VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

REQUEST FOR QUOTES (RFQ)

SEARCH ENGINE PAY-PER-CLICK PROGRAM

RFQ ISSUED: JUNE 8, 2021

QUESTIONS DUE: JUNE 15, 2021 at 10:00 A.M. ET

QUOTES DUE: JUNE 22, 2021 at 1:00 P.M. ET

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Submit Quotes To:
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1. PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

A. INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is soliciting Quotes to establish a firm fixed hourly rate Blanket Purchase Order with one (1) qualified and experienced Contractor to manage VRE’s Search Engine Pay-Per-Click (PPC) program.

B. VRE BACKGROUND

1. VRE is a commuter rail service linking the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) are transportation districts established under Virginia law and jointly own this service. An Operations Board consisting of members from each of the jurisdictions within the VRE service area governs the development and operation of VRE and serves as an advisory board to the NVTC and PRTC governing boards. Use of the term VRE in this RFQ refers to NVTC and PRTC.

2. VRE began operations in 1992 and carries an average of approximately 19,000 weekday trips on two (2) lines. In January 2014, VRE’s Operations Board adopted System Plan 2040 which calls for expansion of service, requiring the addition of rail cars, expansion of station and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as expanding operations to meet the goal of doubling ridership by 2040. VRE’s multi-prong program addresses short term growth needs, as well as longer term capacity improvements and investments in maintaining and servicing VRE’s equipment and facilities.

3. The primary mission of VRE is to provide commuter-oriented passenger rail service between the outlying suburbs and the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria urban core. Some tourists and “day-trippers” also ride the trains. The service is heavily oriented towards the core area in the morning peak and in the opposite direction in the evening peak.

C. PROJECT BACKGROUND

1. VRE currently has a series of inactive campaigns in Google Ads. The campaigns target both current and potential riders and are limited to Virginia counties comprising of or neighboring the service area. Campaigns utilize site links and retargeting and target various commuting and day trip keywords.

2. VRE does not currently have search engine PPC programs with any search engine other than Google.
2. SUBMISSION OF QUESTIONS

A. DEADLINE

1. All questions and requests for clarification regarding the meaning or interpretation of this RFQ and other solicitation documents, or any ambiguities, discrepancies, inconsistencies, or conflicts in or between any of the technical, pricing, or contractual provisions, must be submitted no later than the date and time specified on Page 1 of this RFQ. Questions and clarifications requested after such time will not be answered unless VRE elects, in its sole discretion, to do so.

2. Any interpretation of a question made by VRE will be in the form of an addendum to the RFQ. Questions and responses will be posted on VRE’s website at www.vre.org/about/procurement for all interested Contractors.

B. FORMAT FOR QUESTIONS

Questions must be submitted to VRE in writing via electronic mail to the email address listed on Page 1 of this RFQ. No questions or requests for additional information, clarification or any other communication should be directed to any other individual.

C. VRE POINT OF CONTACT

VRE’s Marketing Administrator will be the point of contact following award of a Purchase Order.

D. NO ORAL COMMUNICATION WILL BE ACCEPTED

VRE will not be bound by any oral communications, written interpretations or clarifications that are not set forth in an addendum to the RFQ.
3. SCOPE OF WORK

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. The Contractor shall show evidence of the following up-to-date Google Ads certifications:
   a. Ads Search
   b. Ads Display
   c. Ads Video
   d. Shopping Ads
   e. Ads App
   f. Measurement

2. The Contractor shall have experience successfully managing Google Ad accounts for a minimum of ten (10) clients with annual search engine ad spends of $20,000 or more. References will be requested by VRE prior to issuance of a Blanket Purchase Order.

B. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Contractor shall provide the following:

1. Monitor and optimize the Google Ads program, staying within the monthly program budget as determined for a given time period by the VRE Marketing Administrator.

2. Complete work using VRE’s Google Ads account.
   a. The Contractor shall be responsible for payment to Google.
   b. The Contractor shall include the cost on its monthly invoice to VRE for reimbursement.

3. Provide monthly campaign optimization.

4. Create new campaigns.
   a. New campaigns, including copy and recommended campaign settings, shall be submitted to VRE for approval within five (5) days of request. No new campaigns shall be launched without the approval of VRE’s Marketing Administrator.

5. Create location adjustments.
a. Adjustments shall be submitted to VRE’s Marking Administrator for prior approval.

6. Adjust the bid type.

7. Increase ad copy variants to improve campaign effectiveness.

8. Adjust campaigns to ensure spend is as low as possible and clicks are relevant.

9. Recommend strategies to improve quality scores.

10. Create product listing ads.

11. Provide keyword research and management to optimize bid (add PPC keywords and negative).

12. Optimize bidding at keywords, placement, devices, geographic, demographic and other levels.

13. Perform the following account management:
   
a. Review expensive under-performing keywords.

b. Ensure PPC campaign does not exceed weekly and monthly ad spend budget.

c. Maintain Quality Score, impression share and other important metrics.

