

**HARDEE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS #2
MARKETING SERVICES**

Hardee County Industrial Development Authority, a body politic and corporate, together with the Hardee County Economic Development Council, Inc., a not-for-profit organization (collectively, the “IDA” or “IDA/EDC”) seeks written sealed proposals for marketing services.

Sealed proposals must be received, by mail or hand-delivery, in the Hardee County Industrial Development Authority / Hardee County Economic Development Council, Inc. office at 107 E. Main Street, Wauchula, Florida 33873 on or prior to:

3:00 p.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021.

Proposals must be placed in a sealed envelope containing the following: “Marketing Proposal.” Proposals received after the established deadline will not be opened and will be made available for return in their unopened state or for destruction at respondent’s written instruction. A pre-proposal meeting will not be held for this RFP.

Important instructions and specifications regarding responses to this RFP are available upon request and online at www.hardeebusiness.com. The bid information is located at the top of the home page. Failure to follow these instructions could result in disqualification. If, at the IDA discretion, it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP before the proposal response date, an addendum will be made available online at www.hardeebusiness.com.

Questions regarding this proposal must be in writing and must be sent to Hardee County IDA/EDC, attn: Krystin Chapman, 107 E. Main Street, Wauchula, Florida 33873, or at Krystin.Chapman@hardeemail.com. All questions must be received by Friday, October 22, 2021, prior to 3:00 p.m.

Respondents to this solicitation or persons acting on their behalf may not contact, between the release of the RFP and the end of the 72-hour period following the agency posting the notice of intended award, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and state holidays, any employee or director of the IDA concerning any aspect of this RFP, except in writing as provided herein. Violation of this provision may be grounds for rejecting a proposal under this RFP and/or any future proposal.

IDA does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual’s disability status. This non-discrimination policy involves every aspect of IDA’s functions, including one’s access to participation, employment, or treatment in its programs or activities. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodations as provided for in the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 286.26 of the Florida Statutes should contact Sarah Pelham, IDA ADA Coordinator at 863-773-3030, by Florida Relay Services 711, or by email at sarah.pelham@hardeemail.com. Request for CART or interpreter services should be made at least 24 hours in advance to permit coordination of the service.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Hardee County Industrial Development Authority and Hardee County Economic Development Council, Inc., hereinafter “IDA/EDC,” seeks the submittal of proposals from qualified individuals or entities who are interested in providing marketing services on a contractual basis. The IDA/EDC is governed by a six (6) member Board (currently). The Hardee County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) is an authority created by the Florida legislature under Chapter 159, Florida Statutes, and the Hardee County Economic Development Council, Inc. is a private, 501(c)3 corporation with Board members also serving as the Board of the IDA. The IDA/EDC currently has on-staff marketing/public relations/communications staff, and is seeking marketing services and counsel for the purposes set forth herein to assist IDA/EDC staff and Board in the performance of certain duties.

The selected marketing entity must demonstrate knowledge of and experience with Florida’s economic development environment, as well as experience in interacting with local government and/or public agencies.

All interested parties must submit the requested information within the time frame provided herein. Proposals shall be prepared with the utmost attention to fair, ethical evaluation standards.

It is the intent of the IDA/EDC to negotiate a Professional Services Agreement for the work described. The Professional Services Agreement will be for one (1) year, but terminable without cause upon written notice to the engaged entity/individual by the IDA/EDC.

B. BACKGROUND

Hardee County is an interior, rural Florida county. With a population of approximately 27,000 residents, Hardee County is valued for its safe, stable communities and neighborhoods, its treasured roots in agriculture, farming, and phosphate mining, and its bucolic lifestyle and scenery.

