



Addendum No. Two

DATE: 4/17/2023

Reference: RFP# 01-000-23-0001
Commodity/Title: Marketing and Communications Consultant(s)
Issue Date: 3/23/2023
Proposal Due: **5/1/2023 (by 2:00 PM EST)**

TO ALL OFFERORS:

This Addendum No. Two informs Offerors as to the questions/answers that were submitted to VPRA in regard to the open RFP.

NOTE: **Offerors must acknowledge receipt of this Addendum in writing within the RFP Cover Page (FORM PD 07) at time of proposal submittal.**

Very truly yours,

John Kostyniuk
John Kostyniuk
804.339.2604

VPRA received the following questions electronically:

Question #1: Is there an incumbent for this work or current contractor performing similar services for VPRA? If so, can you share the name of the contractor?

Answer #1: Siddall Communications is the current agency of record for VPRA's Amtrak Virginia Marketing.

Question #2: Are you looking to onboard more than one agency per component?

Answer #2: We are looking to onboard one agency per component but reserve the right to choose multiple per component or one for all components.

Question #3: Under component 1 the RFP lists, "Utilize available market research to discover potential riders to target." Is this market research VPRA has already conducted? If not, does VPRA have a preferred or existing source for this research?

Answer #3: Existing third-party data for Virginia markets, first-party data from Amtrak National, VTC tourism research, 2018 comprehensive Amtrak Virginia research study, available public GIS data. Some desktop research will be required.

Question #4: What is the budget for paid media spend in Component 1? If not able to provide, can you share what previous traditional and digital media budgets were? How does the budget compare year over year?

Answer #4: An estimate of the paid media budget is \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign.

Question #5: What are the most important KPIs? How does VPRA define success in terms of paid media campaigns?

Answer #5: Conversions, ridership demand generation, click throughs, impressions.

Question #6: Does VPRA have existing sponsorships in place, including college sponsorships?

Answer #6: VPRA currently has sponsorships with Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Virginia, Old Dominion University, and Virginia State University. Annually, VPRA has sponsored the International Folk Festival, Virginia Wine Expo, Virginia Pride, and VA1 Tourism Conference. These sponsorships are up for renewal in 2023. VPRA is interested in renewing or finding new sponsorships that provide the best measurable return on investment.

Question #7: Have there been specific challenges with sponsorships that you would be looking to the selected firm to address?

Answer #7: Aligning the sponsorships with key markets and the ability to track the return on investment have been challenges in the past.

Question #8: For Component 2, does VPRA have an expectation for the number of events as part of this work?

Answer #8: VPRA is estimating one event per month or 12 per calendar year.

Question #9: Outside of Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, what other digital channels have been successful in the past? (E.g. search, programmatic, streaming audio, etc.)

Answer #9: Dynamic search, streaming audio, YouTube, and TikTok.

Question #10: Does VPRA currently utilize any analytic tools or listening tools to collect digital metrics? If so, could you please share the names of the tools and how often metrics are evaluated?

Answer #10: VPRA utilizes tracking pixels on social platforms and google. Reports are pulled weekly and analyzed at the conclusion of each campaign. VPRA currently uses google analytics and Facebook business manager to track conversions.

Question #11: Are there any key milestones of note based on VPRA internal due dates and goals? If so, are you able to share these milestones?

Answer #11: Increase ridership by 10% year-over-year.

Question #12: This RFP is for on-call services. However, Component 3 lists a specific timeframe for the social media content calendar. Is this timeframe for an anticipated task order?

Answer #12: Yes. Create monthly content calendars (July 2023-June 2024)

Question #13: Samples of web design are requested under Tab 2, however, website design is not explicitly listed in the Scope of Work. Is VPRA looking for back-end web design support in addition to website content creation? If so, what web platform is the VPRA website currently hosted on?

Answer #13: VPRA is requesting to see website examples in which the offeror created and developed the content. VPRA uses WordPress.

Question #14: For estimating the monthly and annual fee for each component, should we anticipate that all tasks listed under the component will be covered?

Answer #14: Yes

Question #15: Confirming that VPRA is looking for separate proposals for each component? I.e. a firm responding to all three components would submit three proposals, a firm responding to two components would submit two proposals, etc.?

Answer #15: For Firms interested in responding for each component, you can aggregate all three components into a single proposal but your response for each component must be clearly marked. Proposals should be as thorough and detailed as possible so that VPRA may properly evaluate the Offerors capabilities to provide the required services. Proposals should be organized in the order in which the requirements are presented in the RFP. Proposals that are not clearly organized risk elimination from consideration if the evaluators are unable to find where the RFP requirements are specifically addressed.

