



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001

Request for Information

Strategic Communications and Digital Services

United States Census Bureau

June 26, 2020 [V.1](#)

Request for Information

This Request for Information is intended to assist the Census Bureau to 1) gain industry insight on the most adequate procurement strategy and acquisition vehicle to acquire the services described herein, and 2) identify industry interest and capabilities to provide such services. All requested information is intended to facilitate the U. S. Census Bureau's market research efforts. Information will be solely used by the U.S. Census Bureau in support of this effort. Respondents are encouraged to provide information based on their areas of expertise, proven best practices and recent experiences with other government and private industry procurement efforts.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) NOTICE ONLY. THIS IS NOT A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP). NO SOLICITATION IS AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME.

This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes. It does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This RFI does not commit the Government to contract for any supply or service whatsoever. Further, the Census Bureau is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Those responding to the RFI are advised that the U.S. Government will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI. All costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party's expense. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued.

Responses to the RFI will not be returned and those responding will not be notified of the results of the review. If a solicitation is released, it will be synopsized on the [Beta.Sam.gov website](https://beta.sam.gov). It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor these sites for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

I. About the U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau is the federal government's largest statistical agency. The Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy. Our goal is to provide the best mix of timeliness, relevancy, quality and cost for the data we collect and services we provide. Federal law protects the confidentiality of all the information the Census Bureau collects. Our agency honors privacy, protects confidentiality, shares our expertise globally, and conducts our work openly.

The Census Bureau engages in a range of scientific and statistical activities. Our agency actively researches survey and questionnaire design as well as different modes of data collection, processing, and dissemination. The Census Bureau is guided on this mission by scientific objectivity, our strong and capable workforce, our devotion to research-based innovation, and our abiding commitment to our customers.

The Census Bureau needs to maintain and strengthen a modern, innovative program to effectively communicate the paradigm-shifting approaches and technologies that will allow us to address the nation's information needs, including the properties of *ad hoc* statistics. New, agile strategies will enable us to effectively support the Open for Business agenda and other departmental priorities. Radical reinvention will position the Census Bureau and the federal statistical system to remain world leaders in economic and social measurement. This strategic plan presents our strategy to address these challenges.

Our Statistical Program

The Census Bureau conducts three (3) censuses – the Decennial Census, Economic Census and Census of Government – and over 130 surveys including the American Community Survey, demographic surveys and economic surveys.

Censuses

- The **Decennial Census** is the once-a-decade population and housing count of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Island Areas as required by the U.S. Constitution. The results of the decennial census determine the number of seats for each state in the U.S. House of Representatives and are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts and to distribute more than \$675 billion in federal funds each year.
- The **Economic Census** measures the nation's economy every five years, providing vital statistics for virtually every industry and geographic area in the country.
- The **Census of Governments** provides comprehensive data about the nearly 90,000 state and local governments in the nation every five years.

Our Surveys

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing annual survey that shows what the U.S. population looks like and how it lives. The ACS helps communities decide where to target services and resources.

Demographic surveys measure income, poverty, education, health insurance coverage, housing quality, crime victimization, computer usage, and many other subjects.

Economic surveys are conducted monthly, quarterly, and yearly. They cover selected sectors of the nation's economy and supplement the Economic Census with more frequent information about the dynamic economy. These surveys yield more than 400 annual economic reports, including principal economic indicators. Sponsored surveys are demographic and economic surveys that we conduct for other government agencies. They include the Current Population Survey, the National Health Interview Survey, and the National Survey of College Graduates.

Geography

The Census Bureau maintains a nationwide geographic database that includes boundary information for legal, statistical, and administrative areas. We also track physical features such as streets and rivers for geographic area delineation.

The Census Bureau maintains a national address file to support censuses and surveys.

International Programs

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts demographic, economic, and geographic studies of other countries and strengthens statistical development around the world through technical assistance, training, and software products.

