

Request for Proposals for Marketing and Website Development Services.

Southwest Iowa Planning Council
1501 SW 7th St.
Atlantic, IA 50022

Closing Date/Time: 12:00 PM CST, November 30, 2020

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1 Statement of Work

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to invite prospective vendors to submit proposals to develop an integrated marketing plan to promote usage of the Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA), operated by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) in Atlantic, Iowa. The selected vendor then will develop a budget based upon the accepted plan, and work with SWIPCO to implement said plan. A broad media campaign is anticipated, but the exact form it will take will be developed via the vendor and approved by SWIPCO. Additionally, the vendor will create a new website, www.swita.com, to market SWITA and improve functionality from the current online presence, specifically improved user interface to register riders for the service and collect payment. The vendor will work closely with SWITA's scheduling software provider to prepare the website infrastructure for a future integration into SWITA's scheduling system. Funding for this effort is primarily provided through the CARES Act to enable SWITA service to recover from Covid Pandemic related usage declines and to build trust in the safety of the system. Secondary purpose of this project is to provide similar support to the planning and housing functions of the agency, though the greatest emphasis is on SWITA. The first phase of the project is anticipated to last approximately one year in which the majority of the content and strategy will be developed. Years 2 and 3 shall focus on maintaining the campaign and modifying it as needs arise. The majority of the financial outlay for consulting services is anticipated in the first year, with greater emphasis on media spending in subsequent years.

1.2 Coverage & Participation

The intended coverage of this RFP, and any agreement resulting from this solicitation, shall be for the use of SWIPCO. SWIPCO reserves the right not to enter into any contract, to add and/or delete elements, or to change any element of the coverage and participation at any time without prior notification and without any liability or obligation of any kind or amount.

2 General Information

2.1 Original RFP Document

SWIPCO shall retain the RFP, and all related terms and conditions, exhibits and other attachments, in original form in an archival copy. Any modification of these, in the vendor's submission, is grounds for immediate disqualification.

2.2 The Organization

Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) is a council of governments with operations in 8 counties in southwest Iowa. Its largest component part is Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) which provides public transit service throughout the region. The office also assists local communities with infrastructure projects, housing assistance, planning, and other economic development activities. It employs approximately 100 people, and operates approximately 105 transit vehicles, providing close to 350,000 public transit rides per year. The public transit ridership is a mix of general public, work route, student transportation, taxi, medical appointments, para-transit, and non-emergency medical transportation brokered through Iowa's Medicaid system. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds utilize the system, and there is high usage by the elderly, disabled, children, and immigrant communities.

2.3 Existing Marketing Efforts

SWIPCO has handled all aspects of marketing and communications to date in house, and the agency itself considers these efforts to be piecemeal and often low priority. Outreach has typically been focused directly on agencies that serve client communities, not on riders themselves. The agency maintains a website, www.swipco.org, and the primary purpose of this website is to provide legally required notices. The agency maintains SWIPCO and SWITA Facebook accounts and a Twitter account. The Facebook accounts primarily are

used to make small announcements, recognize employee milestones, and publicize open positions. The Twitter account is dormant. Primary methods of advertisement in the past have been via radio and print advertising. As a public transit agency, there are certain requirements regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act that influence some advertising decisions. The public transit vehicles themselves are ubiquitous throughout the region and offer a largely untapped potential for communicating to the public. The internet domains of www.swipco.org and www.swita.com are owned by SWIPCO.

2.4 Schedule of Events

The following is a tentative schedule that will apply to this RFP, but may change in accordance with the organization's needs or unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be communicated by e-mail to all invited bidders and will be posted on SWIPCO's website, www.swipco.org.

RFP Released	November 6, 2020
Pre-Proposal Availability	11-9-2020 through 11-20-2020,
Questions/Inquiries Due	Noon, November 20, 2020
Proposal Due and Opened	Noon, November 30, 2020
Complete Initial Evaluation	December 4, 2020
Final Award Notification	December 10, 2020

2.5 Protests of Proposal Process

SWIPCO has developed a policy by which protests to the RFP and bid award process may be formally filed and reviewed. This policy is available on the SWIPCO website, www.swipco.org under the "Career Opportunities/RFPs" tab. A copy may also be requested by emailing Executive Director John McCurdy at john.mccurdy@swipco.org.

3 Proposal Preparation Instructions

3.1 Vendor's Understanding of the RFP

In responding to this RFP, the vendor accepts full responsibility to understand the RFP in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to SWIPCO as necessary to gain such understanding. SWIPCO reserves the right to disqualify any vendor who demonstrates less than such understanding. Further, SWIPCO reserves the right to determine, at its sole discretion, whether the vendor has demonstrated such understanding. That right extends to cancellation of award, if award has been made. Such disqualification and/or cancellation shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to SWIPCO.

