



RFP Release Date: November 20, 2023
Vendor Questions Due: December 6, 2023
Answers Posted: December 13, 2023
Proposals Due: December 29, 2023

Request for Proposal

Media Planning and Buying and Search Engine Optimization Services

Summary

VEIC, a mission-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the economic and environmental costs of energy use, is seeking requests for proposals for Media Planning and Buying and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) services.

Responses to this Request for Proposal (RFP) must be delivered electronically to VEIC by **5:00 p.m. EST on December 29, 2023**. VEIC will not accept responses submitted after **5:00 p.m. EST**. Please submit your response via e-mail to Penny Nichols, pnichols@veic.org with **RFP Submittal for Media Planning and Buying and SEO services** in the subject line.

VEIC will respond to questions regarding this RFP only as follows: VEIC will receive questions regarding requirements and scope of work up to **5:00 p.m. EST on December 6, 2023** via e-mail to Penny Nichols at pnichols@veic.org with **RFP Questions for Media Buying and SEO Services** in the subject line. When appropriate, please refer to the RFP page number and section heading for ease of navigation and response. VEIC will post answers on the VEIC website <https://www.veic.org/requests-for-proposals> no later than **December 13, 2023**.

VEIC Background

VEIC is a sustainable energy organization on a mission to generate the energy solutions the world needs.

For over 35 years, VEIC has been working with governments, utilities, foundations, and businesses across North America to develop and deploy clean energy services that provide immediate and lasting change. VEIC has expertise in energy efficiency, building decarbonization, transportation electrification, and demand management for a clean and flexible grid. We design innovative solutions that meet client goals, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. VEIC is nationally recognized for programs and pilots that optimize energy use, reduce energy burdens for low-

income customers, and advance emerging technologies and innovative program models.

In addition to our full-service consulting business, VEIC administers three large-scale sustainable energy programs: [Efficiency Vermont](#), [Efficiency Smart](#), and the [DC Sustainable Energy Utility](#) (DCSEU); oversees brands that are moving the market toward clean and efficient energy including [Button Up Vermont](#) and [Drive Electric Vermont](#); and serves on the program administration teams for [CalNEXT](#), [Focus on Energy](#) (Wisconsin), [Hawaii Energy](#), and [TECH Clean California](#).

Project Overview

This RFP seeks to identify one or multiple service providers who can support members of the Marketing and Public Relations department to develop and execute media planning and buying programs and perform SEO services using industry best practices and innovative approaches.

VEIC seeks to engage service providers with demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in their business practices and mission. We are committed to building a work community that is inclusive and represents a vibrant diversity of background, experience, perspective, and thought. Climate change impacts all of us; however, we are impacted differently based on our identities and experiences. We all deserve a place at the table to make decisions about our collective future, and we hope you'll consider joining us as we work toward our vision of a healthy planet, thriving people, and energy justice. Candidates across all markers of identity (age, race, gender, ability, communication style, etc.) are highly encouraged to respond.

The selected service providers may provide Media Planning and Buying and / or SEO services across any of the following five brands and website properties operated by VEIC: VEIC itself; Efficiency Vermont and Efficiency Smart (two distinct energy efficiency organizations operated by VEIC); plus Button Up Vermont and Drive Electric Vermont (two standalone websites/campaigns administered by VEIC).

The selected service providers may conduct services for one or any combination of the five brands and website properties. The selected service provider may be provided with one or multiple contracts and/or work orders covering the unique contractual requirements for each brand.

VEIC offers high-impact energy solutions that decarbonize buildings, transportation, and utility grids. We help our clients meet their clean energy goals through innovative and equitable solutions that benefit them, their partners, and their communities. VEIC's service areas focus solutions on Energy Efficiency, Building Decarbonization, Transportation Electrification, and Clean & Flexible Grid. Learn more at www.veic.org.

The nation's first energy efficiency utility, **Efficiency Vermont** has helped Vermont avoid over 13 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions and has received the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR Program for sustained excellence award for the last seven consecutive years. Efficiency Vermont works with partners to help

Vermont transition to a more affordable, low carbon energy future through education, incentives, and support for our clean energy workforce. For more information, visit www.encyvermont.com.

