

Request for Proposal – Communications/Graphics/Web/Media
December 13, 2012

Respondents can submit for single or multiple components as well as the comprehensive scope(s).

I. Purpose

The Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Process is a three-year planning program funded largely by a highly competitive, first of its kind, \$4.25M federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of the new federal Sustainable Communities Initiative. The Sustainable Communities Initiative is an interagency collaboration among HUD, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection.

Coming together to develop a regional sustainability plan

The Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) is focused on creating a vibrant and competitive 12-county region. Through a diverse group of member organizations and region-wide engagement, the NEOSCC will develop concrete plans while producing collaborative capacity for action. The aim of all of these efforts is to create a vibrant and resilient Northeast Ohio that increases our quality of life, connects our communities; celebrates our natural resources and creates a competitive economic framework for the vitality of our region. To create this outcome, however, we must develop a strong communications strategy, messages and tools that support the themes of our engagement platform: LEARN, SHARE, CREATE AND ACT. For a complete program description, please visit:

<http://www.neoscc.org>.

Current Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium Members include:

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study	Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority	Lorain County Growth Partnership
Akron Urban League	Mahoning County
Ashtabula County	Northeast Ohio Area wide Coordinating Agency
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Youngstown	Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning & Development Organization
City of Akron	Policy Bridge
City of Cleveland	Regional Prosperity Initiative
City of Youngstown	Stark County
Cleveland Museum of Natural History	Stark County Regional Planning Commission/
Cleveland State University	Stark County Area Transportation Study
Cuyahoga County	Summit County
Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority	Summit County Health District
Eastgate Regional Council of Governments	Trumbull County
Fund for Our Economic Future	

Requirement/Background:

A significant opportunity for the selected communication consultant(s) will be to collaborate on the development of a value proposition for sustainability and collaboration within our region. The communication and engagement consultant(s) retained for this work will be part of a team that crafts messages and strategies and implements tools that will foster member organizations and resident engagement leading to a shared vision and action.

Audiences:

Consortium Members General Public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Rural • Public Urban • Public Suburban • Other Demographics? Public Disadvantaged/Unengaged Board Organization Professional Staff Key Coordinating/Networking Organizations Media Funders State Government Municipal Government	County Government Federal Government Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size • Local/Regional • Start-Up • Emerging Education (K-12) Higher Education Network Mavens/Change Agents Challenging Groups
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Geographic reach:

Ashtabula	Cuyahoga	Geauga
Lake	Lorain	Mahoning
Medina	Portage	Summit
Stark	Trumbull	Wayne

The NEOSCC Communications and Engagement efforts are being led by the NEOSCC Communications and Engagement Work Stream Committee and the Program Office. The Manager of Communications and Engagement (MCE) is specifically tasked with managing the selected consultants.

The NEOSCC is in the process of completing a high level working paper that summarizes the methods by which residents, Consortium members and regional stakeholders will be engaged in the overall planning process, including messaging and communications work. The *Communication/Engagement Plan* will be revisited and, as necessary, revised throughout the planning period to ensure effectiveness. This plan will be a road map for the selected consultant(s).

In late January 2012, a separate Request for Proposal will issued by the NEOSCC for actual engagement plan refinement and public engagement services.

Current State:

The Consortium has begun to implement its work plan and expand its board roster of 26 member organizations. At the same time, the NEOSCC program office has been launched and the individual Work Streams (Environments, Economic Development, Communities, Connections, Quality Connected Places, Data/GIS and Communications/Engagement) have initiated their meetings and data gathering.

Specific to the services sought in this request, the following communication and outreach tools have already been completed:

- NEOSCC Logo and Style Guide
- NEOSCC Website – a placeholder digital presence for overview content
- “Up and Running” handouts and PowerPoint standards
- News Releases in December and April
- Preliminary messaging and re-branding (in-progress, will be given to selected consultant)

All of these materials have been developed to establish an identity and move the organization through its foundational phase.

Services & Outcome Expectations

The Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium is seeking to engage experts to shape its message, communicate its values and engage the community through messaging, graphics, website, traditional and social media strategy and media relations. Respondents can submit for single or multiple components as well as the comprehensive scope(s).

While submissions by single firms will be accepted, responding organizations are encouraged to develop teams by expertise and across Northeast Ohio. The core of the NEOSCC initiative is collaboration throughout the region, therefore we would like to suggest that our consultants do the same.

