REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR
National Operations Center of Excellence (NOCoE)

Program and Communications Services

From the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

December 18, 2017

A. INTRODUCTION

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is inviting individual bidders to submit proposals to this Request for Proposals for the requested National Operations Center of Excellence (NOCoE). Questions of a technical or contractual nature about the contents of this RFP are due no later than COB December 20, 2017, to the attention of Mr. Strat Cavros, AASHTO Manager of Acquisitions, Contracts & Business Development (Contracts Manager), at scavros@aashto.org. AASHTO will strive to answer questions and send those answers by e-mails to prospective bidders and post them on the AASHTO and NOCOE websites as an Amendment to the RFP by December 22, 2017. Proposals must be sent to Mr. Cavros no later than 4:00 PM EDT December 29, 2017. It is expected that AASHTO will make an award to the successful bidder no later than February 1, 2018.

B. STATEMENT OF WORK

Background

The NOCoE’s origins date from August 2013 when AASHTO, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), and the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITSA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to work together with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to complete a business plan for the creation and start-up operations for a National Operations Center of Excellence using the Cooperative Model as defined in NCHRP Report 298. Another MOU between the three associations was signed in April 2014 to outline joint roles and responsibilities, as well as the individual association roles and responsibilities for establishing the NOCoE. The NOCoE was successfully launched in January 2015 at the Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and begins its second year this month. During its first year the NOCOE completed an Outreach and Engagement and Technical Services Plant (TSP) and began the delivery of a broad array of technical services including a series of webinars and peer exchanges.

The key objectives of the NOCoE are as follows:

- Identify, collect, and disseminate best practice information and promote its application with the purpose of improving the operations outcomes of agencies charged with transportation systems
management and operations and establishing the NOCoE as the resource for all such information;
• Expand Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O) knowledge and identify research gaps and needs;
• Support TSM&O community building through peer exchanges, communities of practice, and collaboration; and
• Assess the needs of the TSM&O community (both public and private), identify customer and client needs, and encourage collaboration across government, industry, and academic institutions.

The NOCoE office is located adjacent to the AASHTO office in Washington, D.C., and relies on AASHTO for administrative, legal, contracting, and accounting support.

This contract is intended to be awarded to an individual either as an independent contractor (Contractor) or as part of a consulting firm to provide programmatic and communications services for the day to day operations of the NOCoE. It is assumed that the tasks and workload will be approximately 32-40 hours per week on a near full-time basis. The person will be working closely with the Managing Director to implement the communication and outreach activities, assist in the technical services and support the execution of new initiatives within the NOCoE Business Plan and direction of the Managing Director.

Scope of Work

Task 1 – Project Management

This support services contract does not require extensive project management as the proposed person will be reporting directly to the Managing Director for all services and matters related to the initially identified tasks listed in Task 2 and Task 3 of this RFP. It is expected that the Contractor will manage the project budget and hours associated with the contract in delivering the services.

Task 2 – Program Coordinator Services

The Contractor will provide program coordinator services for the execution of the NOCoE business plan. The Contractor will provide operational and some strategic level support within the services which may include but not be limited to:

• Communicating directly with industry professionals in the public, private and academia sectors of the transportation industry
• Scheduling and organization of meetings/events
• Creating meeting minutes and summaries as needed
• Creating and assisting with non-technical reports
• Supporting the growth and development of the technical services and outreach programs
• Providing feedback and suggestions on improvements of the coordination of the multiple and overlapping programs/projects at NOCoE
• Help build positive relations with volunteers and other non-profit association staff
• Assisting, compiling and preparing reports for internal and external distribution
• Assist in preparing for and executing webinars
• Assist in the growth of the digital media audience for NOCoE
• Supporting the NOCoE staff to plan and execute technical services and outreach activities
• Assist in other duties as needed

Task 3 – Communications and Outreach services

The Contractor will provide communications and outreach services for the execution of the NOCoE business plan. The Contractor will provide operational and strategic communications support within the services listed below which may include but is not limited to:

• Managing and growing the number of subscribers and relevant metrics for the NOCoE newsletter
• Website and Enhanced Knowledge Transfer System management and oversight
• Social Media Outlets
• TSMO community outreach and engagement
• On-site agency visits
• Coordination with applicable industry groups like AASHTO’s Transcomm committee

Task 3-1: Newsletter

The NOCoE newsletter is one of the main conduits of information that is sent to the TSMO community. Actively searching and providing new and relevant content is critical to the success of the newsletter. The goal of NOCoE is to increase the number of subscribers, increase website traffic through pushing content in the newsletter and provide opportunities for the TSMO community to contribute to the newsletter. The newsletter is a completely electronic based newsletter and is not expected to be in print format.

