



Notice Type: Request for Proposal

Short Title: **Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization**

**Posted date: January 28, 2016**  
**Questions due: February 4, 2016**  
**Answers Posted: February 11 2016**  
**Proposals due: February 22, 2016**  
**Decision: February 29, 2016**  
**Project Start: March 18, 2016**

## **Introduction**

Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC), a nonprofit organization, requests proposals for Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization services.

Responses to this RFP must be delivered electronically to VEIC by 5:00 p.m. EST on Monday, February 22, 2016. Responses submitted after 5:00 p.m. EST will not be accepted. Responses must be submitted electronically via e-mail to: [gtickle@veic.org](mailto:gtickle@veic.org) and [pnichols@veic.org](mailto:pnichols@veic.org) with ***RFP Submittal for Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization*** in the subject line.

1. For efficiency of review, VEIC has specified a numbering protocol for the order in which the Response Requirements are to be presented. Please follow this numbering protocol and do not re-number, insert numbers, or otherwise modify the sequence. Responses that do not follow this numbering protocol will not be considered.
2. When responding via e-mail, all of the documents for the submittal must be presented in the same order as the numbered requirements below. All submissions should consist of one (1) PDF document containing all of the requested information.

Questions regarding requirements and Scope of Work will be received up to 5 p.m. EST Thursday, February 4, 2016 via email only at [gtickle@veic.org](mailto:gtickle@veic.org) and [pnichols@veic.org](mailto:pnichols@veic.org), and answers will be posted on the VEIC website ([www.veic.org](http://www.veic.org)) no later than 5 p.m. EST, Thursday, February 11, 2016. Questions submitted after February 4, 2016 will not be responded to.

## **Background on Vermont Energy Investment Corporation**

Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC) challenges itself to work on the frontier of energy efficiency. VEIC offers innovative and equitable energy solutions for a complex and changing world. In all that we do—whether its policy development or program implementation—we help our clients use energy with the maximum efficiency, linking individual to societal benefits.

With our eye on the future and our hearts in the moment, our work is well on the way to meeting our goal: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a rate of 20 million tons per year by 2027.

VEIC has the good fortune of working with a number of outstanding partners who have selected us to bring their brands to life: The DC Sustainable Energy Utility, Efficiency Vermont, and Efficiency Smart. The Biomass Energy Resource Center became a part of VEIC in 2012. The Renewable Energy Resource Center and Drive Electric Vermont are collaborative ventures developed by VEIC. Commons Energy, a subsidiary company of VEIC, was also established in 2014 as a low-profit limited liability company (L3C) rooted in the social mission of reducing the economic and environmental costs of energy use.

VEIC employs over 250 professionals and is headquartered in Burlington, Vermont, with offices in Washington D.C., and Ohio.

For additional information, please visit [www.veic.org](http://www.veic.org).

## **Project Overview**

The VEIC Marketing department develops comprehensive and integrated marketing and communication programs and campaigns that support the strategic goals and objectives of VEIC and those of its partners.

The Marketing department's goal is to create clear, measurable, and compelling marketing and communications programs that 1) Promote the energy efficiency services provided by VEIC and its partners; and 2) Inspire consumers to change the way they consume and think about investments in energy efficiency.

VEIC is seeking a strategic service provider(s) to support the Marketing department by providing professional and experienced digital media planning and buying services from March 18, 2016 through March 31, 2017.

The primary focus is to find a service provider(s) who can work collaboratively with members of the Marketing department to develop and execute Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies that complement and support the goals of existing marketing and communications initiatives and campaigns.

It is anticipated that the selected service provider(s) will support the VEIC Marketing department's efforts focused on four of VEIC's brands: VEIC itself, three of VEIC's energy efficiency utility programs—the DC Sustainable Energy Utility, Efficiency Smart; and Efficiency Vermont—and Drive Electric Vermont.

**Vermont Energy Investment Corporation** is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the economic and environmental costs of energy use. Founded in 1986, VEIC is nationally and internationally recognized for advancing energy efficiency and renewable energy programs across the United States, Canada, and Europe. Learn more at [www.veic.org](http://www.veic.org).

