
February 2, 2021

**AGENDA ITEM 1
ACTION ITEM**

CALIFORNIA ABLE ACT BOARD

Resolution No. 2021-01: Approval to Issue Request for Proposals for Marketing Services

Action Recommended

Adopt Resolution No. 2021-01 authorizing the Executive Director to issue a Request for Proposals ABLE 02-20 (“RFP”) for Marketing Services.

Background

The California ABLE Act Board (“Board”) is tasked with implementing the California ABLE Program (“CalABLE” or “Program”), a financial savings tool for eligible people with disabilities. The Program launched in December 2018.

With 43 ABLE plans that have launched, of which a majority have no residency requirement, the Program faces heavy competition in the national space. Additionally, industry data continues to demonstrate slow trends in enrollment, further stressing the importance of effective marketing. As such, staff is recommending procuring the services of a marketing firm to help support the outreach and education efforts provided to the Board by the Program administrator, Tuition Financing Inc. (“TFI”). Marketing services are currently provided by Sagent Marketing under a one-year contract, No. ABLE 06-18, with a one-year extension through February 28, 2021.

This marketing firm will be required but not limited to i) develop an annual marketing plan detailing outreach and education campaigns to achieve enrollment targets, ii) collaborate with the Board and its contractors, including TFI, and iii) establish messaging and branding for the Program.

The term of agreement of this RFP is for two (2) years for an amount not to exceed \$305,000 per year with the option to extend one (1) time for an additional year at the same or lower rate(s).

Scope of Services

The Scope of Work in the RFP includes the following:

- Work with the Board and Executive Director, the Program Manager, the Communications Office of the California State Treasurer’s Office, and the Board’s

other contractor(s) at the Board's request, to develop an annual Marketing Plan that describes targeted education and outreach campaigns to ensure enrollment numbers meet the expectation of 17,000 enrollments by the end of June 2023.

- Assist with coordinating efforts with the Board, Executive Director, and staff to interested community groups, consumer advisory groups, and other impacted parties to design materials with specialized messaging for different target groups.
- Work with the Board and Executive Director, the Program Manager, the Communications Office of the California State Treasurer's Office, and the Board's other contractor(s) at the Board's request, to develop and implement a marketing and public relations program in California and on a national scale that focuses on CalABLE's eligible population. This would also include efforts to reach non-English speaking populations.
- Work collaboratively with the Board and Executive Director, the Program Manager, the Communications Office of the California State Treasurer's Office, and the Board's other contractor(s) at the Board's request, to design and implement cost-effective marketing campaigns that use existing networks. These campaigns should be strategically designed to reach target communities identified by the Board. These campaigns may include, but are not limited to, print, video, broadcast, digital, online, and email promotional vehicles, as well as community outreach activities. The Contractor must monitor and report to the Board on the effectiveness and/or shortcomings associated with each campaign activity.
- Work with the Board and Executive Director, the Program Manager, the Communications Office of the California State Treasurer's Office, and the Board's other contractor(s) at the Board's request, to shape and project the image of the Program as a viable financial savings tool for people with disabilities in the state and nationally.
- Each marketing campaign must include a work plan, marketing methodologies, concept development, outreach strategies, timeline for development and implementation, benefit to the overall Program mission, and an estimate budget within the constraints of the Board.
- Provide work product and materials that is designed in an accessible way for people with disabilities using "People-first" language. Examples of work product include, but are not limited to, program branding, multi-language survey tools, and special event materials.
- Advise on maintaining brand consistency and make recommendations on advancing the brand.
- Provide work product and materials built around consistent messaging in the various promotional vehicles to drive stakeholder engagement through Program information-sharing.

- Assist and advise Board staff on the design and production of newsletters and program updates for public consumption across various media channels, including internet and email, social media, and other channels with proven history of reaching the targeted audiences.
- Identify and develop effective marketing materials that promote collaboration with disability groups nationally, statewide, and locally by building on existing programs with shared consumer interests to support the recruitment and retention of Program participants.
- Identify and develop financial literacy educational materials that promote opening a CalABLE account to gain future financial independence.
- Prepare reports after each campaign to the Board and the Executive Director, detailing whether or not the campaign was effective and any lessons learned to apply to future campaigns.
- Attend Board meetings when requested by the Board. The Board will meet on a quarterly basis. Attend other meetings pertaining to the 529A industry (Internal Revenue Service, Securities and Exchange Commission, other states, or others) with or on behalf of the Board as requested.
- Be available to consult with Board members and the Executive Director from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time, Monday through Friday.
- Respond to the need for telephone consultation within a 24-hour period and be available for meetings with the Board with no greater than 10 days' notice.

Minimum Qualifications

Bidders must certify that they meet the following minimum qualifications:

- Bidder(s) must have a minimum of three (3) years of experience designing, producing, and implementing marketing communication services and outreach to specific consumer demographics.
- Bidder(s) must be willing to tailor marketing campaigns to hard-to-reach target audiences, including individuals with disabilities, their families, and support organizations.
- Bidder(s) may not currently or during the term of the Agreement executed pursuant to this RFP have a contractual or other business relationship with the Board's ABLE consultant (AKF Consulting LLC) or with its investment consultant (Meketa Investment Group, Inc) or with its program/plan manager (TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc).
- Bidder must be qualified to do business in the State of California and must provide either (i) evidence of registration from the California Secretary of State or (ii) certification that no impediments to registration exist.

Schedule (Key Action Dates)

Date	Action
February 18, 2021	RFP available to Prospective Bidders
February 24, 2021, 4:00 p.m. (PT)	Deadline to Submit any Written Questions
March 1, 2021	Answers to Written Questions Distributed
March 4, 2021, 4:00 p.m. (PT)	Deadline to Submit Proposals
March 5 – March 14, 2021	Evaluation of Proposals
March 15, 2021	Notice of Intent to Award Contract
June 1, 2021	Commencement of Contract (pending Board and DGS approval)

Evaluation and Scoring

All proposals will be reviewed by an evaluation committee. The initial review of the proposals will confirm that all information has been submitted in conformity with the requirements of this RFP. The absence of required information will cause a proposal to be deemed nonresponsive and may result in the proposal’s disqualification. Responsive proposals will then be scored according to criteria herein. The Experience/Expertise in Marketing and Communications Services includes an optional interview in the final score. The scored categories and the corresponding weighting of each scored category is as follows:

Scored Category	Weighting
Background and Personnel Information	20 points
Experience/Expertise in Marketing and Communications Services	50 points
Cost	30 points
Total Possible Points	100 points

Attachments

- Attachment #1 – Resolution No. 2021-01