The following activities will be completed as part of the delivery and management of the Newsletter:

• Manage, edit, and produce the NOCoE Newsletter as a concise listing of new and important Transportation System Management & Operations and ITS resources, papers, presentations, discussions/interviews, analyses, training opportunities, and upcoming Operations and ITS events. The newsletter will be distributed to subscribers on a biweekly basis. The subscription list will be maintained and updated on a regular basis.
• Augment the Newsletter with periodic alerts to subscribers to important and timely new solicitations and issues. Important and timely information that occurs in between newsletters will be written, edited, and distributed to subscribers though e-mail announcements on an as-needed basis.
• Search NOCoE member Web sites, relevant transportation Web sites, and news Web sites for information to post on the NOCoE Web portal and Newsletter.

• Organization/agency websites will be searched regularly for information to post on the NOCoE Web portal and Newsletter.

• Actively solicit new content useful to those responsible for Transportation System Management and Operations and ITS planning and deployment. Relationships will be maintained with contacts who will supply this information as it becomes available. The NOCoE Web portal would provide direct links and access to resources and TSM&O activities supported by other groups (FHWA, Operations Academy, ITE, ITSA, etc.)

• Work closely and coordinate with the ITS-JPO (OST) Professional Capacity Building (PCB) Program to ensure that the NOCoE Newsletter and calendar contains an up-to-date set of PCB resources. The ITS-JPO and PCB Program websites will be monitored regularly for new information to be posted. Relationships with contacts in the program will be maintained.

• In consultation with the NOCoE Managing Director, all work under the tasks herein will be coordinated with work being done as part of the SHRP2 program implementation so that the NOCoE provides access to all SHRP2 reliability products and other best practice material.

Task 3-2: Website

Contractor will facilitate, update and maintain the NOCoE website under the direction of the Managing Director. Regular content updates and interaction with the website is expected including the upload and addition of resources to the knowledge management system. The contractor will manage the website through the following tasks:

• Support the ongoing development, testing, implementation, enhancement, and coordination of the website. Actively manage the website. Work with the website software (Joomla) to upload information and provide on-going maintenance of the website. Recommend changes to enhance the website.

• Manage the online calendar of events for the TSM&O community.

• Conduct periodic organization/agency and website scans. Actively solicit new contents and modify current content as required. Direct links, access to resources and TSM&O activities supported by other groups (FHWA, JPO, Operations Academy, ITE, ITS America, ITS State Chapters etc.). Integrate reference material available on various websites and recommend ideas to improve efficiency and eliminate redundancy.

• Suggest updates to the website based on content and stakeholder needs

• Create monthly performance evaluation (dashboard) of the website and stakeholder engagement using Google analytics.

Task 3-3: Social Media

Contractor to actively manage, post and promote NOCoE activities, products and services on social media. NOCoE’s social media includes LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. The use of social media will be
mainly to supplement the newsletter material, provide reactionary updates to industry developments and reach a wider network. Contractor to provide integrated communications with social media and regularly suggest content along with targeted outreach to widen the TSMO and NOCoE network. Contractor to provide direct communications with the TSMO community to promote stakeholder journalism in support of TSM&O activities.

Task 4: TSMO Community Outreach and Engagement
Under direction of the Managing Director, Contractor to provide suggestions and opportunities to engage the TSMO community, focusing first on the State DOTs but also including local and regional public sector, private sector and academia/research communities. Contractor to suggest engagement activities as it helps to achieve the NOCoE strategic plan goals.

