

IRL Council
Host of the
Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
(IRL NEP RFP #2016-001)

Website Design and Aligned Public Communications & Branding Services

OVERVIEW

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program (IRL NEP)

The Indian River Lagoon is one of 28 estuaries in the country designated by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an “estuary of national significance” under Section 320 of the Federal Clean Water Act. The National Estuary Program (NEP) was established to protect and restore nationally significant estuaries threatened or impaired by pollution, development, and overuse. The Indian River Lagoon is recognized as one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in the nation supporting a \$3.7 billion regional economy.

The IRL NEP was formally accepted as part of the NEP in 1990. The success of National Estuary Programs is that they function as science-based, innovative, non-regulatory, consensus-building coalitions with numerous stakeholders representing citizen and environmental groups, businesses and industries, academic institutions, and local, county, state and federal governments. The primary goal is to develop a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and assist coordination and implementation of CCMP Action Plans. The first Indian River Lagoon CCMP was completed in 1996. The CCMP was last updated in 2008.

From 1990-2015 the St. Johns River Water Management District was the sponsoring government agency for the IRL NEP. In February 2015, the IRL Council was created as a special district of the State of Florida to serve as the new host agency for the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program. The first full fiscal year for the IRL Council began on October 1, 2015. Host designation for the IRL NEP was recognized by our federal partner, the EPA, on January 8th, 2016. The IRL Council Board of Directors is represented by the U.S. EPA (non-voting member), St Johns River Water Management District, South Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Volusia County, Brevard County, St. Lucie County, Martin County and the Indian River County Lagoon Coalition. The IRL Council serves as the policy and governance body of the IRL NEP Management Conference. The IRL Council and IRL NEP is supported by volunteer advisory committees with broad and balanced regional representation within an IRL NEP Management Conference structure. The IRL NEP Management Conference is composed of the IRL Council (8 members and investor organizations), the Management Board and Financial Advisory Committee (40 members), Science, Technology, Engineering and Modeling Advisory Committee (22 member organizations representing over 100 scientists) and Citizens Advisory Committee (20 members representing interested citizens throughout 5 IRL counties).

With a modest full-time staff (3.0 FTEs) with organizational coverage across 5 counties, 50 cities, 156 miles and 1.7 million residents, expert communications support is needed to help IRL Council staff deliver a targeted, strategic and compelling communications campaign that advances the 4 broad goals stated by the IRL Council and IRL NEP:

1. To attain and maintain water and sediment of sufficient quality to support a **healthy estuarine ecosystem**;
2. To attain and maintain a functioning, healthy ecosystem which **supports endangered and threatened species, fisheries, commerce and recreation**;
3. To achieve **heightened public awareness** and **coordinated interagency management** of the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem; and
4. To identify and develop **long-term funding** sources for **prioritized projects** and programs to preserve, protect, restore and enhance the Indian River Lagoon.

These 4 goals will be implemented in accordance with specific guidance from the CCMP. In 2016, the IRL NEP will begin a full CCMP revision process with IRL stakeholders and citizens to address these 4 goals, develop Action Plans for CCMP implementation and identify emerging threats to the IRL, an estuary that has suffered significant water quality declines, severe algal blooms and multiple animal mortality events since 2011.

To be successful, the IRL NEP must:

1. Develop a strong, accessible, interactive and trusted communication network with a diverse community of internal and external stakeholders, including representatives and citizens from public, private and independent sectors.
2. Deliver clear, compelling, science-based messages that unify our citizens and communities to engage in restoration and stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon.
3. Develop brand recognition for the IRL Council and reorganized IRL NEP.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF WORK

To achieve the goals of the IRL NEP, program staff have identified 4 essential communication needs for the IRL NEP that require experienced and expert services. Preference will be given to single firms or a team of firms that can respond to two (2) scope of work tasks as a single, strategically coordinated delivery of services and deliverables as described below.

TASK 1: NEW WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT:

The IRL NEP website serves as the organization's primary mode of communicating both internally to the IRL NEP Management Conference and externally to the public, our stakeholders, partner organizations and elected officials. It is our first line of communication linking the IRL NEP to a diverse audience of 5 counties, 50 cities and 1.7 million residents. The IRL NEP community reaches beyond the IRL region to all of Florida and the nation. Key links at a state and national level will be made to the US EPA, 27 NEPs nationwide, Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP), and other estuary network resources.

Anticipated Components of Task 1 (may be modified as part of detailed Scope of Work and Contract Development)

- Assessment of website content, organization, and design needs.
- Development of options for website redesign; three options must be submitted to IRL Council review team for consideration.
- Website design and development.
- Testing of all site functionality and deployment of the site to a final server with a host of our choice.

