



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: Marketing MoCo for Business Campaign**

### **General Information**

Issuing Organization: Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

Issue Date: December 1, 2021

Due Date for Proposals: January 31, 2022

### **Contract Officer**

Name: Nicole Cantarella

Title: Creative Director, Communications and Marketing

Email: [Nicole@thinkmoco.com](mailto:Nicole@thinkmoco.com)

Phone: 240-641-6710

### **I. Purpose**

The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) is requesting proposals from local marketing firms (Consultants) to develop messaging that promote Montgomery County as an ideal place to start or grow a business. The messaging would be aimed primarily at the local business community, with the goal of encouraging new business creation and expansion projects—and changing the perception that Montgomery County is not business-friendly. Local policymakers and residents could also be an audience for this campaign.

The campaign may extend beyond local audiences to include national businesses in target industries, with the goal of encouraging businesses to move or expand to Montgomery County, MD.

The Consultant would also share recommendations for paid media placements as part of the proposal.

### **II. Organizational Background**

MCEDC is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization established in July 2016 to foster business growth and expansion in Montgomery County, MD. Overseen by a Board of Directors, MCEDC is committed to growing the county's vibrant business community and leveraging its strengths assets to build an even stronger, more stable and diverse economy.

### **Project Description**

While Montgomery County's life sciences sector has thrived and expanded over the last 18 months, other sectors like the hospitality and service industry were adversely impacted by the pandemic. In addition, the county has been challenged by lackluster growth and a reputation of not being as competitive or compelling a place to do business.

Efforts are underway to improve the business experience, and MCEDC is working to accelerate economic growth and change the narrative. One tool is a new campaign that lays out the value proposition for businesses to locate here, emphasizing success stories, assets, resources and policy changes that benefit businesses.

Campaign goals include reaching more employers with the message that Montgomery County is an ideal place to start, grow or move a business, from large businesses and entrepreneurs in targeted industry areas (Life Sciences, Technology, Nonprofits, Hospitality and Real Estate) to smaller, diverse businesses and makers. The campaign would broaden awareness of local resources available to businesses, including mentoring and access to capital. The messaging would include three options of creative concepts and taglines, as well as media buy recommendations for the campaign.

The consultant and MCEDC would implement the creative execution and paid media campaign in collaboration.

As background: the largest of Maryland's 24 counties, Montgomery County accounts for nearly 25 percent of the state's economy. Home to the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, the county is the anchor of the nation's fourth largest life sciences hub, where innovators like AstraZeneca, Emergent BioSolutions and Novavax are drawn to the area for the exceptional ability to rapidly develop and commercialize products. The county is also home to major hospitality headquarters, including Marriott, Choice and HMS Host as well as robust tech, finance and nonprofit sectors.

NOTE: There is the possibility of a second contract to assist with media buys, monitor outcomes and ensure identifiable goals are achieved.

### **III. Communication Procedures**

From the issue date of this RFP until selection and award, the designated contracting officer is the sole point of contact concerning the RFP. The primary mode of communication between MCEDC and potential Bidders will occur on the MCEDC Careers Webpage.

Interested parties can download the RFP and additional documents from the MCEDC Careers webpage beginning December 1, 2021. The RFP is being made available electronically. If Bidder electronically accepts the RFP, Bidder acknowledges and accepts full responsibility to ensure that no changes are made to the RFP. In the event of a conflict between a version of the RFP in Bidder's possession and the contracting officer's version, the contracting officer's version shall govern.

It is the responsibility of respondents to check MCEDC's Careers webpage for any addenda or modifications to a RFP to which they intend to respond. MCEDC accepts no liability and will provide no accommodation to Respondents who submit a response based on an out-of-date RFP document.

### **IV. Ex-Parte Communication/Conflict of Interest**

Each Bidder shall ensure that no improper, unethical or illegal relationships or conflicts of interest exist between or among Bidder, MCEDC directors, officers, employees, and agents and other parties to this RFP. Bidder is responsible for disclosing at the point of proposal submission of any such relationships. MCEDC reserves the right to determine the pertinence of such relationships, when discovered or disclosed, whether intended or not, and to decide whether Bidder's disqualified or cancelled as a result thereof. MCEDC's determination regarding any question of conflict of interest will be final. All MCEDC Board members, officers, employees and agents are precluded from entertaining questions concerning the completion of the proposal or the procurement process.

