



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR

General Information

	Solicitation Number:	RFQ CAW# 23-19
	Description:	Public Relations & Communications Evaluation/Assessment – Contract Services
	Solicitation Issued:	May 19, 2023

Submission Deadline for Response

	Opening Date:	Thursday, June 8, 2023	Opening Time:	4:00 p.m., Central Time
	<p>Responses shall not be accepted after the designated opening date and time. It is the responsibility of the proposer to submit responses at the designated location on or before the opening date and time. Responses received after the designated opening date and time shall be considered late and shall be returned without further review.</p>			

Delivery Information for Response

	Delivery Address:	<p>Central Arkansas Water ATTN: Purchasing Section 221 East Capitol Avenue Little Rock, AR 72202</p> <p>Delivery providers USPS, UPS, and FedEx deliver mail to CAW's street address on a schedule determined by each individual provider. These providers will deliver to CAW based solely on the street address.</p> <p>Note: Proposer(s) who choose to hand deliver a response, should take it to the front door at the James T. Harvey Building which is located at 221 East Capitol Avenue. Call the Purchasing Section upon arrival at 501-377-1210 or 501-377-1315 Solicitation maybe left with Receptionist.</p>		
	Response's Outer Packaging:	<p>Response must be delivered to CAW in a sealed package. The outer packaging should be properly marked with the information listed below. If the packaging is not properly marked, it may be opened for identification purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicitation number and Description Date and time of the opening Proposer's name and return address 		

Central Arkansas Water Contact Information

	CAW Buyer:	Liz Tuck-Rowan, NIGP-CPP, CPPO, CPPB, C.P.M., CPSD	Direct Phone #:	(501) 377-1266
	Email Address:	liz.tuck-rowan@carkw.com	CAW's Main #:	(501) 377-1200
	Website:	www.carkw.com		

SIGNATURE PAGE

Proposer's Information

Type or Print the following information.

Company:			
Address:			
City:	State:	ZIP Code:	
Business Designation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietorship <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Service Corp <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit
Minority Designation: <i>See Minority Business Policy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable AR Minority Certification #: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian Service-Disabled Veteran Certification #: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic American <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander American <input type="checkbox"/> Service-Disabled Veteran
Woman Owned Business:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, my company is a woman owned business <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable	Dun & Bradstreet #	DUNS #: _____

Contact Information

Contact Person:		Title:	
Phone:		Alternate Phone:	
Email:			

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

	<p>The proposer should indicate below whether or not any known possible conflicts of interest exist with Central Arkansas Water. (See <i>Conflict of Interest Disclosure</i> in Section 1.)</p> <p>At the present time, and to the best of my knowledge, (proposer should select one of the following choices).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No known possible conflicts of interest exist.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a possible conflict of interest exists.</p> <p>If yes, the proposer must provide an explanation. _____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Confirmation of Redacted Copy

	<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES, a redacted copy of the submission documents is enclosed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO, a redacted copy of submission documents is <u>not</u> enclosed. I understand a full copy of non-redacted submission documents will be released if requested.</p> <p><i>Note: If a redacted copy of the submission documents is not provided with proposer's response packet, and neither box is checked, a copy of the non-redacted documents, with the exception of financial data (other than pricing), shall be released in response to any request made under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). See Solicitation for additional information.</i></p>
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Israel Boycott Restriction Confirmation

	<p>By checking and submitting a response to this <i>Solicitation</i>, a Prospective Contractor agrees and certifies that they do not boycott Israel, and if selected will not boycott Israel during the aggregate term of the contract.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prospective Contractor does not and will not boycott Israel.</p>
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Execution of Response

The proposer's signature below **shall** represent and warrant agreement to and compliance with all requirements, specifications, and terms and conditions within this solicitation. The undersigned official **must** be duly authorized to bind the proposer to a resultant contract. (See *Signature Page* in Section 1 of this solicitation).

Authorized Signature: _____ Title: _____

Printed/Typed Name: _____ Date: _____

SECTION 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 PURPOSE

Central Arkansas Water wants to contract with an individual or firm to evaluate and assess CAW's PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAM. CAW's desires for the successful applicant to evaluate and assess the team, and offer suggestions to reorganize, modernize, and empower CAW's Public Relations and Communications Department to be one of the premier communications departments within the water and wastewater industry while establishing the duties, expectations, and qualifications for future team members within the Department in the future as well as working with the Government Affairs Manager to increase the impact of that position in the communities serves today as well as the communities it should be serving in the future. The final report and recommendations will be provided to the CEO.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Central Arkansas Water (CAW or the Utility) is the largest water supplier in the state of Arkansas. The Utility plays an integral role in the quality of life for residents and the economic health of the communities it serves. As a regional water supplier serving a population of approximately 500,000, CAW contributes to the public health and wellbeing of one in every six Arkansans. In addition, CAW supplies the water needed by industries that compete in regional, national, and international markets. The Utility serves approximately 214,000 metered connections through retail and wholesale service to customers in Pulaski, Saline, Grant, Perry, Lonoke, White, and Faulkner counties.

