



Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency

**One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

Marketing Communications and Advertising Services

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I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

MassHousing is requesting proposals pursuant to this Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for a marketing and advertising consultant to enter into a one-year contract with the option of one, one-year extension.

The purpose of the contract is to build awareness of and generate applications for a new down payment grant program for low- and moderate-income, first-time homebuyers who currently reside in “disproportionately impacted communities” which are the 26 Massachusetts Gateway Cities¹ as well as Boston, Framingham and Randolph).

These down payment and closing costs assistance grants are made possible by funding from the federal government’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. Funds will be available to eligible home buyers beginning on October 17, 2022. Depending on their income tier, approved buyers can receive a maximum of either \$30,000 or \$50,000. Approximately \$60 million in total assistance is available. The program expects to assist approximately 1,500 home buyers.

The program will be implemented by two of the Commonwealth’s quasi-public agencies, MassHousing (the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency), and MHP (the Massachusetts Housing Partnership).

The objective of this advertising and marketing engagement is to build public awareness of the program among the target audience of low- and moderate-income prospective first-time home buyers, and to direct those buyers to visit relevant websites where they can learn more and pre-qualify for the assistance. More specific information on the program is included at the end of this document.

MassHousing will serve as the lead agency for this engagement and will have day-to-day management oversight of the contractor. The contractor will also have periodic collaboration with MHP.

For more information about the ARPA Down Payment Assistance & Closing Costs Grant Program see Attachment A attached hereto.

II. BACKGROUND

MassHousing provides mortgage financing and related services targeting the affordable housing market in Massachusetts. Created in 1966 by an act of the Massachusetts Legislature, MassHousing operates as a self-supporting, independent authority of state government. MassHousing raises mortgage capital through the issuance of taxable and tax-exempt revenue bonds and is organized around six primary business lines: Rental Business Development, Rental Underwriting, and Rental Management, Home Ownership Lending Operations, Home Ownership Production, Home Ownership Servicing and Operations, and the Mortgage Insurance

¹ The 26 Massachusetts Gateway Cities are Attleboro, Barnstable, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield, and Worcester.

Fund. Support services such as accounting and financial reporting, legal, and information technology are provided by a group of corporate offices.

MassHousing's Rental Management business line oversees a portfolio comprised of mortgage loans originated by MassHousing's Rental Business Development and Rental Underwriting business lines, and this entire portfolio is serviced in-house. MassHousing's servicing of this portfolio includes regulatory oversight and compliance with requirements stemming from various housing subsidy contracts. Rental Management also provides regulatory and subsidy contract administration services to other entities, principally the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD").

MassHousing's Home Ownership Servicing and Operations business line oversees a portfolio of single-family mortgage loans to first time homebuyers and other qualified borrowers. These loans were originated by MassHousing-approved lenders across the state under MassHousing's auspices and then subsequently purchased and serviced by MassHousing.

The Mortgage Insurance Fund ("MIF") was established to provide an additional source of primary mortgage insurance for certain borrowers. MIF is the primary insurer for single-family loans made by MassHousing and is also an insurer approved by the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac), the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and Massachusetts community banks and credit unions.

For additional information about MassHousing, please visit our web site at www.MassHousing.com. For a detailed overview of MassHousing, including its financials, please review the most recent MassHousing Information Statement, and Annual Report. Both documents as well as others can be found on MassHousing.com website at <https://www.masshousing.com/en/about/investors>.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

- Develop an understanding of:
 - the objectives of ARPA and this program
 - how MassHousing and MHP provide financing to home buyers
 - the role of a new, third-party website administered by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association in pre-qualifying buyers; and
 - other existing state down payment assistance programs.
- Develop a strategy to reach the target audience
- Recommend a mix of advertising and marketing channels
- Develop racially diverse, culturally sensitive creative assets in English, Spanish and Portuguese
- Traffic ads to media outlets
- Work with MassHousing and MHP to determine key performance indicators
- Track campaign performance
- Recommend campaign optimizations to improve performance
- Provide monthly, written analytics reports on campaign performance
- Provide a final performance report at the end of the engagement

- Collaborate with MassHousing, MHP and other partners as needed

IV. CONTENT OF PROPOSALS

This RFP is designed to elicit all information considered essential to evaluating each proposal. There is no intent to limit the content of the proposals. Respondents may include such additional information as may be appropriate, or offer alternate solutions, but should not exclude any information requested in this RFP.