Deliverables and Desired Outcomes

Deliverable: A new IRL NEP website that delivers the following characteristics and desired outcomes:

- The website has a diverse audience. It must be accessible, easy to navigate and interactive.
- The website must be strong graphically and content rich.
- The website must meet the needs of our diverse regional community and user groups. While most of the site's subpages are publicly accessible, the site includes some password-protected pages restricted to staff and IRL NEP partners.
- Website is easy for staff to make daily updates and information additions.
- Homepage needs to be compelling in visual imagery and content.
 - o Features should include an events calendar with outlook calendar sync, Real-time Twitter/ Facebook feed and social media widget, tabs with subcategory drop down menus. The tabs and sub-categories need to incorporate the needs of the IRL NEP and highlight our available programs, reports, research, and partnerships. Simple and recognizable icons and graphics will be used to add visual cues and hints to underlying information.
- Main story telling area on homepage that will be used for showcasing selected content, which will rotate between key branding messages and featured content.
- IRL NEP will be completing a revision of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) in 2016. Modernizing the website's functionality will help the program staff to more easily and efficiently complete the required public engagement phase of the CCMP revision. Features that need to be present are a platform for public to comment on the CCMP draft document and provide a pass-word protected area of the website where CCMP staff can collaborate with individual Management Conference committee members. Firewalls need to be in place to ensure that staff to committee member communications are possible, but committee member communications are restricted as needed to meet Florida Sunshine Law requirements.
- Interactive media such as educational videos and interactive maps are needed.
- Hyperlinks with definitions and a website search engine are needed.
- A Spanish translated website is also needed to reach the Hispanic community.
- A mobile version of the website should also be designed to reach a larger audience.
- Development of a user guide to assist IRL Council staff in adding and changing site content. Conduct one-day training on content management system for key staff.
- The site is a vast repository, containing everything from project reports to annual reports and newsletters. As such, it is of great importance that the home page and hundreds of

subpages have a polished, professional, up-to-date appearance while being accessible, user-friendly, and informative.

TASK 2: BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND ALIGNMENT

The value of brand development and alignment for the IRL Council and IRL NEP cannot be overstated. The successful restoration and stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon depends upon our ability to implement the aspirational message of our program tagline: “*One Lagoon – One Community – One Voice*”. With responsibility to represent federal, state and local government agencies and 1.7 million citizens from 5 counties and 50 cities, a strategic brand development and alignment strategy represents both a challenge and historic opportunity.

The challenges to effective communication have been a common theme and discussion issue since the IRL Council was created in February 2015. The topic was a focus of the 2015 Indian River Lagoon Science Symposium, the 2016 IRL Data Sharing Workshop at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, and scores of IRL Council staff discussions with citizens, stakeholders and elected officials. A common theme is the need for better storytelling to communicate the complex scientific, social and economic issues facing the Indian River Lagoon and pathways for successful IRL restoration.

The historic opportunity is to create, activate and communicate compelling stories and narratives that engage Indian River Lagoon citizens, communities, stakeholders and investors in the need for restoration and long-term stewardship of the IRL.

The IRL NEP is seeking assistance through this RFP from a firm or team with demonstrated expertise, experience and success in brand development and alignment. At a minimum, this process must integrate our stories, narratives, messages and graphic images into unique identity and value proposition for the IRL Council and the IRL NEP. This identity and value proposition must be honest, authentic and real. It must be integrated into the website content and all social media outlets. To address these needs, the IRL NEP seeks support from a firm or team that can provide expert guidance and support for the following deliverables and desired outcomes.

Story Deliverables and Desired Outcomes

- Brand development and alignment that develops and integrates compelling stories, messages, and graphics. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Stories and narratives that integrate the environmental, cultural, social and economic assets and values of the Indian River Lagoon.
 - Logo redesign and updates. This includes redesign of the IRL NEP Logo in 1,2 and 4 color versions) and re-design of the IRL Florida Specialty License plate to conform to FDOT standards.
 - Creation of foundational graphics to anchor the new website to include organizational diagrams for the IRL NEP Management Conference.
 - Standardization of all IRL NEP communication elements through the development of a simple and succinct style guide that will define fonts, imagery, template design and other graphical treatments. The style guide will keep the site design consistent and protect investment if future site development needs arise.

- A brand development and alignment outcome that leads to enhanced citizen knowledge, engagement, investment and long-term stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon.

