



# Request for Proposals 20RFP108 District Communication Support and Strategic Communications

Date	Event
February 25, 2020 and March 3, 2020	Advertise/Issue Date
N/A	Pre-Proposal Conference
March 10, 2020	Due Date for Vendor Questions by 5:00 pm
March 13, 2020	Questions and Answers posted on Contract & Procurement Services' Website
March 24, 2020	<b>RFP opening / due date at 2:00 pm CST</b>
April 27, 2020	AISD Board meeting for review/approval

<p><b>Deliver or Mail Sealed Proposals to:</b> <b>Austin ISD</b> <b>Contract &amp; Procurement Services</b> <b>4000 S. IH-35 Frontage Road, 4th Floor</b> <b>Austin, TX 78704</b></p>	<p><b>Contact:</b> <b>Annie Collier</b> <b>Assistant Director</b> <b>Phone: 512-414-2124</b> <a href="mailto:annie.collier@austinisd.org">annie.collier@austinisd.org</a></p>
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- Questions must be submitted via e-mail to the contact person listed above.  
**In the e-mail subject line, type: Questions 20RFP108, District Communication Support and Strategic Communications.**
- Q & A and Addenda will be posted on our website: [www.austinisd.org/cp/bids](http://www.austinisd.org/cp/bids)
- **Proposals are due no later than 2:00 pm on the date indicated.** Your proposal must be delivered by mail or hand delivery in a sealed envelope or carton. Proposals received after the specified time shall not be considered.
- **Please submit the following:**
  - Required**
    - One (1) hard copy marked "original" – include signed "required" forms
    - One (1) digital copy on a flash drive – include signed "required" forms
  - Requested**
    - One (1) additional digital copy on a flash drive
    - One (1) additional hard copy marked "copy"
- FAX, e-mail or other electronic proposals will not be accepted.
- Proposals must be plainly marked with:
  - Name and address of the respondent
  - RFP number and title above

## **Checklist and Submission Guidelines**

This checklist is provided to help you conform to all form/document requirements stipulated in this solicitation and attached herein.  
(This is not a required form, it is not necessary to return this checklist with your proposal.)

### **Understanding the Proposal**

Completed

- Read entire RFP document, appendices and attachments
- Review AISD Policy and Provisions on our website: [Policy and Provisions](#)
- Attend pre-proposal conference (not required)
- Submit questions properly before deadline
- Review addenda, Q&A and other additional attachments
- Review Proposal Format section of RFP

### **Forms**

Completed | Required

- |  Bid Certification
- |  Notification of Criminal History of Contractor
- |  Debarment, Suspension and Ineligibility Certification
- |  Conflict of Interest Questionnaire (CIQ) – electronic
- |  Strategic Partner Profile
- |  EDGAR Vendor Certification
- |  Software Vendor Certification Form

### **Submitting the Proposal**

Completed

- Prepare the proposal in the format specified and sign all required forms
- Submit required hard copy marked “original”
- Submit requested quantity of digital copies on flash drive
- Submit requested quantity of hard copies marked “copy”
- Package proposal in sealed envelope or carton properly labelled
- Deliver or mail proposal to delivery address by RFP opening / due date and time

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Austin Independent School District (herein after referred to as “AISD” or the “district”) is seeking proposals from firms qualified and experienced in providing District Communication Support and Strategic Communications. Being a legal method of procurement for school districts in Texas, AISD would like to utilize current platforms to engage suppliers.

The Austin Independent School District seeks to acquire a list of qualified communication and public relations firms to support the organization in the development, creation and management of district communications and communication strategies.

**Each Bidder, by submitting its proposal, agrees that the proposal is subject to the Austin ISD Policies and Provisions and agrees to comply with those conditions. Acceptance of a proposal will occur only when a contract is executed. Any contract will incorporate the Austin ISD Policies and Provisions and Standard Terms and Conditions and no commitment exists until a contract is executed by both parties.**

## II. HISTORICALLY UNDERUTILIZED BUSINESS (HUB) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The HUB Program promotes and strongly encourages the involvement and participation of Historically Underutilized Businesses in District-wide procurements. According to AISD policies CH (LOCAL) and CV (LOCAL), the HUB Program guidelines are not applicable for this type procurement.

