

Request for Proposal

Communications Audit of Aquarion Water Company of Massachusetts

September 2012

I. Overview

Aquarion Water Company of Massachusetts, Inc. (AWC or Company) provides drinking water to approximately 19,000 customers across five Massachusetts communities - Hingham, Hull, Cohasset, Millbury and Oxford. The Company is a public utility regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) and, in connection with a review by the Department, is soliciting proposals from communications and/or public relations firms to perform an in-depth review of the Company's Massachusetts communications practices.

II. Goal

Provide AWC with an assessment of its current Massachusetts communications programs and practices through an independent audit.

III. Objectives

Review and assesses Company communications programs and practices including but not limited to:

- A. Routine communications with the public and public officials, including flushing notices;
- B. Emergency communications with the public and public officials, including reverse 911;
- C. Day-to-day interactions with public officials, including attendance at and participation in public meetings;
- D. Processes for understanding the needs and expectations of customers and for translating those into requirements for the Company;
- E. Use of electronic communications including emails, websites and social media;
- F. Use of printed materials and other means of communicating with customers, members of the public, and public officials.

For each of these areas, the audit should compare the Company's performance to the performance of other comparable water companies and, if needed, recommend cost-effective actions to promote improved communications.

IV. Submittals

Responses submitted should include the following components:

- A. Detailed description of communications audit program elements, including a discussion of the firm's proposed approach to performing the audit, and the firm's proposed scope of work;
- B. Descriptions of the firm and areas of expertise, particularly as they relate to the project described above;
- C. Names and resumes of staff members assigned to the project, including billing rates and anticipated level of participation (i.e., hours) in the matter;

- D. Proposed budget;
- E. Phased budget and timeline for the project activities;
- F. Description of other related projects with references;
- G. List of current and former clients in the utility industry;
- H. Details of any potential or existing conflicts of interest;
- I. Explanation of firm's billing procedures including rates, overtime rates, mark-ups, etc.

V. Terms and Conditions

Those who have submitted proposals (“Proponents”) should be aware of the following terms and conditions addressing Requests for Proposal for AWC:

- A. AWC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to consider alternatives, to award the contract to a proponent by sections, to waive any informalities and irregularities, and to re-solicit proposals, at its sole discretion.
- B. AWC reserves the right to conduct such investigations of and discussions with proponents or other persons or entities as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any proposal or to secure maximum clarification and completeness of any proposal.
- C. All proposals submitted must be valid for a minimum period of sixty (60) days after the date of the proposal opening. Each proponent must submit with the proposal a list of all subcontractors, independent contractors or sub consultants employed or proposed to be employed by the proponent in the performance of the contract.
- D. AWC reserves the right to select the proposal that it finds to be within the best interests of AWC, including the right to select a proponent for reasons other than lowest price.
- E. AWC does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation or disability of the proponent, its employees or contractors in the award to the successful proponent.
- F. The following criteria shall be considered in evaluating the proposals:
 - 1. Costs for proposed work;
 - 2. The reputation, experience and efficiency of the proponent;
 - 3. The ability of the proponent to perform the contract or provide the goods and services within the time specified;
 - 4. The comparative quality of the goods and services bid;
 - 5. The proponent’s performance under previous contracts with AWC, if any;
 - 6. The ability of the proponent to provide additional services;
 - 7. The number and scope of conditions attached to the proposal;
 - 8. The proponent’s interest in the project, as well as its understanding of the project scope and the specific requirements of AWC;
 - 9. The proponent’s schedule of completion;
 - 10. The application of all of the above criteria to any sub consultants, subcontractors or products to be utilized by the proponent;

11. General qualifications of the firm and the qualifications of the assigned staff;
 12. Any other criteria deemed relevant by AWC.
- G. AWC makes no guarantees to any proponent. The only obligations to be undertaken by AWC will be those contained in the negotiated contract with the successful proponent.
 - H. AWC assumes no responsibility for payment of any expenses incurred by any proponent as part of the Request for Proposal process.
 - I. All work product generated by the successful proponent will be the property of AWC, including without limitation all rights to reproduce, license, assign, sell and otherwise use the work product in any form, size, format or medium for any purpose. Proponent will convey and assign all rights of ownership and authorship in the work product to AWC.
 - J. The proponent will agree not to discriminate through the services or activities made possible by or resulting from its proposal on the grounds of sex, race, color, creed, national origin, age (except minimum age and retirement provisions), marital status, sexual orientation or disability. If the proponent is selected to provide goods or services to AWC, any violation of this provision shall be considered to be a material violation of its agreement with AWC and shall be grounds for cancellation, termination or suspension of the agreement. The successful proponent shall at all times, both in the proposal and in the contract process, comply with all applicable city, state and federal anti-discrimination laws, rules, regulations and requirements thereof.

VI. Schedule

Proposals must be received by AWC at 900 Main Street, Hingham, MA 02043 no later than 2pm EDT, on 10/15/2012, three weeks from the date this RFP is issued. Proposals received after such time and date will not be accepted and will be returned unopened. Proposals shall be in a sealed envelope plainly marked with the project name (“**COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT SERVICES**”).

The proposal package should include:

- One (1) original proposal and five (5) complete copies
- The complete proposal on a CD in searchable pdf format
- One (1) copy of any related collateral materials

The proposal may be hand delivered to:

John P. Walsh
Aquarion Water Company
900 Main Street
Hingham, MA 02043

Or the proposal may be submitted by US Mail to:

John P. Walsh
Aquarion Water Company
900 Main Street
Hingham, MA 02043

Each proposal shall contain evidence of the respondent's qualification to do business in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or shall covenant to obtain such qualification. AWC may interview qualified proponents, and will make a selection based upon an evaluation of the qualifications, experience, and other considerations as set forth above in its sole and exclusive discretion. The successful proponent will be required to enter into a contract with AWC for the performance of the required services. The project is anticipated to begin immediately upon execution of the contract. No payment will be awarded for any work prior to the signing of the contract, unless expressly approved in advance in writing.

By submitting a proposal the respondent represents, warrants and agrees that:

- The information in the proposal is accurate and complete
- Any copyright or intellectual property in any materials contained in the proposal will not be infringed or violated if AWC does not go to contract with the proponent
- This RFP governs the proposal and any negotiations that may follow between the respondent and AWC.

VII. Additional Information

This RFP is being issued by AWC pursuant to a directive of the DPU set forth in the DPU's order dated March 30, 2012 in Docket D.P.U. 11-43.

Proponents are directed specifically to pages 126-27 and 251-75 of that Order, as well as the transcripts of the proceeding. The transcripts and the Order are available at the Department's offices, One South Station – 5th Floor, Boston, Massachusetts for public view during normal business hours. A copy of the Order is also available on the Department's website at <http://www.env.state.ma.us/dpu/docs/water/11-43/33012dpuord.pdf>.

Questions regarding this project or other information regarding the Company should be directed to John P. Walsh, Aquarion Water Company, 900 Main Street, Hingham, MA 02043, Email: jwalsh@aquarionwater.com, 781-740-6695, who may be reached during regular business hours.