Questions must be directed to Nicole Cantarella, [Nicole@thinkmoco.com](mailto:Nicole@thinkmoco.com) with the subject line **RFP Marketing MoCo for Business Campaign Questions** and will be answered on the MCEDC Careers webpage. Potential Bidders are asked to respect these conditions by not making personal requests for assistance. All questions submitted will be answered in an FAQ format on the MCEDC Careers webpage.

### **V. Schedule for Proposal Submission, Review, Award and Project Scope**

With the exception of the proposal submission deadline, MCEDC reserves the right to make changes to the timeline below. Each Bidder responding to this RFP must supply all required documentation. Failure to comply with this RFP will result in the disqualification of Bidder's proposal.

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
RFP Published	Potential Bidders	December 1, 2021
Deadline to submit questions	Potential Bidders	Ongoing
Answers to questions posted on website	Issuing Office	As received
Monitoring the MCEDC Careers webpage for all communications regarding the RFP submissions	Potential Bidders	Ongoing
Deadline to submit proposal	Potential Bidders	January 31, 2022
Selection of Successful Bidder	Issuing Office	February 18, 2022
Contract Awarded	Successful Bidder	February 25, 2022

## VI. Scope of Services

### Project Deliverables

MCEDC is issuing this RFP to select a contractor to design the messaging, including creative concepts/taglines, and identify diverse and effective media outlets for a paid media campaign. The budget for this proposal is not to exceed \$150,000, including 30-45 days of time working with MCEDC after the contract has been awarded to adapt the recommendations into MCEDC's operating plans. The amount is inclusive of the Consultant's time and all other costs associated with the campaign creative and recommendations for media buys.

This budget does not include the actual media buys. The concept should work with both local targeted audiences and audiences outside the area.

The Consultant will work closely with the MCEDC marketing team and develop messaging that complements MCEDC's ongoing own, earned and paid media efforts (newsletter, website, social media, webinars and sponsored posts) for industry and programmatic areas. The campaign is expected to increase awareness about the county's many assets and resources, connecting audience with sources of assistance, including MCEDC.

The date for deliverables—three creative concepts and the recommended media buys--will be determined once Consultant is selected.

The Consultant would provide the following:

#### Creative

- Develop 3 creative concepts (i.e. the big idea) around the overarching theme "Here's How/Why MoCo/MoCo is Open for Business." Under the umbrella of that main campaign, focus on these three buckets:
  - Targeted industry areas including Life Sciences, Technology, Nonprofits, Hospitality and Real Estate
  - Smaller businesses/entrepreneurs, including women and minority-owned businesses, making them aware of local resources like mentoring and access to capital
  - The broader community and many reasons to eat/play/live/work in MoCo
- Consultant will provide executions for web, social, ads, environmental and any additional options they recommend.

#### Outreach

- Identify target audience in the DMV and locations outside the DMV that are home to

entrepreneurs and businesses in the target industry areas

- Identify strategies to reach target audiences, including diverse, effective media outlets/media buys
- Identify paid media opportunities with goals and measurable outcomes; weigh cost/benefits

#### **Project management/outcomes**

- Measure success by setting and reporting metrics for quantifiable and identifiable goals for the campaign
- Identify dedicated partner(s) from the consultant group that will work collaboratively with the MCEDC marketing team on the campaign messaging

#### **Resources/assets**

- In developing the Marketing Campaign(s)
  - Work closely with MCEDC, as well as other local partners, to build on existing research and assets, including:
    - [Economic Advisory Panel: Connecting the Dots](#)
    - [Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan](#)
    - [Target industries](#)
    - [Research reports](#)
    - Collateral ([Bio One Pager](#), [Cyber One Pager](#), [Convergence One Pager](#))
    - [Value proposition](#)
    - Campaigns already underway, like the [Immunology Capital Next to the Nation's Capital](#) Owned Media best performing — [website](#), social ([LinkedIn Permitting](#)), [newsletter\(s\)](#)

### **VII. Guidelines for Submissions**

Proposals submitted to MCEDC in response to this RFP need to include the following elements:

- Scope of Work
- Timeline and Budget
  - Detailed project timeline which aligns with the general timeline listed below. The budget must be within a reasonable cost and must support the scope of work. All costs must be itemized. If any component of the project will be outsourced to a third party, the proposal must clearly state the name of the party, justification for outsourcing, and costs
- Qualifications
  - A summary of experience (including print, digital and environmental signage) and at least one case study of a rebrand similar to this RFP (not to exceed 5 pages).
- Project References
  - Three customer references from comparable projects, including the company name, type of organization, contact name, contact job title, address, email, phone number, and brief project description for that reference.

