



Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

**Request for Proposals (RFP)
Regional Economic Development Website Design, Development & Marketing/Advertising**

Issue Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Proposal Due Date: Friday, September 30, 2022

Submit Proposals To:

Mrs. Colleen Kelleher
Finance Director
Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments
1000 Lafayette Boulevard, Suite 925
Bridgeport, CT 06604



Introduction

The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG) is accepting proposals from interested and qualified web design and digital advertising/marketing consultants to plan, design, develop and market a comprehensive regional economic development website for the Greater Bridgeport Region. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is being issued as a multi-task project, detailed in the attached Scope of Work (Schedule A). MetroCOG will work cooperatively with the selected consultant throughout the project on all tasks and may, at its discretion, perform some work assignments.

About

The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (MetroCOG), authorized under Connecticut General Statutes, is a regional planning organization that is guided by a cooperative partnership between the six municipalities of the Greater Bridgeport Region: the City of Bridgeport and the towns of Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull. The Chief Elected Official of each member municipality serves on the MetroCOG Board of Directors. MetroCOG, in partnership with the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG), serves as the Greater Bridgeport & Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO), the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the collective region.

As one of the State of Connecticut's nine Councils of Governments (COGs), MetroCOG works with its municipal partners to identify projects, programs, funding opportunities, best practices and strategies that advance our shared vision for the Region. The agency's core disciplines include transportation, land use, economic development, environmental and natural hazard mitigation planning, brownfields assessment and remediation, regional shared services, and a range of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and data services.

Purpose

MetroCOG is also a strategic partner and sub-applicant of the State of Connecticut's Statewide Long-Term Recovery Coordination, Resiliency Planning and Technical Assistance Project. As a partner, one of MetroCOG's objectives is to provide technical assistance and critical information to local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders on how to navigate our region's rapidly changing economic environment. To this end, MetroCOG is seeking to create a Regional Economic Development website with dedicated sections for entrepreneurial and small business resources. Furthermore, MetroCOG recently adopted a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in October 2021. The CEDS is an analysis of current and future demographics, economic and market trends, and other relevant data to assess current regional economic conditions. Utilizing a grant from the United States Economic Development Administration, the CEDS was completed through a regionally directed planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of the Greater Bridgeport Region. One of the objectives in the CEDS is to establish a dynamic online economic development presence for our Region.



The Website

As economic development strategies have increasingly become more virtual, it is important for the Greater Bridgeport Region to capitalize on opportunities through a dedicated regional economic development website. Increasingly information is disseminated digitally, with the site selection process beginning with online data research. Furthermore, without a dedicated website, social media accounts and direct e-communications, small business owners and entrepreneurs' risk being excluded from opportunities. Moreover, citizens and business owners alike rely on these digital sources for learning about local and regional issues.

MetroCOG is seeking to create a comprehensive, interactive online presence that provides a variety of economic development resources such as data, contact information, virtual presentations, entrepreneurial outreach and education, and links to legal, regulatory, financial, and public health resources. Additionally, given the influx of residents and businesses to the region due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the website should also focus on the region's key industry sectors, quality of life, investment opportunities, educational institutions, and other economic opportunities and to leverage those assets.

The economic development website should be well organized and easy to navigate for small businesses and entrepreneurs, residents, municipalities and other stakeholders. A robust 'partners' area of the website should connect all the existing participants in the regional economic development process, as this is critical for ensuring that the regional website does not become overly cumbersome with information.

Inquiries

General questions regarding this RFP should be directed to the following: Colleen Kelleher, Finance Director, in writing via e-mail to ckelleher@ctmetro.org no later than 3:00pm on Friday, September 16, 2022. Inquiries and responses will be e-mailed as well as posted at <http://www.ctmetro.org/aboutus/for-vendors/> no later than September 21st, 2022.

Please note that it is MetroCOG's policy to respond only to technical questions. Under no circumstances will MetroCOG provide interpretive guidance. No oral interpretations shall be made to any respondent as to the meaning of any of the documents, and phone calls will not be accepted. Written approval of MetroCOG is required prior to any public disclosure of the cost proposal submitted in response to this RFP or any other subsequent awards. It is the responsibility of interested firms to periodically check the MetroCOG website for amendments to this RFP and responses to inquiries.

Submission Requirements

Prospective firms are asked to submit responses in two parts: (1) *Letter of Interest* and (2) *Technical Response*.



