

RFP – MARKETING SERVICES

Amendment 1 – Comments and Questions/Answers

Questions/Comments and Answers

Q1: Confirming you are not accepting emailed proposals? In the past we have responded to state govt RFPs that requested separate emails for technical and cost with specific subject lines. Just curious if that is a possibility?

A1: This is a sealed bid, so at this time we will not accept emailed responses. Please refer to RFP Section 3.1 et seq. for submission requirements.

Q2: How many agencies was the RFP delivered to?

A2: We do not disclose our Bidders' list prior to award. Also, our solicitations are posted publicly and we have no way of knowing in advance who will respond.

Q3: Is there currently an incumbent AOR?

A3: Yes, our Agency of Record is A to Z Communications, Inc.

Q4: If there is an incumbent, will they be part of the RFP?

A4: This solicitation is open to all responsive and responsible Proposers.

Q5: What triggered the RFP?

A5: Tennessee statute imposes a maximum term of five years on expenditure contracts. We are nearing the end of that five-year term with the incumbent.

Q6: Is the total yearly budget \$1MM? How much of this is typically spent on media?

A6: The yearly marketing budget fluctuates according to what the university needs. The \$1 million total has been consistent for the last 2-3 years in terms of the total spent on media. Additional funds outside that total are spent on creative development, strategy/consulting and research.

Q7: What are the goals for 2024? Increased admissions, etc.

A7: Yes, the largest part of marketing goals for 2024 are tied to increased enrollment across the board, including undergraduate, transfers and graduate admissions. Secondary goals include increased brand awareness, community outreach, licensing/trademarks, and strategic partnerships.

Q8: What is working best with regard to your current marketing efforts?

A8: Over the last 2 years, the Office of Communications & Marketing and the division of Enrollment Management merged into a new unit called Enrollment & Communication under a single vice president. This has created a tremendous synergy between Marketing and Recruitment efforts to better target specific populations of students. This has led to record levels of undergraduate applications and admits for the university.

Q9: What do you hope to improve?

A9: With this bid, we are not necessarily seeking improvements. However, we are always open to new ideas and methods to better enhance our current marketing and recruitment efforts.

Q10: What is the makeup of the TN Tech marketing team - headcount and roles?

A10: The TN Tech Office of Communications is led by the Associate Vice President for Communications & Marketing who serves as the primary point of contact for the selected agency of record. There are 5 directors in the office managing the following areas: Brand Communications, Interactive Media, Web & Digital Media, Printing Services and Marketing Promotions & Events. Beyond those directors, there are several creative/production level staff members that perform graphic design, photography, videography, web

development, social media management, writing and printing press operations. The office also has an Office Manager and Financial Manager. In total, there are 21 staff members.

Q11: Who will be evaluating the RFP responses?

A11: Tennessee Tech maintains confidentiality of RFP evaluators. This evaluation committee consists of staff members from the Office of Communications & Marketing.

Q12: What is the most important quality in your agency partner?

A12: The most important quality in an agency partner would be good, proactive communication with regular meetings to discuss priorities and an agency who is proactive in pitching new ideas.

Q13: What do you think makes a great agency/client relationship?

A13: Good, proactive communication is the key to a great agency/client relationship.

Q14: Are there other vendors/partners that you currently work with for other aspects of marketing? (PR, etc.)

A14: The university has several other contracts that the Office of Communications & Marketing does work with from time to time on one-off projects such as graphic design or specific digital marketing pushes. The university works directly as needed with local, Cookeville media partners.

Q15: Will there be another round of cost negotiations or is first submission best and final?

A15: No – first submission is final and there will be no “best and final offer” procedure. Please refer to revised RFP Section 3 for more details.

Q16: Regarding question (C.2) asking about the OS and programs we use. Do you have specific requirements for file handover that require us to use certain programs?

A16: We use Adobe Creative Cloud applications on MacOS and generally stick with industry standard file types for all our projects. We would prefer all file types shared with us to be compatible with one or more adobe products.

Q17: Is the name of attachment 6.4 the “project narrative” or are we to provide a project narrative?

A17: That reference in Section 6.5A.3 is a typo which has been corrected. The Attachment is actually called “Contract Scope & Mandatory Requirements.” Proposers do not need to provide a project narrative in Section 6.5A.3.