Please address the following areas in your proposal:

- Name of firm, address, and key contact person
- Statement of qualifications, experience and history of firm
- Experience of staff who will be providing services
- Experience with similar economic development entities
- Proposed approach
- Cost of services, including options for levels of service provided.
- Three (3) client references from comparable projects, including the company name, type of organization, contact name, contact job title, address, email, phone number,

and brief project description for each respective reference.

Proposals must be emailed to Nicole Cantarella at [Nicole@thinkmoco.com](mailto:Nicole@thinkmoco.com) with “**RFP Marketing MoCo for Business Campaign**” in the email subject line **no later than 5 PM EDT on January 31, 2022**. No proposals received after this time will be considered, unless the deadline has been extended. All proposals must be signed by an official agent or representative of the company submitting the proposal.

Contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning Bidder for this RFP. All contractual terms and conditions will be subject to review by attorneys representing the MCEDC and will include scope, budget, schedule and other necessary items pertaining to the project.

### **VIII. Evaluation Factors for Award**

The following is the total weight for this RFP. Bidders must have 80 points or more to be recommended for final selection.

Scoring Methodology	
Firm qualifications	20
Staff qualifications	20
Approach	40
Cost and pricing requirements	20
Total Available Points	100 pts

MCEDC reserves the right to conduct discussions with Bidders for the purpose of obtaining “best and final offers” as follows:

- Enter into pre-selection negotiations
- Schedule oral presentations; and
- Request revised proposals

The selection committee will limit any discussions to those Bidders whose proposal have the potential for selection. The Board will award to the responsible Bidder whose proposal, conforming to the solicitation, will be the *most advantageous* to MCEDC, cost or price and other factors.

### **IX. Bidder’s Conditions, Representations and Authorizations**

By submitting its proposal, each Bidder understands, represents and acknowledges that:

- A Bidder and his/her authorized representative may withdraw or modify his/her proposal by written notice received prior to the exact hour and date specified for proposal receipt
- All of Bidder’s information and representations in the proposal are material and important and the Issuing Office may rely upon the contents of the proposal in negotiations, contractual obligations, and awarding the contract(s). Bidder agrees that the proposal will remain firm for a period of one hundred twenty (120) calendar days after the date specified for receipt of proposal or until a contract agreement is fully executed.
- Bidders are expected to fully inform themselves of all conditions, requirements and specifications before submitting a proposal. After the proposal submission deadline, a Bidder may not change its proposal or obtain relief in case of errors or omissions in the submitted proposal.
- MCEDC may waive minor informalities or errors in proposals if it determines that the error does not undermine the overall integrity of the proposal.

### **X. Post Award**

Bidders whose proposals are not selected will be notified of the selected Bidder and given the

opportunity to be debriefed. The debriefing will not compare Bidders with other Bidders, other than the position of Bidder's proposal in relation to all other Bidders' proposals. A Bidder's exercise of the opportunity to be debriefed does not constitute the filing of a protest.

#### **XI. Protest/Appeal Procedure**

Any respondents dissatisfied with the Review Committee's recommendation and who seek to appeal the matter to the MCEDC Executive Committee, must file a written appeal within ten (10) calendar days of receiving notice of the Review Committee's decision with the MCEDC COO at the following address:

Bill Tompkins  
Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer  
Montgomery County Economic Development  
Corporation  
1801 Rockville Pike, Suite 320  
Rockville, MD 20852

Any appeal must set forth in reasonable detail a statement of the reasons for the protest, together with supporting exhibits and evidence to support the desired relief. Upon receipt of a timely and proper protest, the Executive Committee will investigate the protest and will provide a written response to the Bidder within 10 business days of receipt of the protest. If the Executive Committee requires additional time to review the protest and is not able to provide a response within ten (10) business days, the Executive Committee will notify the Bidder. MCEDC, at its sole discretion, may elect to withhold the contract award until the protest is resolved or denied or proceed with the award and implementation of the contract. The determination of the Executive Committee is final.