1. The Letter of Interest must specify the following:
 - Name and address of the consultant.
 - General information on the consultant and any proposed sub-consultants
 - Name, title, e-mail, and telephone number of the individual within the consulting firm authorized to enter the company into a contract with MetroCOG.
 - The name, title, e-mail, and telephone number of the individual MetroCOG should contact regarding questions and clarifications on the proposal.
 - A statement that the consultant's proposal will remain in effect for ninety (90) days after acceptance of the Consultant's proposal by MetroCOG.

2. The Technical Response must contain a description of the consultant's proposed approach to the project, with specific attention to:
 - Project understanding and approach to Scope of Work (Schedule A)
 - Recommendations to improve/support the Scope of Services
 - Description and status of comparable project experience
 - Description of any special services required
 - Name and services for any subcontractors with a description of the level of previous working relationship.
 - Name and purpose of intended Small Business, Minority Business or Women Business Enterprises (if applicable)
 - Project schedule and timeline.
 - Resume of key personnel proposed to work on the assignment with emphasis on relevant experience.
 - Detailed organizational chart.
 - Three references from comparable types of projects completed in the last five years. Include project names and locations, name of primary client contacts and their contact information including e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. Indicate the role of your firm in each project and each project's cost and date of completion.
 - Pertinent examples of related work prepared and designed by the consultant.
 - A fee schedule.

Each consultant should submit **three (3) paper** copies and one **(1) digital** copy of their proposal in a sealed envelope bearing on the outside the name of each firm, full address, name of the project for which the proposal is submitted, and the date and time the proposal is due. If forwarded by mail, the sealed envelope containing the proposal must be enclosed in another envelope addressed to the following:

Mrs. Colleen Kelleher
Finance Director
Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments
1000 Lafayette Boulevard, Suite 925
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604



Proposals will be accepted no **later than 3:00 pm on Friday, September 30th, 2022**. Proposals received after the date and time shall not be considered. No partial submittals will be accepted.

Selection Process

Firms shall demonstrate expertise and experience in all skill areas that may be appropriate for website planning, design, development, and marketing/advertising. All proposals received by MetroCOG will be reviewed and evaluated by a Selection Committee comprised of representatives of MetroCOG and local and regional economic development stakeholders. Up to five (5) prospective firms will be selected for an interview and presentation to the selection committee. A recommendation of the preferred firm will be made by the selection committee and MetroCOG will be authorized to notify the selected consultant and begin contract negotiations.

Responses and presentations will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Expertise and creativity illustrated by the firm’s work products.
- Understanding of work to be performed.
- Project organization and staff commitment.
- Professional expertise of team.
- Prior experience relative to project.
- Experience with creating websites that are accessible to people with: visual impairments, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, or limited English proficiency.
- Completeness, feasibility and quality of scope of services and project schedule.
- Clarity and conciseness of presentation.

The selected consultant will be notified of the decision by the selection committee and contract negotiations will commence immediately upon notification. A 60-day fee negotiation period will be provided for the selected consultant and MetroCOG to finalize the contract fees, scope of service and contractual agreement. At the end of the 60-day negotiation period, the Contract will be awarded. If a negotiated fee cannot be mutually agreed to by both parties, MetroCOG will terminate negotiation and begin negotiation with the second rated consultant.

The firm awarded the contract must meet all municipal, state, and federal affirmative action and equal employment opportunity practices. This will include compliance with E.O. 11246, “Equal Employment Opportunity,” as amended by E.O. 11375, “Amending Executive Order 11246 Relating to Equal Employment Opportunity,” and as supplemented by regulations at 41 CFR part 60, “Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Equal Employment Opportunity, Department of Labor.”

The selected firm will be required to prepare project documents in a timely manner and submit reports indicating the work completed with all invoices. To this end, the firm will be expected to assign sufficient



administrative, planning, design, and support staff to complete the scope of work within the established and agreed to schedule.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Compliance with Local, State & Federal Laws

MetroCOG is a strategic partner and sub-applicant of the State of Connecticut's Statewide Long-Term Recovery Coordination, Resiliency Planning and Technical Assistance Project which was funded by the United States Economic Development Administration's Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)—Award No. 01-69-15142. All respondents shall comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Respondents are strongly encouraged to review all applicable regulations, terms, and conditions prior to submitting a response.