14. Write engaging and concise copy to modify the call to action (CTA) on ads and boost click-through-rates and landing pages to boost conversion rates.

15. Monitor, evaluate, and present the performance of campaigns by generating monthly performance reports to analyze trends, goals, opportunities and other key performance indicators.

C. DELIVERABLES

1. All monthly reports, including monthly performance reports, shall be submitted via email to the VRE Marketing Administrator, Cindy King at cking@vre.org.

2. Each monthly progress report shall include the number of hours and tasks performed by the Contractor.
4. SPECIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A. TERM

1. The term of the Blanket Purchase Order shall be one (1) calendar year.

2. VRE is not obligated to expend all authorized funds under the Blanket Purchase Order.

3. The Blanket Purchase Order shall be based upon the Contractor’s hourly billing rate and shall include an allowance for reimbursement to the Contractor for all costs associated with managing VRE’s Google Ads account.

B. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

The Contractor shall assign a single point of contact that must be available between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

C. GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Contractor shall comply with ATTACHMENT 1 – VRE GENERAL PROVISIONS, as applicable to the Scope of Work.

D. MODIFICATION OF THE SCOPE OF WORK

VRE reserves the right to modify the Scope of Work at its discretion when it is in the best interest of VRE. See Clause 15. CHANGES of the General Provisions.

E. QUOTE ACCEPTANCE PERIOD

The Quote and any modification thereof shall be binding upon the Quoter for ninety (90) calendar days following the Quote closing date. Any Quote in which the Quoter shortens the acceptance period shall be rejected, although the acceptance period may be extended by mutual agreement between VRE and the Quoter. At the end of the Quote acceptance period, the Quoter may withdraw its Quote by giving written notice to VRE.
5. INSURANCE

A. CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE

1. By signing and submitting a Quote under this solicitation, the Contractor certifies if issued the Purchase Order, the Contractor will have the insurance coverage identified and described in ATTACHMENT 2 – VRE INSURANCE COVERAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR SMALL PURCHASE OF GOODS/SERVICES.

2. The Contractor shall furnish VRE proof of compliance with these insurance requirements in the form of an original Certificate of Insurance signed by an authorized representative or agent of the insurance company(ies). The Certificate of Insurance must be furnished within three (3) calendar days of request by VRE.

3. Failure to provide the certificate(s) when required may be cause for VRE to issue a Purchase Order to the next responsive Contractor. However, in no event shall work be performed until the required Certificate(s) of Insurance have been furnished and approved by VRE.
6. INVOICES

A. INVOICES

1. Invoices shall be submitted by the Contractor for services/goods ordered, delivered, and accepted by VRE.

2. Invoices shall be submitted electronically in one (1) continuous electronic copy in PDF to cking@vre.org.

3. The VRE Project Manager shall be indicated on the invoice cover sheet.

4. At a minimum, invoices shall contain the following information:
   a. Name, address, and telephone number of the Contractor
   b. VRE Purchase Order number
   c. Invoice number and invoice date
   d. Number of billable hours and hourly rate
   e. Cost of reimbursement for management of VRE’s Google Ads account (the Contractor must attach the Google invoice and proof of payment to Google for each invoice submitted to VRE)
   f. Monthly Progress Report
   g. Total invoice amount

5. If invoices fail to meet all of the above requirements, they will not be processed for payment and will result in the invoice being returned to the Contractor for correction and resubmission. VRE may request additional substantiating documentation as necessary.

B. PAYMENT

Payment will be made on a monthly basis by VRE.
7. PRICE INFORMATION

_Quoters are strongly encouraged to read this section carefully. INCOMPLETE QUOTES WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFIED_

A. The price information must be submitted in ATTACHMENT 3 – QUOTE FORM included herein.

B. The price shall be quoted in U.S. Dollars.

C. Quotes shall be inclusive of all costs and shall include full compensation for all taxes, fees, shipping/delivery charges, materials, equipment, tools, transportation, labor, insurance, permits, overhead and profit, etc. necessary to complete the work in conformance with the Scope of Work and to the satisfaction of VRE. Extra charges will not be allowed.

D. The prices, without exception shall be net, not subject to discount, and shall include all royalties and costs arising from patents, trademarks, and copyrights in any way involved in the work.

E. No erasures or other handwritten changes may appear on the Quote Form.
8. ATTACHMENTS

The following documents are incorporated in this Request for Quotes and the resulting Purchase Order by this reference.

A. Attachment 1 – VRE General Provisions

B. Attachment 2 – VRE Insurance Coverage Requirements for Small Purchase of Goods/Services

C. Attachment 3 – Quote Form