Question #16: The RFP states that firms proposing SWaM participation of 10% will receive full points (20) for SWaM utilization. Is VPRA giving any scoring preference to SWaM firms proposing as the prime at 100% SWaM utilization?

Answer #16: Yes,

The evaluation criteria for Small Business Utilization is amended to read:

Proposals will be evaluated and scored in accordance with the following criteria:

- Offerors status as a Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity (DSBSD) SWaM Certified Business. No offeror or subcontractor shall be considered a small business unless certified as such by DSBSD by the due date for receipt of proposals. If you are certified by the DSBSD as a small business, complete only Section A of form PD 60. This includes but is not limited to DSBSD-certified micro, women-owned, minority-

owned, DBE and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses when they have also received DSBSD small business certification.

- Full points are awarded to SWaM certified Primes. Partial points available for Offeror's if the Prime is Non-SWaM and the offer includes a small business participation plan.

Description	Score
<i>Small Business Utilization (Tab 4):</i>	20 Points

Offeror's status as a SWaM by DSBSD;

Offeror's plan (Use of small businesses and businesses owned by women and minorities as consultants, subcontractors, suppliers or support services) to utilize firms certified as SWaM by DSBSD;

Full points are awarded to SWaM certified Primes.

Partial points available for Offeror's if the Prime is Non-SWaM and the offer includes a small business participation plan..

Question #17: Given that this RFP has three distinct proposing opportunities, would VPRA give an extension to allow firms time to propose on multiple individual components?

Answer #17: Addendum No. One amends the due date for the submittal of RFP proposals as follows:

- Proposals are now due 5/1/2023 by 2:00 PM EST.

Question #18: Will VPRA consider multiple awards for each component or likely one award per component (understanding that one firm may be awarded more than one component)?

Answer #18: VPRA is looking to onboard one agency per component, but reserves the right to choose multiple per component or one firm for all components.

Question #19: Chapter 3.2 references "available marketing research" to identify potential riders to target – is VPRA providing this research or should the proposal include desktop research?

Answer #19: Yes, please outline the cost to perform desktop research in the proposal. VPRA has access to data that is available and may need to be analyzed.

Question #20: Will you share the previous budget for media/ad spend for Amtrak Virginia? If you do not have access to this budget information, do you have a range in mind for annual media spend? If so, will you please share that budget range?

Answer #20: An estimate of the paid media budget is \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.

Question #21: Has the VPRA conducted any marketing analysis or feasibility studies for advertising? If so, will you please share that information?

Answer #21: Amtrak national has ridership profiles that can only be shared with contracted partners. VPRA has a 2018 comprehensive market research study and rider profiles that can be shared with the contract recipient.

Question #22: What does the "production of informative public events" entail?

Answer #22: This is for event activations (Reserving space and arranging the logistics, sourcing vendors, developing event collateral, and providing on-site staff support).

Question #23: Under Component One, number one, has the VPRA already developed advertising and marketing goals and strategies, or is this the development of such the responsibility of the marketing consultant in coordination with VPRA?

Answer #23: VPRA has goals and strategies that guide our efforts, but we will look to the consultant to provide advertising and media strategies that help accomplish those goals.

Question #24: In the RFP, under Purpose 1.1, it is noted that the RFP is to solicit sealed proposals to establish a contract through competitive negotiation with a "qualified creative and paid media agency or agencies," however, under the Scope of Work, it notes that VPRA is seeking a single "Consultant." Are these terms to be used interchangeable? Agency and consultant?

Answer #24: Yes

Question #25: In order to provide pricing that is comparable to other vendors, could VPRA provide more specifics for what should be assumed in terms of pricing?

- To what scale should we budgeting for media buys?
- How much is available for sponsorships?
- How many full-time employees are you anticipating to complete these tasks?

Answer #25:

- An estimate of the paid media budget is \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.
- The proposed sponsorship budget is \$100,000 for July 1 – June 30 annually.
- It will vary depending on the component.

Question #26: How many task order awards are anticipated in the first year?

Answer #26: It is anticipated that there will be a task order for each of the three components. The offeror shall outline the work needed to complete the component and estimate annual cost.

Question #27: How much budget does VPRA have for task orders for the first year?

Answer #27: The offeror shall estimate the total budget for the scope of the component.

Question #28: What is the estimated budget for this contract?