Q18: If we know we will use subcontractors, do you want separate answers from them for all the questions in Section B—qualifications and experience or should we bundle all of the team's capabilities into each answer?

A18: For section B, you can bundle all the team’s capabilities together, but can make a note they are a subcontractor. In section C5, subcontractors and their roles should be itemized out.

Q19: Can you share which audiences are your target markets? Is there one market that is more important than others, and if so, can you please share what that market is?

A19: Target markets include Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga. Secondary markets include the Upper Cumberland region, West TN and Memphis area, northern Alabama and northern Georgia. Middle TN and the Nashville area is the most important market.

Q20: Is there an incumbent that has been providing these services?

A20: Please see Answer #3 above.

Q21: Is there a need for Satellite or Radio Media Tours to promote specific Tennessee Tech programs, centers, or degrees?

A21: We do incorporate some streaming and traditional radio options in our media plans, but not specific tours. We have found success working with the Admissions Team on “Tech to You” recruitment events in key locations across state of TN.

Q22: In reference to Section C.4 – if we currently work with a public university in the state of Tennessee in any capacity, does this fall under this section? Does this also pertain to the possibility of working with another postsecondary school?

A22: Yes, this would pertain if that work were for marketing/recruitment or if it would otherwise fall under the agency of record contract. We understand some agencies help with projects related to athletics and/or fundraising and not recruitment. We ask that those relationships be disclosed here in section C4.

Q23: If our costing is not structured on a per hour rate, how would you like for us to proceed with the cost proposal schedule?

A23: We can appreciate that you use a different cost structure. However, we need to be able to compare apples-to-apples, so we are asking only for hourly rates from all Proposers in that section of Attachment 6.6.

Q24: If we were awarded this, how many divisions/departments will we be assisting? Will it be through a single point of contact/decision maker or multiple determined by the project/need?

A24: Primary departments for this contract are the Office of Communications & Marketing and the Office of Admissions. But the contract would be open for all of campus to use. The Associate Vice President for Communications & Marketing serves as the primary point of contact and decision maker. She secures the chain of approvals as needed internally for any work done.

Q25: What is your preferred method of sharing creative assets such as b-roll, student/campus imagery, etc. that could be used in the development and refresh of creative campaigns?

A25: Currently, our office uses Dropbox to share assets with external vendors, but we are open to any secure FTP process. We also currently use Photo Shelter as the repository for our university photos. We also use Basecamp and Asana and have been part of other project management systems in the past.

Q26: Can you please clarify the Video Production assistance needed, specifically, are they for general campus collateral (i.e. internal communications, campus videos), commercial use or a combination of both?

A26: Video Production assistance is primarily for help in producing professional commercials and video spots for the university, as well as for A/V assistance at live events as needed. We have an in-house video production team that produces videos for social media and internal communications.

Q27: If the \$1M budget is all in, would you prefer the cost proposal to include a media budget?

A27: No, the budget for media spend can vary, and the \$1 million is an average. You do not have to include a proposed media budget/plan with this RFP.

Q28: Will Tennessee Tech University give preference to Tennessee-based companies?

A28: No.

Q29: Will Tennessee Tech University give preference to minority-owned and woman-owned businesses?

A29: No, however we encourage all minority-owned and woman-owned businesses to register with the Governor’s Office of Diversity Business Enterprise (Go-DBE).

Q30: Does Tennessee Tech University have an incumbent or preferred vendor in mind for this project?

A30: Tennessee Tech does have an incumbent – please see Answer #3 above.

Q31: Who will be directing/leading the agency partner on a daily basis?

A31: The Associate Vice President for Communications & Marketing will be directing/leading the agency partner on a daily basis.

Q32: How has the ever-changing education landscape impacted your enrollment numbers?

A32: In recent history, you can see that COVID impacted our university enrollment as it did many others. Rebounding from that, there is an increased sense of competition among universities when it comes to the shrinking number of available high school students to recruit.

Q33: In your opinion, what is your biggest challenge right now?

A33: Recruiting more students to the university and finding ways to get them committed earlier in the admission process.

Q34: What strengths are important to you from your selected agency partner?

A34: Robust media planning experience is important and experience working with in-house creative teams.