RFP PURPOSE. In accordance with IRL Council practices and guidelines that call for competitive evaluation of vendor/contractor services, IRL Council issues this Request for Proposal (RFP) with the intent to review proposals and price quotes and enter into a one-year contract that may be renewed for up to three one-year periods. Preference will be given to a communications/branding firm or team that can demonstrate expertise and excellence in delivery of the stated and capacity to provide the following services:

- A strategic combination of communication skill sets and experiences that will guide communication product development for IRL Council and IRL NEP internal and external communications.
- Succinct and aligned messages and visual graphics that communicate difficult conservation and restoration messages to a diverse community of stakeholders, policy makers and citizens.
- Effective design, strategic branding, compelling stories, and strong graphics to support a comprehensive, multi-faceted communication campaign delivered across a variety of communication platforms, including a robust, interactive web site, social media, seminars, public speaking engagements, and video.
- Stories to enhance public and stakeholder education and appreciation for the social, economic and environmental assets of the Indian River Lagoon and foster greater collaboration among strategic partners throughout the IRL region.

IRL Council seeks to establish a one-year contract with the chosen firm based on qualifications and task-specific costing. Contract will be written with contract options for annual renewals for up to three (3) years based on annual performance review. After a firm is chosen through the RFP process, a detailed scope of work (SOW) and contract will be submitted to the IRL Council for review and contract authorization.

CONTRACTOR QUALIFICATIONS. Through this RFP, IRL Council intends to select and negotiate a contract with a communications and branding firm or team that can demonstrate the capacity to develop high quality, high value deliverables. The IRL Council is seeking a firm or team that has the following characteristics:

1. **Regionally Located Firm.** For a variety of reasons, including the criticality of on-demand and timely daily assignments, the firm IRL Council selection must be familiar with the Indian River Lagoon and located in a central location to provide an objective and regional perspective to the IRL Council and IRL NEP. To be considered, a firm must have been in business in Florida under its existing name and/or basically the same business structure for not less than one year from the date of issuance of this RFP.
2. **Experience.** IRL Council is interested in contracting with a communications firm or team that can demonstrate significant experience in all phases of website development, story development, message development and alignment, visual graphics development and alignment, and authentic branding. Experience should include regional, statewide and

national experience. Experience will be documented by listing relevant recent/current projects the firm has managed.

3. Authenticity and Innovation: The IRL Council and IRL NEP recognize the value and significance of unique brand development and authenticity. The creation of the IRL Council, restructuring of the 25-year old IRL NEP and resurgence of public support at local levels for Indian River Lagoon restoration provide a historic opportunity to build public trust and promote active public engagement through strategic communication delivery.
4. Capacity. IRL Council is interested in contracting with a firm that has significant in-house capacity and is able, as much as possible, to create and assist the IRL Council and IRL NEP in the development and roll out of its communication strategy. The IRL Council will give preference to a firm with full capabilities to deliver the products and services detailed in the RFP. For a multi-firm team that responds to this RFP, clear responsibilities and authorities must be provided. The IRL Council is not interested in contracting with a firm that will rely on a number of outside sub-contractors for development of work products over which IRL Council has no control.
5. Environmental Experience. In addition to the general firm experience mentioned above, it will be a great advantage if a firm has practical knowledge and experience working with a coastal environmental and science-based organization(s), preferably in Florida. Also desirable are demonstrable work products and successful outcomes working with statewide collaborative partners with complementary goals and roles.
6. Noteworthy Accomplishments & Awards. As a partial measure of the firm's quality of performance, it would be an advantage to IRL Council if the firm and/or individuals within the firm have been recognized for exemplary achievement.

SUBMISSION OF RFP RESPONSES. Firms interested in submitting a response to this Request for Proposal must submit the following documents:

I. Cover Letter (Limited to 2 pages)

II. Proposal (No more than 15 pages following the specific format below):

1. Name of Firm
2. FEID#
3. Number of years in business under above name
4. Address
5. Proof of Insurance

6. List of Team Members and Team Leader with Area of Expertise, Responsibility to the Contract, Time Commitment for each member working on the Contract and Full Contact Information for each listed team member.

7. Experience: List any current or recent (within the last 3 years) projects that demonstrate the firm's experience in successfully meeting the communication needs and outcomes detailed in the RFP announcement. Firms may list as many projects as they wish but the list must include a website development example, a story development example and a brand development example. Each project that is included should provide relevant information to IRL Council about the scope and quality of services offered by the firm. Work product(s) from these contracts may be included. For each project, list the following:
 - a. Project Name
 - b. Description of Services
 - c. Primary Deliverables
 - d. Client Name and Contact Information
 - e. Description of Demonstrated Project Success or Strategic Outcomes
 - f. Evidence of Innovation

8. Capacity: Describe the firm's approach and capacity to provide the following deliverables. For each, describe what characteristic, capability, process or experience differentiates your team in the marketplace:
 - a. Website Development
 - b. Story Development
 - c. Graphics Development
 - d. Brand Identity Development

9. Noteworthy Accomplishments & Awards: List and provide a brief description of any awards the firm or individual staff members have received during the last three years. List the entity that made the award.