Communications Directorate

Communications is a core business function for Census Bureau programs and service providers. Programs areas across the Census Bureau have communications areas that evaluate, support, and improve the value of products and services. However, central to the communications function at the Census Bureau is the Communications Directorate. The Census Bureau counts on the Communications Directorate to initiate, energize, coordinate, and support communications agency-wide. The Communications Directorate provides innovative ways to make Census Bureau statistics more accessible, useful, interesting and relevant.

Following the White House executive order establishing H.R.5759 - 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act, we are responsible for ensuring the greatest extent possible to build website and digital services that are:

- Accessible to individuals with disabilities in accordance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d);
- Deliver consistent appearance;
- Contains a search function that allows users to easily search content intended for public use;
- Provided through industry standard secure connection;
- Designed around user needs with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions, using qualitative and quantitative data to determine user goals, needs, and behaviors, and continually test the website, web-based

form, web-based application, or digital service to ensure that user needs are addressed;

- Provides users of the new or redesigned website, web-based form, web-based application, or digital service with the option for a more customized digital experience that allows users to complete digital transactions in an efficient and accurate manner; and
- Fully functional and usable on common mobile devices.

Innovations

The Census Bureau brings innovation to all aspects of our business processes. The agency engages government, communities, and the technology industry to create digital tools that address our greatest challenges as a nation. This process helps to empower people with technology, make government data more accessible and user-friendly, and facilitate cross-sector collaboration to build new digital solutions with open data.

The Census Bureau is now using 21st century technology to meet our centuries-old mission — making the statistics that define our growing, changing nation more accessible to the public than ever before. The America’s Economy mobile app is part of the Census Bureau’s digital transformation effort to provide the general public and the government workforce with access to information “anywhere, anytime, on any device,” a key goal of the Federal Digital Strategy. The overall transformation effort at the Census Bureau now allows for Internet responses to 60 different surveys including the 2020 Census.

The agency is continuing its efforts to improving infrastructure that supports new public-facing efforts and is enabled by the Census Bureau shared services strategy. Shared infrastructure, security, data collection and dissemination provide the key technological building blocks for a more open government.

Digital Transformation

The Census Bureau’s digital transformation efforts transform and expand the dissemination of Census content and better serve our internal and external customers by:

- Enabling data to be easily discovered, accessed, and consumed via Census.gov
- Making data useful for a diverse set of customer needs
- Taking advantage of digital opportunities
- Centralizing and standardizing the metadata

The digital efforts focus on implementing a mobile-first approach and a customer-focused user experience. The Census Bureau invested in new technology stack that brings customer relationship management, customer experience management, and analytics software for customer insights, and content management system (Adobe AEM).

Partnership and Stakeholder Outreach

The Census Bureau has a robust partnership program, engaging with partners and supporters across the country to bring awareness about the importance of our data and the impact it has on

communities around the nation. Partners are trusted voices in the communities by encouraging their communities and businesses to respond to census surveys and censuses. For the 2020 Census, we set and surpassed an ambitious goal to reach 300,000 partners.

The Census Bureau ongoing partnership program engages government, nonprofit, technology companies, corporate and community organizations that help spread the message about the importance of participating in the census. The Census Bureau is committed to continuing its integrated partnership efforts as an evergreen program and showcasing the wealth of data serviced by over 130 surveys and programs. Furthermore, program areas around the agency also have partnership efforts supporting their program with the challenge of how to continue engaging all these partners in a cohesive integrated approach.

Data Dissemination Efforts

In 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau retired American FactFinder (AFF), its statistics and information search engine after 20 years, and established a modern data dissemination platform. Data.census.gov represents a new chapter in the Census Bureau's dissemination approach by centralizing data access and allowing for a more rapid response to customers. The Census Bureau developed this platform as part of our commitment to streamlining our customers' experience in finding, analyzing and using Census Bureau data.