3.2 Good Faith Statement

All information provided by SWIPCO in this RFP is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time. SWIPCO makes no certification that any item is without error. SWIPCO is not responsible or liable for any use of the information or for any claims asserted there from.

3.3 Communication

Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by a specified procurement official in charge of managing this RFP process. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communication.

- 3.3.1 **Vendors' Inquiries.** Applicable terms and conditions herein shall govern communications and inquiries between SWIPCO and vendors as they relate to this RFP. Inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification related to this RFP are to be directed in writing (mail, email, or fax) to:

SWIPCO
1501 SW 7th. St.
Atlantic, IA 50022

Attention: John McCurdy, Executive Director
Telephone: (712) 243-4196 ext 222
Fax: (712) 243-3458
E-mail: john.mccurdy@swipco.org

- 3.3.2 **Informal Communications** shall include, but are not limited to: requests from/to vendors or vendors' representatives in any kind of capacity, to/from any SWIPCO employee or representative of any kind or capacity for information, comments, speculation, etc. Inquiries for clarifications and information that will not require addenda may be submitted verbally to the named above at any time.

- 3.3.3 **Formal Communications** shall include, but are not limited to:

- Questions concerning this RFP must be submitted in writing and be received prior to Noon, November 20, 2020.
- Pre-proposal availability: SWIPCO staff strongly encourage all potential vendors to schedule one on one meetings with SWIPCO staff prior to proposal submission. These appointments will be the vendors' primary opportunity to learn about SWIPCO's needs and gather information needed to successfully complete proposals. SWIPCO will schedule one on one appointments with vendors upon request and subject to staff availability between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily, November 9, 2020 through November 20, 2020. Because of the ongoing pandemic, accommodations will be made if these meetings need to be conducted virtually.

- Errors and omissions in this RFP and enhancements. Vendors shall recommend to SWIPCO any discrepancies, errors, or omissions that may exist within this RFP. With respect to this RFP, vendors shall recommend to SWIPCO any enhancements, which might be in SWIPCO's best interests. These must be submitted in writing and be received prior to Noon, November 20, 2020.
- Inquiries about technical interpretations must be submitted in writing and be received prior to Noon, November 20, 2020. Inquiries for clarifications/information that will not require addenda may be submitted verbally to SWIPCO at any time during this process.
- Verbal and/or written presentations and pre-award negotiations under this RFP.
- Addenda to this RFP.

3.3.4 **Addenda:** SWIPCO will make a good-faith effort to provide a written response to each question or request for clarification that requires addenda within 3 business days. All questions, answers, and addenda will be shared with all recipients.

SWIPCO will not respond to any questions or requests for clarification that require addenda, if received by SWIPCO after Noon, November 20, 2020.

All addenda will be posted to our Web site only:

<http://www.swipco.org>

3.4 Proposal Preparation and Submission

In order to be considered for selection, vendors must submit a complete response to this RFP by Noon, November 30, 2020. Proposals must be signed by an authorized representative of the proposal and be delivered sealed to:

John McCurdy, Executive Director
SWIPCO
1501 SW 7th St.
Atlantic, IA 50022

Vendors are to submit one (1) copy. SWIPCO shall not accept proposals received by fax or e-mail. Owing to the creative nature of the work, it is anticipated that vendors may provide examples of their creative work, including digital media. It is strongly suggested that items that do not lend themselves to print to be provided by a web link that is readily accessible by SWIPCO without the need for any specific software to open files.

Proposals must at a minimum include:

Basic Information

3.4.1. Corporate description, including basic contact information such as office address, phone, website and email as well as the primary and secondary points of contact. Also include information on the size of the firm and the various capabilities you offer and biographical information on the principals and personnel who will be assigned to this account. Include any subcontractors. Please specify who in your firm will be assigned to this project.

3.4.2. Discuss current workload of your firm and ability to balance current workload as well as our project workload.

Related Experience

3.4.3. Information on your approach to projects of this type, including a minimum of three examples of other similar projects you have undertaken and how you evaluated effectiveness.

3.4.4. Specific involvement with other public transit agencies, government entities, or private firms of similar scope you have worked with in the past or are working with now that you believe presented similar challenges and opportunities.

Research Capability

3.4.5. Address ability to gather and effectively utilize research to assist in developing and implementing the marketing plan.

Proposed Action Plan, Time Frame

3.4.6. Each vendor should submit an outline of their proposed action plan along with associated timelines.

Compensation/Budget

3.4.7. Each vendor should submit expected project costs for deliverables/services outlined in their proposed action plan along with a payment schedule and an explanation on how fees are established.

3.4.8. A listing of services available and potential costs, if any, that are not be included in the contract.

References

3.4.9. Each vendor should provide three professional references for similar work that has been performed by your firm including the names, addresses, titles, email addresses and telephone numbers of the person most familiar with the work. SWIPCO reserves the right to contact any client, current or former, of the vendor relative to work that the vendor has completed or is in the process of completing.