Small, Disadvantaged, Minority & Women Business Enterprises (DBE/MBE/WBE) Requirement

MetroCOG takes all necessary affirmative steps to assure that Small Business Enterprises (SBE), Minority Businesses Enterprises (MBE), Women's Businesses Enterprises (WBE) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) are used when possible. Although this project does not stipulate a required compliance target, MetroCOG will make every effort to consider awarding the contract to a qualified SBE/DBE/MBE/WBE firm.

In the case of proposals submitted from Consortia, Joint Ventures and Teams (See Section III. C) lead firms should consider the use of DBE/MBE/WBE firms. Proposals must clearly identify the DBE/MBE/SBE firm, the role the DBE/MBE/WBE will play in the project and the tasks assigned to the DBE/MBE/WBE. Proof of Connecticut DBE/MBE/WBE certification must be submitted with the proposal. Responses that fail to provide proof of DBE/MBE/WBE certification and description of project involvement will be deemed incomplete

Additional Services

If you believe that additional services outside to those requested in the specifications are necessary, please identify those services and your reasons for recommending such services.

Insurance

MetroCOG requires consultants to provide and maintain adequate professional liability for errors and omissions in the minimum amount of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) and automobile liability insurance in the minimum amount of One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000). The consultants and subcontractors shall carry workman's compensation insurance. Proof of adequate insurance must be included in the bid application.



Personnel

The consultant shall provide the professional services identified in this scope of services and requested by MetroCOG. The proposal must identify the person or persons who will be responsible for conducting the work as listed in this scope of services, and include a copy of each person's resume, experiences with municipal/government clients and listing of references.

MetroCOG is requesting that a senior experienced person be the primary representative for your consultant in actually performing the services.

Length of Service

It is expected and required that the work covered by this scope of services shall be completed in expeditious manner. The proposal should indicate the approximate date for completion of the work and anticipated length of time needed to complete the project. The project must be completed by September 23, 2023.

Contract/Agreement

The successful bidder shall enter into a contract with MetroCOG and agree to abide by all state and federal contractual requirements. By signing the agreement with MetroCOG, the consultant agrees to perform work as specified in the scope of services and accepts the terms and conditions set forth in the contract.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Freedom of Information

Respondents are advised that any and all materials submitted in response to this RFP shall become the sole property of MetroCOG and shall be subject to the provisions of Section 1-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (re: Freedom of Information).

Incurred Costs

This Request for Proposals does not commit MetroCOG to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request. MetroCOG will not be liable in any way for any costs incurred by respondents in replying to this RFP.

Severability

If any terms or provisions of this Request for Proposals shall be found to be illegal or unenforceable, then such term or provision shall be deemed stricken and the remaining portions of this document shall remain in full force and effect.

Acceptance or Rejection by the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

MetroCOG reserves the right to accept and or reject any or all responses submitted for consideration or to negotiate separately in any manner necessary to serve the best interests of MetroCOG. Respondents' whose responses are not accepted shall be notified in writing. Finalization of the agreement is contingent on approval of MetroCOG, the United States Economic Development Administration and the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development.



Amending or Canceling Request

MetroCOG reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP, prior to the due date and time, if it is deemed necessary to do so.

Waiver of Informalities

MetroCOG reserves the right to accept or reject any and all responses to this RFP, or any part thereof, and to waive any informalities and/or technicalities that are deemed to be in its best interest.

Work Products

All reports, data, and other documents prepared by the consultant shall be submitted to MetroCOG for review and approval. Resulting work products of the consultant pursuant to this solicitation shall be provided in both print and digital format and shall become the property of the entity in which the consultant is contracted with.

No such approval shall in any way be construed to relieve the firm of responsibility for technical adequacy or operate as a waiver of any of MetroCOG or their member municipality rights. The consultant shall remain liable according to applicable laws and practices for all damages to MetroCOG or their member municipalities caused by the consultants' negligent performance of any of services furnished relative to any agreements resulting from this solicitation.

Subcontracting

Firms may team as they deem necessary to respond to this RFP. In their response, the prime firm and all sub-consultants should be clearly identified along with the responsibilities of each. The successful respondents may utilize the services of specialty, currently unidentified subconsultants on those unforeseen portions of the work that under normal practices are performed by specialty firms. In this event, the consultant shall obtain and make available fee proposals from qualified sub-consultants for their services.

