Title of RFP: ACCS Marketing and Advertising

RFP Issue Date: December 4, 2019

Purpose: Marketing and advertising campaign services solicitation

Procurement Method: Invited competitive proposals

Contract Term: The System anticipates awarding the contract before the end of January 2020 and engaging in a one-year contract with an option to extend the contract each year for an additional four (4) years.

Issuing Office: External Affairs

Issuing Office Point of Contact: Rachel Adams, Rachel.adams@accs.edu

Deadline for Receipt of Proposals: January 3, 2020

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to identify a fully integrated marketing and communications firm ("Agency") to further ACCS communications and marketing goals. The ACCS intends to enter into a contract for a period of one year with an option to extend the contract each year for an additional four (4) years.

The Agency will work with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) to achieve its marketing goals in support of the ACCS mission, vision, and strategic goals. Chief goals of our marketing strategy include:

- Increasing awareness of Alabama's community colleges as high-quality, affordable, accessible and supportive institutions of higher education, which prepare students for lifelong success.
- Increasing enrollment by motivating students to consider and enroll at one of Alabama's community colleges
- Increasing awareness of Alabama's community colleges as engaged community members with resources for all Alabamians.
- In addition to general awareness efforts, the ACCS is seeking to promote opportunities related to apprenticeship and manufacturing careers statewide and in specific regions of the state.

The selected Agency will be required to demonstrate its ability to work in all communications channels – traditional media and digital, paid and nonpaid, and promotions – in addition to providing an effective long-term strategic platform and flawless marketplace execution, all at a competitive cost to ACCS. The estimated time frame for this proposal will start on January 20, 2020 and continue through January 31 2021.

It is our expectation that, upon selection, we will develop and agree to a scope of work to be delivered by the Agency, keeping in mind that we are held to stringent cost-control measures and always seek to be good stewards of the state's resources.

The scope and subsequent staff requirements to support ACCS are dynamic and volatile, always influenced by state budget fluctuations, local, state and national events, and other unforeseen circumstances. While every effort is made to define and follow a specified scope of work, there is no guarantee that such scope or budgets will be maintained.

2. Overview

The Alabama Community College System (ACCS) is Alabama's gateway to world-class, affordable education and technical training for the necessary skills to compete in a constantly evolving workforce. The system consists of 24 community and technical colleges, including the Alabama Technology Institute, and Marion Military Institute – one

of five junior military colleges in the nation. The Alabama Technology Network is a part of the ACCS and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

Tuition at Alabama's community colleges is less than half the cost for the same core, academic courses as those taught at four-year universities in the state. More than 168,000 people choose to study through ACCS each year.

Our student body extends well beyond "traditional age" college students, prospective high school graduates and their parents. We also serve adults, including displaced workers, career-changers, those who never attended college or who are returning to meet a particular career goal. Our dual enrollment programs engage current high school juniors and seniors in college credit-bearing courses they can take as part of their high school curriculum. Our marketing audience is broad in demographic attributes, educational background and aspirations.

The Agency will need to understand our audiences: who they are, what are their characteristics. This will include understanding the population of each region served by the colleges, as well as other audience characteristics (age, economic status, prior educational performance and plans). With limited funds, we need to consider which audience segment(s) we should focus on and what are the most effective strategies to reach and influence them.

ACCS is governed by the Alabama Community College System Board of Trustees.

The Alabama Community College System provides:

- General education and other collegiate programs at the freshman and sophomore levels prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions to complete baccalaureate degrees.
- Adult Education focuses on improving individuals' skills, productivity and training with GED preparation and testing, basic skills, and English as a Second Language.
- Workforce development initiatives provide customized, flexible, short-term training programs that are responsive to industry needs—from highly specialized training to programs that help prepare entry level employees to meet growing demands.

Mission:
To provide a unified system of institutions dedicated to excellence in delivering academic education, adult education, and workforce development.

Vision:
To develop an educated, prosperous population by providing an affordable pathway to help citizens of any walk or stage of life succeed through quality education and training; a community college system where education works for all.

Values:

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Accessibility
- Accountability
- Diversity

Organizational History

ACCS is a public system of 24 community colleges dispersed across the state, and a central system office that provides coordination, back-office support and some centralization of functions. The system is governed by a single board of trustees and led by a chancellor. Each college is independently accredited and is led by a president. For most of its history, the college system was a department within the State of AL and was subject to State administration and management.

Major legislation in 2015 changed the governance of the system by establishing an independent, self-governing, public system of comprehensive community colleges under a Board of Trustees.

3. Anticipated Scope of Work

The ACCS is seeking a fully integrated marketing and communications firm to increase awareness and enrollment at Alabama's community colleges. ACCS seeks comprehensive services from planning to execution and assessment. Elements will include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Perform or subcontract to perform statewide market research to gain insight into what is most important to students, how Alabama's community colleges are perceived, and any gaps between perception and reality. Research should include current students, AL parents with soon-to-be college-age students, as well as the general public. As the research will inform campaign messaging, it is the desire of the ACCS that this effort begin immediately upon the execution of a signed contract.
- Perform or subcontract to perform a statewide economic impact study of the state's community colleges to help quantify the System's benefit to the state.
- Develop messaging based on market research for various stakeholder groups to include: potential students, parents, counselors, elected officials, and business and industry leaders.
- Develop and implement marketing campaign to include: digital and social media platforms, radio, television, out-of-home, and print.
- Develop creative for all aspects of campaign including television and radio advertisements.
- Produce promotional materials to include promotional items, posters, and brochures.

