



**Solicitation Information
May 20, 2015**

RFP# 7549599

TITLE: University of Rhode Island Request for On-line College Applicant Strategy Partner

Submission Deadline: June 19, 2015 at 2:00 PM (ET)

Questions concerning this solicitation must be received by the Division of Purchases at gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov no later than **Monday, June 1, 2015 at 5:00 PM (ET)**. Questions should be submitted in a *Microsoft Word attachment*. Please reference the RFP# on all correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information.

SURETY REQUIRED: No

BOND REQUIRED: No

GAIL WALSH
CHIEF BUYER

Applicants must register on-line at the State Purchasing Website at www.purchasing.ri.gov

Note to Applicants:

Offers received without the entire completed three-page RIVIP Generated Bidder Certification Form attached may result in disqualification.

THIS PAGE IS NOT A BIDDER CERTIFICATION FORM

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island Department of Administration/Division of Purchases, on behalf of the University of Rhode Island Office of Enrollment Management, is soliciting proposals from qualified firms to provide online college-applicant recruitment resource, in accordance with the terms of this Request for Proposals and the State's General Conditions of Purchase, which may be obtained at the Rhode Island Division of Purchases Home Page by Internet at www.purchasing.ri.gov . The initial contract period will be for three years from the date of final contract signing.

This is a Request for Proposals, not an Invitation for Bid. Responses will be evaluated on the basis of the relative merits of the proposal, in addition to price; there will be no public opening and reading of responses received by the Division of Purchases pursuant to this Request, other than to name those offerors who have submitted proposals.

INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS:

1. Potential vendors are advised to review all sections of this RFP carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.
2. Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals which depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this RFP will be rejected as being non-responsive.
3. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content shall be borne by the vendor. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.
4. Proposals are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than 120 days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.
5. All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
6. Proposals misdirected to other state locations, or which are otherwise not present in the Division at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered. For the purposes of this requirement, the official time and date shall be that of the time clock in the reception area of the Division.
7. It is intended that an award pursuant to this RFP will be made to a prime vendor, or prime vendors in the various categories, who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Joint venture and cooperative proposals will not be considered. Subcontracts are permitted, provided that their use is clearly indicated in the vendor's proposal and the subcontractor(s) to be used is identified in the proposal.

8. All proposals should include the vendor's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9, downloadable from the Division's website at www.purchasing.ri.gov.
9. The purchase of services under an award made pursuant to this RFP will be contingent on the availability of funds.
10. Vendors are advised that all materials submitted to the State for consideration in response to this RFP will be considered to be Public Records as defined in Title 38, Chapter 2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request once an award has been made.
11. Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Division of Purchases website on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP.
12. Equal Employment Opportunity (G.L. 1956 § 28-5.1-1, et seq.) – § 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy – (a) Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies to all areas where State dollars are spent, in employment, public services, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Opportunity Office at (401) 222-3090 or Raymond.lambert@doa.ri.gov.
13. In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation, a corporation without a Rhode Island business address, shall have the right to transact business in the State until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). *This is a requirement only of the successful vendor(s).*
14. The vendor should be aware of the State's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) requirements, which address the State's goal of ten percent (10%) participation by MBE's in all State procurements. For further information, contact the MBE Administrator at (401) 574-8253 or visit the website www.mbe.ri.gov or contact charles.newton@doa.ri.gov.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The University of Rhode Island (URI) is a public university with 13,354 undergraduate and 2,306 graduate students. URI strives each year to enroll a diverse undergraduate and graduate class of new freshman and transfer students from the state of Rhode Island as well as from other states and countries. The Office of Enrollment Management seeks to enroll students who are prepared to be successful at the University, who possess a variety of talents and strengths, who are committed to becoming contributing members of the community, and who will be stimulated and challenged by doing undergraduate and graduate work in an environment that includes scholarly research and graduate study.