The Census Bureau is seeking to add features and capabilities to make the system more robust and easy to use. To help ensure a smooth transition to the new platform, the Census Bureau will hold multiple webinars and training events. The Census Bureau is working on a unified search engine for census.gov and data.census.gov, improving its metadata and establishing data integration across the website experience.

II. Procurement Overview

The Communications Directorate recognizes the Census Bureau's need for progressive and innovative support of communications, dissemination and digital services. The Directorate also recognizes the autonomy of Census program offices. The Strategic Communications and Digital Services Contract would centralize services for Census program offices to enable efficiencies, consistency and follow best practices from public and private sector industries that would aim to:

- Provide efficient procurement services and deliver needs to program areas across the agency faster.
- Ensure a consistent look and feel, branding and messaging to end-users by having a single source of service.
- Establish a unified foundation and understanding of core communications elements, segments, and corporate branding.

The Census Bureau's seeks support for developing and executing an integrated strategic communications and digital services required to meet agency mission and inform the American public on statistical information generated by the Census Bureau and disseminated through a wide variety of communications channels and platforms.

The Census Bureau recognizes the need for progressive and innovative support of Census Bureau communications, dissemination and digital services. The Directorate also recognizes the autonomy of Census program offices. Therefore this proposal requests consideration of creating a single communications contract to provide a suite of services for use by all offices and further align messaging to all audiences and stakeholders.

III. Scope of Effort

The Census Bureau is seeking a contractor to plan, design, produce, implement, integrate, and assess integrated communications and digital-wide services to create end-user awareness of Census Bureau programs, strengthen our partnerships, support stakeholder relations, deliver research-backed user experience, and educate, inform and grow our audiences . The government seeks services in all communications-related areas and channels to support communications and digital services needs across the agency.

The Census Bureau is seeking to improve internal and external communications across all possible communications channels and digital services. The Contractor shall identify ways to improve the public’s overall experience through coordinated and integrated efforts across all Census Bureau directorates and programs.

The Census Bureau prioritizes innovation, digital transformation, partnership and stakeholder relations outreach as core elements of our communications efforts. The bureau recognizes the importance of building strong, long lasting relationships with community leaders and organizations as trusted voices in our communities. In the last decade, the Census Bureau has also made tremendous effort in establishing innovative digital solutions to improve our agency website, its customer relationship management platform, and building a robust analytics and customer experience management platform in order to make data driven-decisions around improving customer experience. These efforts have successfully placed the Census Bureau as a leading agency in implementing digital innovations in the federal government. Furthermore, the agency continues prioritizing digital innovations and improvements in communications that improve customer satisfaction, create awareness of Census Bureau statistics and grow our audience.

IV. Technical Description - High-Level Categories

The purpose of this contract is to fulfill the Census Bureau’s requirement for developing and executing Strategic Communications and Digital Services to serve the entire agency. These efforts shall help support the agency mission to serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy. During this process, the key objective is to gain a deeper understanding about industry’s current communications management practices and technology’s latest advancements that can assist our team in defining requirements to strengthen our brand as the federal statistical and data-leading agency, with a broad customer-focused approach.

The Census Bureau has categorized services as follow:

- A) Strategic Planning and Program Coordination
- B) Research, Analytics and Performance Monitoring

- C) Integrated Partnership and Strategic Customer Relations Management
- D) Education and Outreach
- E) Data Integration/Data Linkage
- F) Product and Content Development
- G) Tools and Technology Management
- H) Training

Descriptions of the services listed above can be found in **Attachment 1_In-Depth Category Descriptions, of this RFI.

