



# RISLA

---

**RHODE ISLAND STUDENT  
LOAN AUTHORITY**

Rhode Island Student Loan Authority  
935 Jefferson Blvd., Suite 3000  
Warwick, RI 02886

**Request for Proposal (RFP)  
Marketing and Communication Services  
November 2, 2018**

## **Introduction**

The Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA) is inviting proposals from qualified marketing and communication professionals and firms for a variety of services.

RISLA provides education lending and refinancing services and also administers an extensive College Planning Center, scholarship search engine and internship matching service.

**Information on RISLA can be found at [www.risla.com](http://www.risla.com)**

**Proposals Are Due: 4:00 PM Friday November 30, 2018**

## **Objectives**

RISLA is seeking one or more qualified and experienced professionals/firms who can assist RISLA's management and internal marketing staff in achieving our organizational goals. At this time our primary goals are listed below.

RISLA objectives/issues:

- 1) Increase the FAFSA completion rate for both RI high school students and non-traditional students.
- 2) RI is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> highest in the country for FAFSA completion but would still like to improve our standing several notches.
- 3) Increase public awareness of and utilization of the RISLA College Planning Center.
- 4) RISLA has some of the lowest cost in-school loans in the country. However students and families, especially those from outside the state, are not aware that RISLA exists or why they should look at RISLA education loan offerings. RI is a net importer of students so there are a large number of out of state students attending RI institutions. RISLA would like to increase the percentage of students in RI that use our programs rather than from Sallie Mae and other for profit groups.
- 5) Many students and families could benefit from using RISLA's refinancing program, but we are competing with large banks and fintech companies who have huge marketing budgets and better name recognition.
- 6) The fintechs and banks are heavily marketing to RISLA's own loan portfolio. Need to execute strategies to defend our portfolio.

Accordingly, RISLA is primarily interested in selecting firms or individuals who have proven expertise in the following areas:

- 1) Press releases – assist RISLA in identifying topics for press releases or events. Then drafting and/or reviewing press releases and following up with media contacts.
- 2) Executing events/announcements
- 3) Identify earned media opportunities and be responsible for executing them
- 4) Brand building strategies
- 5) Marketing ideas and strategies for RISLA’s College Planning Center, In-school loans, refinancing loans, scholarship search engine and internship matching service.
- 6) How to promote RISLA’s texting services for FAFSA completion and mobile enabled loan applications. For existing examples text the word “FAFSA” to 24000 and also “college” to 24000
- 7) Designing and executing direct mail campaigns and have the ability to measure on a very granular level the success rate of various attributes.
- 8) Measurement of the cost effectiveness of all of RISLA’s marketing and communication efforts
- 9) Competitor research

PLEASE NOTE: RESPONDERS DO NOT HAVE TO BID ON ALL OF THESE ITEMS

RISLA is not interested in media buying services at this time.

RISLA has an experienced marketing and design staff that has been very successful in producing informational materials, graphic design, video production and advertising campaigns. While it would probably be beneficial for proposers to have the following expertise or services listed below RISLA can provide them in house and does require these services of the proposer.

RISLA has the following inhouse expertise:

- 1) Design and build web pages
- 2) Graphic design
- 3) Web traffic is monitored using HubSpot
- 4) Design and build native apps
- 5) Work with credit bureaus to produce direct mail campaign lists
- 6) Produce animated videos
- 7) Texting services
- 8) Blogging
- 9) Design and produce a variety of printed materials

For all of its services RISLA usually selects the low qualified bidder.

Responses to this RFP will be ranked based on the Exhibit A matrix .

## RFP Process

Proposals MUST include their responses on Exhibit A along with any other materials that the proposers believe would be helpful. Proposals should be delivered by 4:00 PM Friday November 30, 2018 via email, mail or hand delivered, for printed submissions there should be four sets in sealed packages to:

Mr. Charles Kelley  
Executive Director  
Rhode Island Student Loan Authority  
935 Jefferson Blvd., Suite 3000  
Warwick, RI 02886

Email: [ckelley@risla.com](mailto:ckelley@risla.com) with a copy to [cpastorius@risla.com](mailto:cpastorius@risla.com)

At that time the Authority will open the bids received. Representatives of the bidders may attend the opening of the proposals.

A bidder's conference call will be held on Tuesday November 20, 2018 at 2:00 PM EST. The dial in number for that call is 800-704-9804 participant code 355339#.

**Any questions regarding this proposal must be submitted to [ckelley@risla.com](mailto:ckelley@risla.com) before 4pm on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Answers to all submitted questions will be posted at <https://www.risla.com/rfp-qa> on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018.**

RISLA reserves the right to withdraw this RFP at any time and to reject any and all proposals.