Administered on behalf of American Municipal Power (AMP), **Efficiency Smart** has served more than 65 AMP member utilities in Delaware, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Efficiency Smart helps residents to lower their electric bills and make their homes more comfortable. This includes discounts on energy-efficient lighting, rebates for energy-saving appliances, and guidance on reducing electric use. For businesses, Efficiency Smart provides technical assistance and financial incentives to encourage the installation of energy-efficient technologies. Learn more at www.encysmart.org.

Facilitated by Efficiency Vermont, **Button Up Vermont** is a statewide weatherization preparedness campaign to help people reduce energy use and stay warm and healthy through the Vermont winter. It provides information from tips on air sealing and insulation, to weighing the benefits of upgrades like energy efficient heat pumps. Learn more at www.buttonupvermont.org.

Drive Electric Vermont is a statewide public-private partnership of policy makers, industry leaders, and ordinary citizens accelerating transportation electrification in the green mountain state. Its work focuses on EV education and outreach, charging infrastructure development, incentive programs, and stakeholder coordination. Learn more at www.driveelectricvt.com.

Scope of Work

By submitting a response to this RFP, the bidder acknowledges understanding and accepting this Scope of Work and agrees to fulfill all of its terms and conditions in the event of a contract award. We anticipate the work to be conducted remotely and without reason for travel.

This request for proposal is to develop and execute 12-month Media Planning and Buying programs and perform SEO services. The programs and services will be adjusted and optimized throughout the contract period.

Service providers responding to this RFP may choose to submit responses for all services categories listed or may choose to submit a proposal for a single category. RFP responders may also elect to subcontract to fulfill any of the service categories; however, subcontracting may be subject to VEIC's final approval. The scope of work for subcontractors, along with bios and past examples of work should be included in the submittal if they are known.

If the work is awarded to multiple service providers, the selected service providers will work collaboratively with the Marketing and Public Relations Project Teams to coordinate strategic efforts as needed.

To meet the objectives of this RFP, the selected service providers will be required to provide the following services, with strategies and tactics reflecting the uniqueness of each brand.

Note: Bidders outside the U.S. may submit a response to this RFP, with the understanding that a successful bidder who maintains operations outside the U.S. must meet all U.S. Internal Revenue Service regulations and must meet all VEIC Information Security Requirements (See section H below). All data relative to the Scope of Work must be stored and processed within the sovereign U.S.

1. Traditional and Digital Advertising Channels - Media Strategy, Buying, and Implementation Services

- Develop and implement a strategic media plan and program for traditional and digital media channels that do not appear through the Google Display Network or Microsoft Bing channels
- Recommend media strategies and placement that reflect the goals and objectives, creative materials, consumer behavior, technology and trends, geography, demographics, seasonality, and target audiences and key stakeholders
- Recommend channels and flighting to reach both customers and non-customers (including policy influencers and decision makers)
- Reflect identified Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring media plan's performance
- Optimize media plan and program on a monthly basis or in response to brand and budget parameters
- Lead media buying and media deployment activities on an ongoing basis throughout the contract period
- Negotiate best unit rates and highest quality placements
- Identify and negotiate value-add opportunities
- Clearly communicate ad deliverable deadlines and specifications to project teams
- Process insertion orders and coordinate delivery of creative files
- Maintain up-to-date insertion orders and provide to project staff
- Set up direct bill
- Assist with post-buy bill reconciliation and resolution of incorrect billing
- Perform post-buy analysis and monthly performance reports, as requested
- Provide a year-end report including campaign performance by channel,

2. SEM and Social Media / Meta Channels - Media Strategy, Buying and Implementation Services

- Develop and implement a strategic media plan and program for SEM and Social Media / Meta channels. SEM channels to include the Google Display Network and Microsoft Bing
- Recommend media strategies and placement that reflect goals and objectives, creative materials, consumer behavior, technology and trends, geography, demographics, seasonality, and target audiences and key stakeholders

