.
2. Relevant Experience
  - Representative work with quasi-public entities, port authorities, transportation or maritime organizations, and/or economic development agencies.
  - Examples of successful legislative, budget, or administrative outcomes.
3. Approach & Work Plan
  - Proposed strategy for representing the Port's interests at the state level.
  - Methods for communication, coordination, monitoring, and reporting.
  - Description of how the firm will develop a deep understanding of the Port's operations and priorities.
4. Fee Structure
  - Proposed monthly retainer and any anticipated additional costs.

### **Submission Instructions**

Proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

Melisa Freilino, Manager, Executive & Administrative Operations  
[melisa.freilino@portofcleveland.com](mailto:melisa.freilino@portofcleveland.com)

**Deadline:** December 15, 2025

Questions may be directed to the contact above. The Port reserves the right to request additional information, interview finalists, and reject any and all proposals.

### **General Conditions**

This RFP does not commit the Port to award a contract or pay any costs incurred in preparing responses. The Port may negotiate terms, request clarifications, or modify the scope prior to final selection.