Q35: Understanding that increased enrollment is a KPI, what are all of the KPI's for this campaign?

A35: KPIs change for each campaign cycle. As we work through the campaign, important KPIs are number of impressions/click-throughs/engagement for advertising, being able to quantify the number of conversions that happen between advertising and submitting application for admission or campus visit, number of applications, number of admitted students, number of those signed up for housing, number with scholarships, number enrolled for student orientation, etc. We work to share this information with the agency of record to fine tune our campaigns and messaging.

Q36: Does Tennessee Tech University have a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool in place? If so, what tool are you currently using?

A36: Yes, within the last recruitment cycle, we use Slate CRM.

Q37: What is Tennessee Tech University's current CMS?

A37: For the current CMS on the university website, we use Modern Campus (formerly Omni).

Q38: What are your target markets and who are your target audiences?

A38: Target markets include Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga. Secondary markets include the Upper Cumberland region, West TN and Memphis area, northern Alabama and northern Georgia. Middle TN and the Nashville area is the most important market. Target audience is high school students 15-18 years old, and secondary targets are their parents.

Q39: For the section requiring the narrative regarding our most recent new account gained and most recent account lost, would it be acceptable to provide information regarding average tenure of relationships? As a privately held company, we do not disclose financial or client information, but we could provide insight into the typical client experience/length of service.

A39: Yes, this will work to be more general to submit about the nature of relationship and length of duration, as well why account was gained/lost. You do not have to disclose specific client names.

Q40: Are you working with a current provider with services and if so what caused the rfp process?

A40: Please see Answer #3 above and Answer #5 above.

Q41: There is a seemingly hypothetical marketing budget listed in B.11 referring to >1 million in total expenditures, is this the expected budget or is there a firm media spend level that will be expected? This will assist in pricing for the scope desired for the project.

A41: The media spend can fluctuate. It has averaged around \$1 million the past few years, but that can change. The media spend does not include any expenditures related to creative development, strategy/consulting or research.

Q42: Is an incumbent agency participating in this agency selection process?

A42: Please see Answer #4 above.

Q43: Is there an annual budget allocated for this all-in scope of work we can consider - or even a target or a not-to-exceed?

A43: No, the budget can fluctuate and change depending on university marketing needs.

Q44: Can your team define the success metrics through which the partnership and subsequently the agency will be evaluated?

A44: Success metrics will be measured on quality of the agency/university relationship and through industry-standard KPIs for advertising/marketing campaigns for audience engagement.

Q45: Can you define the team structure our agency will be working with, as well as how approvals will be run through the university? What is your team's typical turnaround time for feedback and approvals based on past campaigns / partnerships of similar scope?

A45: The Associate Vice President for Communications & Marketing will be the primary point of contact and decision maker. She secures any internal approvals, even up to the President, as needed. Typical turnaround time for feedback approvals, can take just hours or days to complete. This is a very active/engaged relationship with weekly if not daily communication between the university and agency.

Q46: Pg. 8 Section 3.2.7 - Does this mean an actual signature is needed on the printed Technical proposal we mail in or is a digital signature acceptable across the board? It is not clear here where in the submission a digital signature is acceptable vs. not.

A46: The Technical Proposal and Cost Proposal both require a signature – digital is acceptable. An inked signature is not necessary anywhere in the submission.

Q47: Pg. 15 Attachment 6.1 - Do we just leave section 4. Minority / Ethnicity code blank if we are not MO?

A47: That is correct.

Q48: Who are the universities' current geodemographic target audiences?

A48: Target markets include Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga. Secondary markets include the Upper Cumberland region, West TN and Memphis area, northern Alabama and northern Georgia. Middle TN and the Nashville area is the most important market. Target audience is high school students 15-18 years old, and secondary targets are their parents.

Q49: What are the university's current enrollment stats broken down by key audience segment and modality? What are the university's goals for enrollment in that same format for the next year, five years, etc.?

A49: All enrollment numbers from Fall 2023 census. Total Student Body: 10,117

- Undergraduate students: 8,838
- Graduate students: 1,279
- In-State students: 91.1%
- Out-of-State students: 8.9%
- International students: 3.3%
- Find out more at: <https://www.tntech.edu/about/facts.php>

Goals tied to university strategic plan: <https://www.tntech.edu/strategic/2025-goals.php>

Q50: Attachment 6.2:

-Define mobile app development

-Define how electronic media differentiates if at all from “digital” media

—How many campaigns do you run a year and what were the previous results of those campaigns?

