



DATE: October 17, 2019
SUBJECT: Letter of Clarification
RE: Corporate Communications RFP
TO: All Prospective Proposers

Houston First Corporation (“HFC”) issues this Letter of Clarification regarding the referenced Corporate Communications RFP to answer questions timely received in the manner set forth below:

Question 1: Who will manage the agency selected and what is their experience level?

Answer: The Proposer selected agency will be managed primarily by the Chief Marketing Officer who has more than 20 years of marketing and public relations experience and the Director of Corporate Communications who has a 20-year media and communications background.

Question 2: What marketing data is available to support this RFP?

Answer: Any relevant information and data not provided in the RFP will be shared with the Proposer selected.

Question 3: Can HFC provide any insight on priority markets and local focus vs. global vs. national?

Answer: The primary focus of this RFP is local and industry trade markets. However, serving the needs of HFC corporate and any of its brands or extensions – from meetings to facility management – could involve regional or national markets as well.

Question 4: Can HFC provide greater clarity on brand focus related to assignment?

Answer: While the focus is HFC corporate, the scope includes extensions or brands of HFC, as well as facilities. Contractor assignments for HFC or its extensions could include pitch development, creation of messaging, media monitoring, coverage recaps as well as development and/or management of media events.

Question 5: What is the existing communications strategy or will the Proposer selected assist in building the foundation?

Answer: HFC expects to build a foundation moving forward.

Question 6: What is the overall process for strategy?

Answer: Chief Marketing Officer, Director of Communications and PR Director will meet with contractor, sometimes brainstorm, other times review contractor suggestions and mutually agree on a strategy to proceed forward. Sometimes communication will be by email or phone conversation with CMO, Director of Communications or other members of the Marketing team.

Question 7: Is a crisis communication plan in place or will the contractor selected be a part of the planning and response team in the event of a crisis?

Answer: A crisis communication plan has been formulated, and the Proposer selected will provide support to HFC in the event of a crisis.

Question 8: Will HFC provide greater detail on the measurements of success?

Answer: Measurements of success will be established per project or event; the goal is to have ongoing reports, recaps and analytics so that we can continuously improve outreach and effectiveness. The Proposer selected will be required to have access to their own media monitoring and listening tools.

Question 9: Will social and digital media be welcomed as part of strategy recommendations?

Answer: Yes, recommendations for social and digital media strategy are welcomed. The Proposer selected will also be asked to monitor and report on impressions and engagement and offer suggestions for HFC websites.

Question 10: Is influencer marketing considered as part of this RFP?

Answer: Yes.

Question 11: What planning and tracking tools does HFC use?

Answer: HFC uses Google analytics for HFC websites, Trendkite for media monitoring and Sprout for social.

Question 12: Why has HFC issued the RFP?

Answer: The scope and purpose of this solicitation are as stated in the RFP.

Question 13: Who is the incumbent contractor?

Answer: Dancie Perugini Ware Public Relations.

Question 14: Is travel a reimbursable expense?

Answer: Please refer to Section 2 of the Corporate Communications Services Agreement.

Question 15: May an out-of-state firm submit a Proposal and partner with a local Diversity company?

Answer: The RFP is open to all qualified firms.

Question 16: Can HFC provide examples of marketing extensions and special initiatives?

Answer: Marketing extensions complimentary services provided to organizations outside of HFC, such as National Urban League, First Robotics and Quilts. Past services included, by way of example and not limitation, were pitching, development of talking points, consulting meetings and research. Special initiatives can relate to any project given to or developed by HFC, such as campaigns and PR activations.

Question 17: Does HFC have specific measurable objectives and KPIs?

Answer: Objectives for each year change. HFC will be developing 2020 KPIs during 4th quarter.

Question 18: May an out-of-state firm submit a Proposal, or is a local office required?

Answer: The RFP is open to all qualified firms. A local presence is not necessary.

Question 19: Can Proposers suggest revisions to the Corporate Communication Services Agreement, or is scoring for contract acceptance pass/fail?