1.3 ISSUING OFFICE

The CAW Purchasing Section, as the issuing office, is the sole point of contact throughout this procurement process. The proposer's questions regarding this solicitation should be made through the CAW buyer listed on page one (1) of this solicitation.

1.4 OPENING LOCATION

Sealed responses submitted by the opening time and date **shall** be opened at the following location:

Central Arkansas Water
Purchasing Section
221 East Capitol Avenue
Little Rock, AR 72202

1.5 CONE OF SILENCE

All communication(s) pertaining to this solicitation **shall** be directed to the CAW buyer listed on page one (1) of this solicitation, or his or her designee. CAW has imposed an absolute prohibition against any communication or contact ("Cone of Silence") with any other CAW personnel, CAW consultant, or Central Arkansas Water Commission (CAWC) member regarding this solicitation process.

The prohibition begins with the publication of this solicitation document, remains in place through the CAW solicitation and award process, and ends only after CAW has executed a contract with the successful firm. The prohibition is suspended only when the CAW Buyer, or his or her designee, initiates or consents to a meeting or communications for the purpose of clarifying a solicitation or another solicitation-related action.

A violation of this policy may result in the disqualification of an offending proposer's response.

1.6 DEFINITION OF REQUIREMENT

The words "**must**" and "**shall**" signify a requirement of this solicitation and that proposer's agreement to and compliance with that item is mandatory.

- A. Exceptions taken to any requirement in this solicitation, whether submitted in the proposer's response or in subsequent correspondence, may cause the proposer's response to be disqualified.
- B. The proposer may request exceptions to non-mandatory items. The proposer should clearly explain the requested exception and should reference the specific solicitation item number to which the exception applies.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- A. CAW has made every effort to use industry-accepted terminology in this solicitation.
- B. "Central Arkansas Water", "CAW", and the "utility" are used synonymously in this document.
- C. "Central Arkansas Water Commission", "CAWC" and the "commission" are used synonymously in this document.
- D. The words "proposer", "responder", "vendor" or "contractor" are used synonymously in this document.
- E. The terms "Request for Qualifications", "RFQ", and "Solicitation" are used synonymously in this document.
- F. The following acronyms are defined:

ANSI	American National Standards Institute
AMS	Asset Management System

1.8 SOLICITATION RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. An official authorized to bind the firm to a resultant contract **must** sign the *Response Signature Page* included in the RFQ.
- B. Proposer's signature on this page **shall** represent and warrant agreement that either of the following may cause the response to be disqualified:
 - Additional terms or conditions submitted intentionally or inadvertently.
 - Any exception that conflicts with a Requirement of this RFQ.
- C. Proposer's signature on the *Response Signature Page* **shall** represent and warrant the following:
 1. Proposer has completely reviewed this RFQ and any addenda.
 2. Proposer's agreement to and compliance with all requirements within this RFQ. (See *Definition of Requirement*.)
 3. Proposer's agreement to and compliance with all laws relating to State and Federal Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination requirements and conditions of employment, in addition to all federal, State, and local laws.
 4. Proposer has provided information in response to this RFQ that is both accurate and true.
- D. Response Documents
 - The proposer's original response marked original, and three copies **must be delivered to CAW in a sealed package** on or before the established opening date and time.
 - The solicitation shall also be submitted to the following email on or before the established opening date and time: procurement@carkw.com. To confirm receipt email Bridgette Johnson at bridgette.johnson@carkw.com or call 501-377-1210.
- E. Additional Sourcing Information

AR Bid: The official posting can also be found on the AR Bid website at <https://arkansas.ionwave.net> The solicitation document can be downloaded from the attachments tab of this posting. Note: it is the proposer's responsibility to properly register and utilize the AR Bid website.

1.9 PRICING

Pricing information is prohibited from being included in your response.

1.10 REQUIREMENT OF ADDENDUM

- A. This solicitation **shall** be modified only by an addendum written and authorized by CAW.
- B. The proposer **shall** be responsible for checking the Purchasing Section of the CAW website www.carkw.com for any and all addenda up to the established opening date and time.