## III. PROPOSAL FORMAT

### A. Preface

The Contractor shall provide an executive summary of two (2) pages or less, which gives in brief, concise terms, a summation of the proposal.

### B. Proposal

The vendor’s proposal itself shall be organized in the following format and informational sequence:

#### ***Section I – Summary of Experience***

This section shall contain the full name and address of the contractor submitting the proposal and a brief summary of the contractor’s experience and individual experience for personnel who will provide this product or service.

#### ***Section II - Scope of Service***

A description of services and capabilities as outlined in the Scope of Service and Performance Requirements sections of this RFP, in the order shown. Clearly state any exceptions taken to the specifications of this RFP, or any conditions of the proposal.

### ***Section III - Financial Proposal***

This section shall contain a straightforward, concise delineation of the contractor's fees to satisfy the requirements of this RFP. It is the contractor's responsibility to specify all costs (i.e. administrative fees, processing fees, etc.) associated with providing the products or services required herein.

### ***Section IV – References***

References are to be from government agencies and/or firms, which are substantially serviced by the vendor (references most similar to Austin ISD should be provided). Each reference must contain the reference's name, address, telephone number, and point of contact (including email address). A list of at least three (3) references from current customers must be provided.

#### **C. Required Forms**

Forms are required with **Original response & flash drive only**; they can be excluded from additional requested copies.

Contractor shall execute the following required forms (located on our website: [Required Forms link](#)), and return the **signed original** with the proposal:

- Bid Certification
- Notification of Criminal History of Contractor
- Debarment, Suspension and Ineligibility Certification
- Strategic Partner Profile
- Software Vendor Certification Form (when applicable)
- Conflict of Interest Questionnaire (CIQ). The CIQ is prepared by the Texas Ethics Commission, in compliance with Chapter 176 of the Texas Local Government Code. The form should be submitted on-line at [Conflict of Interest Questionnaire - CIQ](#).

## **IV. INITIAL REVIEW OF PROPOSALS**

Any contractor determined non-responsible or any proposal determined non-responsive will not be evaluated further. The contractor will be notified of a non-responsible or non-responsive determination.

### **Responsive**

In order for a proposal to be responsive:

- ALL required forms listed above shall be signed and included with proposal;
- Proposal shall be received prior to the RFP opening date at the address listed on the cover page;
- Proposal shall respond to the entire scope of service and performance requirements as requested.

**Responsible**

In order for a proposal to be responsible, the contractor shall be in good financial standing with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

**V. COMPETITIVE SELECTION / EVALUATION**

A. This is a NEGOTIATED procurement and as such, award will not necessarily be made to the offeror submitting the lowest priced proposal. Award will be made to the firm submitting the best responsive proposal satisfying AISD’s requirements, price and other factors considered.

Consistent with state law and district policy, this RFP does not commit the district to award a contract. The district reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and/or award in whole or in part any proposal if the district determines it is in the best interest of the district to do so.

B. The district anticipates that the evaluation process may include multiple levels of evaluation, as for example, but not limited to:

Phase 1: Initial review of the proposal by the district’s evaluation team.

Phase 2: Interviews and/or presentations of top proposals from Phase 1, followed by administrative review of finalist(s) and award recommendation.

**PHASE 1**

<b>Points</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Detailed Description</b>
<b>30 Points</b>	Proposed Plan	The adequacy and completeness of the plan offered addressing the Scope of Service.
<b>40 Points</b>	Contractor's Capabilities	The demonstrated ability of the contractor to provide services, including references.
<b>30 Points</b>	Financial Proposal	Rates for services.

C. The committee evaluating the proposals submitted in response to this RFP may require any or all contractors to give an oral presentation in order to clarify or elaborate on their proposal as well as to provide a demonstration. Upon completion of oral presentations or discussions, contractors may be requested to revise any or all portions of their proposals and submit a best and final offer (BAFO) for consideration.