In support of MassHousing’s longstanding commitment to confront the housing challenges facing the Commonwealth to improve the lives of its people, MassHousing will prioritize organizations who align with the Agency’s values and its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

All proposals should contain the following information:

A. Transmittal Letter/Firm Description/Executive Summary

Proposals must be accompanied with a transmittal letter on company stationery or letterhead and signed by an individual legally authorized to bind the company. The transmittal letter should identify the individual(s) involved in preparing the proposal, as well as a single point of contact for the company. The transmittal should contain or be accompanied by a detailed description of the firm (including background on the firm’s financial stability) as well as a summary of the contents of the proposal.

MassHousing is an equal opportunity employer and seeks to provide procurement, contracting and employment opportunities for minority, women, veterans, LGBT, and persons with disabilities. We encourage responses from entities which describe strategies to actively promote and recruit diverse vendors, workers, and contractors. Responses that describe the benefits of direct, specific, and measurable access to employment and contracting opportunities created by the proposed project will be favorably reviewed.

B. Experience and Qualifications

Proposals should describe the relevant experience of the firm and of the key personnel that will be providing the services. Relevant experience includes not only services like those being sought by MassHousing but also any past experience with entities similar to MassHousing.

C. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan

Please provide the following information about your organization's commitment to the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion and related activities.

Organizational and Workforce Diversity

1. Describe your organization's activities that reflect your commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and the impact, if any, it has on your organization's competitive position.
2. Describe the diversity makeup of your Board of Directors and executive leadership team. Please provide the breakdown by gender and ethnicity.
3. Please provide documentation if your company is certified as a diverse business (M/WBE, veteran-owned VBE, LGBT-owned, and/or disability-owned business).

Vendor/Consultant/Supplier Diversity

1. For all vendor/consultant/supplier goods and services purchased in the last three years, what is the dollar volume/percentage paid to M/WBE, veteran-owned VBE, LGBT-owned, and/or disability-owned businesses?
2. What are your proposed partnerships, spending goals and commitments regarding increasing purchases of goods and services from diverse businesses?

D. References

Please provide a list of at least three (3) companies that MassHousing can contact as references for which the respondent has provided similar services within the past three years, including:

1. Name, address, and phone number of each company.
2. General description of the engagement; and
3. Contact name and telephone number(s) of those who can talk knowledgeably about their experience with the respondent and any system issues that arose during the implementation of their project.

E. Project Plan

Provide a step-by-step project plan for performing and completing the solicited services as described in Attachment A. Your Project Plan should include:

1. Key personnel and their roles in providing the service.
2. Your general approach and methodology in providing the services. You may provide suggestions or alternatives to any approach described in Attachment A as long as you also respond to the described approach.
3. Details about project phases, including a list of deliverables, sign-off points, timelines, milestones, software components (if any), subcontractors, and training.

4. Expectations of MassHousing’s staff to assist with the process.

F. Support

Please describe whether there is typically an on-going relationship with respondent and its clients after implementation. Please describe the way respondent communicates with clients after implementation, whether through industry-related newsletters published by respondent, continuing educational workshops, etc.

G. Adverse Actions

Please include a description of any insurance claim, criminal investigation or material litigation against your firm or members of your firm in the last ten (10) years, any instances in which your firm has been debarred by state or federal government and the circumstances for the debarment, as well as a summary of any formal complaints filed against your firm or members of your firm containing allegations of discrimination in the last ten (10) years.

H. Conflicts of Interest

Please describe any facts you are aware of that would result in a conflict of interest with MassHousing if a contract was awarded to your firm.

I. Pricing

Please provide a detailed pricing structure for delivering the services (use a matrix or chart if necessary).

V. METHOD OF SELECTION/AWARD

A. Contract Award

Contract will be awarded to the respondent whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to MassHousing, in its sole discretion, considering price and other evaluation criteria as set forth in this RFP.

MassHousing reserves the right to negotiate the terms of the contract(s), including the contract amount(s), with the selected respondent prior to entering into a contract. The contents of the respondent’s proposal and this RFP, and any amendments thereto, shall become contractual obligations if an engagement of services ensues. Contract selections should be distinguished from a contract award. Contracts will not be considered awarded until negotiation of terms is final. Failure of a successful respondent to accept these obligations in contractual agreement may result in cancellation of a respondent’s selection. If contract negotiations cannot be concluded successfully with any selected respondent(s), MassHousing may, in its sole discretion, negotiate a contract with the next ranked respondent.

