



E-Enterprise for the Environment and the Exchange Network: Strategic Communications Support

Request for Proposals

Release Date: January 13, 2015

Response Date: February 5, 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

Under a Cooperative Agreement between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), ECOS is seeking a bidder or group of bidders working in a coordinated fashion with a single point of contact (hereinafter “bidder”) through this request for proposal (RFP) to provide services in support of a number of communications objectives related to E-Enterprise for the Environment (E-Enterprise) and the Exchange Network (EN), each described in detail below, as follows:

- Communications support to assist in implementing, advancing, and enhancing the innovative E-Enterprise Strategic Communications Plan and the Exchange Network Communications and Marketing Plan.
- Design and build an E-Enterprise website.
- Graphic design services to assist in E-Enterprise and EN branding and graphics, as well as design of various tools, communications pieces, publications, and products.
- Messaging and communications support to more closely align EN and E-Enterprise.

The E-Enterprise vision is a modern, well-integrated, national enterprise of environmental protection jointly governed by states, tribes, and EPA. The EN partnership has built components of the technological foundation to underpin and help enable the E-Enterprise vision. Each initiative derives benefit from the work of the other and can help support communication and outreach needs that are common to both.

The successful bidder will work on projects under this contract with key ECOS and EPA E-Enterprise staff, with the E-Enterprise Coordinator, the E-Enterprise Communications Team, the E-Enterprise for the Environment Leadership Council (EELC), the Exchange Network Leadership Council (ENLC), and the EN Coordinator.

Any bid should address the full range of work presented in this RFP and may not address only portions of the work (for instance, website only).

ECOS is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization; and is the fiscal and contract agent for this work.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Environmental Council of the States

ECOS is the national non-profit, non-partisan association of state and territorial environmental agency leaders. The purpose of ECOS is to improve the capability of state environmental

agencies and their leaders to protect and improve human health and the environment of the United States of America.

2.2. E-Enterprise for the Environment (E-Enterprise)

First chartered in September 2013, E-Enterprise is a transformative 21st-century strategy to reshape how government agencies deliver environmental protection. Through joint governance, the states, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and tribes are collaboratively modernizing business processes and driving and sharing innovations across agencies and programs. These changes will improve environmental results and enhance services to the regulated community and the public by making government more efficient and effective.

The core purpose of E-Enterprise is to *improve environmental protection* by streamlining, reforming, and better integrating our programs. Higher performing programs will operate more efficiently and effectively to deliver positive environmental results.

With this streamlining in hand, we can use advances in information and monitoring technologies to *deliver enhanced services for the regulated community, the public, and environmental agencies*. The improvements of these services – exceptional process efficiencies, burden reduction, and transparency – can be realized only if technological modernization also incorporates the means for better program performance. Without streamlining and reforming our programs first, we risk that technology will automate unchanged, inefficient, fragmented processes.

At the heart of E-Enterprise is a commitment by the governmental co-regulators in the national enterprise for environmental protection to *operate this partnership as a transformative model for joint governance*. Joint governance encompasses a broad principle of early engagement and collaboration among EPA, state, and tribal partners: working collaboratively to streamline, modernize and integrate our shared business processes and management approaches. Joint governance is essential to drive integrated process and management improvement. Without it, process improvements and technology changes undertaken by individual agencies may further entrench fragmentation between EPA, states and tribes.

With the continuing reality of limited resources, joint governance serves to organize the E-Enterprise partnership to elevate its visibility, boost our capacity to collaborate, and help ensure the integration and effectiveness of our shared improvements. Our vision is that Joint Governance will provide the leadership and inspiration to imbue all of our work with this new perspective, so that eventually it simply becomes how we do all of our business, and no longer needs to be called “E-Enterprise”. The current environmental protection system developed over nearly 45 years, so E-Enterprise is a long-term transformative strategy.

E-Enterprise is a strategy to drive systemic reform, enhance services, and thus improve environmental outcomes. The E-Enterprise goals operationalize this strategy through a set of statements that describe what we seek to accomplish.