While the ACCS System Office will be the primary client, we are interested in linking the two levels of existing marketing (central/statewide and college-specific) and will look to the Agency for effective strategies to foster coordination between these levels. The twenty-four community colleges are part of a system but are also individual colleges with their own brand, identity, distinct campus features, array of offerings, and regional attributes. There is an overall community college value proposition that all twenty-four share, which includes affordability, transfer, education aligned to careers, local convenience, and a supportive college environment. Each college funds its own marketing and acts independently of the System in their current efforts.

4. Inquiries about RFP

Prospective respondents may make written inquiries concerning this request for proposal to obtain clarification of requirements. Responses to these inquiries may be made by addendum to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Please send your enquiries to Rachel Adams via electronic mail at Rachel.adams@accs.edu. All inquiries should be marked "Urgent Inquiry, ACCS Marketing RFP".

5. Addendum or Supplement to RFP

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum to this RFP will be provided to each respondent who received the original RFP. Respondents shall not rely on any other interpretations, changes or corrections.

6. Administrative Information

This RFP is issued by the following office:

External Affairs Division
Alabama Community College System
135 S. Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36104-4340

Schedule of Critical Dates

- Issue Date: December 4, 2019
- Proposal Due Date (5 pm CST): January 3, 2020
- Review and Selection Complete (Estimated Date): January 17, 2020
- Agency Contract Due to ACCS: January 24, 2020
- Contract Effective Date (Estimate Date): February 1, 2020

7. Proposal Contents

Requirements

a) A written introduction of no more than two pages describing the firm's expertise and overall approach to entering into a marketing services relationship with ACCS.
b) Vendor's assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats facing ACCS in its marketing efforts, and description of how your firm would work from its SWOT assessment to market the ACCS.
c) Creative work from at least 2 relevant past campaigns.
d) Resume or brief professional biography of individuals or subcontractors that vendor anticipates will perform major duties and functions under this proposed contract. Include role, responsibility, and qualifications.
e) Contact information of three recent client references.

Additional Requirements

a) Digital security: Describe the digital security and privacy policies your agency has in place and any completed certifications.
b) As a respondent, your agency has a continuing obligation to disclose information throughout the RFP process should any qualifications or situations change that might render the Agency as an unqualified candidate.
c) If selected, your Agency must be registered to do business with the State of Alabama through the STAARS Vendor Self Service ("VSS"). For more information, visit VSS at https://procurement.staars.alabama.gov.
d) If selected, your Agency must be qualified with the Secretary of State to conduct business in the State of Alabama. For more information, visit the Secretary of State website at www.sos.alabama.gov and click Corporations.
e) The Agency covenants that it will have no interest, direct or indirect, that will conflict in any manner or degree with the performance of the contract. The Agency shall employ no person having any such known interests.
f) The Agency covenants that it has a policy and practice of equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination based on age, race, creed, and/or gender.
g) The Agency attests that all workers providing the services described in this RFP are either citizens of the United States or are in proper and legal immigration status that authorizes them to be employed for pay within the United States.

Agency Information

a) Headquarters address and other offices
b) Years in business
c) Ownership
d) Number of employees
e) List your current clients – Please describe any potential conflicts
f) List your former clients within the last 2 years and please describe any potential conflicts

Cost Estimate Based on Anticipated Scope of Work

Based on Section 3 herein, prepare a proposal that will demonstrate what the Agency can provide for an amount not to exceed $1,000,000.

Based on Section 3 herein, prepare a proposal that will demonstrate what the Agency can provide for an amount not to exceed $1,250,000.

Based on Section 3 herein, prepare a proposal that will demonstrate what the Agency can provide for an amount not to exceed $1,500,000.00.

8. Discussions/Evaluation Criteria/Award Process

1. ACCS reserves the right to conduct discussions with any or all respondents, or to make an award of a contract without such discussions based only on evaluation of the written proposals. ACCS reserves the right to contact and interview anyone connected with any past or present projects with which the respondent has been associated. ACCS likewise reserves the right to designate a review committee to evaluate the proposals according to the criteria set forth under this section. ACCS may make a written determination showing the basis upon which the award was made and such determination shall be included in the procurement file.
2. ACCS reserves the right to award this contract in whole or in part depending on what is in the best interest of ACCS with ACCS being the sole judge thereof.
3. The evaluations factors set forth in this section are described as follows:
    a. Experience (20%)
    b. Creativity (25%)
    c. Strategy (30%)
    d. Cost (25%)
4. The committee may invite finalists for interviews and/or presentations. Failure to attend a requested interview presentation before the committee may result in a proposal not being considered.

9. Instructions for Submitting a Proposal

Proposals should be as thorough and detailed as possible so that your capabilities to provide the required services can be properly evaluated.

All proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., January 3, 2020.

The ACCS prefers electronic submission of proposals. If files must be sent via a file sharing service, please be sure items are labeled clearly. Proposals should be sent to Rachel.adams@accs.edu.

Proposals can be sent by mail to:

Alabama Community College System
External Affairs Division

135 S. Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36104-4340

ACCS reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received and to accept any portion of a proposal or all items bid if deemed in the best interest of the System to do so.

Proposals received after the state due date and time will not be considered.

10. Terms of Contract

ACCS intends to enter into a one-year contract with an effective date of February 20, 2020 with the option to extend the contract each year for an additional four (4) years.

ACCS reserves the right to terminate the agreement with thirty (30) days' notice if the terms of the proposal and/or contract are violated.

Termination of the contract by contractor without cause can only occur with at least one-hundred and twenty (120) days' notice prior to the termination of the contract.

At the conclusion of the contract period, if incumbent vendor is not the successful bidder for subsequent solicitations, vendor will assist with transition to a new vendor. Vendor shall within two months prior to the end of the contract term provide ACCS or the successor vendor with copy of any and all materials, in any form including administrator access to websites and social media accounts, produced under the contract.