

**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY**

***Request for Proposals (RFP) 20-45***

***PROMISE Initiative Communications Services for Mississippi State University***

ISSUE DATE: March 26, 2020

ISSUING AGENCY: Office of Procurement and Contracts  
Mississippi State University  
610 McArthur Hall  
245 Barr Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Sealed Proposals, subject to the conditions made a part hereof, will be received **April 21, 2020 at 2:00 PM in the MSU Office of Procurement and Contracts, same address above**, for furnishing services and potentially, optional services as described herein.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Indicate firm name, and RFP number on the front of each sealed proposal envelope or package.

All inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to:

Jay Rester  
Office of Procurement and Contracts (Same address above)  
jrester@procurement.msstate.edu  
662-325-2550

- A. Any addendum associated with this RFP will be posted at <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/procurement/bids/index.php> located under RFP 20-45.
- B. **Note 2:** It is the respondent's responsibility to assure that all addenda have been reviewed and if applicable, signed and returned.

**1) UNIVERSITY OVERVIEW**

- a) Mississippi State University (MSU) is a comprehensive land grant university of 21,500+ students and approximately 5,000 faculty and staff. The main campus is located adjacent to the community of Starkville in northeast Mississippi, with a remote campus located in Meridian with an enrollment of around 700 students. Additionally, the university operates several remote agricultural experiment stations and has an Extension office located in each of the eighty-two Mississippi counties.
- b) Additional information about MSU can be found at our website [www.msstate.edu](http://www.msstate.edu).

## 2) **INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON RFP**

The Mississippi State University Extension Office seeks a qualified firm to provide Communications Services to increase the reach of the PROMISE Initiative, which employs a multi-phased approach to prevention prescription opioid misuse in rural areas of the state. This is a Mississippi statewide opioid misuse and abuse prevention campaign, and plans to leverage the existing resources and assets for the campaign, the successful bidder will work together with Department of Mental Health and Mississippi State University to develop and disseminate up-to-date, accessible resources and information on the prevention and treatment of opioid misuse for individuals, families, communities, and practitioners.

## 3) **SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED**

- The scope and needs of the project, we have outlined the proposed deliverables for the project below.
  - Development of a prevention-focused page on the existing Stand Up, Mississippi website, including copywriting and copyediting
  - Integrating prevention-focused message into the current Stand Up, Mississippi social media content, including the development of graphics
  - Design and layout of prevention materials for print and digital distribution
  - Development of prevention toolkits for stakeholder groups
  - Assist with the development and distribution of on-demand virtual training, as needed
  - Provide public relations support, including drafting and distributing media releases
  - Scheduling interviews, as needed
  - Assist with research to identify and share best practices and emerging trends in addressing opioid misuse in rural communities through resources like the Rural Health Information Hub and National Rural Health Association
  - Printing and shipping collateral materials, as needed and requested
- Provide periodic reports on the performance of digital prevention materials (e.g. downloads, page traffic, post engagement, etc.)

### a) **Users**

- The Project Investigator and the Co-Project Investigator should always have access to this information.

### b) **Reporting/Forms, Custom Fields, Files**

- Reports should be provided in multiple formats. Most reports, if not all, should be viewable on screen with options to download in Excel, PDF, CSV, Word (.doc/.rtf), or API access.

- The system should have the ability to create custom fields by select users and system administrators and to define fields to all districts or schools or to specific districts or schools.
- The bidder should explain in detail the reporting function and the flexibility and ease with which the RCU/MDE can design and build reports as needed.
- The bidder should explain in detail form building function and the flexibility and ease with which the RCU/MDE can design and build forms as needed.
- Capability to isolate monitoring/reporting by district or school separately for individualized monitoring as well as aggregating and summarizing monitoring activities at the state level.
- Capability to upload artifacts or documents in multiple formats including but not limited to Excel (.xlsx, .xls), Word (.docx, .rtf), PDF, text, CSV formats, or API support. Capability to upload image files such as .jpg or .tif.
- Flexibility for districts/schools to upload and monitor multiple reports associated with compliance and reporting other educational entities/programs.