Answer #28: The offeror shall propose an estimated budget to complete the tasks outlined in the scope based on the:

- estimated paid media budget of \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope

outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.

- The proposed paid sponsorship budget of \$100,000 for July 1 – June 30 annually.

Question #29: Who are the incumbents on this contract?

Answer #29: See answer one (Siddall Communications is the current agency of record for VPRA's Amtrak Virginia Marketing)

Question #30: What business goals or concerns does VPRA currently have that this contract can help solve? What is very important for the agency?

Answer #30: VPRA seeks to build a dedicated base of repeat Amtrak riders, find ways to attract new riders, build trust and change consumer behavior moving away from cars and toward more sustainable transportation. It's very important for VPRA to build a strong brand for Amtrak Virginia and a clear association that the Commonwealth funds and manages the majority of Amtrak service in Virginia.

Question #31: On Page 5, Item 3: Amtrak Virginia does not seem to have a presence on Twitter and YouTube. Is the agency also contemplating the creation and maintenance of accounts on those platforms as part of this contract?

Answer #31: Amtrak National manages the twitter handles and acts as the customer alert arm. Amtrak Virginia is creating a YouTube presence and anticipates using the channel for paid and organic media.

Question #32: Page 5, Item 3.2.1.k: What kind of content is required for the E-Statements? Is it financial data? Or a narrative of news and accomplishments for the period being reported?

Answer #32: The e-statement is a short monthly promotional email blast that conforms to an Amtrak National template. It serves as a tool that Amtrak National uses to promote regional routes.

Question #33: Page 5, Item 3.2.3.i: What is the estimated average volume of copy or number of pages to support on the VPRA website?

Answer #33: VPRA estimates 20 templated pages in WordPress that include photography of Virginia destinations served by Amtrak, travel information, attractions, and public transportation options.

Question #34: What is VPRA's paid media budget (outside costs) and services (consulting fees) budget for each of the three major components, paid Advertising Campaigns, Paid Sponsorships, and Social Media and Website Management)?

Answer #34:

- estimated paid media budget of \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.
- The proposed paid sponsorship budget of \$100,000 for July 1 – June 30 annually.
- Social media and website budgets should be established based on the scope outlined in component three.

Question #35: May a consulting firm submit a proposal that aggregates all three components into a single proposal or are we correct that the requirement is to submit separate proposals for each component?

Answer #35: See answer Number 15: For Firms interested in responding for each component, you can aggregate all three components into a single proposal but your response for each component must be clearly marked.

Question #36: For component one, Paid Advertising Campaigns: What can the consultant expect its quarterly media buy outlay to be?

Answer #36: estimated paid media budget of \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns).

Question #37: For component three: social media and website, Will the consultant have access to the platforms and perform the posting, or create the calendars and content and turn this over to VPRA staff who “owns” the platforms?

Answer #37: Consultant will be granted access to the platform(s) in which they will schedule and post monthly content. Website will be content creation not website management since the website management will be conducted by VPRA.

Question #38: We would like to verify what the 21 Amtrak Rail Stations in VA are as we saw some conflicting info online. Is the list on AmtrakGuide.com the correct list?

Answer #38: VPRA cannot answer this question because VPRA does not own and manage the majority of the stations in VA.

Question #39: Is it safe to assume the hours listed on the AmtrakGuide.com website are accurate?

Answer #39: No. VPRA does not manage the hours listed. VPRA could not find AmtrakGuide.com. In addition VPRA does not think AmtrakGuide.com is relevant to this RFP.

Question #40: How many of the 21 locations have personnel staffing the location? We see on the website that some list “Passenger Assistance”. Does that mean there is Amtrak staff on-site?

Answer #40: VPRA does not think AmtrakGuide.com is relevant to this RFP

Question #41: We see on the website that it either says “No Wi-Fi” or “Amtrak Wi-Fi”. Is the “Amtrak Wi-Fi” free to guests?

Answer #41: Free Amtrak wifi is available on all trains.

Question #42: Do the Amtrak Rail Stations have televisions for public viewing in them currently? If so, how many in each station? What is currently on the televisions? Who currently manages the content?

Answer #42: No. Stations are owned by a variety of entities including Amtrak, VRE, the Commonwealth, cities, and towns.

Question #43: Page 8, Section 2b: Are you trying to promote the 7 Universities/Colleges listed in the RFP or are you looking for campaigns for the 7 Universities/Colleges to promote Amtrak travel?

Answer #43: VPRA aims to promote Amtrak to college students in Virginia, in addition to other key target markets. The goal is to secure sponsorships with key universities along our routes to promote our service to students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and college sports fans.