URI's budget is largely driven by tuition that comes from the successful recruitment and retention of undergraduate and graduate students. URI continues to make great strides in the recruitment and retention of students. As we develop our goals and objectives for freshman recruitment in the coming years, the data project a decline in the number of college-eligible students nationwide and most specifically in our region of the United States. This decrease in students will create continued pressure and competition among all colleges and universities. To this end, URI needs to work more strategically to recruit and yield students who will persist to graduation. The latter is increasingly more challenging for most schools these days.

We acknowledge that students nationwide are conducting the majority of their college search online anonymously. The University is committed to enhancing our online presence to gain the attention of a broader pool of students. As such, URI is looking to maximize the use of our website, current technology, and strategic marketing efforts to reach and recruit a more extensive population of students who may not have otherwise discovered or considered URI. We believe the best way to do this is by partnering with a company that specializes in offering online tools for students to research colleges, organize their search, decide on their college and discover ways to pay for their college. The selected college student recruiting vendor must demonstrate a proven track record of augmenting their pool of students and helping colleges and universities increase their applicant pool as well as shape it in the desired targeted areas. Additionally, the students must come from a database in which students knowingly and willingly opt-in to share their information with URI specifically for the purposes of college recruitment and admissions (and NOT simply be a purchased database of students from the cloud).

SECTION 3: SCOPE OF WORK

General Scope of Work

The primary objectives of this request are to develop a partnership with an established online admissions marketing, recruiting and sourcing organization which will serve as an online recruitment resource providing a robust pool of students, sophisticated matching system, and targeted campaigns highlighting URI's brand to ultimately drive more suitable and interested applicants to URI and increase our yield. Vendors responding to this RFP must have a proven track record of matching appropriate students to universities, increasing geographic out-of-state outreach and progressively increasing their pool of college

applicants as well as working with universities to develop targeted, customized and track able communication to highlight and increase strategic brand awareness.

Specific Activities / Tasks

The specifications that we require for a partnership with an online college applicant strategy vendor include the following:

- Three-year contract;
- Opportunity to increase the number and quality of our out-of-state applicants;
- Opportunity to grow and strategically shape our overall applicant pool;
- Ability to target students with specific interests in areas of study offered by URI;
- Ability to connect with high-achieving students throughout the United States with the ability to focus on certain geo-demographic and socio-economic targets;
- Ability to connect with diverse students;
- Ability to connect with academically prepared students;
- Ability to use and expand upon our existing brand and messaging;
- Ability to target messaging and campaigns as desired;
- Ability to connect URI with students who have specific academic indicators that match URI's current and future scholarship parameters;
- Ability to target high school sophomores, juniors and rising seniors;
- Ability to develop and draft appropriately branded messages, while giving URI the ability to approve all final edits (but requiring minimal URI staff time);
- Ability to target messages to students with specific backgrounds, interests in particular majors, and/or certain academic and extracurricular interests;
- Ability to integrate messages via the internet, e-mail, social media, and smartphone devices;
- Ability for students to opt-in to our messaging when they show an interest in URI;
- Provide URI with a weekly CSV or TXT file of students with an interest in URI that will seamlessly upload into our PeopleSoft admissions software;
- Create algorithm that appropriately matches high school students to various attributes of URI;
- Ability to tailor outreach by region and zip code;
- Ability to increase and shape enrollments for specific geographic areas;
- Ability to connect with more high-achieving students to continue to increase the quality of our applicant pool;
- Ability to effectively message to students URI's unique attributes including scholarship, financial aid assistance, mission and other opportunities;
- Ability to appropriately and accurately redirect students to our 'next step' in the admissions process;
- Ability to track whether delivered messages resulted in a hit onto URI's admission website or an opt-out;
- Increase URI's brand awareness among students;
- Provide URI leadership with monthly reporting analytics that allow us to determine the success of the messaging campaigns;
- Provide quarterly scheduled review calls to continuously assess, improve and maximize target and messaging campaign;
- Provide URI with expert professional consultation on targeted messaging and branding;
- Ability to work with a dedicated team of professionals uniquely assigned to URI;

- Proven track record of working with a minimum of two (2) million unique high school students in the past five (5) years, with a current pool of at least 250,000 unique high school students;
- Proven track record of working with diverse and academically prepared students;
- Proven track record of working with community based organizations with a focus on access and opportunity;
- Proven track record of working effectively with the high school guidance population;
- Proven track record of working with self-identified interested students with targeted and professional messaging (i.e., NO spam);
- Proven track record in the regions of New England, the Mid-Atlantic, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, California, Florida, and Texas;
- Deliverable is a web-based solution, compatible with all browsers.

