



Request for Qualifications

February 8, 2008

Strategic Public Relations Program:

Implementation of the APA Phase Five Communications Program

Responses Due: March 5, 2008 (5 p.m. Eastern time)

The American Planning Association (APA) is seeking to hire a communications consulting firm to assist with expansion and implementation of APA's communication program (Phase Five) in order to increase awareness about APA, and to expand the role planners and planning play in shaping growth and development in the U.S.

APA is using a two-step process to select the firm. Step one will consist of submittal of qualifications (due by 5 p.m. Eastern Time Wednesday, March 5, 2008). Step two is preparation of a detailed proposal (to be submitted only after APA has sent a request for proposal in March 2008).

1.0 Introduction and Background

The American Planning Association (APA) is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit membership and education organization representing 43,000 practicing city and regional planners, consultants, officials, citizens, academicians, and students involved with economic, social, and physical planning issues. About two-thirds of APA's members work for state and local government agencies. These individuals work with elected officials, community leaders, interested residents, and others to create more livable, prosperous, and equitable communities.

APA's mission is to provide leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in community planning, promoting education and citizen empowerment, and providing tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change.

APA began its comprehensive communications program in 2004, which to date includes development and adoption of:

- an initial communications plan;
- a set of tested core messages;
- a comprehensive communications toolkit;
- a uniform organizational brand identity;
- on-going media training for the association's leaders and members;
- redesign of the organization's website (ongoing);
- new programs such as National Community Planning Month (held annually during October) and Great Places in America; and
- on-going media outreach about APA programs, conferences, books, and issues of particular concern.

These communications and branding efforts have been undertaken in order to heighten awareness among target audiences and strengthening their support for good planning in their communities, as well as to increase target audiences' awareness of, and support for, APA as the leader in the planning movement in America.

2.0 Guiding Themes, Core Messages, and Challenges

2.1 Themes

Several documents guide the organization's activities and communications efforts. Among them is the 2006-2007 Development Plan that outlines specific goals including:

- 2.1.1 Promoting the value and relevance of planning through the APA Communications Plan and implementation measures;
- 2.1.2 Reaching out more aggressively to elected and appointed officials at all levels, as well as to engaged citizens;
- 2.1.3 Advancing APA's legislative priorities at the national and state levels, while coordinating technical reports with legislative initiatives and public information events;

- 2.1.4 Making social justice and advocacy for inclusionary planning part of our legislative agenda and communications program;
- 2.1.5 Implementing APA's communications plan so as to incorporate our identity in all of our outreach, public information, marketing and branding initiatives;
- 2.1.6 Highlighting the positive outcomes derived from the comprehensive outlook that planners alone bring to the process of addressing important community issues; and
- 2.1.7 Engaging a greater proportion of APA members in activities throughout the association.

2.2 Core Messages

APA has three core messages:

- 2.2.1 APA members help create communities of lasting value.
- 2.2.2 Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live.
- 2.2.3 Planning enables civic leaders, business interests, and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

2.3 Challenges

Achieving APA's Phase Five Communication Program goals and objectives requires recognizing a number of challenges including:

- 2.3.1 APA Chapters and Divisions are comprised of volunteer members with limited budgets and support; relatively few have paid staff.
- 2.3.2 The majority of APA's members work in the public sector. While chapters and divisions can speak out on local and state planning issues of general concern, individual planners employed by local jurisdictions generally must refrain from being public spokespersons on such issues.

2.3.3 Generally APA does not comment on specific local planning issues or controversies.

2.3.4 APA is a 501 (c) 3 organization and cannot lobby for candidates of any party for any office. APA has not established a Political Action Committee and does not plan to form such Committee at this time.

2.3.5 There is not a history within the organization of soliciting members, benefactors, or organizational supporters for major financial contributions.

3.0 Goals and Objectives

APA seeks a communications consultant to help the organization develop strategies, tactics, implementation steps, and evaluation measures to:

- 3.1. Address overzealous restrictions being place on local governmental use of eminent domain through ballot initiatives, constitutional amendments, and state and federal legislation that hinder economic revitalization efforts in states and communities where such restrictions are adopted;
- 3.2 Address efforts to adopt regulatory takings initiatives, whether through misleading ballot initiatives or other means, in order to subvert local planning and regulations designed to protect and enhance public health, safety and welfare;
- 3.3 Improve and increase local elected and appointed officials' appreciation for, and reliance on, planners and APA as the "go to" people and organization for addressing all of a community's growth and development issues and needs;
- 3.4 Leverage and capitalize on the centennial anniversary of organized planning in the United States, which APA will celebrate starting in October 2008 and through December 2009 (including a black-tie dinner and symposium in Washington, D.C. May 21-22, 2009).

4.0 Scope of Work and Tasks

- 4.1 Develop a specific work plan, including detailed budget and tasks, in order to leverage events and increase public exposure to APA and its brand through media and public outreach and other activities being undertaken by APA during the 15-month celebration (October 2008-December 2009) of the 100th anniversary of city planning in the U.S.
 - 4.1.1 Develop a specific work plan, including detailed budget and tasks, in order to raise money for the APA Foundation from APA's planning centennial anniversary black-tie dinner to be held in Washington, D.C. May 21, 2009.
- 4.2 Develop and implement a specific and detailed work plan for APA to implement aimed at maximizing and leveraging media outreach and communications efforts in connection with APA's legislative program including media exposure about APA's legislative policies, positions, and highest-priority legislative issues; APA's Annual Fall Leadership and Legislative Policy Conference (held each year in Washington, D.C. in late September/early October); and APA's legislative priorities in terms of the 111th U.S. Congress that convenes in January 2009 and continues through December 2010.
- 4.3 Develop a comprehensive plan including measurable goals and objectives, strategies, tactics, performance and evaluation measures, and budget and staffing requirements in order to position AICP members of APA to be the "go to" experts for local elected and appointed officials who address growth, economic revitalization, and development issues in communities throughout the United States.

5.0 Qualification Requirements

Qualification responses should include:

- 5.1 Names, qualifications, and experience of principals or staff members who would be assigned to this project.
- 5.2 Names and qualifications of any sub-contractors the firm expects to use.
- 5.3 At least three references from current or past clients whose projects are similar in scope to what is proposed here.

5.4 List of projects and experience working with similar organizations.

6.0 Additional Information, Written Questions

For additional information about APA, please visit our website at www.planning.org. We also will respond to any written questions you have, although in the interest of fairness, we will send everyone who may be submitting a proposal the list of questions and answers as it develops. No names of individuals or firms will be included, however. If you have questions, please send them, via e-mail, to APA Public Affairs Coordinator Denny Johnson at djohnson@planning.org. The period for submitting written questions continues through the close of business (5 p.m. Eastern time) March 5, 2008.

7.0 Deadline, Replies

Replies must be received no later than the close of business (5 p.m. Eastern time) March 5, 2008. Please submit proposals to the American Planning Association, Attention: Denny Johnson, APA Public Affairs Coordinator, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036-1914. APA reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal or any part thereof if that is deemed to be in the best interests of the American Planning Association.