The proposed candidate is expected to have experience working in a non-profit or similar environment to accomplish the tasks noted above. At a minimum, the experience should reflect:

- Working with professionals and volunteers
- Ability to start and complete a project with guidance from a team and/or supervisor
- Experience writing published reports, newsletter articles and/or blogs
- Experience and knowledge of social media and communications
- Knowledge and use of technological resources including presentations and video communications
- Knowledge of the transportation industry is a plus
- Strong skills in Microsoft office
- Project planning, organizational, and budgeting skills
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Practical knowledge of and experience with Microsoft Office, including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

The Contractor is estimated to work at a near full-time capacity on a regular basis and be considered NOCoE staff. This is a not a guarantee or a minimum number of hours for this contract

Education and Experience
An associate’s or Bachelor’s degree and a minimum of four years of related professional experience in a non-profit environment is desired.

Travel
Travel is expected for approximately 25% of this position. Travel costs will be reimbursed according to the provisions below.
Contract Length

The length of this contract will be a minimum of one year and a maximum to end on September 18, 2019.

C. CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION DATA

These provisions will be made a part of the contract when it is fully executed (among several that may be included in the resultant contract).

Payment and Progress Reports

The Contractor shall prepare and submit monthly invoices for each calendar month indicating labor charges (including dates worked, hours worked billed in half hour increments, and hourly totals for the month), other direct costs as approved, and travel as approved. The Contractor must submit supporting cost detail, including receipts, to receive reimbursement for costs incurred. Invoices received by AASHTO more than 90 days after the work completion date may not be paid. It is the Contractor’s responsibility to ensure that all work completed is invoiced within the allowed billing period.

The invoice shall be accompanied by a written progress report indicating:

- A clear and complete account of the work performed each month
- An outline of the work to be performed the next month, and
- A tabulation of the current and cumulative costs expended by month versus budgeted costs

All invoices, expense vouchers and progress reports shall be submitted to AASHTO, attention of Strat Cavros, Contracts Manager at 444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 249, Washington, DC 20001 or electronically to scavros@aashto.org. In addition, progress reports shall be submitted electronically to Patrick Son at pson@transportationops.org.

Payment to the Contractor in fulfillment of services under this agreement shall be subject to acceptance of all assigned services by AASHTO, and shall be subject to final audit by AASHTO of the time sheets and expense records reflecting services rendered. If accepted, AASHTO will remit payment within 60 calendar days of receipt of each invoice or voucher. If final audit has not been conducted within 90 days of delivery of the entire performance required by this agreement, AASHTO shall make final payment.

Travel and Per Diem

Travel and Per Diem authorized under this subcontract must be invoiced in accordance with the Government Travel Regulations currently in effect. Current per diem rates are listed at http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287.
Travel requirements under this contract shall be met using the most economical form of transportation available. If economy class transportation is not available, higher class transportation shall be approved in advance by the AASHTO Contracts Manager, and the request for payment voucher must be submitted with justification for use of higher class travel indicating dates, times and flight numbers. All travel shall be scheduled sufficiently in advance to take advantage of offered discount rates, unless authorized by the AASHTO Contracts Manager.

Key Personnel

The Contractor will be listed as a key personnel on this contract and shall not be removed without the advanced notification and written approval of the Contracts Manager.

D. CONTRACTOR TECHNICAL AND COST PROPOSAL CONTENT

Technical Proposal

The contractor’s technical proposal shall be no more than five pages (Size 12 Font and 1” Margins) and include the following information:

1. Introduction - Bidder’s name and contact information. Description of the bidder’s interest and commitment to provide the NOCoE services being requested.
2. Key Personnel - Detailed biography of bidder with a focus on their knowledge and experience (may take the form of a resume).
3. Approach - Description of the bidder’s approach to performing the tasks and responsibilities (no more than four pages)

Cost Proposal

The contractor’s cost proposal shall be no more than 2 pages (Size 12 Font and 1” Margins) and include the following information:

1. Introduction- Bidder’s name and contact information, cost summary and signature.
2. Hourly Billing rate – Billing rate will be inclusive of salary, overhead, fringe and profit, if any.
3. Cost Control and Invoicing- Bidder’s approach for controlling cost and insuring timely submission of invoices.

The anticipated timeline for the resultant contract is for one year with an option of renewal that will be determined by the NOCoE Managing Director.

This contractor budget shall not exceed $110,000 per annum.