**Efficiency Vermont** is a statewide energy efficiency utility that invests time, money, and resources to help everyone in Vermont save energy. Efficiency Vermont provides technical assistance, rebates, and other financial incentives to help Vermont households and businesses reduce their energy costs through the use of energy efficient equipment, lighting, and approaches to construction and major renovation. Learn more at [www.encyvermont.com](http://www.encyvermont.com).

The **District of Columbia Sustainable Energy Utility** (DCSEU) helps DC residents and businesses use less energy and save money. Since 2011, the DCSEU has delivered financial incentives, technical assistance, and information to tens of thousands of District residents and businesses, helping them to save millions of dollars on their energy costs. In 2014, the DCSEU served 47,000 households. Learn more at [www.dcseu.org](http://www.dcseu.org).

**Efficiency Smart** helps Ohio municipalities, businesses and residents reduce energy and save money on their electric bills by offering innovative programs, advanced technical support and strong financial incentives. Established by American Municipal Power, Inc. (AMP), Efficiency Smart has provided services to its participating member communities since January 2011. Learn more at [www.encysmart.org](http://www.encysmart.org).

**Drive Electric Vermont** is a statewide coalition of policy makers, industry leaders, and ordinary citizens dedicated to promoting the spread of electric transportation in Vermont. Drive Electric Vermont's efforts are focused on four areas:

- Infrastructure, Regulation, Codes and Standards
- Legislation, Policy, Finance, and Incentives
- Technology and Innovation
- Education, Marketing, and Outreach

Learn more at [www.driveelectricvt.com](http://www.driveelectricvt.com).

## Scope of Work

By submitting a response to this RFP, the Bidder acknowledges understanding and acceptance of this Scope of Work, and agrees to fulfill all of its terms in the event of a contract award.

This request for proposal is for Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) services. The primary objectives are to deliver and execute a 12-month Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) program to be adjusted and optimized throughout March 31, 2017.

Service providers responding to this RFP may choose to submit responses for both Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) functional areas, or may choose to only submit a proposal for a single functional area. RFP responders may also elect to subcontract to fulfill any of the two functional areas; however, subcontracting may be subject to

VEIC's final approval. The scope of work for subcontractors, along with bios and past examples 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 VEIC's Digital Marketing Manager to coordinate strategic efforts.

To meet this objective, the selected service provider(s) will be required to provide the following services, with strategies and tactics reflecting the uniqueness of each brand. The estimated digital media budget is provided in the Budget section below.

**A. Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising for Google Ad words Pay-Per-Click, Display and Social Advertising)**

1. Work collaboratively with VEIC's Marketing department, including VEIC's Digital Marketing Manager to develop and execute Search Engine Marketing (SEM) strategies that support new and ongoing marketing initiatives, goals and objectives;
2. Research, identify, and recommend Search Engine Marketing (SEM) strategies and tactics to effectively achieve performance goals by driving program participation and build brand awareness. This can include keyword research; landing page identification, optimization and testing; remarketing opportunities; and device and geographic targeting and testing;
3. Develop, manage, and optimize digital advertising for Google Ad words PPC, display and social media;
4. Write and test ad copy; test and optimize for ad position; and oversee overall SEM ad budget;
5. Provide strategic recommendations for how banner / display ad creative (to be supplied by VEIC) can be integrated and carried out across different media channels and drive conversion;
6. Work collaboratively with VEIC's Marketing Department, and other creative and strategic service providers on digital banner display advertising. This will include outlets, ad sizes, flighting and creative execution;
7. Monitor, measure, and optimize performance for continuous improvement of the buy across all channels;
8. Provide key performance indicators, success metrics, and pre-and post-click metrics. This includes weekly reports and monthly check-ins;
9. Negotiate prices with media outlets (securing non-profit rates where possible) and secure placements;
10. Process insertion orders and traffic (e.g., coordinate the scheduling and delivery of creative files to media outlets).