The Hardee County IDA/EDC is committed to enhancing the county’s economic strength and long-term viability and vitality, and to leveraging Hardee County’s natural strengths, including the availability of large tracts of developable land, the region’s cherished quality of life, and Hardee County’s superb natural beauty and environmental resources. In partnership with local business leaders, elected officials, and the state’s economic development network, the IDA/EDC has been actively engaged in strategic economic development activities for several decades. The IDA/EDC employs a full slate of economic development professionals, and has a strong track record of successful economic development projects. Particularly as Hardee County seeks to strategically expand its economic footprint beyond its well-known identity as a top U.S. location for phosphate mining, the need for top-tier professional marketing services has been identified.

In addition to the appeal of its natural amenities, Hardee County has many other assets. It is ideally located within southwest Florida’s major transportation corridors, including proximity to the Port of Tampa. Strategic target industries identified via research by a recent University of South Florida study include the manufacturing sector; manufacturing and distribution facilities;

and improved agriculture. Hardee's workforce is famed for its work ethic; the county has forged strong partnership with education and career assets to achieve employer-driven workforce training and upskilling.

Recent economic development wins in the nearby Suncoast region include the expansion of Amazon in adjacent Manatee County, with a new 330,000+ square foot distribution center under construction. Hardee's laid-back pace and natural beauty offer a welcome counterpoint to nearby Tampa in adjacent Hillsborough County, a major metropolitan location which serves as the southern anchor to Florida's politically influential "I-4 Corridor" to Orlando, and features numerous high-wage, high value sectors, including Tampa's burgeoning financial services market.

Hardee County has generally relied upon citrus, cattle, and row crop vegetable farms. In the last several decades the economy has become more diversified from these traditional economic drivers. Manufacturing, health care, mining and government jobs are gradually replacing many of the traditional agricultural employment opportunities. Data from Career Source indicates that full-time agricultural employment in Hardee County is around 20% of the current workforce. Seasonal workers for agriculture, generally composed of "H2A" workers utilize a significant portion of the local housing stock. Skilled training needs are increasing in the economy and housing shortages are a critical impediment to economic growth. Businesses are increasingly relying on the commuter population to fulfill their individual workforces, and this significantly reduces the "multiplier effect" of the payroll financial impact to the local economy.

Hardee County's economic situation continues to be negatively impacted by a reduction in citrus volume due to the ravages of citrus greening. Traditional economic drivers derived from citrus industry segments of growing, harvesting and caretaking, have been severely weakened by Huanglongbing (HLB), otherwise more commonly referred to as citrus greening. The disease is known to be caused by the bacterium, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*. Efforts to halt the spread of the greening bacterium (generally transmitted by an insect, the Asian Citrus Psyllid) or to provide treatment for infected groves have been ineffective thus far.

Citrus greening is greatly impacting the demographic and economic infrastructure of much of "inland" south central Florida and the respective communities' dependent upon the citrus economy. The most significant impact on the local economy results from the reduction in "multiplier effect" of the citrus industry revenue stream with negative influences on virtually all sectors of the local economy. Row crop farming has made some re-emergence on former citrus lands but not to a level of economic impact to replace the citrus economic void. Secondly, the loss of traditional agricultural lands to phosphate mining, though currently offset by mining payrolls, continues to be a looming concern for the County's economic viability once mining ceases. Housing shortages and labor force deficiencies remain an impediment to increasing effectiveness of the economic development efforts.

Many of the employees working in Hardee County commute from the surrounding counties of Manatee, Sarasota, Desoto, Highlands, Polk, and Hillsborough counties. The school system estimates almost 30% of their instructional employment commutes into the county. Commuter

employees significantly reduce the “multiplier effect” of the payroll dollars generated from the local economy in that they are generally spent in the employee’s home county.

C. SCOPE OF SERVICES

This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks to solicit the services of a qualified marketing firm in support of Hardee County IDA/EDC strategic economic development activities: to plan, coordinate, implement and manage marketing services, including brand development and management; marketing strategies and schedules; social media/digital/web strategies, including key messaging; potential website design update and/or development; and market research.