Question #44: Do you plan to select multiple bidders for each subset (Component One, Component Two, and Component Three)? Will a bid be accepted for only bidding on certain bullet points within a particular “Component”?

Answer #44: VPRA will not accept bids from a prime interested in certain parts of a component. We are looking to onboard one agency per component but reserve the right to choose multiple per component or one for all components.

Question #45: What is the Ridership of Amtrak in Virginia

- System Wide
- How many people boarding/disembarking at EACH of the 21 Amtrak Rail Stations annually?

Answer #45: Amtrak Virginia ridership is approximately 1 million riders per year.

Question #46: Are you looking to further promote Amtrak travel outside the state of VA?

Answer #46: VPRA funds and manages the state-supported Amtrak service in Virginia. We have feeder markets in the Northeast corridor, surrounding states, and international travelers.

Question #47: Is the Amtrak station (Union Station) in Washington, DC included in this RFP, if not is there an opportunity to include them in this offering?

Answer #47: No. We are not looking to promote Amtrak stations. We are promoting Amtrak service in Virginia, aiming to gain and retain riders.

Question #48: Are there any TV screens on any Amtrak trains?

Answer #48: No

Question #49: Is there a budget designated for the work in this RFP? If not, are you able to disclose what historical budgets have been for each area of work in the past few years?

Answer #49: VPRA's budgets are publicly available on our website: www.vpra.virginia.gov

Question #50: Are there any additional ARPA funds available in the budget for this work?

Answer #50: No

Question #51: With the contract being awarded July 1, what is the expectation of which of the four Paid Advertising Campaigns is to be executed and when?

Answer #51: Fall campaign from September-November, Winter campaign December-February, Spring campaign- March-May, Summer campaign- June (extending into July).

Question #52: As applicable, what agencies (or kind of agencies) do you currently work with? (Creative, PR, Media, etc.)?

Answer #52: See answer to question 1.

Question #53: What are the metrics of success for VPRA? And as it relates to communications and marketing?

Answer #53: Conversions, ridership demand generation, awareness, click throughs, impressions.

Question #54: . Can you share any market research or target audience information that the incumbent(s) have access to in order to provide a more informed response?

Answer #54: No, data can be shared with contracted firms.

Question #55: Can you share a copy of your current communications plan?

Answer #55: No

Question #56: Under the Attachment E, Fee Proposal, Form PD70, it is requested that we provide:

a. A monthly Fee and extend the monthly fee to an annual fee (times 12 of the monthly fee) for each of the three components.

b. Does this mean that VPRA would prefer a firm fixed monthly retainer to cover all of the costs of the work outlined in the Scope of Work?

c. Would VPRA be open to a straight time and materials (i.e., fully billable hourly rates) pricing approach?

Answer #56: a and b. Yes, VPRA prefers a firm fixed monthly retainer to cover all of the costs of the work outlined in the Scope of Work.

c. No. While VPRA asked responders to Provide a list of position titles, hourly rates and percent of time that will be allocated to each Component this was for market analysis. VPRA did ask for the fully loaded labor rate for positions outside of the scope of work, if any, in case task orders require positions outside of the scope of work.

Question #57: Does/will the scope of work include promoting VRE passenger rail service also?

Answer #57: No, but could include cross-promotional opportunities.

Question #58: What has the budget for paid sponsorships been over the last four years?

Answer #58: VPRA's annual agency budget is publicly available on the VPRA website. VPRA has an estimated paid media budget of \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.

Question #59: Who will approve content, how many layers of approval?

Answer #59: VPRA Marketing Manager and Amtrak National Marketing Manager. Two layers of approval.

Question #60: Currently, what is the turnaround time from the delivery of content to receiving feedback?

Answer #60: 1-2 weeks.

Question #61: In what format are content calendars currently delivered? For example, an Excel spreadsheet? Google Doc? Via software?

Answer #61: Google Doc but open to more advanced software. VPRA uses the Microsoft Suite.

Question #62: How is content currently being created, specifically where are photos and graphics sourced from now?

Answer #62: Amtrak National retains a limited photo repository for state use however the cost to purchase stock imagery should be included in proposal

Question #63: Does VPRA/Amtrak VA have a Digital Asset Management system or cloud storage that the team will be able to access for content creation?

Answer #63: No, VPRA does not have a digital asset management system. Amtrak National retains a limited photo repository for state use.

Question #64: What platforms are VPRA/Amtrak VA websites currently built on? Will you require hosting?