Fax or oral proposals are not acceptable. A firm's failure to submit its proposal prior to the deadline will cause the proposal to be disqualified. Late proposals or amendments will not be opened or accepted for evaluation.

## Selection Process

Review of the proposals will be undertaken by a committee comprised of RISLA's Executive Director, Deputy Director/Chief Financial Officer, Marketing Director, Director of the College Planning Center and other key staff members. This committee will review all proposals and using the grading matrix at Exhibit A recommend individual(s) or firm(s) to provide market research services for RISLA. Final selection shall be made by the Board of Directors of RISLA and will be based on the lowest qualified bid price, willingness to accept contingency fees, and a demonstrated ability to provide the results RISLA is seeking.

RISLA intends to execute an engagement letter with the successful proposer(s) that shall incorporate the terms and fees that were proposed and negotiated.

Proposals will be evaluated using the following scoring weights resulting in a maximum score of 100 points. Please see Exhibit A for details.

Example of how fees may be considered with overall point rankings.

Fee score = (lowest bid/bid for firm being evaluated) X 30 points

**Example:** Assuming 3 bids were received: (firm A) - \$40,000, (firm B) - \$46,000, (firm C) - \$50,000

Firm A (the lowest bidder)	awarded 30 points	$\$40,000/\$40,000 \times 30 \text{ points} = 30$
Firm B	awarded 26 points	$\$40,000/\$46,000 \times 30 \text{ points} = 26$
Firm C	awarded 24 points	$\$40,000/\$50,000 \times 30 \text{ points} = 24$

An evaluation grid will be prepared summarizing the scoring by each member of the evaluation committee and the composite ranking which supports RISLA's selection of an individual or firm. If any proposer is disqualified and therefore not evaluated, the reason for such action shall be documented.

## **SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO BE REQUIRED OF THE PROPOSER**

- a. Firm organization and leadership team and professional staff resources,
- b. Engagement staff qualifications and experience,
- c. The proposer's suggested approach to the engagement,
- d. Identification of any sub-contractors, co-proposers, or other entity that will be used to provide the professional services sought by the request for proposal.
- e. Client references that may be contacted regarding professional services provided previously should be noted on Exhibit A.
- f. A listing or description of other professional services provided by the proposer to Colleges and Universities, non-profits involved in education or internships, the State of Rhode Island or (primary government) or any other component units (quasi-publics).

All proposal must be complete. RISLA reserves the right to disqualify any or all proposals. RISLA also reserves the right to reject the lowest bidder if the firm does not possess the personnel, experience, and resources to complete the required services in accordance with the specifications in the RFP.

RISLA reserves the right to cancel this request for proposals, to reject any and all proposals submitted, to request any additional clarifying information from any proposers, and to negotiate separately with any and all proposers. Issuance of this RFP does not commit RISLA to pay costs incurred in the preparation of proposals and RISLA reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all proposals, in part or in their entirety.

Any procedural questions regarding this proposal should be submitted to Charles Kelley, RISLA Executive Director, at ckelley@risla.com. As noted below there will be a conference call where all interested parties can dial in and hear all questions related to the services requested and the RFP process. Please note that no member or representative of your organization may discuss the RFP or your proposal with any Board Member or employee of RISLA other than Lindie Thibodeau, Marketing Director or Charles Kelley, Executive Director, any Rhode Island state official, office holder, or employee (including general officers, state legislators and their staffs, etc.) or any other party who might reasonably be considered to have any influence on vendor selection until RISLA has announced a decision with respect to this RFP. Proposers shall, in their proposals, represent and warrant that they have complied with the preceding sentence.

#### Ethics

RISLA and its Board of Directors and staff are committed to maintaining the highest standard of ethics in the awarding of contracts. In accordance therewith RISLA requires each Proposer agree to the following:

“Neither the Proposer nor any officer, employee, agent, representative or affiliate of the Proposer has given or offered or shall give or offer to any Board Member, employee, or representative of RISLA or to any family member of the foregoing, or to any business by which any of the foregoing persons are employed, or to any official of the State of Rhode Island who is subject to the State Code of Ethics, any gift, loan, political contribution, reward, or promise of future employment based on any understanding or expectation that the vote, official action, or judgment of the person would be influenced thereby, and, that no officer, employee, agent, representative, or affiliate of the Proposer shall have any direct or indirect nonincidental contact with any State officer or employee or with any member of the Board of Directors of RISLA during any period of time prior to RISLA’s award of the Contract, except at a public meeting of the Board of Directors of RISLA or at a meeting of a subcommittee of the Board of Directors.”

Any violation of the foregoing shall result in immediate disqualification of the Proposer.