The Scope of Services may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Strategies and Analysis. Analyze Hardee County’s unique strengths and weaknesses in attracting and retaining businesses and customers and develop a comprehensive marketing plan to attract business and customers, including mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. The plan should include comprehensive, coordinated marketing activities, potentially to include (in whole or components) brand/positioning analysis, market research, market reports, competitive analysis, plan development (to include recommended trade and marketing opportunities for targeted or suggested target industries), recommended business/government alliance team building.
2. Branding. Identify and analyze Hardee County’s branding and positioning in the marketplace. Provide recommendations, including message development, internal and external branding implementation.
3. Identification of Strategic Market Segments. Identify and analyze Hardee County’s economic development market segments. Provide strategic recommendations, including potential catalyst projects.
4. Design and Implementation of an integrated Marketing Campaign. Identify the target audience, mediums, and messages to reach identified audiences and estimate cost to implement such a campaign.
5. Digital Integration. Develop an integrated campaign, including programs for digital, social, and web-based platforms in support of strategic economic development.
6. Public Relations Integration. Coordinate all efforts with designated IDA/EDC staff.

D. SUBMITTAL

Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the respondent’s ability to meet the requirements of the RFP. Respondents shall furnish all information requested on any proposal response forms attached to this RFP. If there is not enough space on the applicable form, additional sheets may be attached. Proposals must be typed or printed in ink and contain an original signature of an individual

authorized to bind the respondent. Submit one (1) original and three (3) copies of all required forms and data, and one (1) exact digitized copy in exact order of proposal on a USB drive.

All proposals should include at least the following information:

1. Transmittal Letter: Indicating the respondent understands the scope of services and includes respondent's contact information, including business name, authorized representative, telephone number, email address, and physical/ mailing address. An authorized representative of the respondent must sign.
2. Work Plan: Written narrative describing the manner in which the respondent will satisfy the requirements of the Scope of Services. Include the overall timeline for the services that will be performed, the suggested marketing services mix, overview of how the entity will work with IDA/EDC, including the rate/percentage of involvement of senior-level marketing entity individuals in performing the services.
3. Experience: Describe similar marketing experience with projects of a similar scope, including local government or economic development entities. Include results achieved. If desired, provide a case study for a client in a similar segment.
4. Qualifications: Describe, in sufficient detail, the qualifications and experience of the marketing team, including names of individuals proposed to satisfy the Services and their capacity, special technical capabilities, and expertise of the firm and individuals who will perform the Services, including an organization chart. Please indicate the involvement level of senior and junior staff members, including frequency of senior staff participation. Indicate the number of full-time employees/consultants.
5. References: Description of prior projects of the same or similar services and list of references (including telephone number) that may be contacted.
6. Proposed Fee Schedule: Provide fees and schedule for services.
7. Proof of Insurance: Proof of current Commercial General Liability Insurance with minimum coverage limits of \$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$2,000,000 aggregate. Proof of Workers Compensation in at least the limits required by law. The negotiated contract will contain additional insurance requirements the contractor must comply with.
8. Authorized Signature: An authorized representative of the respondent must sign and complete the proposal. Proof of authorization for the representative to bind the respondent may be required.

E. SELECTION AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

IDA shall be the sole judge of its own best interest, the submission and the resulting contract. In all instances, the IDA's decision shall be final. The selection process shall be open to the public. The IDA is not obligated to award a contract and may decide to reject all proposals.

Proposals will be reviewed by an evaluation committee, and the respondents will be scored based upon the RFP Evaluation Criteria below. Each evaluation committee member shall perform the member's own independent scoring for each respondent. The scores will be tallied, and the committee will make a recommendation to the IDA Board for award based on the highest-ranking respondent. In the event the successful respondent does not execute a contract within 30 days after the selection, the IDA reserves the right to award the contract to the next most qualified respondent.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following RFP Evaluation Criteria:

1. Transmittal letter. (5 points)
2. Experience. Overall depth and breadth of experience and expertise in the realm of marketing, most specifically in those areas most often encountered in local government economic development (20 points)
3. Qualifications. Individual team member qualifications. (20 points)
4. Work Plan (30 points)
5. References/Proof of Insurance (5 points)
6. Proposed Fee Schedule (20 points)

| Criteria for Evaluation | Maximum Possible Points | SCORE |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Transmittal Letter | 5 | |
| Experience | 20 | |
| Qualifications | 20 | |
| Work Plan | 30 | |
| References/Proof of Insurance | 5 | |
| Fees for Services | 20 | |
| TOTAL | 100 | |

F. GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. Hardee County Industrial Development Authority is an industrial development authority created pursuant to Chapter 159, Florida Statutes and authorized pursuant to resolution of the Hardee County Board of County Commissioners. The IDA is a public instrumentality for the purposes of industrial development, and the exercise of the powers conferred upon it by law are deemed and held to be the performance of an essential public purpose and function.

2. This RFP provides guidelines for the submission of proposals in response to the solicitation by the IDA for respondents to provide the services set forth herein. For purpose of

this RFP, a “respondent” or “proposer” is an organization, firm, or other person or entity submitting a response/proposal to this RFP and “contractor” is the respondent that is awarded a contract under this RFP.

3. Respondents shall make no distribution of any part of their proposal beyond that made to the IDA. A respondent who shares information contained in their proposal with competing respondents may be subject to disqualification.

4. IDA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals or any parts thereof, and the award, if an award is made, will be made to the most responsive and responsible proposer whose bid and qualifications indicate that the award will be in the best interest of IDA. IDA reserves the right to waive irregularities or any informality in the proposal.

5. A respondent may withdraw its proposal by notifying IDA in writing at any time prior to the opening. Respondents may withdraw their submissions in person, or by an authorized representative. Respondents and authorized representatives must provide the letter of withdrawal, picture identification, proof of authorization (in the case of authorized representatives) and provide IDA with a signed receipt for return of the proposal. Proposals, once opened, become the property of the IDA and will not be returned to the respondent. Proposals, once opened, become “public records” and are subject to public disclosure in accordance with Chapter 119, Florida Statutes.

6. IDA anticipates entering into a contract with the respondent who submits the proposal judged by the IDA to be most advantageous to the IDA. IDA anticipates awarding a single contract to the sole respondent chosen, but reserves the right to award this RFP in any fashion, in its sole determination, which it deems to be in the best interest of the IDA. By submission of a proposal, each respondent understands that this RFP does not constitute an agreement or a contract with the IDA. No contract or agreement is binding until the submission is reviewed and accepted by the IDA Board and executed by all parties. IDA reserves the right to award any contract to the next most qualified respondent if the successful respondent does not execute a contract within 30 days after the selection.

7. The failure or omission of any proposer to examine any form, instrument, site, or document shall in no way relieve any respondent from any obligation in respect to his/her proposal. The requirements applicable for the services sought under this RFP should be considered in full when respondent is compiling a proposal, including the terms and conditions of the contract attached to this RFP which will be entered into with the contractor. The contractor shall maintain insurance coverage reflecting the minimum amounts and conditions as required by the IDA. IDA reserves the right to cancel any contract under this RFP without cause by giving no more than 30 days written notice to the contractor. The initial term of the contract shall be for a term of one year, subject to renewal or extension by the IDA. No price increase will be permitted for a renewed or extended term.

8. Neither the IDA nor its directors, agents, employees, or representatives shall be liable for any expenses incurred in connection with the preparation of a response to this RFP. Respondents should prepare their submittals simply and economically, providing a

straightforward and concise description of the respondent's ability to meet the requirements of the RFP.

9. IDA recognizes fair and open competition as a basic tenet of public procurement and encourages participation by minority and women business enterprises.

10. Tax exemption certificates for IDA will be furnished upon request.

11. The contractor shall be responsible for acquiring all applicable Federal, State, County, and City licenses and permits and pay local business tax as may be appropriate. IDA does not charge any permit fees for the services contemplated.