c) **Functions**

- Bidder will correspond with MSU, DMH, and other project partners on a regular basis to obtain and communicate project updates, offer and receive feedback, and develop an effective communications strategy. Correspondence channels will include, but are not limited to, face-to-face meetings, telephone/conference calls, email, online productivity software (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) and project management messaging tools (e.g. Teamwork, Slack, etc.).
- In addition to regular monthly check-ins, client consultation and account service will include the following deliverables.
- Kick-off meeting to understand key project goals and establish metrics for the project
- Draft a plan for the development of key campaign deliverables based on kick-off/discovery meeting findings and action items
- Develop a comprehensive project timeline with milestones, benchmarks and key deliverables

d) **System Maintenance and Support**

MSU has completed year 1 of this project and will be moving forward with Year 2 with the assistance of the awarded contractor. During Year 2, Contractor will work with MSU and DMI-I to create a prevention page on the existing Stand Up, Mississippi website that includes specific information for rural communities with an emphasis on

providing specific resources and tools for individuals, youth, families, communities and practitioners on child/sub pages.

In addition, Contractor will integrate prevention messaging and information on the existing Stand Up, Mississippi Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram profiles and will provide a monthly content calendar and biweekly content to MSU and DMH to review prior to posting. We will also explore the development of a prevention-focused blog that highlights stories and ideas from rural communities in the state and across the nation to share successes and lessons learned from ongoing efforts to prevent opioid misuse.

Contractor will work with MSU and DMH to develop prevention-focused print and digital collateral that is tailored to the needs of specific groups, including families, communities (e.g. local government and community-based organizations), and practitioners. These materials will be housed on the website, shared on social media, and printed for distribution at events and include, but are not limited to:

- Social media graphics
- Prevention toolkit for specific audiences
- Fact sheets
- Posters and flyers
- Brochures

Contractor will provide public relations support to MSU and OHM, as needed to

- Support the drafting, development, and distribution of communications and PR products about the effort
- Identify and secure interview opportunities to discuss the effort and ways for rural communities to address opioid misuse

The final scope of services and hours are negotiable.

#### 4) **INQUIRIES ABOUT RFP**

- a) 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 inquiries to Jay Rester via electronic mail at [jrester@procurement.msstate.edu](mailto:jrester@procurement.msstate.edu)
- b) All inquiries should be marked “**URGENT INQUIRY. MSU RFP 20-45**”

#### 5) **ADDENDUM OR SUPPLEMENT TO RFP**

- a) 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**

**a) Issuing Office**

- i) This RFP is issued by the following office:

Office of Procurement and Contracts  
Mississippi State University  
245 Barr Avenue, 610 McArthur Hall  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

**b) Schedule of Critical Dates**

- i) The following dates are for planning purposes only unless otherwise stated in this RFP progress towards their completion is at the sole discretion of the university.

(1) RFP Posted	March 26, 2020
(2) Questions from Vendors Due	April 9, 2020
(3) MSU Q&A Response Due	April 14, 2020
(4) Proposal Submission Deadline – 2:00 p.m.	April 21, 2020
(5) Award Date (Estimated Target)	May 1, 2020
(6) Contract Effective Date	May 1, 2020

**7) PROPOSAL CONTENTS**

- a) This is a one-step RFP process. The technical proposals and the cost proposals are to be submitted in a single sealed envelope. Indicate firm name, RFP# and word “1 Proposal” on the front of the sealed proposal envelope or package.
- b) At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Technical Proposal:
- i) Cover letter, indicating the scope of the proposal. The letter should include an overview of the services being offered. The letter should include a statement of exceptions to any of the terms and conditions outlined in this RFP. (Cover letter should be no more than 3 pages in length.)

- ii) Corporate Structure and Credentials
  - (1) Number of years of experience with similar projects
  - (2) Staffing levels and support proposed
  - (3) Examples of similar previous work.
- iii) Operations and Ability To Perform
  - (1) Provide operation plan. This should include, but not be limited to, acknowledgement and agreement with all requirements as well as explanations, where applicable, of the intended plan to achieve the requirements.
  - (2) Describe how services will be provided to MSU.
- iv) At a minimum, the following items should be included in the contents of the Cost Proposal: Hourly rates, additional estimated expenditures, estimated total cost

