

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Marketing and Communication Support Services

Project No. 12-05

October 11, 2011

To: All Prospective Respondents

From: Houston Community College, Procurement Operations

Subject: Informational Letter #2 – The following questions were received in Procurement Operations within the time period specified in the solicitation document Request for Proposals (RFP) for Marketing and Communication Support Services (#12-05).

Question #1:

Is there a preference for in-state partners in this scenario?

HCC Answer:

No, HCC is looking for a firm who can provide the required services per the Scope of Services.

Question #2:

Will the difficulty in securing an intern (we are located in Chicago) affect our submission? We are happy to try to do our best to work with the College on that.

HCC Answer:

No

Question #3:

Will you all be needing print pricing as well for the marketing collateral materials mentioned on the scope of services? If so, do you have specific quantities/specs we need to follow?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #4:

Will a prospective promotional products vendor come under this RFP only as a subcontractor in delivering "media buys" or "print services"?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #5:

If so, how does one go about becoming a subcontractor for this RFP/Project No. 12-05?

HCC Answer:

N/A

Question #6:

If promotional products does not come under the scope of this RFP (Project No. 12-05), which RFP should be researched in future?

HCC Answer:

A separate Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued in the near future for Promotional Products.

Question #7:

Approximately how much of the budget will be spent on promotional products per year?

HCC Answer:

N/A

Question #8:

What is the main goal of the effort? Is it to attract new students and increase enrollment, or is it to raise the community's awareness of HCC and its programs? If both are priorities, please prioritize.

HCC Answer:

While registration and awareness is important, our demand exceeds our budget. Our primary efforts are to improve the brand.

Question #9:

What was the total budget for the last 3-year contract period, and what is the budget of the new 3-year contract expected to be?

HCC Answer:

\$1.1million (past 3 years) and \$1.5million (new 3 years).

Question #10:

What is the current average monthly agency retainer fee?

HCC Answer:

\$47,500.00 monthly flat.

Question #11:

What is the average number of agency hours billed per month?

HCC Answer:

Flat Fee.

Question #12:

How long has the incumbent had the account?

HCC Answer:

Three (3) years.

Question #13:

If you are a small business, are you still required to contract out 25% to another small business?

HCC Answer:

Yes, it at all possible.

Question #14:

Has the contract ever been awarded to an agency based outside of the Houston area?

HCC Answer:

This is only the 2nd time will have released this Request for Proposal. The first was located in the Houston area.

Question #15:

While we are based outside of Houston, our PR partner has an office in Houston. Would internships at our partner offices, satisfy the internship participation requirement?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #16:

Will you please provide us with a copy of the current budget, and how it is allocated?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #17:

Are recruiting events included in this scope of work?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #18:

Is there an emphasis on increasing enrollment or raising awareness among a specific ethnic demographic or age group?

HCC Answer:

No, neither.

Question #19:

Is there an emphasis on increasing enrollment among students who are Out-of-District and/or Out-of-State, Non US Resident?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #20:

What is the expectation for the frequency of routine status meetings?

HCC Answer:

There is no set meeting time. We schedule as needed, project by project. There is daily communication.

Question #21:

At this point, since we don't yet know the entire scope of work, it is hard to predict exact percentages of our small business partners. Will there be any flexibility to change the percentages allocated to SBEs after a marketing plan/budget is determined?

HCC Answer:

No

Question #22:

Is the current incumbent planning to pursue the contract again?

HCC Answer:

Yes, as far as we know.

Question #23:

How does the annual \$2.2 million contract break out between ad/media buys, creative services, PR services, etc.?

HCC Answer:

The \$2.2M break down is \$2.2M media buy, no commission and a straight fee.