SECTION 4: TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

Narrative and format: The separate technical proposal should address specifically each of the required elements:

1. Executive Summary – The executive summary is intended to highlight the contents of the Technical Proposal and to provide evaluators with a broad understanding of the offeror’s technical approach and ability.
2. Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Offeror –This section shall include identification of all staff and/or subcontractors proposed as members of the project team, and the duties, responsibilities and concentration of effort which apply to each (as well as resumes, curricula vitae or statements of prior experience and qualification).
3. Work plan/Approach Proposed –This section shall describe the offeror’s understanding of the State/University’s requirement, including the result(s) intended and desired, the approach shall discuss and justify the approach proposed to be taken for each task, and the technical issues that will or maybe confronted at each stage on the project. The work plan description shall include a detailed proposed project schedule (by task and subtask), a list of tasks, activities, and/or milestones that will be employed to administer the project, the assignment of staff members and concentration of effort for each, and the attributable deliverables for each and will identify and describe what type of tutor training methodology will be utilized in the program.
4. Previous Experience and Background - including the following information:
 - i. A comprehensive listing of similar projects undertaken within higher education, a brief description of the projects, and a list of references whom we may contact;
 - ii. Evidence of relevant experience and background as stipulated in Section 3, Scope of Work;
 - iii. A description of the business background of the offeror (and all subcontractors proposed), including a description of their financial position.

SECTION 5: COST PROPOSAL

A separate, signed and sealed, Cost Proposal reflecting the fee structure proposed for this scope of service. Appendix A includes the requested breakdown of specific fees/rates.

SECTION 6: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Questions concerning this solicitation may be e-mailed to the Division of Purchases at gail.walsh@purchasing.ri.gov no later than the date and time indicated on page one of this solicitation. Please reference **RFP # 7549599** on all correspondence. Questions should be submitted in a Microsoft Word attachment. Answers to questions received, if any, will be posted on the Internet as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information. If technical assistance is required to download, call the Help Desk at (401) 222-3766 or lynda.moore@doit.ri.gov.

Offerors are encouraged to submit written questions to the Division of Purchases. **No other contact with State parties will be permitted.** Interested offerors may submit proposals to provide the services covered by this Request on or before the date and time listed on the cover page of this solicitation. Responses received after this date and time, as registered by the official time clock in the reception area of the Division of Purchases will not be considered.

Responses (**an original plus 5 copies**) should be mailed or hand-delivered in a sealed envelope marked “**RFP# 7549599On-Line College Applicant Strategy Partner**” to:

RI Dept. of Administration
Division of Purchases, 2nd floor
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5855

NOTE: Proposals received after the above-referenced due date and time will not be considered. Proposals misdirected to other State locations or those not presented to the Division of Purchases by the scheduled due date and time will be determined to be late and will not be considered. Proposals faxed, or emailed, to the Division of Purchases will not be considered. The official time clock is in the reception area of the Division of Purchases.

RESPONSE CONTENTS

Responses shall include the following:

1. A completed and signed three-page R.I.V.I.P generated bidder certification cover sheet downloaded from the RI Division of Purchases Internet home page at www.purchasing.ri.gov.
2. A completed and signed W-9 downloaded from the RI Division of Purchases Internet home page at www.purchasing.ri.gov. **Please include with original proposal only.**
3. **A separate Technical Proposal** describing how the offeror will provide the deliverables and services based on the criteria set forth in this request .
4. **A separate, signed and sealed Cost Proposal** reflecting the comprehensive and itemized fee structure, proposed to complete all of the requirements of this project.