10. Estuary Program Experience: List any prior experience your firm may have had with a National Estuary Program, National Estuarine Research Reserve or similar community consensus building program for estuarine or coastal conservation. This experience may be in a prime contractor role or as a subcontractor. Identify the name of the organization that services were provided for, the types of services provided and specific contract deliverables.

11. Statement of "Approach to Excellence": Provide a brief statement that explains how your firm will approach this project and deliver exceptional product and service quality to the IRL Council and IRL NEP.

12. Description of your approach to each task and deliverable mentioned in the RFQ. The IRL Council welcomes innovative approaches that increase the quality of deliverables and manages costs.

13. A preliminary budget with cost estimates and timelines detailed sufficiently to evaluate process, timeline and line-item costs.

PROJECT BUDGET FORMAT EXAMPLE		
BUDGET CATEGORY	MATCH	FUNDING REQUEST
A. PERSONNEL (list individual names and titles below)	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
B. FRINGE BENEFITS _____% of _____ (e.g., 10% of total personnel costs) TOTAL:	\$	\$
C. TRAVEL (estimate number/purpose of trips below)	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
D. EQUIPMENT (itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
E. SUPPLIES (itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
F. CONTRACTS (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
G. OTHER (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
H. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (SUM OF A-G)	\$	\$
I. INDIRECT COSTS _____% of _____ (e.g., 10% of total direct costs) TOTAL:	\$	\$
J. TOTAL PROJECT COST (SUM OF H+I)	\$	\$

Task Name and Brief Description (insert rows as needed)	Expected Completion Date	Task Cost
	TOTAL PROJECT COST:	

14. Provide reference names and contact information for three clients that your firm has worked for in the past 1-3 years.

III. Provide samples of relevant work products.

- a. Website example (one example only).
- b. Story and/or Messaging example (up to 3 examples).
- c. Graphics example (up to 5 examples with at least one representing a logo re-design).

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

Six copies of the “RFP Proposal” and examples of 3 work products must be submitted to the address below not later than **5:00 PM, Eastern, August 1, 2016:**

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program
ATTN: Kathleen Hill
1235 Main Street
Sebastian City Hall Complex, Sebastian, FL 32958
hill@irlcouncil.org

FIRM SELECTION PROCESS.

The IRL Council RFP review team (“Review Team”) may be composed of IRL Council staff and selected citizen or scientist volunteers from the IRL NEP Management Board or other Advisory Committees. The total number of reviewers will not exceed 7 individuals. The Review Team will review the responses and evaluate proposals based on the following Ranking Criteria:

Category	Number of Points Assigned (Low to High)	Points Assigned
Location of Firm and/or Team Members	0 pt. – Firm from outside FL; 10 pts. – Florida Firm	##
Experience	0-20	##
Demonstration of Authentic and Innovative Branding	0-10	##
Organization or Team Capacity	0-10	##
Accomplishments and Awards	0-10	##
NEP/Environmental Experience	0-10	##
Approach to Excellence	0-10	##
Proposal Quality	0-10	##
Timeline	0-10	##
Budget and Costs	0-100	##
Total Points Available	200	
Total Points Awarded	##	

IRL Council may choose to request that one or more of the responding firms make a face-to-face presentation to an individual or individuals reviewing responses. If needed, every effort will be made to schedule the presentation(s) at a time and on a date satisfactory to the respondent.

Presentations, if necessary, will be scheduled in Sebastian, FL, at IRL Council's headquarters. IRL Council, at its sole discretion, may determine that a personal presentation(s) is not necessary. Tentatively, IRL Council plans to schedule presentations, if necessary, during the month of August 2016.

Once the proposals are evaluated, the proposals and recommendations are forwarded to the Board of Directors for review, approval, and award. The IRL Council maintains the right to reject all proposals and rebid the project or elect not to proceed with the project. The Board of Directors reserves the right to waive minor formalities in any proposal and to accept any proposal which they consider to be in the best public interest.

IRL Council anticipates that a selection decision will be made by September 9, 2016.