1.11 **NONCOLLUSION**

Proposer **shall** represent and warrant that in connection to a response to this solicitation:

- A. The proposer has not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any contract or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition in connection with the response submitted. Further, that the response has been independently produced, void of collusion with any other response, company, competitor, or potential competitor. No information contained in this response has been knowingly disclosed prior to the official opening of the response. Lastly, no attempt has been made to induce any person or company to submit or not submit a response to this solicitation.

1.12 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE**

- A. The proposer should complete the *Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure* section on the *Signature Page* of this solicitation.
- B. The proposer **must** disclose all known possible conflicts of interest, which exist at the time of proposer's submission. Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to the following:
 - 1. Relationships between proposer's employees, principals, officers, and agents and the employees of CAW.
 - 2. Relationships between proposer's employees, principals, officers, and agents and the CAWC.
 - 3. Those resulting from material adverse matters, as distinguished from the conduct of business as usual.
- C. Proposer's failure to disclose such a relationship may result in one of the following:
 - 1. CAW's rejection of proposer's response.
 - 2. CAW's cancellation of any resultant contract.

1.13 **ISRAEL BOYCOTT NOTICE**

- A. Pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated § 25-1-503, a public entity **shall not** enter into a contract valued at \$1,000 or greater with a company unless the contract includes a written certification that the person or company is not currently engaged in and agrees for the duration of the contract not to engage in, a boycott of Israel.
- B. Proposer's signature on the Signature Page **shall** represent and warrant they do not boycott Israel and will not boycott Israel during the remaining aggregate term of the contract.

1.14 **PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**

- A. Response documents pertaining to this solicitation will become the property of CAW and **shall** be subject to the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- B. One (1) complete copy of the original response from which any proprietary and/or confidential information has been redacted should be submitted on a flash drive in the proposer's response.
- C. Except for the redacted information, the redacted copy **must** be identical to the original hard copy, reflecting the same pagination as the original and showing the space from which information was redacted.
- D. The proposer **shall** be responsible for identifying all proprietary information and for ensuring the electronic copy is protected against restoration of redacted data.
- E. The redacted copy **shall** be open to public inspection under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) without further notice to the proposer.
- F. If a redacted copy of the submission documents is not provided with proposer's response, a copy of the non-redacted documents, with the exception of financial data (other than pricing), **shall** be released in response to any request made under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- G. If CAW deems redacted information to be subject to FOIA, the proposer will be contacted prior to release of the documents.

1.15 **PUBLICITY**

Proposer **shall not** issue a news release or article pertaining to this solicitation or any portion of the project, in any medium, at any time during the pendency of the solicitation or fulfillment of the terms of this contract without CAW's

prior written approval. The proposer's failure to comply with this requirement may be cause for CAW's rejection of Proposer's response or CAW's cancellation of this contract.

1.16 RESERVATION

This solicitation **shall not** commit CAW to issue an award or contract. CAW **shall not** pay costs incurred in the preparation of a response.

1.17 DISCRIMINATION

In the event a contract is entered into pursuant to the "Request for Qualifications", the Firm shall not discriminate against any qualified employee or qualified applicant for employment because of race, religion, national origin, gender, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability. The Firm must include in any and all subcontracts a provision similar to the above.

1.18 BUSINESS, PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE REQUIREMENT

All firms or individuals located or doing business in Arkansas are required to be licensed in accordance with the required state, local and county agencies.

SECTION 2 – SUMMARY OF DUTIES

2. CONTRACTOR DUTIES SUMMARY

CAW's Public Relations and Communications department plans, organizes, and administers an effective public relations program; plans, develops, and oversees activities related to community outreach including CAW's educational and outreach programs.

Within the Public Relations space, the Public Relations and Communications department is tasked with assessing public attitudes and maintain mutual relations and understanding between the Utility and its customers, improving the channels of communication and establishing a two-way flow of information and understanding through media relations, customer and stakeholder relations, publications, marketing, publicity.

Within the Communications space, the Public Relations and Communications department is tasked with proactively communication programs and campaigns to inform CAW's workforce as well as enhance the reputation and visibility of the Utility within the service area, State, Nation, and World and to develop and maintain a system that educates stakeholders and customers about the Utility.

Media relations includes:

- Preparing position papers on issues of importance to the Utility
- Handling publicity
- Issues news of activities to external audiences
- Establishing and maintaining contacts with the mass media
- Handling responses to inquiries from the mass media
- Coordinating media conferences and tours
- Tracking and evaluation media coverage

Customer relations includes:

- Customer engagement activities
- Preparing educational materials (including curriculum) and activities
- Conducting tours
- Preparing brochures, tour guides, videos, maps, and other customer related communications materials

- Preparing gift and give-away items

Publications includes:

- Preparing and publishing materials for public including customers, public officials (working with the Government Affairs Manager), regulatory bodies, advisory bodies, and employees
- Helping out other departments to promote and publish informational materials, public event announcement, and other event related advertisement materials
- Maintenance of an up-to-date "Reach" board for employee information

Marketing Publicity includes:

- Announcing new products or services and enhancements in products or services, achievements, and honors through editorial channels, social media, Utility website, and other forms of effective communications
- Developing and executing promotional materials
- Participating in exhibits and marketing events.