In addition to the multiple hard copies of proposals required, Respondents are requested to provide their proposal in **electronic format (CD-Rom, disc, or flash drive)**. Microsoft Word / Excel OR PDF format is preferable. Two electronic copies are requested (One for the State and one for the University) and it should be placed in the proposal marked “original”.

SECTION 7: EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Proposals will be reviewed by a Technical Review Committee comprised of staff from state agencies. To advance to the Cost Evaluation phase, the Technical Proposal must receive a minimum of 60 (85.7%) out of a maximum of 70 technical points. Any technical proposals scoring less than 60 points will not have the cost component opened and evaluated. The proposal will be dropped from further consideration.

Proposals scoring 60 technical points or higher will be evaluated for cost and assigned up to a maximum of 30 points in cost category, bringing the potential maximum score to 100 points.

The University of Rhode Island reserves the exclusive right to select the individual(s) or firm (vendor) that it deems to be in its best interest to accomplish the project as specified herein; and conversely, reserves the right not to fund any proposal(s).

Proposals will be reviewed and scored based upon the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points
Staff Qualifications	10 Points
Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Offeror	15 Points
Quality of the Work plan	15 Points
Suitability of Approach/Methodology	30 Points
Total Possible Technical Points	70 Points
Cost calculated as lowest responsive cost proposal divided by (this cost proposal) times 30 points *	30 Points
Total Possible Points	100 Points

*The Low bidder will receive one hundred percent (100%) of the available points for cost. All other bidders will be awarded cost points based upon the following formula:

$$(low\ bid / vendors\ bid) * available\ points$$

For example: If the low bidder (Vendor A) bids \$65,000 and Vendor B bids \$100,000 for monthly cost and service fee and the total points available are Thirty (30), vendor B’s cost points are calculated as follows:

$$\$65,000 / \$100,000 * 30 = 19.5$$

Points will be assigned based on the offeror's clear demonstration of his/her abilities to complete the work, apply appropriate methods to complete the work, create innovative solutions and quality of past performance in similar projects.

Applicants may be required to submit additional written information or be asked to make an oral presentation before the technical review committee to clarify statements made in their proposal.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Notwithstanding the above, the State reserves the right not to award this contract or to award on the basis of cost alone, to accept or reject any or all proposals, and to award in its best interest.

Proposals found to be technically or substantially non-responsive at any point in the evaluation process will be rejected and not considered further.

The State may, at its sole option, elect to require presentation(s) by offerors clearly in consideration for award.

The State's General Conditions of Purchase contain the specific contract terms, stipulations and affirmations to be utilized for the contract awarded to the RFP. The State's General Conditions of Purchases/General Terms and Conditions can be found at the following URL: <https://www.purchasing.ri.gov/RIVIP/publicdocuments/ATTA.pdf>

Appendix A
Requested Breakdown of Specific Fees/Rates

Part 1:					
Annual Subscription/Package Cost		\$			
Part 2:					
<i>Additional Costs: Please note which items are included in the above cost and which are additional!</i>		<i>Included in annual cost above: yes/no, if yes enter what is included & unit of measure</i>	<i>If no, enter additional cost per item & unit of measure</i>	<i>If item is not available, enter N/A</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Student outreach targeted campaigns (based on student performance, student interests, student characteristics, student geographic location)					
Strategic brand awareness campaign					
Overlapping college campaign					
College growth and shaping campaign					
Scholarship and financial aid assistance campaign					
Personally relevant outreach messages					
Community based organization access and messaging					
School guidance counselor access and messaging					
Automatic student e-mail follow-up					
Student redirection in our admission process					
Social media integration					
Mobile integration					
Professional development of messages based on URI's brand					
Use of algorithm to appropriately match & target students					
Weekly transfer file of interested students					
Monthly reporting analytics					
Quarterly review calls to enhance performance					
Other costs not listed above that typical clients incur (please specify in the 'Comments' section)					