The successful respondent shall not award any portion of the work to a firm that is not on the selected project team without **prior written approval** of MetroCOG. The acceptance of any and all sub-consultants shall reside with MetroCOG, and their decision shall be final. The successful respondent shall be fully responsible for the performance, finished products, acts, and omissions of their subcontractors and persons directly or indirectly employed thereby.

Assigning/Transferring of Agreement

Any successful consultant is prohibited from assigning, transferring, conveying, subletting or otherwise disposing of the resulting agreement or its rights, title, or interest therein or its power to execute such an agreement to any other person, company or corporation without prior consent and approval in writing from MetroCOG.

Schedule A

Scope of Work

Regional Economic Development Website Design, Development & Marketing/Advertising

Overview

MetroCOG, along with our member municipalities and other local and regional stakeholders desire a website focused on supporting local small businesses/entrepreneurs and marketing the economic strengths and opportunities of Greater Bridgeport. MetroCOG is seeking to create an online economic development presence for the region that details the pertinent information about living in and doing business in the Region. In coordination with local partners, the website will include dedicated sections for entrepreneurial and small business resources, capacity building, best practices, COVID-19 guidance and other economic development resources. We also envision a website that brings together all of the data resources, business retention, expansion, and recruitment resources, contact information, etc. in order to market the Greater Bridgeport Region. MetroCOG prefers a collaborative partnership with a consultant that shares our vision for a site that is easy to navigate, visually pleasing, allows for simple and quick updating and conveys MetroCOG's relevancy and value to the Greater Bridgeport region. The website **will not** replace <http://www.ctmetro.org>.

About MetroCOG

MetroCOG is the regional Council of Governments (COG) for the Greater Bridgeport Region, which includes the City of Bridgeport and the towns of Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull. Each municipality (or member) is represented by their Chief Elected Official, which makes up MetroCOG's Policy Board (Board of Directors). MetroCOG's offices are in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

MetroCOG also serves as the host agency for the Greater Bridgeport and Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO), which is the federally designated transportation planning agency for the Greater Bridgeport and Valley planning region.

MetroCOG works closely with federal, state, and local agencies to facilitate a regional approach to transportation, conservation, economic development, natural hazard mitigation and land use planning, as well as municipal shared services.

Website Objectives

The objective of MetroCOG's regional economic development website is to provide a digital hub for new and archived information, events, reports and publications that are readily available and easily accessible to our constituents. The second objective is to engage stakeholders and provide an additional forum for public input. The third objective is to enable easier maintenance and update of the website.

Website Functionality Requirements:

- An easy-to-use Content Management System (CMS)
- Intuitive navigation
- Clean and focused design

- Reliable built-in search tool
- Display correctly in all major browsers and behave responsively according to industry best practices for use on varying sizes of screens and devices
- Comply with ADA Section 508, including text resizing and compatibility with screen reader technology
- Comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, including translation capability
- Support viewing videos posted on external site, such as embedding YouTube
- Optimal SEO best practices
- Develop in HTTPS to enhance security
- Calendar to show meetings (10-20 events per month) and allow attachments that will be archived
- Social media integration (share buttons, follow buttons, etc.)
- A training component that enables staff to create and maintain their project webpages
- CMS with user permission levels to prevent accidental deletion of key modules
- Simple and automated back-up
- Incorporate a new style guide
- Installation of Google Analytics, as well as any customizations recommended
- Suggestions for cost effective hosting, management, and domain name registration options
- Integration with ESRI Web-Based Mapping
- Integration with document management system (Laserfiche)
- Possible Integration of Site Selector Tool
- Integration of Regional Chamber’s “Quarterly Report”

Optional New Website Functionalities/Wish List

- Mechanism to collect public comments in an organized way and/or conduct surveys.
- Photographs, graphics and/or aerial footage that promote the region.
- Other new applications and features that might be helpful.

Design Coordination

MetroCOG requires that the selected consultant coordinate on final design elements of the website, including meetings between the selected consultant and key agency staff to provide input and feedback at integral moments in the development process.

Maintenance Needs

- Regular back-ups to a secure location
- Regular malware scans and clean-up
- Regular CMS updates and upgrades as needed
- Other processes and features that might be helpful.

Project Budget

- Fee schedule for required functionality
- Additional fee schedule for optimizations/add-ons
- Proposed maintenance fee schedule