## **8) DISCUSSIONS/EVALUATION CRITERIA/AWARD PROCESS**

- a) MSU 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. MSU reserves the right to contact and interview anyone connected with any past or present projects with which the respondent has been associated. MSU likewise reserves the right to designate a review committee to evaluate the proposals according to the criteria set forth under this section. MSU may make a written determination showing the basis upon which the award was made and such determination shall be included in the procurement file.
- b) MSU reserves the right to award this contract in whole or in part depending on what is in the best interest of MSU with MSU being the sole judge thereof.
- c) The evaluation factors set forth in this section are described as follows:
  - i) The Vendor's ability to deliver the services meeting the overall objective and functions described in the RFP
  - ii) Competitive fees and total costs
  - iii) Availability and access technical support
  - iv) Vendor's experience with similar projects
  - v) Compliance with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations
  - vi) The committee may invite finalists for interviews and/or presentations
- d) Failure to attend a requested interview presentation before the committee may result in a proposal not being considered.
- e) Upon award of contract(s), successful respondent(s) will be asked to provide a transition plan and timeline and obtain MSU's input and concurrence before moving forward.

f) Proposals will be scored based on the following weights (100 points total):

Corporate Structure/Years of Experience/References – 35 pts

Operation Plan/Ease of Use/Services Offered – 30 pts

Fees – 35 pts.

9) **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

a) Proposals shall be submitted in one package (envelope or box) as set forth in Section 7a. **Please make sure that the RFP number is clearly visible on the outside of the package.**

b) Proposal – One (1) original and one (1) electronic copy (of the complete proposal in one pdf file on a flash drive) of parts 7(b)(i) (Cover Letter), 7(b)(ii) (Corporate Structure and Credentials), 7(b)(iii) (Operations and Ability to Perform) and 7 (b)(iv) should be sealed in a package with “Proposal” in the lower left hand corner. Each submitted package should be a complete copy. The original shall be marked on the first page “Original”.

c) The proposal package must be received on or before **2:00 p.m. on April 21, 2020**. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the proposal package arrives in the Procurement and Contracts office on-time. The proposal package should be delivered or sent by mail to:

Office of Procurement and Contracts  
Mississippi State University  
610 McArthur Hall  
245 Barr Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

d) Your response must include the signature page included in this RFP (See Appendix A) and contain the signature of an authorized representative of the respondent’s organization. The signature on the “Original” signature page should be in **blue** ink

e) MSU 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 University to do so.

f) **Proposals received after the stated due date and time will be returned unopened. Submission via facsimile or other electronic means will not be accepted.**

## **10) PCI COMPLIANCE ISSUES (IF APPLICABLE)**

The vendor must provide a PCI compliant processing environment using one of the approved options below. If the vendor is unable to fully adhere to one of these options, the proposal will be removed from consideration.

- a) Option 1 – Integrate with MSU’s existing third party, PCI validated payment solution (Nelnet Business Solutions – Commerce Manager).
- b) Option 2 – Use vendor’s payment processing functionality with a different MSU Merchant ID but same bank account. Additional requirements include:
  - i) Vendor must provide PCI compliance certification information, e.g. Attestation of Compliance (AOC) to ensure all hardware, software and back end processing are compliant.
  - ii) Vendor must provide specific reporting requirements and interfaces to support Banner integration and automatic posting of credit/debit card payments to the ERP.
  - iii) Card transactions processed by university personnel must be performed using hardware that is PCI-approved and point to point encrypted (P2PE).
- c) Option 3 – Use vendor’s payment processing functionality with vendor’s Merchant ID. Additional requirements include:
  - i) Vendor must provide PCI compliance certification information, e.g. Attestation of Compliance (AOC) to ensure all hardware, software and back end processing are compliant.
  - ii) Payments due MSU will be remitted on a predetermined basis, net of all applicable fees and merchant discounts. Banner integration not required.
  - iii) Card transactions processed by university personnel must be performed using hardware that is PCI-approved and point to point encrypted (P2PE).

## **11) TWO-PHASE, BEST AND FINAL OFFER**

- a) If the initial proposals do not provide MSU with a clear and convincing solution, or if MSU feels it is appropriate to offer the potential providers an opportunity to submit revised proposals, MSU reserves the right to use a two-phase approach and/or invite Best and Final Offers (BAFO). Based on the information obtained through the proposal submittals (Phase-One), MSU may choose a specific business model, and potential providers may be asked to submit revised proposals based upon that specific model.