CONTRACT. The contract resulting from this RFP will be a two-party contract between IRL Council and the firm that is selected. Any subcontractors the firm may use from time to time during the course of the contract will not be a party to the firm's contract with IRL Council. The contract will establish pricing to be utilized for various aspects of the service. The contract period will be determined by IRL Council. As noted earlier, it is anticipated that there is an opportunity for contractual agreements for a period of up to three (3) years including renewals. The actual length of the contract and any possible renewal options will be terms to be negotiated by the parties.

DELIVERABLES, OWNERSHIP

All materials, software, maps, studies, reports, photographs, and other products or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced as a result of this solicitation and funded, in whole or in part, under an agreement with IRL Council shall be made available to the IRL Council and IRL NEP in the formats in which it is stored or maintained.

The IRL Council and IRL NEP shall have an unrestricted right to use any materials, software, maps, studies, reports, and other products or data generated using assistance funds or specified to be delivered. The contractor shall not obtain, attempt to obtain, or file for a patent, copyright, trademark or any other interest in any such materials, software, maps, reports, and other products or data without the express, written consent of IRL Council and subject to any other approvals required by state or federal law.

BID/RFP PROTEST PROVISION

The IRL Council will require that by submitting a bid/proposal to the IRL Council, bidders agree to the process set forth in this Section.

- a. Notice of Protest - Notice of all IRL Council decisions or intended decisions shall be by posting to the IRL Council web site. Any person adversely affected by a bid or request for proposal shall file a notice of protest in writing, within two (2) business days from the date on the notice of the decision. A formal written protest shall be filed within five (5) business days after the protesting party files the notice of protest. No time will be added to the above time limits for mail service.

- b. Formal Written Protest - The formal written protest shall state with particularity the facts and law upon which the protest is based. The formal written protest shall be printed or typewritten and contain:
 - i. The name and address of the person or firm filing the protest and an explanation of how they are adversely affected by the IRL Council decision or intended decision;
 - ii. Identification of the procurement matter at issue.
 - iii. A statement when the notice of IRL Council decision or intended decision was posted;
 - iv. A statement of all issues of disputed material fact and, if there are none, a statement so indicating;
 - v. A concise statement of the ultimate facts alleged;
 - vi. A statement of the applicable law, rule, statute, or other authority upon which the protest is based and which entitle the protestor to relief;
 - vii. A specific demand for relief; and
 - viii. Any other information material to the protest.

- c. Filing Notices of Protest and Formal Protests - All notices of protest and formal protests shall be filed by hand delivery, mail or email with the IRL Council's Executive Director. A protest is not timely filed unless both the written notice of protest and the formal protest have been received by the IRL Council within the prescribed time limits. Filings received after 5:00 pm will be deemed received the next business day. Failure to file a protest within the time prescribed by this Section shall constitute a waiver of all claims.

- d. Stay of Award - Upon receipt of a formal written protest which has been timely filed, the bid solicitation or contract award process shall be stayed until the subject of the protest is resolved, unless the IRL Council's Executive Director, with the concurrence of the Board of Directors, sets forth in writing particular facts and circumstances which require the continuation of the solicitation process or the contract award process without delay in order to avoid an immediate and serious danger to the public health, safety or welfare.

- e. Resolution of Formal Protest - Upon the written request of the protestor or on its own initiative, the IRL Council shall provide an opportunity for the protestor to meet with the Executive Director to resolve the protest by mutual agreement within seven (7) business days, excluding holidays, of receipt of a formal written protest. If the subject of a protest is not resolved by mutual agreement within seven (7) business days, excluding holidays, of receipt of the formal written protest, or a mutually agreed upon extension of time, the Executive Director shall certify in writing to the Board of Directors that there was no resolution and provide the protestor with a copy of the certification.

- f. Quasi-Judicial Hearing - Within seven (7) business days from receipt of written certification that there was no resolution, the protestor may provide a written request that the matter be heard before the Board of Directors in a quasi-judicial hearing. Failure to provide a written request to the Board of Directors within seven (7) business days of notice shall constitute waiver of any protest. Upon receipt of a written request, the Board of Directors may, in its discretion, request a written response from the Executive Director, and/or schedule the matter for hearing before the Board of Directors. Within seven (7) business days from the conclusion of the hearing, the Board of Directors will provide a written final decision on the matter to the protestor.

The protestor may contest the IRL Council's decision in a court of competent jurisdiction in the county court in which the IRL Council's main office is located no later than thirty (30) calendar days after receipt of notice of the IRL Council's decision, unless otherwise specified within the controlling request for proposal or qualification documents.

CONTACT. Firms should direct email or written inquiries regarding this RFP to:

Kathleen Hill
Administrative-Communications Director, IRL Council
Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program
1235 Main Street
Sebastian, FL 32958
hill@irlcouncil.org

No phone calls please.