Respondents can submit for single or multiple components as well as the comprehensive scope(s).

The NEOSCC is a non-profit with a Board consisting of diverse organizations throughout the region. The program management office (PMO) is led by an Executive Director, Deputy Director, Project Managers and a Manager of Communications and Engagement (MCE). Due to the small PMO staff, numerous consultants are being engaged beyond Communications across the initiative. Based on the number of consultants being managed by the PMO staff, it will be critical for consultants to be responsive to schedules and decision milestones. The small staff also dictates that many meetings with consultants will be multi-purposed in order to make the most efficient use of staff, board and consultant schedules.

The NEOSCC is currently seeking proposals in the following areas:

- Communications Strategy Development/Messaging/Graphics
- Web Design and On-Line Engagement Tools
- Media Outreach

Component One: Communications Strategy Development/Messaging/Graphics

Need: Partnership on the creation of the communications strategy and messages.

The Consultant will:

- Collaborate on the development of communication strategies and schedule for the 2 years remaining on the grant cycle;
 - Refine the current branding and messaging
 - Identify key communication avenues and schedule to meet the overall communications strategy (including all social media, advertising, newsletters, printed materials, etc.);
- Design, write and deliver a new introductory piece for the initiative (2-4 pages);
- Develop a social media strategy for the NEOSCC that reflects information distribution and public engagement activities
- Provide copywriting and graphics design for website;
- Support the development of Board Materials in collaboration with the MCE and the Board Facilitation Consultant;
- Develop “Did you kNEO (know)” campaign highlighting facts and stories about challenges and successes in the region. (Cycle of social media posts, simple ads, spots and other mediums that ask and answer simple questions about the outcomes of sustainability, the costs of the status quo or celebrate our region’s strengths.)
- Provide copywriting and graphics for monthly newsletters;
- Provide on-going writing and graphics;
- Propose measurement and metrics processes to gauge effectiveness; and
- Work in collaboration with staff and other consultant team members.

Key Consulting Skills:

- Strategy Development
- Messaging Campaign Expertise
- Copy writing
- Graphics
- Project Management

Component Two: Website and On-Line Engagement Tools

Need: Partnership on the design of the NEOSCC website. The website is viewed a multipurpose public platform for the engagement plan and in particular for the LEARNING, SHARING, CREATING, ACT themes. The NEOSCC has identified the following as key objectives for the website and social media:

- “Information Hub” for Board Members, Stakeholders and Residents relative to upcoming meetings and background information;
- “Engagement Window” providing a location for dialogue, idea exchange, plan comments and action;
- “Educational Tool” displaying best practices and creating a tool box for the Consortium Members and the greater community;

- “Celebration Spot” highlight regional assets and cumulative progress on existing initiatives as well as the NEOSCC process; and
- “Network Weaver” fostering and documenting connections and networks throughout the planning process and beyond. One of the critical components of the NEOSCC initiative will be the development of a “network of networks” across the region. This will ensure future collaboration and access to expertise.

While the NEOSCC would entertain proposals for new site development, we do acknowledge that many successful existing platforms do exist both regionally and nationally. Based on our schedule, budget and potential efficiencies, we would be very interested in understanding how these existing platforms could be put to use in the NEOSCC initiative. The selected vendor, during the program development, will be required to evaluate existing market platforms/products for the site.

The NEOSCC, under separate contract with a consultant, is already examining its own internal network and Consortium member project management platform. It is anticipated that a recommendation for a tool to address these needs will be complete in January.

The Consultant will:

- Design and develop a web site integrating the objectives of Hub, Window, Tool, Celebration and Network; the first phase (1Q2012) of which will focus on the Hub, Tool, Network Weaver and Celebration objectives. The second phase (2Q2012) will focus on the “Window” or Engagement piece.
- Develop a solution that reflects the messages and graphics of the NEOSCC;
- Provide copywriting and graphics design for website;
- Provide a content management solution to enable Project Management Office staff to implement updates;
- Propose staffing models for the management of engagement discussions online;
- Provide hosting for the site; and
- Work in collaboration with staff and other consultant team members.

Key Consulting Skills:

- Web/Social Media Strategy Development to engage public
- Strong sense of digital design and interactivity
- Innovative web and social media expertise
- Graphics
- Project Management

*The delivery of the website product will be non-proprietary and royalty free. NEOSCC will own all code written by the developer (unless otherwise stipulated in writing) during the development process. Developer may retain the rights to all proprietary software code developed or implemented during the process.