- Research and recommend media placements, parameters, and keywords for reaching both customers and non-customers (including policy influencers and decision makers)
- Optimize media plan and program on a monthly basis or in response to brand and budget parameters
- Lead media buying and media deployment activities on an ongoing basis throughout the contract period
- Manage the monthly ad buy per the approved strategy and budget. Monthly strategies and ad budgets are subject to change.
- Coordinate delivery and implementation of approved SEM / Social Media ad and video creative
- Review provided creative and content, and suggest opportunities for improvement
- Clearly communicate ad deliverable deadlines and specifications to project teams
- Lead the creation of ad copy for text-based Pay-Per-Click (PPC) ads (Google and/or Bing) and social media ads. Submit to team for review and approval.
- Coordinate A/B creative and message testing
- Perform and provide monthly post-buy analysis and review recommendations with project team
- Provide a year-end report

3. SEO Optimization Services

- On a monthly basis, provide SEO strategy and optimization services toward achieving identified SEO program KPIs, including increasing organic traffic, key word ranking, and visibility
- Use and recommend keyword lists and strategies to improve meta description, page titles, alternative image texts, and body copy throughout the site
- On a monthly basis, perform a technical SEO health check
- Recommend website development work, additional page builds, and functionality adjustments and additions
- Recommend an off-page SEO strategy to increase each brand's catalog of backlinks from high quality, authoritative sites
- Discuss progress toward established KPIs on a quarterly basis or as requested

RFP and Implementation Schedule

VEIC will attempt to adhere to the following schedule but reserves the right to adjust the schedule as needed. Any changes to this schedule will be communicated through the VEIC website:

<https://www.veic.org/requests-for-proposals>.

RFP schedule and response deadline.

RFP Released	November 20, 2023
Bidder Questions Due	December 6, 2023

Answers Posted	December 13, 2023
RFP Responses Due	December 29, 2023
RFP Evaluation Period	January 2 – January 17, 2024
Finalists Selected and Contract Negotiation	January 18 – January 31, 2024
Contract Execution and Network Permissions	February 1, 2024
Estimated Performance Period. VEIC may exercise the option to renew each contract and/or work order for an additional 12 months.	February 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025

Preparing and Delivering a Proposal

For ease and efficiency of review, VEIC has specified the requirements for submitting a proposal to this RFP. Bidders must follow and be responsive to all requirements of this RFP. Proposals that are not in the required format or are incomplete may be disqualified at VEIC’s sole discretion.

VEIC reserves the right to verify any information contained in bidders’ RFP responses and to request additional information after RFP responses have been received.

Response Summary, Evaluation Criteria and Points for Proposals

Scoring Category/ Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points
Demonstrated experience and expertise with similar work	35
Quality of proposal and responsiveness to scope of work	20
Previous experience performing media buying for target audiences located in California, Ohio, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, or Wisconsin	20
Cost effectiveness	10
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Additional points can be earned for the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-Owned Business (2 points) • Minority-Owned Business (2 points) • Veteran-Owned business (2 points) • LGBT-Owned business (2 points) • As described by business owner (2 points) 	10
Total Points	100

Response Requirements

Responses to this RFP must be delivered electronically to VEIC by **5:00 p.m. EST on December 29, 2023**. Responses submitted after 5:00 p.m. EST will not be accepted. Responses must be submitted

electronically via e-mail to Penny Nichols at pnichols@veic.org with **RFP Submittal for Media Planning and Buying and SEO services** in the subject line.

Responses must be no more than 15 pages in length, be formatted to standard letter paper size (8.5" x 11") with 1-inch margins all around and a common font set to 11-point or larger.

All responses must include a cover letter with the primary person's contact information. Email responses must have all the required information assembled into one (1) PDF file. Multiple files and/or file formats will not be accepted.