—What are the measurable benchmarks for the success of those campaigns?

A50: Mobile app development is defined as creative and technical assistance with such development if the university wishes to pursue a mobile app. Electronic media here refers to any analog electronics. Today's needs much more focus on digital media for online. Multiple campaign pushes are run throughout the year with hard recruitment pushes in the fall and yield/transfer pushes in the spring. The ultimate results of these campaigns have been the record number of applications and admitted students for the university. KPIs used for benchmarks would include past number of impressions/click-throughs/engagement for advertising, being able to quantify the number of conversions that happen between advertising and submitting application for admission or campus visit, number of applications, number of admitted students, number of those signed up for housing, number with scholarships, number enrolled for student orientation, etc. We work to share this information with the agency of record to fine tune our campaigns and messaging.

Q51: We would like to request access to examples of existing print advertisements, billboards, promotional items, banners flyers, brochures, and packaging produced by TN Tech in the last 12 months as per the offer in attachment 6.2.

A51: Examples are provided here in this dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/w0z7gex2w5mhfilelm7n2/Recruitment-Materials.zip?rlkey=uiopnv297d996sylv7pydn31x4&st=x4zw7qz0&dl=0>

Q52: To accurately answer B.11 we need to understand the breakdown of the hypothetical 1 million spend - are you able to provide us with a breakdown of ad spend vs. agency fees?

A52: I am unable to provide a breakdown, but \$1 million is estimated average of media spend itself and agency fees are in addition to that total.

Q53: Can you provide a full breakdown of the current Tech Stack for the website, CRM, and any other associated properties that make up the university's digital ecosystem?

A53: We use Modern Campus CMS for the website; Visix for on-campus digital signage; and Slate for the CRM.

Q54: Does C.5.11 reference web support of the existing website, or is it also inclusive of a possible complete rebuild?

A54: This would only be considered support for the existing website and there is no plan to rebuild the website based on this RFP.

Q55: Can your team define the specific PR needs and expertise required within this scope of work for crisis communications and PR?

C.6. References • Coordinating crisis communication or work in news or public relations and the Cost Proposal references Crisis Management and Public Relations / Media Relations as a category, and yet there is no reference to traditional public relations in the Contract Scope and Mandatory Requirements, Attachment 6.4

A55: For us, engaging work for public relations requires a focus on comprehensive crisis communication, adept media relations, and strategic public relations services. The agency must offer immediate response capabilities, proactive media outreach, and robust training and strategy development for crisis situations. A detailed proposal should clearly demonstrate value and allow for flexibility in service levels. This partnership should prioritize quick and effective crisis management, consistent and strategic media engagement, and a focus on maintaining the institution's positive public image through carefully crafted messaging and media interaction.

Q56: If none of our work will be outsourced, how should our team address Part 2 of the cost proposal? Doesn't it put us at a point disadvantage to leave this blank?

A56: Just state that none of the work will be outsourced. You will not be at a disadvantage; points will still be assigned appropriately.

Q57: What is the current status of the TN Tech University brand - both the visual and verbal identity? Is the current brand strategy the approved way forward for the brand, and is it documented for pass-off to an agency for implementation or are there gaps the agency hired would need to fill? In other words, will refining the brand strategy be a part of this partnership in any way?

A57: Tennessee Tech is looking for a partner agency to help continue to refine overall brand strategy and make adjustments as needed. We do have internal documents that better define our visual and verbal identity and will be able to share those assets with the agency of record.

Q58: For questions C.5 - *Provide a narrative regarding your capabilities in providing the services listed below* - is this question scored as a whole or based on the separate sub-service line-items? Can you provide more parameters as to what substantiates a thorough enough narrative to receive the utmost points? Some of these services are mentioned twice, or would require a repetitive response - do we just repeat ourselves or can we reference prior responses? Should case studies be included in these responses, in addition to the responses to question C.7?

A58: This question is based on sub-service line items. Thorough descriptions for each item would be encouraged as to how your agency provides these services. You can either repeat or reference prior responses. Case studies and examples of types of work can be included but are not mandatory.