12. IDA is a drug free workplace, and its policy regarding substance abuse encompasses alcohol, illegal drugs or other controlled substances. The possession, transfer or sale of any substance at the workplace is expressly prohibited and may be cause for immediate dismissal.

13. *Public Entity Crime, Section 287.133(3)(a), Florida Statutes.* The respondent certifies, by submission of a proposal or acceptance of a contract, that neither it nor an affiliate have been placed on the convicted vendor list following conviction for a public entity crime. A person or affiliate who has been placed on the convicted vendor list following a conviction for a public entity crime may not submit a bid, proposal, or reply on a contract to provide any goods or services to a public entity; may not submit a bid, proposal, or reply on a contract with a public entity for the construction or repair of a public building or public work; may not submit bids, proposals, or replies on leases of real property to a public entity; may not be awarded or perform work as a contractor, supplier, subcontractor, or consultant under a contract with any public entity; and may not transact business with any public entity in excess of the threshold amount provided in s. 287.017 for CATEGORY TWO for a period of 36 months following the date of being placed on the convicted vendor list.

14. *Discrimination, Section 287.134, Florida Statutes.* The respondent certifies, by submission of a proposal or acceptance of a contract, that neither it nor an affiliate have been placed on the discriminatory vendor list. An entity or affiliate who has been placed on the discriminatory vendor list may not submit a bid, proposal, or reply on a contract to provide any goods or services to a public entity; may not submit a bid, proposal, or reply on a contract with a public entity for the construction or repair of a public building or public work; may not submit bids, proposals, or replies on leases of real property to a public entity; may not be awarded or perform work as a contractor, supplier, subcontractor, or consultant under a contract with any public entity; and may not transact business with any public entity.

15. *Scrutinized Companies, Section 287.135, Florida Statutes.* The respondent certifies, by submission of a proposal and execution of a contract or contract renewal, that it is not on the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in Sudan List or the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in the Iran Petroleum Energy Sector List and that it does not have business operations in Cuba or Syria, and that the respondent is not participating in a boycott of Israel. Respondent shall immediately notify IDA if its certification set forth in this paragraph changes at

any point during the proposal process or term of any contract. IDA may terminate any contract if respondent is found to have submitted a false certification or has been placed on the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in Sudan List or the Scrutinized Companies with Activities in the Iran Petroleum Energy Sector List, or been engaged in business operations in Cuba or Syria or is found to have been placed on the Scrutinized Companies that Boycott Israel List or is engaged in a boycott of Israel.

16. This RFP and any contract entered into under this RFP shall be interpreted under and its performance governed by the laws of the State of Florida. In the event of litigation between the parties, venue shall be in Hardee County, Florida and no other place, and Florida law shall apply.

- End of RFP Terms -

[*RFP Attachments Below*]

**HARDEE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
HARDEE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC.**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS # _____
MARKETING SERVICES**

PROPOSAL RESPONSE FORM

By signing below, I certify that I have read and understand the specifications, conditions, and instructions contained in this Request for Proposal and the following addenda: ____ #1; ____ #2; ____ #3; ____ #4, and certify that I am in a position to authorize and carry out said conditions, specifications, and instructions on behalf of respondent. I further certify to the statements set forth in the RFP as to debarment and suspension, public entity crimes, discrimination, and scrutinized companies. I understand that the bid will be awarded to the most responsive and responsible proposer whose bid and qualifications indicate that the award will be in the best interest of IDA.

Completed documents / information included in this proposal include (*check*):

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| ____ Proposal Response Form | ____ Qualifications |
| ____ Transmittal Letter | ____ References |
| ____ Work Plan | ____ Fee Schedule |
| ____ Experience | ____ Proof of Insurance |

COMPANY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT PERSON: _____

TELEPHONE _____

NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

AUTHORIZED

SIGNATURE: _____

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Date of Submittal: _____