- Goal #1: Improve environmental protection through better program performance
- Goal #2: Enhance services to stakeholders and agency partners
- Goal #3: Operate our partnership as a transformative model for joint governance

In December 2013, the EELC charged the interim E-Enterprise Communications Team with developing a strategic communications action plan to engage and inform internal and external audiences about E-Enterprise. This included developing key messages, key communication tools, and evaluating the need for contractor support. In May 2014, the EELC reviewed a draft E-Enterprise Strategic Communications Plan. The draft plan included key messages and key communication tools and approaches to use such as an E-Enterprise website, developing a pool of ambassadors to conduct outreach, developing a library of outreach materials, and developing a newsletter on E-Enterprise. The draft plan also includes target audiences to educate and engage on E-Enterprise.

For more information, see: <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/e-enterprise>

2.3. Exchange Network

The EN is a partnership first envisioned in 1998. The EN is representatives from states, territories, tribes, and EPA working together to provide better access to high-quality environmental data. Through the ENLC, partners share in the management and administration of the Network, basing decisions on collaborative consensus. Today's environmental decision makers recognize that technology can be used to protect human health and the environment by improving the way environmental data is shared and used. EN partners have revolutionized the exchange of this information by providing secure, real-time access to those data using web services and standard data formats. Higher-quality, more accessible data allows for better, timelier environmental decisions.

For more information, see the Exchange Network web page at <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/>.

2.4. Communication Challenges

Identified challenges to date include the following:

- Delivering simple and clear messages to multiple and diverse audiences about E-Enterprise, which is complex and evolving.
- Communicating the business value of the Exchange Network and its integration with E-Enterprise in terms that are accessible and relevant for audiences that are not experts in information technology.
- Engaging with and obtaining robust feedback from external stakeholders about the design of E-Enterprise.
- Raising awareness and understanding of the EN and how it integrates with and underpins E-Enterprise

The bidder is encouraged to address these challenges in its proposal.

3. SERVICES SOUGHT

The bidder should provide a single proposal including the following elements. Bidders should address **all items below**.

1. Effective branding of the E-Enterprise initiative based on research including a visual identity program to bring more cohesiveness to existing programs and publications and improve messaging in future projects.
2. Development of an effective E-Enterprise for the Environment logo.
3. Support for refinement of the E-Enterprise mission and vision statements.
4. Development of an E-Enterprise website that directs site visitors to pages relevant to their needs. **Desired website elements are described in Appendix A to this RFP.**
5. Help with packaging core messages on E-Enterprise and the Exchange Network into content and products that engage stakeholders and build support and awareness.
6. Develop communications products for E-Enterprise and the Exchange Network such as website content, printed materials, presentations, promotional videos as part of a core library of outreach materials for identified audiences.
7. Outreach and support to ambassadors, such as PowerPoints containing key messages, one pagers, and other tools that can allow leaders of the E-Enterprise and Exchange Network efforts to discuss the initiatives clearly and with common tones to a variety of audiences across the U.S.
8. Strategies for peer-to-peer outreach to line managers and staff about E-Enterprise and the Exchange Network, seeking their participation and engagement in the development of both initiatives in their program areas.
9. Engagement through public listening sessions or roundtables. This includes expert input on the policy, design and implementation of E-Enterprise projects, as well as suggestions for additional projects and tools to develop.
10. Develop a quarterly electronic newsletter.
11. Additional relevant services that may be recommended by the bidder.

4. CORPORATE AND STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Preference will be given to bidders that:

1. Demonstrate experience implementing three projects similar in scope to this work during the last five years.
2. Demonstrate experience working with local, state, or federal governments; non-profit associations; or organizations focused on the protection of human and environmental health.
3. Demonstrate an ability to understand the technological concepts behind web services and web application programming interfaces (APIs) and create messaging and products that promote their benefits and business value.
4. Include a project manager with at least five years of experience in project management.
5. Include a senior-level designer with at least five years of experience in website design and development.

5. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

At a minimum, the proposal must include the following:

1. Bidder's name, location, and complete contact information.
2. All subcontractor(s) name(s) and location(s).
3. A project overview, which should not exceed two pages, that summarizes the bidder's proposed approach to the work. The overview should demonstrate that the bidder understands ECOS, EPA, E-Enterprise for the Environment, the Exchange Network, and the project objectives. The overview should contain the project completion date and the bid.
4. A project narrative that provides a detailed, stepwise description of how the bidder proposes to complete the work successfully including:
 - a description of its brand development process and the key steps it will take in support of this effort.
 - the process for identifying priority target audiences for communications and how it will structure initial campaigns to achieve communications objectives.
 - the process that will be used to develop and deliver key messages, and how it will prioritize actions for specific audiences.
 - how it will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of various communications efforts.
5. A detailed project schedule.
6. A detailed budget listing:
 - tasks identified in the schedule;
 - the proposed personnel assigned to each task and their anticipated level of effort (i.e., hours); and
 - the proposed budget for each task, including any suggested changes to tasks and or timing.
7. Names and contact information for three references for whom bidder has provided services similar in scope to the work during the last five years.
8. Corporate and staff qualifications as outlined in Section 4, and resumes for the key project personnel and key subcontract personnel proposed for the work.

Bidder's proposal should not exceed a total of 20 pages, exclusive of any samples of past work and resumes. Submission of additional materials not specifically requested in this RFP will not be reviewed.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

ECOS will use the following criteria to guide evaluation of bidder proposals but is not limited to this list.

1. Qualifications – 20 %. This will include corporate and staff qualifications including number of years' experience conducting similar work.
2. Services Sought – 50 %. This will include strength of bidder proposal related to messaging, branding, design, plan of action, communication within and across key audiences, coordination between E-Enterprise and the Exchange Network, and others deemed relevant. The E-Enterprise website is scored separately.

3. E-Enterprise Website (Appendix A) – 25%. This will include strength of plan and on-going maintenance of the E-Enterprise website.
4. Schedule – 5%. This will include demonstration of key deliverables, schedule and tracking, and ability to provide adequate staff resources.

ECOS may seek presentations from a limited number of bidders to assist in making an evaluation of bidders.

7. COST

This is a fixed price agreement.

8. SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

Responses to this RFP are due to ECOS by 5:00 p.m. Eastern on Thursday, February 5, 2015. Proposals must be e-mailed as two (2) PDF files to Ms. Layne Piper, lpiper@ecos.org:

- Proposal (.pdf #1)
- Samples of past work and resumes (.pdf #2)

In the subject line of the e-mail, enter “Response to RFP for Strategic Communications Support.” Receipt of proposals will be acknowledged by return e-mail from Layne Piper. If a .pdf is too large to e-mail, the bidder may provide Ms. Piper with a file sharing address that allows ECOS to download the file *in whole before the deadline*.

Hard copy submittals will not be accepted or acknowledged.

Late submissions will not be accepted.

9. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Please contact Ms. Beth Graves, bgraves@ecos.org, for questions related to this announcement. Questions and responses to them will be publically shared on an on-going basis through Thursday, January 29, 2015, Q&A section of <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/e-enterprise>. Potential bidders are solely responsible for checking this webpage for response to questions or any updates related to this RFP.

ECOS may choose to hold a conference call during the RFP open period. If this decision is made, notice will be provided via the Q&A section of <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/e-enterprise>.

10. WAIVER AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

By submitting a bid in response to this RFP, bidder expressly waives any and all claims against ECOS, its officers, directors, employees, subcontractors, and agents, and assumes full responsibility for any and all damages, claims, losses, costs, and expenses that the bidder may incur arising from or relating to this RFP or its response to this RFP. This waiver does not apply to damage or loss resulting from the sole negligence, gross negligence, or willful misconduct of ECOS, its directors, officers, employees, or agents.