One or more contracts may be awarded as a result of proposals submitted in response to this RFP. MassHousing reserves the right to award contracts for individual deliverables if that is advantageous to MassHousing. By submitting a proposal pursuant to this RFP, the selected respondent agrees to enter into an agreement with MassHousing in substantially the same form as MassHousing's Standard Services Agreement attached hereto as Attachment B.

B. Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals submitted in accordance with this RFP will be evaluated by a selection committee composed of MassHousing staff. All respondents will be notified of the outcome of the review of their proposal. Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to requirements of RFP
- Financial and organizational stability of respondent
- Understanding of proposed scope of services and approach in addressing MassHousing's specific needs and objectives
- Quality and timeliness of proposed work plan
- Technical capabilities (in terms of personnel, equipment, and materials) and management plan (including staffing of key positions, method of assigning work, and procedures for maintaining level of service)
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion plan
- Demonstrated experience and qualifications of respondent and respondent's staff assigned to perform the solicited services
- Ability to provide a cost-effective solution to meet the needs of MassHousing; and
- Demonstrated successful past performance based on references.

VI. SCHEDULE AND INSTRUCTIONS

A. Number of Proposals and Due Dates

Please submit one proposal via email to **Eric Gedstad, Director of Marketing** at egedstad@masshousing.com by **5:00 pm Eastern Time on Friday August 26, 2022**.

Proposals received after the response deadline will, at MassHousing's discretion, be returned unopened to sender.

B. Summary Project Timetable

Following initial review of the proposals, MassHousing will identify those respondents it elects to interview. Interviews will be scheduled within the two (2) weeks after the response deadline and MassHousing will attempt to provide respondent's with at least one week's notice before scheduling an interview.

The anticipated timetable for the evaluation process and subsequent project activities are summarized below:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Task</u>
August 12	Distribute RFP
August 12	RFP Response Period Begins
August 26	RFP Response Deadline
September 2	RFP Evaluation and Selection of Candidates for Further Review
September 9	Complete Follow-up and Reference Calls
September 12	Final Selection

This anticipated timetable is for reference purposes only and is subject to change at MassHousing's sole discretion. A copy of this RFP, as well as any addenda thereto, will be posted on www.masshousing.com/rfp. Schedule changes and/or other RFP revisions, including date, time, and place changes, if any, will be posted on the website on a weekly basis. In addition, after the RFP Response Deadline, changes may be sent directly to Respondents at the contact information provided.

C. Single Point of Contact

All inquiries regarding this RFP should be directed to:

Eric Gedstad
MassHousing
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 839-8122
Email: egedstad@masshousing.com

To maintain a fair and impartial competitive process, MassHousing will only answer questions or comments regarding the RFP that are submitted in accordance with the terms of this section. MassHousing will determine, in its sole discretion, whether any inquiry requires a formal response which, if required, may take the form of an addendum to this RFP. Respondents who initiate private communications with other MassHousing personnel regarding material issues involving this RFP may be disqualified.

D. Bidder's Conference

No formal bidder's conference is scheduled.

VII. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

A. Confidentiality

By accepting to respond to this RFP, respondent expressly acknowledges that MassHousing's business procedures, ideas, inventions, plans, financial data, contents of this RFP, and other MassHousing information are the sole and exclusive property of MassHousing. The Respondent also agrees that it will safeguard such information to the same extent it safeguards its own confidential material or data relating to its own business information that is of a confidential or proprietary nature. Federal and state laws require that MassHousing maintain an information security program to protect certain personal information related to individuals who are customers, business partners, vendors, or employees of MassHousing. This information includes the following: (1) nonpublic personal information protected by the Safeguards Rule of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (15 U.S.C. § 6801 et. seq.) and implementing regulations (16 C.F.R. Part 314); consumer reports protected under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, as amended by the 2004 FACT Act (15 U.S.C. § 1681 et. seq.); and any other information pertaining to individuals subject to data security, data security breach notification, and identity theft prevention laws. If MassHousing grants respondent access to its networks or otherwise allows respondent to view personal information related to individuals who are customers, business partners, vendors, or employees of MassHousing, respondent shall comply with all federal and state laws protecting such information while working at MassHousing's facility, while using MassHousing's protected information, and while connected to MassHousing's network. It is MassHousing's policy to employ the services of outside investigative agencies to conduct background checks on individuals with access to its networks. In submitting its proposal, respondent acknowledges that it will be required to submit to such background checks of its impacted employees at MassHousing's request. If awarded the contract, respondent shall comply with MassHousing's information security program by (1) implementing and maintaining measures designed to meet the information security objectives of federal and state laws; (2) using and disclosing customer information solely for the purposes of performing the contract; and (3) providing MassHousing with copies of the results of any internal and external audits or tests of the effectiveness of MassHousing's information security measures.