D. If the district determines that additional evaluation steps are required to determine the best value between Contractors, the district reserves the right to consider any or all of the following additional criteria; the proposed price, contractor’s experience, references and record for responsibility, or any other relevant factor that the district deems necessary to determine best value.

## **VI. SCOPE OF SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS**

The following describes the service and performance requirements that the selected vendor will be required to perform. Failure to address or to fully describe capabilities to accomplish all elements of this section will result in a loss of evaluation points.

AISD (the District), including the Board of Trustees and administrative leadership seek outside providers and firms (partner) to assist with the design and development of policy level communication strategies. This partner will have a deep understanding of the context, environments and constituencies that exist within AISD and often intersect in Austin and central Texas.

We hope the partner will have experience providing consultation to a governmental body, its elected officials and administrative leadership, preferably a large school district. The partner should be a big picture thinker and be able to effectively provide guidance within the framework of a dynamic Austin—and AISD, where cultural inclusivity is valued. Ideally, the selected vendor will have a proven and strong record working with diverse communities in order to achieve equitable outcomes. The partner will assist the district in communicating and connecting with over 80,000 students and their families that speak approximately 90 plus languages in their homes, as well as a diverse workforce for over 12,000 individuals.

This partner would work with our existing communication and engagement strategies to ensure alignment between the Board of Trustees and administrative leadership, campus community (staff and AISD families), and the larger community. This vendor will be expected to support, enhance, compliment and assist with the execution and implementation of the existing communications & engagement plan, as well as the development of future plans.

This work may also include providing support to, and advice on tactical approaches to policy matters, public relations, engagement, media planning, marketing and direct advertising; all in order to share messaging and vision to students, families and the community. The selected partner(s) would help ensure understanding and support of the school district's work and tell the story of our campuses and students.

Major duties include:

- Guidance on political and community strategy;
- Cultivation of strategic messaging;
- Devising ways to streamline communications around major district initiatives; and
- Local media relations consultation.

Other duties could include (as needed):

- Stakeholder mapping;
- The utilization of market research and demographics to develop and facilitate focus groups;
- The utilization of market research and demographics to develop and facilitate community groups;
- media/interview training; and
- ad placement.

### **Financial Proposal**

The financial proposal should be based on fees that would be paid out by the District after a mutually agreed upon base rate retainer for the general scope of services. These services may be utilized across different programs, departments, initiatives and needs, or be based on a single project.

To the greatest extent possible, a proposal should outline an hourly rate and time estimation of the different jobs positions and duties that may be provided within the scope of tasks listed above.

It would be highly beneficial for the respondent to include the principal's hourly rate, senior staff's hourly rate, graphic designer's hourly rate and the agency's blended rate for work on larger projects. Additionally, it would be helpful to know which employee(s) within the agency's hierarchy would likely provide:

- Consultation and guidance on political and community strategy;
- Cultivation of strategic messaging;
- Consultation and guidance on streamlining communications around major district initiatives;
- Media/interview training and/or local media relations consultation;
- Stakeholder mapping;
- Focus/community group design;
- Focus/community group facilitation; and
- Facilitation of ad placements.

### **Term**

The agreement(s) resulting from this solicitation will be in effect for an initial term of one (1) year from the date of award by the Board of Trustees, or such date established by the agreement. The parties by mutual consent may renew the agreement for up to four (4) additional one (1) year periods. In addition, the district reserves the right to extend the contract for an additional time beyond the final expiration date if necessary to ensure no lapse in service.



## **VII. APPENDICES AND ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendices (Documents included within this proposal):
  - Appendix 1 – Purchasing and Acquisition Vendor Relations Policy CHE-LOCAL
  
- Attachments (Separate documents available to download):



**Contacting Board  
Members**

Vendors shall not contact Board members individually for the purpose of soliciting a purchase or contract during the restricted contract period.

If a vendor violates this prohibition during this time frame, consideration of the vendor for award shall be invalidated. Board members shall be notified of possible violations and actions taken.

**Restricted Contact  
Period**

The restricted contact period shall begin upon the date of issuance of a solicitation and shall end upon execution of the awarded contract by all parties.

