



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:** Communications Strategy & Implementation

December 11, 2015

Your firm is invited to submit a proposal to provide the West Virginia Coalition for Technology-Based Economic Development, Inc. (dba TechConnectWV) with the necessary information to contract for communications strategy and implementation.

The intent of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to identify and select an experienced planning consultant or firm that will be responsible for designing and implementing a comprehensive communications strategy for TechConnectWV.

The submittal, consisting of an **electronic copy** of your proposal, should be sent via email to [anne@techconnectwv.org](mailto:anne@techconnectwv.org) with the subject line, "**Communications--(Name of Your Company),**" and should be received no later than **5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time, January 11, 2016** by TechConnectWV.

Nothing herein is intended to exclude any responsible offer or in any way restrain or restrict competition. On the contrary, all responsible firms are encouraged to submit proposals. TechConnectWV reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals submitted.

This RFP does not commit TechConnectWV to any specific course of action. While TechConnectWV may intend to give notice of acceptance to a respondent, it does not bind TechConnectWV to purchase any service or product until a formal contract is executed between TechConnectWV and the respondent.

Technical questions concerning this Request for Proposal should be directed to Anne Barth, TechConnectWV Executive Director, at [anne@techconnectwv.org](mailto:anne@techconnectwv.org).

Sincerely,

*Anne Barth*

Anne Barth, Executive Director  
TechConnectWV  
[anne@techconnectwv.org](mailto:anne@techconnectwv.org)

## **Introduction**

TechConnectWV (TCWV) desires to engage a professional service firm to be responsible for creating and implementing a comprehensive communications strategy, including through traditional and social media, designed to increase awareness of the organization and its goals, increase exposure to TCWV by entrepreneurs and all additional components of the innovation ecosystem, and identify TCWV in the forefront of innovation-based economic development. Preference will be given to West Virginia-based firms.

## **Mission of TCWV**

TCWV is a coalition of professionals dedicated to growing and diversifying West Virginia's economy by advancing innovation-based economic development. The organization is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation with broad membership from the private, public, higher education, research, and nonprofit sectors. TCWV was created to facilitate the growth of West Virginia's technology economy and the commercialization of research innovations developed across the state.

The formation and vision for TCWV was based upon three key facts:

- Technology drives national and state economic growth in the United States and provides critical economic diversity
- Technology-based economic development provides more jobs and higher-paying jobs than activities in any other economic sector
- Creation of higher-paying jobs will support growth in every sector of the state economy and will benefit all West Virginians

TechConnectWV's goals are to diversify the state's economy, spur creation of high-wage jobs in high-growth industries, and promote economic prosperity.

## **Background**

With the assistance of the Battelle Institute, TCWV identified four areas of technology that are best suited for development in the state: Advanced Energy, Biometrics, Biotechnology, and Chemicals and Advanced Materials. Blueprints detailing strategies and actions for each platform are available on TCWV's website, [www.techconnectwv.org](http://www.techconnectwv.org). TCWV also identifies advanced manufacturing as an important economic driver for West Virginia.

A common theme evidenced in each of the Blueprints is the need to raise awareness of the importance of innovation-based economic development. Innovation and technology lead not only to more jobs, but also to higher-paying jobs, fueling economic growth and increasing the standard of living across entire states and regions where innovation-based economic development is prevalent.

A key strategy to advance innovation-based economic development is to develop a culture that supports innovation and entrepreneurship. TCWV seeks to implement a comprehensive communications strategy designed to foster and grow that culture by increasing awareness and understanding of the opportunities presented by the innovation economy.

## **Scope of Work**

TCWV has previously conducted market research and seeks a proposal for implementation and execution.

The Scope of Work will include creation of a comprehensive, strategic communications plan with consistent messaging through all forms of media to increase recognition of TCWV and its goal to advance innovation-based economic development through Oct. 2, 2017. The plan should:

- A. Develop and produce monthly online newsletter under direction of executive director.
- B. Propose and implement a fully-integrated, ongoing social media strategy utilizing TCWV's website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, and other forms of social media.
- C. Provide resources and strategy for traditional earned media including media advisories, press releases, ideas for op-ed columns, talking points, and more as needed.
- D. Provide integrated means to share innovation success stories in West Virginia through TCWV's newsletter, as well as traditional and social media.
- E. Coordinate publicity for annual conferences and events, as needed, including two (2) SBIR events; two (2) Women & Minorities Technology Conference; and four (4) events designed to foster student interest and engagement in entrepreneurship.
- F. Coordinate and implement social media strategy for events outlined in section E. (Post on Facebook, send out Tweets, etc.)

## **Eligibility Requirements**

TCWV is seeking an experienced communications consultant with the following qualifications:

- Experience in design and implementation of comprehensive communications strategy. Please provide the professional background of the entity and the experience of each administrative and/or project staff person that will be assigned to this project;
- Capability to perform the work on schedule and on budget;
- Management capacity, knowledge, skills, and experience to oversee the implementation of a comprehensive communications strategy;
- Knowledge of and experience working with technology-based economic development is a plus.

## **Anticipated Timeline**

Contracting with the selected firm is envisioned by January 31, 2016. TCWV staff will work with the selected firm to develop priorities for completion and a final, detailed timeline. The work will conclude on or before October 2, 2017.

## **Proposal Contents**

At minimum, proposals shall include the following information:

- Response to the Eligibility Requirements set forth above;
- Relevant experience on similar projects and how those might relate to this RFP;
- Two references from clients that have worked with the entity in the last 3 years.

## **Review of Proposals**

Proposals will be reviewed by TCWV's Executive Committee. Providers will be evaluated based on the criteria established herein. An interview may be required upon TCWV's discretion. Proposals using

subcontractors to fulfill elements of this overall project will be considered; however the respondent is solely responsible for the financial commitment, oversight, performance and quality assurance of any subcontractors they utilize in the fulfillment of this contract.

### **Right to Reject Proposal**

Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the proposing firm of the terms and conditions stated herein unless any exception is clearly and specifically noted in the letter of transmittal of the RFP. Any such exception must be mutually agreed upon by the consultant and the requesting entity in any final contract.

1. The RFP is intended to provide enough information to respond to the RFP, but it is the Respondent's responsibility to obtain additional information deemed necessary to provide a complete and effective comprehensive communications strategy for TCWV. It is the responsibility of the Respondent to ensure all information contained within the response is accurate and reliable.
2. TCWV shall have the right to reject or accept any proposal or offer, or any part thereof (e.g., any component of any proposed solution) for any reason whatsoever, and to accept other than the lowest offer, at its sole discretion.
3. Solicitation by TCWV of proposals does not constitute an agreement by TCWV to extend funding to any party for the project under consideration. TCWV may, in its sole discretion, elect not to pursue this project in any manner.
4. Any recommendations or conclusions from this RFP process concerning the service provider shall not constitute a right (property or otherwise). By submitting a proposal, the service provider agrees to waive any right it may have to bring any claim, whether in damages or equity, against TCWV, its agents, employees and members, with respect to any matter arising out of any process associated with this RFP.
5. By submitting a proposal, each applicant grants to TCWV the right to duplicate, use, disclose, and distribute all of the materials submitted for purposes of evaluation, review, and research.
6. TCWV is not responsible for loss or damage to the material submitted, or for any unauthorized use or misuse of the submitted materials by and third party. Any submission to TCWV shall become the property of TCWV (not including any intellectual property rights contained in such submission), and TCWV is not required to return any submitted materials to any applicant.
7. TCWV is not liable for any costs incurred by any service provider prior to signing a contract by all parties concerned. TCWV will not be liable for any costs incurred in replying to this request for proposals.