3.4.10. Vendor Certification – Completed and signed Vendor Certification (**Section 5**).

All information above shall be submitted. It is the sole discretion of the vendor to submit any additional materials. Any respondent to the RFP that fails to submit all information requested, may be required to promptly submit missing information which may result in a low evaluation of the proposal. SWIPCO may reject proposals, which are substantially incomplete or lack key information.

Proposal should be prepared simply, providing a clear and concise description of capabilities that meet the criteria of this RFP. Vendors submitting a response to this RFP may be required to give an oral presentation of their response to SWIPCO. SWIPCO will schedule a time and date of these presentations. Oral presentations are an option of SWIPCO and may or may not be conducted. Owing to the current pandemic, these presentation may take place off site from SWIPCO's office (which lack sufficient space for social distancing) or may take place via electronic means. No firm will be penalized for not being able to conduct oral presentations in person in Atlantic.

3.5 Criteria for Selection

The evaluation of each response to this RFP will be based on its demonstrated competence, compliance, format, and organization. The purpose of this RFP is to identify those firms that have the interest, capability, creativity, and organizational strength to supply SWIPCO with effective marketing assistance. Selections will be based on the capability of the vendor to meet the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Firm's demonstrated ability to develop and implement successful strategic marketing plans.
2. Firm's demonstrated ability to meet goals and deadlines within a budget.
3. Firm's demonstrated understanding of the public transit environment in Southwest Iowa and ability to conduct market research.
5. Capability of the firm to interact effectively with clients over a significant period of time.
6. Cost effectiveness of the proposed services.

4 Additional Terms & Conditions

4.1 Personal Information

General

SWIPCO requires information related to the qualifications and experience of persons who are proposed or available to provide services. This may be satisfied by resumes, documentation of accreditation, and/or letters of reference.

Requested Personal Information

Any personal information that is requested from each Respondent by SWIPCO shall only be used to consider the qualified individuals to undertake the project/services and to confirm that the work performed is consistent with these qualifications. It is the responsibility of each Respondent to obtain the consent of such individuals prior to providing the information to SWIPCO. SWIPCO will consider that the appropriate consents have been obtained for the disclosure to and use by SWIPCO of the requested information for the purposes described.

4.2 Costs

The RFP does not obligate SWIPCO to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever, which may be incurred by a Respondent or any third parties, in connection with the Response. All Responses and supporting documentation shall become the property of SWIPCO, subject to claims of confidentiality in respect of the Response and supporting documentation.

4.3 Intellectual Property

The Respondent should not use any intellectual property of SWIPCO including, but not limited to, all logos, registered trademarks, or trade names of SWIPCO, at any time without the prior written approval of SWIPCO, as appropriate.

4.4 Respondent's Responses

All accepted Responses shall become the property of SWIPCO and will not be returned.

4.5 Governing Law

This RFP and the Respondent's Response shall be governed by the laws of the State of Iowa.

4.6 No Liability

SWIPCO shall not be liable to any Respondent, person, or entity for any losses, expenses, costs, claims, or damages of any kind:

- Arising out of, by reason of, or attributable to, the Respondent responding to this RFP; or
- As a result of the use of any information, error, or omission contained in this RFP document or provided during the RFP process.

4.7 Nondiscrimination of Contractors

A bidder, vendor, or contractor shall not be discriminated against in the solicitation or award of this contract because of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by state or federal law relating to discrimination in employment.

4.8 Tax Exempt Status

Sales of goods to SWIPCO are normally exempt from State sales tax. State sales and use tax certificates of exemption will be issued upon request.

4.9 Entire RFP

This RFP, any addenda to it, and any attached schedules, constitute the entire RFP.

5. Vendor Certification

This certification attests to the vendor's awareness and agreement to the content of this RFP and all accompanying calendar schedules and provisions contained herein.

The vendor must ensure that the following certificate is duly completed and correctly executed by an authorized officer of your company.

This proposal is submitted in response to Request for Proposals for Marketing and Website Development Services.- issued by SWIPCO. The undersigned is a duly authorized officer, hereby certifies that:

(Vendor
Name)

agrees to be bound by the content of this proposal and agrees to comply with the terms, conditions, and provisions of the referenced RFP and any addenda thereto in the event of an award. Exceptions are to be noted as stated in the RFP. The proposal shall remain in effect for a period of ninety (90) days from December 10, 2020.

The undersigned further certify that their firm (check one):

- IS
 IS NOT

currently debarred, suspended, or proposed for debarment by any federal entity. The undersigned agree to notify SWIPCO of any change in this status, should one occur, until such time as an award has been made under this procurement action.

The undersigned further certify that their firm (check one):

- IS
 IS NOT

currently registered as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise with the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Person[s] authorized to negotiate on behalf of this firm for purposes of this RFP are:

Name:

Title:

Name:

Title:

Signature of Authorized Officer:

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Title