In an effort to demonstrate its commitment to ethical procurement and contracting standards, and to improve accountability and public confidence, all District purchases of goods and services through competitive methods as provided in CH(LEGAL) and CV(LEGAL) shall be subject to a restricted contact period. Except as provided in this policy communication between a vendor and vendor's representative, and a Board member, the Superintendent, assistant superintendent, chief, officer, executive director, principal, department head, director, manager, project manager, or any other District representative who has influence on or is participating in the evaluation or selection process is prohibited.

*Prohibited  
Communications*

A vendor and vendor's representative are prohibited from communications regarding the particular solicitation at issue that are intended or reasonably likely to:

1. Provide substantive information regarding the subject of the solicitation;
2. Advance the interests of the vendor;
3. Discredit the response of any other vendor;
4. Encourage the District to reject a response by a bidder;
5. Convey a complaint about the solicitation; or
6. Directly or indirectly ask, influence, or persuade a Board member, the Superintendent, assistant superintendent, chief, officer, executive director, principal, department head, director, manager, project manager, or any other District representative who has influence on or is participating in the evaluation or selection process, to take action or refrain from taking action on any vote, decision, or agenda item regarding the solicitation at issue.

*Permissible  
Communications*

A vendor and vendor's representative are permitted to communicate with the District regarding the following:

PURCHASING AND ACQUISITION  
VENDOR RELATIONS

CHE  
(LOCAL)

1. Communication to the extent the communication relates solely to a nonsubstantive, procedural matter related to a response or solicitation;
2. Communication that relates solely to an existing contract between a respondent and the District, even when the scope, products, or services of the current contract are the same or similar to those contained in an active solicitation;
3. Communication with the District's Office of Contract and Procurement Services;
4. Communication with the District's Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Program Department to the extent the communication relates to obtaining a listing of HUB subcontractors and general questions regarding HUB program compliance requirements;
5. Communication between an attorney representing a vendor and an attorney representing the District;
6. Communication with the District in the course of attendance at vendor conference;
7. Communication with the District for the purpose of the District's evaluation of the bidder's proposal, negotiating the scope of work, or engaging in contract negotiations;
8. Communication with the District for the purpose of making a public presentation to the Board; and
9. Communication made during the course of a formal protest hearing related to the solicitation.

*Other Vendor  
Participation and  
Communication*

Regardless of the above time period, a vendor and a vendor's representative who participate in the drafting or development of technical specifications or evaluation criteria for any project are prohibited from competing in the solicitation for such project.

A vendor and vendor's representative shall send all communications, questions, and requests for clarification in writing and addressed to the District's authorized representative identified in the solicitation. The District shall post responses to vendor questions as an addendum to the solicitation.

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit the District's representative from initiating contact with a vendor, in writing, for the purpose of obtaining clarifying information regarding a solicitation response. The vendor's response shall be in writing and shall be provided to the District's authorized representative.

PURCHASING AND ACQUISITION  
VENDOR RELATIONS

CHE  
(LOCAL)

- Complaints* Any person who is aggrieved in connection with a HUB program policy decision may file a complaint in accordance with GF(LOCAL).
- Violations* The following are violations subject to sanctions:
1. Falsely conceal or cover up a material fact or make any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements, reports, or representations, or make use of any false writing, document, or electronic report knowing the same to contain any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement.
  2. Fraudulently obtain, retain or attempt to obtain, or aid another in fraudulently obtaining, retaining, or attempting to obtain certification status as a HUB.
  3. Make false reports regarding payments made to subcontractors or sub-consultants.
- Sanctions* Any person who violates the provisions of this section shall be subject to the following sanctions and to the maximum penalties provided by law:
1. The District may bar, suspend, or deem nonresponsive in future District solicitations and contracts, for a period of up to five years, any bidder or proposer, or contractor or subcontractor following notice and an opportunity for a hearing in accordance with the protest procedures in this policy.
  2. The District may, by contract, and where appropriate and lawful, impose an administrative penalty.
  3. In addition to other sanctions available to the District, the violation of any provision of these program rules may be included as an incident of breach in each contract.
- Request for Proposal and Bid Invitation* Each request for proposal and bid invitation shall include a copy of this policy.