Q59: Can you provide current metrics related to your marketing project?

A59: KPIs change for each campaign cycle. As we work through the campaign, important KPIs are number of impressions/click-throughs/engagement for advertising, being able to quantify the number of conversions that happen between advertising and submitting application for admission or campus visit, number of applications, number of admitted students, number of those signed up for housing, number with scholarships, number enrolled for student orientation, etc. We work to share this information with the agency of record to fine tune our campaigns and messaging.

Q60: If there are no current metrics, how do you currently track (or plan to track) campaign success?

A60: See response to Q59.

Q61: What metrics do you currently track?

A61: See response to Q59.

Q62: Do you have GA set up?

A62: Yes, we have Google Analytics set up.

Q63: Do you use Tag Manager?

A63: Yes, we use Google Tag Manager.

Q64: Have you run digital ad campaigns before? What was the outcome?

A64: Yes. KPIs change for each campaign cycle. As we work through the campaign, important KPIs are number of impressions/click-throughs/engagement for advertising, being able to quantify the number of conversions that happen between advertising and submitting application for admission or campus visit, number of applications, number of admitted students, number of those signed up for housing, number with scholarships, number enrolled for student orientation, etc. We work to share this information with the agency of record to fine tune our campaigns and messaging.

Q65: Do you have any campaigns running currently?

A65: Yes, I am currently running campaigns to recruit transfer students and push campus visits.

Q66: What aspects of digital marketing do you want to focus on (building brand awareness, increasing web traffic, generating leads, more followers, etc)?

A66: The focus of digital marketing is generating leads in terms of recruiting new undergraduate students.

Q67: How do people currently find your organization online (search, social, etc)?

A67: Most come in through search, and paid search is part of our digital marketing strategy.

Q68: What are your top marketing challenges?

A68: Our top marketing challenges/opportunities would be to always recruit more students to the university, and to continue to differentiate Tennessee Tech from other universities, especially in this time of increased competition.

Q69: What marketing strategies have you tried before?

A69: We have run multiple campaigns and many strategies, including traditional media buys, digital media buys, personalized URLs, direct mail campaigns, email campaigns, paid search campaigns, retargeting, etc.

Q70: Are there opportunities in your market that you feel you haven't capitalized on?

A70: We believe there are more opportunities that need specific strategies that we would work the agency of record on those areas.

Q71: Do you have an in-house marketing team? What are their roles?

A71: Yes, the Office of Communications & Marketing serves an in-house marketing team for the entire campus. We are an internal charge-back service and do all kinds of services from writing, graphic design, photography, videography, web support and printing services.

Q72: What technologies and systems do you currently use to track marketing efforts?

A72: Our agency of record tracks campaign performance metrics on impressions/views/clicks/etc. We also use Google Analytics, Sprout Social, and Slate CRM. We have also used tracking codes inserted on the university website. Key KPIs include the number of impressions/click-throughs/engagement for advertising, being able to quantify the number of conversions that happen between advertising and submitting application for admission or campus visit, number of applications, number of admitted students, number of those signed up for housing, number with scholarships, number enrolled for student orientation, etc. We work to share this information with the agency of record to fine tune our campaigns and messaging.

Q73: Are you in control of the access and integration of these systems? Is that expertise on staff? Or is that a 3rd party's responsibility?

A73: We are in control of access and integration of these systems and have the expertise on staff.

Q74: Can you provide access to these systems to your strategic marketing partners?

A74: Yes, we can provide access as needed to agency of record.

Q75: Have you conducted any previous research related to your marketing goals?

a. Target audiences, Competitive analysis, Qualitative feedback, Quantitative analytics

A75: Yes, we have current research and will be able to share this with the agency of record.

Q76: If so, can you compile and share that existing research?

A76: See answer to Q75.

Q77: If no research exists, do you plan on investing in research?

A77: See answer to Q75.

Q78: Do you have a current hourly rate schedule?

A78: Yes, the incumbent operates on an hourly rate schedule.

Q79: Is there an incumbent?

A79: Please see Answer #3 above.

Q80: What initial project/projects are you anticipating this year?

A80: Initial projects include a new thematic marketing campaign that can be tailored to audience segments.

END OF QUESTIONS