Component Three: Media Relations

Need: Partnership with the Staff and Communications and Engagement Work Stream on the creation of the media relations strategy, news releases and media advisory services. ***While submissions by single firms will be accepted, organizations responding to the Media Relations request are encouraged to develop teams by expertise and across Northeast Ohio. The core of the NEOSCC initiative is collaboration throughout the region (all 12 counties listed on page two) and, therefore we would like to suggest that our consultants do the same.***

The Consultant will:

- Develop regional media outreach strategy
- Work with communications consultant and NEOSCC on the development of a communications and Media Partnership strategy;
- Solidify relationships with key media (print, broadcast, digital) throughout the 12 counties;
 - Identify key reporters, understand stories of interest;
- Publicize “events”/news
- Create media releases and content;
- Advise MCE of on-the-ground issues within distinct regional media markets; and
- Work in collaboration with staff and other consultant team members.

Key Consulting Skills:

- Existing network of media relationships across the 12 counties and within distinct Metro areas (i.e. Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Youngstown);
- Expertise in media relations strategy development and crisis communication;
- Creative writing and storytelling;
- Listening; and
- Account Management

III. Proposal content

1. Who are you?

- a. Describe what makes your organization unique. Please describe your creative approach. How would you characterize its strengths?
- b. What is your experience with non-profit and civic initiatives within and throughout Northeast Ohio? What mechanisms/mediums have you used to do so?
- c. What is your experience within the sustainability (i.e. triple bottom line) market?
- d. What is your experience in working regionally?
- e. What is your experience with start-up organizations?
- f. Please describe the work you are most proud of, including results achieved relative to objective.

- g. What is your current workload? Please describe your ability to begin the project in late January.
 - h. Include three references for your previous work.
2. How will you manage our account?
- a. Understanding that we are a non-profit organization and require cost-effective pricing, how will you manage our account as efficiently as possible without compromising quality or integrity?
 - b. Identify individuals assigned to project, their specific roles and credentials.
 - c. Please describe any Outside Consultants assigned to specific tasks (include their experience and background and a Letter of Commitment from Outside Consultants to your Organization’s Proposal).
 - d. If you have developed a multi-firm team for your response, please outline your previous experience working as a multi-firm team.
 - e. Please describe the function of your account management. How does it interact with a typical client? How does your firm approach projects with multiple other consultants?
 - f. Please describe your technical capabilities related to website development and social media campaigns (if applicable).
 - g. Please describe your public relations expertise – locally in Northeast Ohio, nationally and internationally, trade and news alike (if applicable).
 - h. How will we measure your success?
3. Please describe your approach.
- a. Outline the scope of services required to meet the proposed deliverables.
 - i. Please be **specific** in the number of drafts and revisions that your scope and fee include.
 - b. Identify proposed timeline and budget.
 - c. Project Organizational Chart

4. Fees

Please provide an estimate of expected cost, consultant hours, timeframe and personnel for each of the appropriate components. **Remember, respondents can submit for single or multiple components as well as the comprehensive scope(s).** PLEASE BE SPECIFIC IN IDENTIFYING ANY QUALIFICATIONS SUCH AS NUMBER OF DRAFTS/REVISIONS THAT ARE INCLUDED IN YOUR FEES.

Provide sufficient insight into the costs proposed that the scope or “unit” of work covered is clear. Please provide a cost inclusive of costs expected for labor, regional travel, and materials (all fees should be inclusive of any materials, software, etc.).

Include your standard hourly rate schedule as well.

Also, please be sure to identify your team members that will be assigned to each task.

Component One: Communications Strategy Development/Messaging/Graphics

	Time and Material Not to Exceed Fee	Hours	Schedule	Personnel
Collaborate on the development of communication strategies (multiple integrated mediums) and schedule for the 2 years remaining on the grant cycle; - Refine the current branding and messaging - Identify key communication avenues and schedule to meet the overall communications strategy (including all social media, advertising, newsletters, printed materials, etc.);				
Design, write and deliver a new introductory piece for the initiative (2-4 pages)				
Develop a social media strategy for the NEOSCC that reflects information distribution and public engagement activities				
Support the development of Board Materials in collaboration with the MCE and the Board Facilitation Consultant				
Provide copywriting and graphics design for website;				
Develop “Did you kNEO (know)” campaign highlighting facts and stories about challenges and successes in the region. (Cycle of social media posts, simple ads, spots and other mediums that ask and answer simple questions about the outcomes of sustainability, the costs of the status quo or celebrate our				

region's strengths.)				
Provide copy writing and graphics for monthly newsletters				
Provide on-going writing and graphics				
Propose measurement and metrics processes to gauge effectiveness				
Work in collaboration with staff and other consultant team members				