B. Non-Discrimination

In connection with the performance of work under this contract, the respondent agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of age, race, religion, color, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, alienage or citizenship status, ancestry, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws. This provision shall include, but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. The respondent further

agrees to take affirmative action to ensure equal employment opportunities for those applicants of protected groups referred to above. The respondent agrees to post in conspicuous places, available for employees and applicants for employment, notices setting forth the provisions of the nondiscrimination clause.

C. Rights of MassHousing

MassHousing is soliciting competitive proposals pursuant to a determination that such a process best serves the interests of MassHousing and not because of any legal requirement to do so. MassHousing accordingly reserves the right to accept any proposal; to withdraw or cancel this RFP; to modify or amend, with the consent of the proponent, any proposal prior to acceptance; to reject any or all proposals or waive any informality and otherwise to affect any agreement that MassHousing in its sole judgment, deems to be in its best interest.

D. Use of Respondent Proposal

All material submitted becomes the property of MassHousing and will not be returned. If the respondent intends to submit confidential or proprietary information as part of the proposal, any limits on the use or distribution of that material should be clearly delineated in writing. Respondent should be aware that MassHousing is a quasi-public governmental agency subject to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 66, sections 1-18, therefore, any information submitted to MassHousing (even if marked as confidential or proprietary) may be subject to disclosure under the Massachusetts Public Records Law.

MassHousing reserves the unrestricted right to copy and disseminate the respondent materials for internal review.

E. Respondent Proposal Costs

All respondent proposal related costs, including but not limited to, proposal preparation and presentation, system demonstrations, documentation, site visits, in-depth briefing for MassHousing, and negotiation meetings are entirely the responsibility of the respondent and shall not be chargeable in any manner to MassHousing. MassHousing will bear the costs of sending its own staff to respondent headquarters and respondent client sites if such meetings are required.

Attachment A

About the ARPA Down Payment Assistance & Closing Costs Grant Program

Who is eligible:

- Residents of Disproportionately Impacted Communities* with a borrower annualized income that does not exceed 135% of AMI** (Area Median Income) for the community of the subject property.
- First-time homebuyers
- Buyers who will occupy the property as their primary residence (no investors)
- Borrower(s) who are eligible for a MassHousing or MHP first mortgage in conjunction with the ARPA Grant

* Attleboro, Barnstable, Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Framingham, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Randolph, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield, and Worcester.

** 135% of AMI depends on county. For example, the maximum borrower income in Berkshire County, which has the lowest AMI, is \$117,855. The maximum borrower income in Essex Country (one of the counties with the highest AMI) is \$179,955.

How home buyers will apply and be approved for grants:

1. Prospective home buyer visits www.mymasshome.org and completes online eligibility application
2. If eligible, home buyer downloads eligibility letter / certificate
3. Home buyer contacts a lender who originates MassHousing or MHP home loans and who has agreed with one or both agencies to participate in this program (this list is TBD).
4. Buyer provides eligibility letter / certificate to lender
5. Lender works with home buyer to complete application for both a mortgage loan and down payment / closing costs grant
6. If home buyer is approved for mortgage loan and down payment / closing costs grant, buyer completes home purchase.

How the awarded funds may be used for the home buyer's benefit:

- Down payment assistance for up to 5% of the purchase price or the appraised value of the home, whichever is less.
- Closing costs (including such expenses as origination charges; appraisal and credit report fees; Prepays/Escrows; legal services, settlement or escrow services, survey, title insurance, transfer taxes and tax stamps; prepayment of mortgage Insurance premiums; discount points with evidence of a commensurate reduction in interest rate)

Maximum Assistance:

Borrower(s) may receive up to:

- \$50,000 if their annualized income is at or below 100% AMI
- \$35,000 if their annualized income is between 101% - 135% AMI