- A. Company Info:** name of the business, contact person, and contact information including full legal name, address, telephone, email address, and website address, as applicable.
- B. Company Profile:** a brief company profile, not exceeding 500 words.
- C. Statement of Ownership:** the type of business entity (sole proprietorship, corporation, LLC, or other).
- D. Ability to Meet VEIC Scope of Work – Narrative:** a narrative of your organization's experience and services related to the scope of work.
- E. Customer References** (1 page maximum): this section of the response must include a minimum of 2 customer references, including name, company, phone, and email.
- F. Customer Examples:** For each category, provide two examples or case studies of similar work your firm has provided to other clients. We are particularly interested in experience with non-profits in related industries, B2B and B2C audiences, performance analysis, and experience with energy efficiency and decarbonization related programs and technologies.
- G. List of Staff to Perform Services:** list individuals or staff to perform services, and a brief description of individual experience relevant to the project objectives.
- H. Rate Schedule:** VEIC seeks to understand bidder's proposed rate schedules for the Scope of work described in Categories 1-3. The hourly rates and/or rate schedules proposed should be inclusive of labor, materials, and reimbursable expenses. Bidder may propose different hourly rates or rate schedules for each Category 1-3. Across all five brands,
 - The estimated yearly traditional and digital media budgets (non-Google Display Network or Microsoft Bing) by brand, range in amounts from \$15,000 to \$650,000
 - The average monthly budget for SEM and Social Media / Meta combined channels is estimated at a range of \$15,000 to \$30,000
- I. Information Security Requirements:** Review the Contract Template (Appendix A) and the Information Security Requirements (Appendix B). The selected Service Providers may be required to complete and provide a completed Information Security Questionnaire (Appendix C) prior to contract execution.

J. Certificate of Insurance: Bidders must supply a current Certificate of Insurance showing evidence of General Liability. If awarded a Contract, the bidder will also be required to provide a final certificate of insurance to show compliance with the minimum insurance requirements outlined in the successful bidder’s contract. VEIC anticipates the minimum and most likely requirements are outlined below and will confirm final insurance requirements prior to issuance of a contract. Bidders must raise any questions about the insurance requirements during the contract negotiation process.

Insurance Policies	Limits
Commercial General Liability	\$1M per occurrence/\$2M aggregate
Automotive Liability	\$1m per occurrence single limit for bodily injuries and property damage (if driving will be authorized in performance of any part of the contract).
Workers’ Compensation	Statutory mandates
Employer’s Liability	\$500K per accident; \$500K per disease, \$500K policy disease limit
Cyber Liability Insurance	\$2,000,000 per occurrence \$2,000,000 aggregate
Employee Dishonesty	\$500,000 with client coverage
Tools and Equipment and Vehicles	Coverage for loss, damage, or theft for Contractor’s equipment, tools, and vehicles

Pricing and Pricing Basis

VEIC requires all bidder submissions to quote prices in USD, clearly stating any currency exchange rates/calculations used. Any discount offered by a bidder must be clearly identified along with the terms to which the discount is subject.

Proposal Submission

Bidders must email proposals to the following address: pnichols@veic.org. It is each vendor’s responsibility to ensure that the proposal and all other required documents are received at the above address by the closing time and date specified above. VEIC will be the sole judge of the qualifications of all prospective candidates and reserves the right to reject any and all submissions without recourse.

VEIC is aware that the information contained in the proposal indicates the bidder’s current operations. Therefore, the use of this information will be confined to this request and the

information will be treated as confidential.

Bidders shall bear all costs associated with preparing and submitting responses to this RFP and the subsequent evaluation phase. VEIC will, in no way, be responsible for these costs, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the prequalification process.

Treatment of Information

All information about VEIC provided during the RFP process shall remain under nondisclosure and cannot be released without the express permission of VEIC. Note to bidders: VEIC may include separate nondisclosure documents at a later date.

Limitation

This RFP does not commit VEIC to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of proposals. VEIC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received in response to this RFP, to negotiate with any qualified vendor or to cancel in part or in its entirety the RFP, if any of these actions is deemed by VEIC at its sole discretion to be in VEIC's best interest.