

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
Social Media Marketing and Public Relations

- **ISSUE DATE:** August 18, 2011
- **PRE-BID CONFERENCE: 8/23 10am at the EDC**
- **BIDS DUE:** September 8, 2011 (4:00 PM)
- **FINALIST PRESENTATIONS:** Week of 9/12
- **DECISION:** September 16, 2011

REPLY TO:

Communication RFP Evaluation Committee

✉ mchambers@riedc.com

☎ 401-278-9100

📠 401-273-8270

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

I. Description of Proposal

This document constitutes a Request for Proposal (RFP), in a competitive, sealed format, from qualified individuals and organizations to perform social media marketing and public relations. This request is an offer by the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC) to purchase, in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP, the services proposed by the successful offeror(s), by contract, as needed.

1.1 The offeror shall provide a proposal, in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth herein, to provide services to the RIEDC from October 1, 2011 as follows:

- Provide an integrated Social Media Marketing and PR strategy guidance for the RIEDC and the Rhode Island Tourism Division
- Execute the agency's integrated social media marketing.
- Provide national, trade and regional public relations outreach for the RIEDC and the Rhode Island Tourism Division
- Assist the RIEDC's communications department as needed.

1.2 All questions concerning this procurement should be in writing and directed to Melissa Chambers, Marketing Manager, at mchambers@riedc.com

II. Background

The RIEDC mission is to strengthen the Rhode Island economy through policies, programs, and projects which will enhance the business environment in order to promote prosperity for all of our citizens. The RIEDC offers business services and assistance, access to capital programs, incentives and a variety of programs to help companies grow within Rhode Island's borders and relocate to our great State. Additional agency information is available at www.riedc.com.

The tourism division is the official state entity responsible for promoting domestic and international tourism to Rhode Island. It conducts comprehensive marketing and communications efforts aimed at expanding the state's multi-billion dollar tourism industry. The division conducts the only marketing effort aimed at attracting visitors to all tourism regions of the state. The tourism division is overseen by RIEDC.

III. Scope of Services

3.1 Offeror will provide RIEDC with consulting services as mutually agreed upon and described in a proposal statement of work which will govern any particular assignment that is engaged under this RFP.

3.2 The Statement of Work shall be drafted as an engagement letter between the parties setting forth the following:

- a. a complete and detailed description of the type(s) of services to be rendered by the Offeror;
- b. the applicable billing rates for the services to be rendered ("Service Fees");
- c. any additional terms and conditions to which the parties may agree.

IV. Process and Requirements

4.1 Offerors will submit their proposals within the timeframe indicated. RIEDC is committed to selecting the most competitive offer. Our evaluation will be geared to identify those proposals which offer the best combination of expertise and value. RIEDC will not, however, base its evaluation solely on price and reserves the right to make an award to an Offeror who may not necessarily be the lowest bidder.

4.2 No extension in the submittal date will be granted on an individual basis. If RIEDC determines that the timeframe it has established for this RFP is inadequate, it may, at its option, extend the submission deadline for all Offerors.

4.3 Offerors agree that their proposals are a firm agreement to provide services at a stipulated rate to RIEDC. Those rates will be reflected in the Statement of Work engagement letter. All pricing schedules quoted in response to this RFP, however, must remain in effect for one (1) year at a minimum and may, at the election of the Offeror, be guaranteed for three (3) years.

4.4 Offeror may withdraw their proposal at any time by notifying Melissa Chambers in writing of their intention to do so.

V. Awards

5.1 Subsequent Contract Terms and Conditions

- a. The RIEDC reserves the right to award all, partial or none of this solicitation.
- b. This contract does not create an employment relationship. Individuals performing services required by the contract are not employees of the State nor the requesting Department

or Agency. Vendor's employees shall not be considered employees of the State or the requesting Department or Agency for any purpose and as such shall not be eligible for benefits accruing to state employees.

- c. Travel and travel reimbursement is not authorized for this acquisition.
- d. This purchase is not subject to any sales tax or Federal excise tax. An exemption certificate will be furnished upon request.
- e. The vendor shall be paid upon submission of proper invoices to the ordering agency at the prices stipulated on the contract. Invoices shall contain the contract number and purchase order number. Failure to follow these instructions may result in delay of processing invoices for payment.
- f. All billing and subsequent payments must be in arrears.
- g. No oral statement, online click wrap amendments, facsimile, mail or other notification issued by vendor shall modify or otherwise effect the terms, conditions, or specifications stated in this purchase order unless accepted in writing by RIEDC.

Offeror shall have the capability, experience, and expertise to provide the RIEDC with services in accordance with the requirements set forth herein and consistent with the representations made in the submission under this RFP.

5.2 Selection of the approved vendor will be substantially based on the criteria delineated in section VII.

VI. Proposal Format

6.1 Five copies of each proposal shall be submitted to the RIEDC.

6.2 RIEDC will not provide any reimbursement for any cost associated with the development or presentation of a proposal.

6.3 Failure to include any of the following information may have an adverse impact on the evaluation of a proposal:

- a. Offeror should complete all of Section VII. The Offeror should respond to the main themes of each of the outlined areas in Section VII in a comprehensive, yet succinct, narrative that addresses the RIEDC's core needs in each of those areas. The Offeror should provide corresponding examples, sample work products or references where asked to do so. The Selection Committee may request additional detailed responses to individual questions during the oral presentation phase.
- b. Inclusion of client information or references that reflect upon the Offeror's consulting expertise or experience is desirable.
- c. Proposal should be prepared in a standard 8 ½ x 11 format and adequately bound.
- d. Table of contents and an executive summary of the proposal should be included.
- e. A fee schedule for work proposed under the RFP should be included. Please note, the estimated, monthly, budget will be \$10,000. Some months may be busier than others and could be rolled into the next month of work.