Answer #64: WordPress, no

Question #65: How many unique visitors visit the sites daily?

Answer #65: Unknown. Amtrak National manages the sales website.

Question #66: Does VPRA/Amtrak VA currently use social media scheduling software? If so, which one?

Answer #66: Hootsuite, or a commercially equivalent

Question #67: Will we be required to respond to questions or comments on posts? If so, is there currently an FAQ document we can pull responses from?

Answer #67: Occasionally. Most are auto-replies and highly regulated by Amtrak national.

Question #68: How is social listening reporting currently being provided? Are you currently using social listening software? If so, which one?

Answer #68: It is not currently being done.

Question #69: How is social media success currently being measured? Specifically, what social media metrics are being tracked and measured?

Answer #69: Goals will need to be established. But organic growth is the main priority.

Question #70: How will social media reports be used and who will they be seen or used by?

Answer #70: They will be used to guide future strategy and primarily used by the VPRA marketing manager.

Question #71: What is meant by “engage partners” as listed as item G in this component (Component Three)?

Answer #71: Network, build relationships, outreach.

Question #72: How often would account management meetings be required? Weekly or monthly (Component Three)?

Answer #72: Bi-weekly.

Question #73: Will you be sharing a social media strategy with us, or should we include the development of one in our proposal?

Answer #73: Include in proposal.

Question #74: Are there competitors or brands in this or another industry whose social media you enjoy or aspire to?

Answer #74: VPRA wants innovation for our social media accounts with a pulse on current trends. Sites we enjoy include, VDOT Northern VA Twitter, Slack, Nike, Starbucks, Brightline, United Airlines, Duolingo, and Amtrak National.

Question #75: How will you measure the success of the vendor selected for this component (Component Three)?

Answer #75: Measured platform growth.

Question #76: Could you please confirm that we must commit all personnel in our proposal as key personnel? Page 11 states “Contractor shall not change primary or secondary staff

assigned to VPRA, except for employee departures, or subcontractors and their staff, without VPRA's prior written permission."?

Answer #76: No, identify which of your personnel will be key personnel as set forth in the RFP. See paragraph 4 of PD 100.

Question #77: Attachment E requests "a list of position titles and percent of time that will be allocated to each component". Could you please clarify specifically what should be included in this pricing attachment? Do you only require a list of titles and a percent breakdown for each of the three areas? Or would you like a full price schedule breaking down hourly rates, hours and total fees?

Answer #77: A list of titles and a percent breakdown for each of the three areas.

Question #78: Can you provide scoping information for this work? How many hours were spent in the most recent contract year?

Answer #78: No

Question #79: How much of your total budget for this project do you intend to allocate towards media buying?

Answer #79: estimated paid media budget of \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.

Question #80: What is your estimated media budget?

Answer #80: estimated paid media budget of \$100k per campaign (to include the four seasonal campaigns). The offeror should establish an estimated budget based on the scope outlined in component one, recommending the mix of media for each campaign. Amtrak Virginia has approximately 1 million riders per year.

Question #81: Can you share your current media mix?

Answer #81: Paid social, banner ads, search, dynamic search, out of home, print, streaming radio.

Question #82: Please clarify how you define promotions?

Answer #82: Activities that support or provide active encouragement for the furtherance of a cause. Amtrak has several promotions that are "always on."

Question #83: What format do you prefer for reporting?

Answer #83: Powerpoint

Question #84: Is there a preferred budget allocation between digital and traditional media? (e.g. 60% traditional, 40% digital)?

Answer #84: No.

Question #85: Are you currently using landing pages for digital campaigns? If so, will those landing pages remain the same? What are the links for these?

Answer #85: Yes. There are dedicated promotional landing pages. They can found at <https://www.amtrak.com/virginia>. Scroll down to view the "always on" discounts. There will be additional one-off landing pages for flashsales and special promotions that are managed by Amtrak national.

Question #86: What OOH activations have been most successful in the past?

Answer #86: The VCU RamCar, college sports games, the Richmond Folk Festival

Question #87: Have you executed direct mail campaigns in the past? How do you define a successful direct mail campaign?

Answer #87: No. Unknown.

Question #88: Who is the target audience (demographic/psychographic data)?

Answer #88: Virginia leisure travelers, students, seniors, families, business travelers.

Question #89: Do you have any first party data that can be leveraged for privacy compliant targeting?

Answer #89: No

Question #90: What is the expected launch date for media?

Answer #90: September 1, 2023

End of questions.