#### **XII. Protest Remedies**

- i. If the protest is upheld by the Panel, MCEDC will consider all circumstances surrounding the procurement in its decision for a fair and reasonable remedy, including the seriousness of the procurement deficiency, the degree of prejudice to the protesting party or to the integrity of the competitive procurement system, the good faith efforts of the parties, the extent of performance, the cost to MCEDC, the urgency of the procurement, and the impact of the recommendation(s) on MCEDC. MCEDC may recommend any combination of the following remedies:
  - ii. Re-solicit the requirement
  - iii. Issue a new RFP
  - iv. Award a contract consistent with statute or regulation, or
  - v. Other such remedies as may be required to promote compliance
  - vi. Notwithstanding that a protest is upheld, MCEDC reserves the right to proceed with the protested selection or award of contract, and to implement a contract with the firm selected or awarded the contract.

#### **XIII. Contract Terms**

If a Bidder's proposal is accepted, the Bidder and MCEDC will work in good faith to enter into a binding contract ("Agreement") setting out all of the terms and conditions under which the Bidder will provide the services subject to this RFP, which Agreement will be consistent with the RFP. Among the provisions to be included in the Agreement are the following:

#### **XIV. Hold Harmless/Indemnification**

The Bidder shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless MCEDC, and its directors, officers, employees, and agents from and against all liability and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, howsoever arising or incurred, alleging damage to property or injury to, or death of, any person arising out of or

attributable to the Bidder's performance of the Agreement, provided that the Bidder shall not be responsible for acts of negligence or willful misconduct committed by MCEDC, its employees, agents and officials.

Any property or work to be provided by the Bidder under the Agreement will remain at the Bidder's risk until written acceptance by MCEDC; and the Bidder will replace, at Bidder's expense, all property or work damaged or destroyed by any cause whatsoever.

## **XV. Termination**

**Termination Prior to Expiration of Term:** MCEDC reserves the right to terminate the resulting Agreement at any time, with or without cause, upon thirty (30) days' written notice to Bidder, except that where termination is due to the fault of the Bidder, the period of notice may be such shorter time as may be determined by MCEDC. Upon receipt of any notice of termination, Bidder shall immediately cease all services except as may be specifically approved by MCEDC. The Bidder shall be entitled to compensation for all services rendered prior to the effective date of the notice of termination and for any services authorized by MCEDC. In the event of termination without cause, MCEDC need not provide the Bidder with the opportunity to cure.

**Termination for Default of Bidder:** If termination is due to the failure of the Bidder to fulfill its obligations under the Agreement, MCEDC may take over the work and prosecute the same to completion by contract or otherwise, and the Bidder shall be liable to the extent that the total cost for completion of the services required exceeds the compensation stipulated (provided that MCEDC shall use reasonable efforts to mitigate such damages), and MCEDC may withhold any payments to the Bidder for the purpose of set-off or partial payment of the amounts owed MCEDC as previously stated.

**Termination for Non-appropriation:** If MCEDC or other funding source fails to appropriate funds or if funds are not otherwise made available for continued performance for any fiscal period or part thereof of the resulting Agreement, the Agreement shall be cancelled automatically as of the beginning of the fiscal year or part thereof for which funds were not appropriated or otherwise made available; provided, however, that this will not affect either MCEDC's rights or the Bidder's rights under any termination clause in the Agreement. The effect of termination of the Agreement will be to discharge both the Bidder and MCEDC from future performance of the Contract, but not from their rights and obligations existing at the time of termination. The Bidder shall be reimbursed for the reasonable value of any non-recurring costs incurred but not amortized in the price of the Agreement. MCEDC shall make a good faith effort to notify the Bidder as soon as it has knowledge that funds may not be available for the continuation of the Agreement for each succeeding fiscal period or part thereof beyond the first fiscal year.