- b) The evaluation committee may develop, for distribution to the top-ranked firms, refined written terms with specific information on what is being requested as a result of information obtained through initial RFP submittal process. Proposers may be asked to reduce cost or provide additional clarification to specific sections of the RFP. Selected proposers are not required to submit a BAFO and may submit a written response notifying the solicitation evaluation committee that their response remains as originally submitted.

**12) TERM OF CONTRACT**

- a) It is MSU's intention to enter into a one (1) year contract beginning May 1, 2020. However, upon mutual agreement of both parties, in writing it may be renewed for up to five additional 12-month periods.
- b) MSU reserves the right to terminate this agreement with thirty (30) days-notice, by the Director of Procurement and Contracts via certified mail to the address listed on the signature page of this RFP (See Appendix A) if any of the terms of the proposal and/or contract are violated.
- c) In the event the contractor fails to carry out and comply with any of the conditions and agreements to be performed under the specifications, MSU will notify the contractor, in writing, of such failure or default. In the event the necessary corrective action has not been completed within a ten (10) day period, the contractor must submit, in writing, why such corrective action has not been performed. The University reserves the right to determine whether or not such noncompliance may be construed as a failure of performance of the contractor.
- d) Termination of contract by contractor without cause can only occur with at least one-hundred and twenty (120) days-notice prior to the proposed termination of the contract.
- e) In the event MSU employs attorneys or incurs other expenses it considers necessary to protect or enforce its rights under this contract, the contractor agrees to pay the attorney's fees and expenses so incurred by MSU.

**13) ACCEPTANCE TIME**

- a) Proposal shall be valid for one-hundred and eighty (180) days following the proposal due date.

#### **14) RFP CANCELLATION**

- a) This RFP in no manner obligates MSU to the eventual purchase of any services described, implied or which may be proposed until confirmed by a written contract. Progress towards this end is solely at the discretion of MSU and may be terminated without penalty or obligations at any time prior to the signing of a contract. MSU reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time, for any reason, and to reject any or all proposals or any parts thereof.

#### **15) INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR CLAUSE**

- a) The contractor shall acknowledge that an independent contractor relationship is established and that the employees of the contractor are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of MSU and that employees of MSU are not, nor shall they be deemed employees of the contractor.

#### **16) OTHER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS**

- a) **Award Terms:** This contract shall be awarded at the discretion of the University based on the capabilities and overall reputation of the Supplier, as well as the cost. Acceptance shall be confirmed by the issuance of a contract from the University.
- b) **Standard Contract:** The awarded contractor(s) will be expected to enter into a contract that is in substantial compliance with MSU's standard contract [http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/pdf/standard\\_rfp\\_contract.pdf](http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/pdf/standard_rfp_contract.pdf). Proposal should include any desired changes to the standard contract. It should be noted that there are many clauses which the MSU cannot change (see Standard Addendum <http://www.procurement.msstate.edu/contracts/standardaddendum.pdf>) Significant changes to the standard contract may be cause for rejection of a proposal.
- c) **The Procurement Process:** The following is a general description of the process by which a firm will be selected to fulfill this Request for Proposal.
  - i) Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued to prospective suppliers.
  - ii) A deadline for written questions is set.
  - iii) Proposals will be received as set forth in Section 9.
  - iv) Unsigned proposals will not be considered.
  - v) All proposals must be received by MSU no later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of this RFP.

- vi) At that date and time the package containing the proposals from each responding firm will be opened publicly and the name of each respondent will be announced.
- vii) Proposal evaluation: The University will review each proposal.
- viii) At their option, the evaluators may request oral presentations or discussions for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in the proposal
- ix) Respondents are cautioned that this is a request for proposals, not a request to contract, and the MSU reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all proposals when such rejection is deemed to be in the best interest of the University.
- x) The proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria set forth in Section 8c.

**APPENDIX A: SIGNATURE PAGE**

**Provide information requested, affix signature and return this page with your proposal:**

**NAME OF FIRM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPLETE ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AREA CODE/NUMBER**

**FACSIMILE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AREA CODE/NUMBER**

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZED**

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRINTED NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_