Others includes:

- Assisting with the development of a good working climate within the Utility
- Providing PR services to other departments (photographic, video, gifts or give aways)
- Managing sponsorship
- Building and maintaining relationships with other companies
- Organizing Utility events
- Developing and maintaining a strong community education program

SECTION 3 - EVALUATION PROCESS

3. Evaluation Process

All responses will be scored based on the overall responsiveness to the solicitation requirements, interviews (if needed), and the reference accounts provided. CAW, at its sole discretion, may conduct interviews to seek clarification or gather more information.

3.1 Qualifications Evaluation Process

The Request for Qualifications (RFQ) format is intended to present an interested contractor/firm with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform the required services. The format is left to the discretion of the proposer to allow creativity and uniqueness of approach. Proposal submission is not intended to be expensive or extravagant, although the presentation should be considered for simplicity and ease of understanding.

Upon the review of qualified proposals, the Review Committee shall select the contractor/firm deemed best qualified and most responsive. The committee will determine whether in-person interviews will be required or whether a decision may be reached by reviewing the written proposals. The selected firm will be notified, and contract negotiations will commence. If Central Arkansas Water is unable to negotiate a contract, CAW shall cease negotiations and begin negotiations with the next most qualified and most responsive proposer.

Evaluations will be based upon the capability of the firm and upon the abilities and accomplishments of the individual or individuals assigned to perform the services. In addition, any experience in working

with governmental entities should be cited by the proposer. Of particular emphasis will be the qualifications of the key individual/personnel that the proposer identifies to work with CAW.

No assurances are given or intended to imply that CAW and their respective committee will award a contract, as a result of this request or submittal of qualifications. CAW will not be liable for any costs associated with responding to this request or negotiating a contract.

3.2 Response Elements

Your response **must** outline individual/company's background, qualifications, and proposed plan for addressing the requested item(s) or service(s).

Experience with PR and Communication Development (including project list with contact information)

Signature Page(s) 2 -3 to be included with response.

Failure to follow these guidelines in any manner may result in disqualification of your response.

3.3 Pricing

Pricing information is prohibited from being included in your response.

Pricing information is defined as statements including, but not limited to the following:

- "At no additional cost"
- "Free of charge"
- "For an additional fee"

Pricing information includes any information by which the cost of the equipment or service is set out, may be computed, or may be compared to another company.

SECTION 4 – QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Questions and Clarifications

- A. All requests for clarification or additional information **must** be submitted in writing to CAW Purchasing Section at CAW procurement@carkw.com. Written questions **must** be submitted by 4:00 p.m., no less than seven (7) calendar days prior to the response opening date on page one of this solicitation.
- B. For each question submitted, the company should reference the specific solicitation number and section to which the question refers.
- C. Companies' written questions will be consolidated and responded to by CAW. CAW's consolidated written response is anticipated to be posted by the close of business three (3) calendar days prior to the submission deadline.
- D. All questions and answers, clarification of, and addenda to, this solicitation will be published on the CAW's website www.carkw.com; under section Procurement, Questions and Answer for Open Solicitations. It is the Company's responsibility to review CAW's solicitation information online in order to obtain all available information and all updated requirements for this solicitation.
- E. Companies **must** be registered for contract award and future solicitation notifications. Companies may register on-line [AR Bid \(ionwave.net\)](http://AR Bid (ionwave.net)), Supplier Registration.

SECTION 5 – NEGOTIATION OF CONTRACT

1. For the basis of negotiations, CAW and the highest rated individual/firm shall jointly prepare a detailed, written description of the scope of the proposed services.
2. If CAW is unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with the firm selected, negotiations with that firm shall be terminated. CA W shall then undertake negotiations with the next highest rated firm. If there is a failing of accord with the second firm, negotiations with such firm shall be terminated. The process may continue until a satisfactory contract can be negotiated with a qualified firm.
3. If CAW is unable to negotiate a contract with any of the selected firms, CAW shall reevaluate the necessary services, including the scope and reasonable fee requirements, again compile a list of qualified firms and proceed in accordance with the provision of A.C.A. §19-11-801 thru §19-11-805.