Component Two: Website and On-Line Engagement Tools

	Time and Material Not to Exceed Fee	Estimated Hours	Schedule	Personnel
Design and develop a web site integrating the objectives of Hub, Window, Tool, Celebration and Network; the first phase (1Q2012) of which will focus on the Hub, Tool, Network Weaver and Celebration objectives (The selected vendor, during the program development, will be required to evaluate existing market platforms/products for the site.) The second phase (2Q2012) will focus on the “Window” or Engagement piece.				
Develop a solution that reflects the messages and graphics of the NEOSCC;				
Provide copywriting and graphics design for website;				
Provide a content management solution to enable Project Management Office staff to implement updates;				
Staffing models for the management of engagement discussions				
Provide hosting services for site				
Work in collaboration with staff and other consultant team members				

Component Three: Media Relations

	Time and Material Not to Exceed Fee	Hours	Schedule	Personnel
Develop regional media outreach strategy				
Work with communications consultant and NEOSCC on the development of a communications and Media Partnership strategy;				
Solidify relationships with key media (print, broadcast, digital) - Identify key reporters, understand stories of interest;				
Publicize “events”/news				
Create media releases and content;				
Advise MCE of on-the-ground issues within distinct regional media markets; and				
Work in collaboration with staff and other consultant team members				

IV. Process

Proposals should be sent in .pdf format ONLY (NO PAPER COPIES PLEASE) to ebarcelona@neoscc.org. To be considered for the RFP please submit by 5:00 PM, Friday, January 13, 2012. Upon review, we may select firms to present their proposal during the week of January 30, 2012.

OTHER INFORMATION

Period of Performance

NEOSCC seeks consultant services as defined for specific scopes outlined herein as well as qualifications for services as needed throughout the planning process. All firms' information will be kept on file for consideration as other opportunities arise.

Submittal Expectations

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT A DESIGN SUBMITTAL. WE ARE LOOKING TO UNDERSTAND CONSULTANT'S APPROACH, EXPERTISE AND COSTS AND WILL NOT BE ACCEPTING PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AS PART OF THE SELECTION PROCESS.

Rejection of proposals

NEOSCC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this Request for Proposal and to negotiate separately with any other sources regarding components of the proposal.

Preparation costs

All preparation and/or presentation costs incurred in responding to the Request for Proposal are the sole responsibility of the respondent and will not be reimbursed by NEOSCC.

NEOSCC Commitment

The release of this request does not imply any commitment on the part of NEOSCC to accept any proposals submitted. NEOSCC also reserves the right to further breakdown the award to distinct services described.

Correspondence

All correspondence or inquiries related to this qualifications request must be addressed to:

Emma Petrie Barcelona
Deputy Director
330-375-2949
ebarcelona@neoscc.org

AT THIS TIME, PLEASE UTILIZE EMAILS FOR QUESTIONS! ALL QUESTIONS ARE DUE BY January 4, 2012. NEOSCC will release responses to questions on January 6th on the NEOSCC.org website.

Evaluation areas for proposal review:

- Understanding the Scope/RFP priorities
- Responsive to RFP- specific inquiries
- Level of creativity
- Relevant experience/skill sets
 - Demonstrated experience in non-profit and civic arena
 - Demonstrated experience in regional experience
 - Demonstrated experience in start-up organizations
 - (communications only) – branding and communications strategy experience
 - (web only) – technical experience relative to web site development
 - (web only) – on-line engagement platforms
 - (media only) - public relations expertise locally, regionally nationally and international
- Capacity of team to deliver work required
- Account and Team Management Approach
- Approach to measurement of success
- Clarity and thoroughness of approach, scope of services and timeline
- Style/fit to NEOSCC stakeholders
- Fee for value offered
- Other intangibles

Business elements under review:

- Women Owned Business Enterprise
- Minority Owned Business Enterprise
- Section- 3 Business Interest