**B. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

1. Work collaboratively with VEIC's Marketing department, including VEIC's Digital Marketing Manager to develop and execute SEO strategies that support new and ongoing strategic marketing initiatives created for each brand;
2. Research, identify, and recommend Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies and tactics that will effectively achieve performance goals by driving program participation and build brand awareness. This can include recommending content and keyword opportunities to attract relevant traffic to the Websites, and benchmarking keyword and content performance;
3. Recommend opportunities to grow organic search including on-page optimization;
4. Identify and recommend key linking opportunities for both internal and external pages;
5. Work collaboratively with VEIC's Marketing department, plus other creative and strategic service providers to develop optimal, integrated SEO initiatives;
6. Provide SEO reporting that includes performance results that includes and is not limited to: Organic performance, top search queries, top landing pages, and top keyword rankings.

\* Note: VEIC will provide all creative and resizings for digital display advertising.

To successfully meet these objectives, the selected vendor must work closely and collaboratively with the Marketing department to ensure activities are aligned with strategy, brand, and creative direction. This will require thorough discovery on the part of the selected service provider(s) in reviewing existing plans, guidelines, and other strategic documents.

Upon selection, VEIC's Manager, Marketing will schedule a kick-off meeting with the selected service provider(s) and the internal VEIC marketing team. All work of the service provider(s) must be reviewed by VEIC's Digital Marketing Manager and approved by each Brand Manager.

**Project Deliverables:**

The selected service provider(s) will be required to provide VEIC with written documentation of the service provider(s) work throughout the year. The selected service providers will be required to provide the following deliverables that include and will not be limited to:

- An annual Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising) plan for each brand with flighting schedules and budgets, and updated as needed throughout the year;
- An annual Search Engine Optimization (SEO) plan for each brand with updates provided on a monthly basis;
- Written performance reports submitted weekly;
- Written performance reports with results, insights and recommendations submitted monthly. Monthly performance reports will be reviewed with VEIC's Marketing

Department in-person or via Webex, GoToMeeting or other online presentation software; and

- Monthly invoices submitted by the 5<sup>th</sup> business day of each month. Monthly invoices will cover labor services and reimbursable expenses, or as identified by VEIC.

### **Performance Period:**

Work under this RFP will begin immediately upon contract execution in preparation for the second quarter of 2016 and will continue through March 31, 2017.

### **Anticipated Schedule / Milestones**

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|---|-----------|
| • RFP issued                                  | 1/28/2016 |
| • Questions due to VEIC                       | 2/4/2016  |
| • Answers to questions posted to VEIC website | 2/11/2016 |
| • Proposals due to VEIC                       | 2/22/2016 |
| • Selection of Service Provider               | 2/29/2016 |
| • Estimated project kick-off                  | 3/18/2016 |

### **Proposal Requirements**

Responses to this RFP must be delivered electronically to VEIC by 5:00 p.m. EST on Monday, February 22, 2016. Responses submitted after 5:00 p.m. EST will not be accepted. Responses must be submitted electronically via e-mail to: [gtickle@veic.org](mailto:gtickle@veic.org) and [pnichols@veic.org](mailto:pnichols@veic.org) with ***RFP Submittal for Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization*** in the subject line.

All responses must be no more than fourteen (14) 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.

Please include the following information in your response to this bid request. If responding to both Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) functional areas, provide separate responses for requirements #5 and #6.

1. A brief description of your firm's structure and capabilities, including resumes of key personnel;

2. A list of all services to be provided in-house and services to be provided by any outside consultants. If any services are to be provided by outside consultants, please provide a brief description of the firm, its role, and capabilities;
3. A description of your approach, methodology, and process for completing the work;
4. A proposed timeline, including key milestones and deliverables;
5. A price quote, including a proposed fee structure and budget break-down, separated by Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Proposals must include all expenses to be incurred by direct staff and subcontractors, and outlining each of the duties described in the Scope of Work. Agencies should be able to demonstrate good budget stewardship and success in leveraging modest, non-profit rates to achieve exceptional results;
6. Two examples or case studies of similar work your firm provided to other clients. If proposal is for both Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO), please include separate examples for each service;
7. Three references, including name, phone and email, for whom your firm has performed similar services.