Bidder expressly acknowledges that its response to this RFP does not create a contract between bidder and ECOS.

Bidder expressly acknowledges that ECOS is under no obligation to provide one-on-one feedback to any bidder concerning bidder's response, ECOS' methodology and deliberations for evaluating responses, or ECOS' selection of a contractor.

ECOS reserves the right to contact individual bidders for any reason and at any point in its decision-making process. ECOS is under no obligation to disclose any contact with any bidders.

Bidder expressly acknowledges that the decision to select or not select a contractor in response to this RFP is:

1. made at ECOS' sole discretion,
2. may be based on any factors ECOS chooses to consider, and
3. may or may not be based solely on cost considerations.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY AND NONDISCLOSURE

By submitting a bid in response to this RFP, the bidder agrees to keep confidential and not use or disclose any information acquired during the bidding process concerning ECOS, its business, finances, or operations. The provisions of this section shall not prevent the bidder from disclosing information to the extent required by a judicial order or other legal obligation, provided that, in such event, the bidder shall promptly notify ECOS in writing, and shall cooperate with ECOS to contest or minimize the scope of the disclosure (including application for a protective order).

Bidder expressly acknowledges that ECOS may be required to disclose the contents of any bid received. Further, bidder expressly acknowledges that ECOS will distribute the bids, via e-mail, to a team of ECOS members who will act as reviewers. As state employees, one or more of these reviewers may be bound by their state's requirements to disclose information sent to their state's e-mail system. Consequently, neither ECOS nor its members are under any obligation to keep any bid confidential.

APPENDIX A: E-Enterprise for the Environment Website Design Specifications

The purpose of the E-Enterprise website is to be a one-stop, easy-to-use resource for all new and existing E-Enterprise partners and their customers (including, but not limited to, the public, the regulated community, and non-governmental agencies), Congress, and federal agencies. It should also promote E-Enterprise and its widespread adoption.

Because it is the repository for all E-Enterprise tools and information needed by partners to understand and participate in E-Enterprise, the website must be easy to navigate. New partners and new staff/contractors of existing partners may not be familiar with E-Enterprise, so website navigation must be highly intuitive. The "look and feel" should be similar to the Exchange Network Website: <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/>

The website should be visually appealing, but not "commercial" in feel or approach. The website is not being used for e-commerce purposes. Users will not use passwords or require secure access.

The website must comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220), August 7, 1998.

I. Work to be Performed

The bidder will provide project management, website design, and related website development services in support of the design and launch of the E-Enterprise website. The following tasks are required as part of the work:

1. Assessment of the current EN website to determine opportunities for similar approaches to navigation, organization, utility, and visual appeal.
2. Identification and utilization of an appropriate, easy-to-use, open-source, online publishing platform. ECOS prefers WordPress, however, other platforms will be considered. Bidder must recommend one platform and provide an explanation for the choice.
3. Development of three design options for ECOS' consideration.
4. A final, ECOS-selected logo will be prominently displayed across the new website.
5. Identification of and securing the domain in ECOS' name.
6. Setup of a Google Analytics account and incorporation of Google Analytics across the entire site.
7. Migration of all existing-Enterprise-related content from <http://www.exchangenetwork.net/e-enterprise>.
8. Testing of the new site to assure Section 508 compliance.
9. Deployment of the website to ECOS' web hosting environment.
10. Development and delivery of training for key ECOS staff and others at ECOS' location, and an estimate of how much time such training would require.
11. Development of documentation for website content management.

Bidder is encouraged to propose additional website-related tasks that will help ECOS achieve its project objectives. Each proposed additional task must be accompanied by a full cost estimate and implementation schedule, and presented apart from the bid for the work requested in this Appendix.

II. Project Schedule

Bidder must complete all E-Enterprise website work by August 14, 2015. Earlier proposed completion dates are encouraged. Bidder must provide clear timeline that demonstrates the proposed work breakdown structure and project schedule. The timeline should include dependency relationships among tasks.

Odwyerpr.com