Question #24:

Upon reading the information on the HCC RFP, we came across something that we would like clarified. One Section 12 it is mentioned that the vendor should commit to use certain HCC students as interns. Is there any other commitment we would make given that we are out of state? We were thinking of the possibility that HCC has some type of partnerships or agreements with other "sister" schools in Tampa Bay, Florida. This way we could offer internships locally and help other Community College students with the possibility of benefiting with an internship opportunity.

HCC Answer:

HCC students in Houston service area only.

Question #25:

Is the HCC issuing RFP out of policy requirements, e.g. current contract is expired and the agency is prohibited from automatic renewal, or is the HCC dissatisfied with the work being performed by current vendor?

HCC Answer:

The current three-year contract is expiring on February 28, 2012 and it has no renewal options..

Question #26:

Can you give us a break down of current marketing communications spending?

HCC Answer:

Refer to Question # 23

Question #27:

Will HCC be selecting only one vendor or will it be selecting multiple vendors to fulfill work requirements?

HCC Answer:

A single agency.

Question #28:

How much does HCC anticipate spending with the selected vendor in the first year of the contract?

HCC Answer:

Refer to Question # 23

Question #29:

Will the selected vendor be the "exclusive" provider of all marketing communications services for HCC?

HCC Answer:

Yes

Question #30:

RFP states that work will be contracted on "as needed" basis. Does HCC anticipate completing its scope of work on a per-project basis requiring separate work authorizations or will work be contracted by monthly fee or on an hourly basis?

HCC Answer:

\$47,500 monthly flat fee.

Question #31:

Attachment No. 12, Financial Interests and Potential Conflicts of Interests, states: This requirement applies to contracts with a value exceeding \$50,000. What is the monthly/annual budget allocation for marketing and communication support services?

HCC Answer:

Refer to question # 23.

Question #32:

Regarding the internship program, do you anticipate the intern(s) being full-time or is there a set expectation on a certain number of hours?

HCC Answer:

19.5 hours per week

Question #33:

Will all of the questions and answers discussed at the pre-proposal meeting on October 4, 2011 be available to all proposers? If so, how will they be distributed?

HCC Answer:

Yes, they will be posted on the HCC Procurement Operations website.

Question #34:

What level of paid media will HCC be considering for this effort – local, statewide, national or a combination of the three?

HCC Answer:

If paid media means our media buy; \$2.0 million.

Question #35:

Attachment No 2, Schedule of Items and Prices, of the RFP asks for a monthly fee/price. Since you are seeking a vendor to be on an "as needed" basis for a variety of projects, please elaborate on the factors we should take into account to estimate the monthly fee and how we would account for other large on-time costs like research, especially focus groups. Is it your intention to contract this work on a monthly retainer fee or project-by-project basis?

HCC Answer:

The fee is a flat monthly fee. Normal hourly rate balances out the fair market value.

Question #36:

Do you have an estimated annual budget for this contract?

HCC Answer:

Please refer to question # 16.

Question #37:

On page 34 of the RFP, Section 13.2, Part G, Number 2, you ask an implementation plan and project schedule. Again, since you are seeking a vendor to be on an "as needed" basis, is this plan to be overarching of the three-year contract term or for a specific/hypothetical project?

HCC Answer:

Neither, the agency contracted needs to be flexible for unexpected task such as crisis management, ad development, etc.

Question #38:

Does the HCC Marketing Department has in-house translation services, or, as your vendor, will we need to provide those?

HCC Answer:

We have in-house marketing services that either supplement the agency's work or work collaboratively with the in-house staff.

Question #39:

Please provide either physical or electronic copies of the budget records, including how funds were allocated.

HCC Answer:

Please refer to question # 16.

Question #40:

What will be the dynamics between the firm hired and Houston Community College's Communications Department?

HCC Answer:

The relationship is extremely collaborative and dependent on approvals from the head of the Communications Department.

Question #41:

Which department will the hired firm be reporting to?

HCC Answer:

The Vice-Chancellor of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

Question #42:

Approximately how many events are expected per year?

HCC Answer:

A total average of about four per year.