## **Budget**

The total budget for the Scope of Work to be paid to service provider(s) shall not exceed a total of \$78,000. This includes all labor services, planning fees, commission structure, materials, and any reimbursable expenses. The budget allocation for this work is not-to-exceed:

- Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising): \$48,000; and
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO): \$30,000

The total estimated budget for Search Engine Marketing (SEM / Paid Advertising), March 2016 through March 31, 2017 is estimated at a range of \$121,500 to \$191,500, with the budget allocation by brand currently estimated as:

- Efficiency Vermont: \$85,000 to \$135,000
- DC Sustainable Energy Utility: \$25,000 to \$30,000
- Drive Electric Vermont through Google Ad Grants: Estimated \$6,000 to \$15,000
- Efficiency Smart; \$3,000 to \$7,500
- VEIC: \$2,500 to \$4,000

Final SEM budget to be determined through budgeting and negotiations processes.

VEIC asks that media outlets direct-bill each brand based on prices negotiated by the service provider(s).



## **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposal selection will be qualifications-based. Proposals will be evaluated based on the written submission and the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience and expertise in similar projects (35%)
- Cost effectiveness (30%)
- Responsiveness to work scope and program needs (30%)
- Vermont, Washington, DC or Ohio vendor (5%)

Note:

VEIC reserves the right to reject any or all responses, to waive any informality or irregularity in any response received, and to be the sole judge of the merits of the respective responses received. VEIC reserves the right to determine the timing of the start of work, and reserves the right not to proceed with some or all of the work. VEIC will not reimburse costs incurred by the Service Providers in their preparation for the responses to this RFP.

## **Contract Award**

VEIC may award contracts to one or more firms. Work for each functional area - Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization - may be split between firms; however work for individual functional areas will not be split amongst firms. VEIC may award a contract based solely on the response to this RFP, or it may award a contract following discussion or negotiations with one or more bidders.

VEIC may request additional data or material prior to making a contract award. VEIC will intend to negotiate contract terms with the most qualified vendor. If unsuccessful, VEIC would intend to then negotiate with the next most qualified vendor, until reaching satisfactory contractual arrangements.

## **Insurance Requirements**

Before commencing work, the Contractor shall provide Certificates of Insurance to show that the following minimum coverages are in effect. Where applicable the Certificates of Insurance shall name VEIC as additionally insured party as its interests may appear. All policies shall be noncancellable without 30 days prior written notice from the insurance carrier to VEIC. It is the responsibility of the Contractor to maintain current Certificates of Insurance on file with VEIC through the term of the contract.

**Workers' Compensation:** With respect to all operations performed under the contract, the Contractor shall carry workers' compensation insurance in accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont and any other state in which it is performing the services.



General Liability and Property Insurance: With respect to all operations performed under the contract, the Contractor shall carry general liability insurance having all major divisions of coverage including, but not limited to:

- Premises – Operations
- Independent Contractors’ Protective
- Products and Completed Operations (where appropriate)
- Personal Injury Liability
- Contractual Liability

The policy shall be on an occurrence form and limits shall not be less than:

- \$1,000,000 Per Occurrence
- \$1,000,000 General Aggregate
- \$1,000,000 Products/Completed Products Aggregate (where appropriate)
- \$50,000 Fire Legal Liability.

Automotive Liability: The Contractor shall carry automotive liability insurance covering all motor vehicles, no matter the ownership status, used in connection with the contract. Limits of coverage shall not be less the amount required by any applicable state law.

## **Questions**

Questions regarding requirements and Scope of Work will be received up to 5 p.m. EST Thursday, February 4, 2016 via email only at [gtickle@veic.org](mailto:gtickle@veic.org) and [pnichols@veic.org](mailto:pnichols@veic.org), and answers will be posted on the VEIC website ([www.veic.org](http://www.veic.org)) no later than 5 p.m. EST, Thursday, February 11, 2016. Questions submitted after February 4, 2016 will not be responded to.

## **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 bidder or to cancel in part or in its entirety the RFP, if any of these actions is deemed by VEIC in its sole discretion to be in VEIC’s best interest.

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