Answer: Depending on the materiality and scope of contract revisions proposed, the Proposer would not receive the full 15 points available, or the Proposal could be rejected as non-responsive.

Question 20: Are Proposers required to submit letters of recommendation from national accounts?

Answer: No.

Question 21: For purposes of meeting the Diversity Commitment, does HFC recognize WBENC and WOSB?

Answer: No. HFC recognizes and accepts certification provided by the City of Houston; Houston Minority Supplier Development Council; Metro's Small Business Certification Program; Women's Business Enterprise Alliance; TxDOT; State of Texas Underutilized Business Program (HUB); and Texas Small Business Association TSBA.

Question 22: Regarding structure for the various brands under HFC, will leadership for each venue take part in communications/pitch planning or is planning centralized with HFC leadership?

Answer: HFC facilities are managed by internal departments and will be involved.

Question 23: Is the Proposer selected responsible for project managing the creation of content on the editorial calendar of creating content?

Answer: The Proposer selected will be required to proactively update their section of the editorial calendar. There will be content creation responsibilities.

Question 24: Is HFC subject to any caps on hourly rates charged by its contractors?

Answer: No.

Question 25: What are the current high-level challenges facing HFC?

Answer: The main challenge is being able to manage the reactive media relations with proactive planning/execution, as per the scope defined in the RFP

Question 26: If the Proposer is confident that they can manage the listed activities without subcontractors, will they be penalized when it comes to Diversity Commitment?

Answer: As stated in the RFP, Proposers should indicate how they intend to make good faith efforts to utilize diverse companies to meet the 20% Diversity Goal set forth in the RFP. All Proposals will be reviewed for the Diversity Commitment and Proposers will be assessed up to 10 points.

Question 27: Who is the intended audience for PR efforts?

Answer: The audience is primarily local, though opportunities for pitching national trade are foreseeable.

Question 28: When you mention training and tailoring messages for spokespeople, could you estimate how many?

Answer: As it relates to this RFP, training referenced assistance with limited interview preparation with a subject matter expert assigned.

Question 29: Will you provide crisis-management examples or comment on pending crises?

Answer: No. Crisis planning could come into play, but this is not the main focus of this RFP.

Question 30: As part of the key messaging, is it more important to communicate the key points around HFC or the brands?

Answer: The Proposer selected will represent the HFC corporate brand. The consumer brand it represents and the facilities it manages will certainly be referenced in pitches as they are the consumer products.

Question 31: Will a non-certified firm who has applied as a DBE be accepted for Diversity purposes?

Answer: A firm must be certificated to be considered.

Question 32: Are MWBE firms expected to meet the Diversity Goal for this RFP?

Answer: Yes.

Question 33: Are we required to submit our insurance certificate with our Proposal?

Answer: No.

Question 34: Will proposals in response to similar RFPs be made available?

Answer: No.

Question 35: What is the budget?

Answer: HFC does not provide budget information during active solicitations to ensure that the best value is received.

Question 36: If our firm is a “top ranked proposer”, will we be required to travel to Houston for the interview?

Answer: If HFC elects to interview top-ranked Proposers, then in-person interviews in Houston will be required.

Question 37: Can HFC provide a sample editorial calendar?

Answer: When available, a sample editorial calendar will be made available at <https://www.houstonfirst.com/do-business>.

Question 38: What is the notification date?

Answer: A notification date has not been established for the RFP.

Question 39: May a certified Diversity firm submit as a prime contractor and a subcontractor?

Answer: Yes.

Question 40: Has the due date been extended?

Answer: No. The Submission Deadline of 2:00 p.m. on October 22, 2019 still stands.

Question 41: Is the Proposer selected expected to provide 3-5 media advisories and pitches for each brand?

Answer: No.

Letters of Clarification become a part of the RFP automatically upon issuance and supersede any previous specifications and/or provisions in conflict therewith. By submitting their Proposal, Proposers are deemed to have received all Letters of Clarification and to have incorporated them into their Proposal.