VII. Questionnaire/Evaluation and Selection Criteria

COMPANY DETAILS

- Company name and parent company name
- Ownership structure
- Years in operation
- Mailing address (headquarters)
- Other office location(s)
- Primary phone
- Fax number
- Website and blog URL
- Primary point of contact (name, title, phone and email address)
- Total number of employees
- Number of employees whose primary function is social media
- Current list of clients engaged in social media work
- Percentage of total revenue that is social-media related
- Senior social media staff bios and links to social media profiles where applicable
- Please provide a comprehensive pricing and/or rate sheet for all potential services you might provide under this RFP should you be selected as a service provider

REFERENCES

- Three references for social media work including; company name, primary client name, contact details and brief explanation of services provided
- Any potential conflicts with existing vendor client base and this RFP
- Please provide a complete list of relevant social media platform and technology partners. Do you have any proprietary tools or products related to social media?

CAPABILITIES & EXPERIENCE

- List all social media and online marketing capabilities
- Please list any experience you have with integrating social, paid and/or earned media
- Is there a specific industry or type of work your firm specializes in?
- Please provide three case studies of your strategy work that resulted in a social media initiative and the business results achieved using the categories below to guide your case study:

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

Please outline how you applied your social media strategy process to achieve business results

- How do you approach adapting a traditional brand into a two-way dialogue?
- How do you integrate standard websites with social media platforms?
- What is your approach to risk management in social media?
- How do you incorporate existing applications, websites, microsites and newsletter programs into your overall social media strategy?
- What are your design, creative and community management capabilities?

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING & METRICS

Tell us how you would apply analytics to measurement of site use, relevancy and value

- What is your brand/reputation monitoring process (i.e. proprietary tools used, methodology, etc)?
- How do you measure success for your social media programs? Please provide an example
- What is your quality assurance process to ensure that the large volumes of data gathered in the monitoring process are handled efficiently and representative of the overall online conversation?
- Please detail your methodology for handling online crises and what services you provide in support of crisis management?
- Please outline your general approach to sourcing and responding to comments.
- Please provide a case study detailing your work for the purposes of managing reputation or online crisis management, including outcomes and lessons learned.

CLIENT EDUCATION & TRAINING

- Do you offer social media training services for clients? If yes, what formats are they available in?
- What internal processes do you have in place to ensure that your staff is kept current on social media innovations and best practices?

COMMUNITY AND INFLUENCER OUTREACH (SOCIAL PR)

- What is your process for identifying and outreaching influencers within various social media channels?
- What tools and approaches do you use for Influencer Relationship Management? (Third-party, proprietary, etc.)
- How have you integrated Influencer Outreach with traditional communications and/or marketing campaigns?

CLIENT SERVICES & PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- How is a typical client engagement with your firm structured?
- If you are selected to provide social media services, who will be assigned to our business (please provide names, titles and short biographical notes)
- What percentage of senior staff involvement is structured into your projects? What role do they play?
- What reports will be provided to the client in order to communicate project milestones and overall project health? What is the frequency of these reports?

PUBLIC RELATIONS/EARNED MEDIA

The Offeror shall perform the following work to assist the RIEDC in achieving its primary public relations goals.

- Give examples of where your firm has offered strategic messaging that suits current economic climates, a mutable media landscape and necessary social media outreach within a range of A-list media.
- How has your firm assisted with providing identification of PR goals that will bring increased tourism visitation with efforts in major markets where traditional advertising is cost-prohibitive?
- Demonstrate where you have managed sustained, proactive media outreach to maintain visibility on clearly defined subjects and to clearly defined audiences. Provide example of measurable success in promoting economic development regionally and nationally.
- What experience do you have promoting events such as Music Festivals, Waterfire, Sailing and Yachting Events, Culinary etc.?

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

You may submit samples of work. Materials can be submitted in hard copy, digitally with Web links, or a combination of both. Information provided will not be returned, so please do not send original or one-of-a-kind materials. Service Providers for this RFP will be evaluated and selected on a range of criteria that is largely qualitative. The four areas of evaluation include:

- A. Skill/Creativity**
- B. Resources/Capability**
- C. References/Referrals**
- D. Pricing Structure/Rates**

As noted, Offerors may be asked to participate in an interview process after submission of all proposals to the RIEDC, at the option of the selection committee. Ultimate selection to the approved vendor list will be made by RIEDC at its sole discretion.

RFP Deadline

Proposal materials and completed forms relating to this RFP must be received by the RIEDC on or before September 8, 2011 (4:00 PM)

Please submit materials to:

RIEDC
Marketing and Communication RFP
315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101
Providence, RI 02908

Please forward any questions about this RFP in writing to the address above, or via e-mail: mchambers@riedc.com. Questions will not be considered unless submitted in writing as directed. Telephone calls or personal visits to the RIEDC are prohibited during the solicitation and evaluation process.

Vendor questions and subsequent agency responses will be posted on the RIEDC website at www.riedc.com/rfp

All proposals with the appropriate required information must be submitted in a sealed package. The outside of the package must contain the name of the submitting vendor, the due date, and the appropriate solicitation number.

Proposals submitted after the due date and time will not be considered, no exceptions.

Schedule of RFP Process and Project Timeline

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- **FINALIZE CONTRACT:** September 23, 2011