V. Requested Information

SECTION A – BUSINESS INFORMATION AND CAPABILITIES STATEMENT (3 PAGES MAX)

Interested vendors are requested to submit, at minimum, the following information:

- 1) Company name, mailing address, and website address
- 2) Contact person’s name, position, e-mail address, and telephone number
- 3) Business information:
 - a. Business size (i.e., large, small, SBA certified small disadvantaged, SBA certified 8(a), SBA certified HUB Zone)
 - b. Ownership (i.e., woman-owned, veteran-owned, service disabled veteran-owned)
 - c. DUNS number
 - d. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes
 - e. Federal contract vehicles that would be available to the Government for the procurement of the services (e.g., GSA schedules [number and name], Government-Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs), agency-specific acquisition contracts)
- 4) Company’s capabilities statement that includes a brief summary of the company’s capabilities, core competencies and experience(s) providing integrated communications services and digital services, particularly as those relates to new and emerging communications techniques and channels and to the services described in this notice. This summary shall include, but is not limited to, services provided, language capabilities, principal markets, and geographic areas served. This statement shall not exceed seven hundred (700) words count.

For additional information on the Strategic Communications and Digital Services and its desired capabilities, please refer to **Attachment 1: In-depth Category Descriptions**.

SECTION B: TECHNICAL AND PROCUREMENT QUESTIONS (22 PAGES MAX.)

Interested vendors are requested to provide responses to the questions below as part of their submission. These responses will contribute to the Census Bureau overall market research in order to determine how best to procure the support services.

A. Procurement Approach

In view of the extent and breadth of the potential services to be acquired, as described in this notice:

1. What contract structure(s) (e.g. single award contract, multiple award contract, BPA, IDIQ/ Task Order type, Requirements contract, etc.) would be most appropriate for acquiring these services? What are the benefits of the proposed structure? Please explain your answer.
2. From the following pricing structure: Firm Fixed Price (FFP), Time and Materials (T&M), Cost Reimbursable (CR), Hybrid/Combination, which would be most appropriate for these types of services, and most effective to mitigate both government and contractor scope and cost risks for a procurement of this scope and why? For those structures not suggested, what are the risks associated with those?
3. What procurement strategy (e.g. GWAC, GSA Schedule, Full & Open Competition, Limited Sources) would be most appropriate for acquiring these services? Why?
4. How should the government go about estimating pricing for these services, assuming a five-year lifecycle? What pricing assumptions, models and price risks shall the government take into consideration when estimating pricing for these efforts?
5. What pricing data and/or pricing exercises should be required from offerors as part of their price/business proposal for the government to ensure a fair, reasonable and comprehensive pricing evaluation that could sustain best value to the government for potentially five-years worth of services?
6. What technical evaluation criteria might industry consider meaningful for a procurement for these services?
7. Describe any other information not previously included in your organization's response to this RFI that would be important for the USCB to consider in determining a strategy, requirements, risks for a communication acquisition, and post-award implementation of the contract.

B. Small Businesses Utilization

8. In your experience working with or as a small business, could this procurement be set aside for small business in its entirety? If yes, what could be potential risks of this approach? If no, what challenges do you see precluding a small business from leading such an effort?
9. If only a portion of the work is set aside for small businesses, which services (from those defined in the appendix located in Attachment 1) could those be?
10. (Question for large businesses only) – What program(s) do you have in place for mentoring and training small businesses? How do you measure success at the end of the program for the mentor and for the protégé?
11. (Question for small businesses only) – If your company has participated in mentor-protégé program(s) led by large companies under prime / subcontractor arrangement, how did participation in the program help your company grow?

C. Contract Management

12. Assuming a single award contract structure (i.e. prime and subcontractors model) – what requirements and performance metrics should the government establish to ensure the successful integration and full participation of all partners within the team?

13. Assuming a multiple award contract structure (i.e. multiple awardees) - what best practices should the government employ to ensure the successful integration of efforts across all awardees for coordinated communications and digital services and to prevent a silos-approach? Should this be a government function or should a separate contractor provide integration services?
14. What platforms or systems does your company provide to centralize communications among team members and with the client?
15. What are your recommendations for the government to maximize labor efficiencies (categories, functions, levels) and optimize use of resources in an integrated communications shop?
16. What are your recommendations for the government to increase flexibility to adopt and adapt innovative solutions, automation, virtualization, and the use digital technologies in communications operations, that would help minimize costs while ensuring brand integrity and customer satisfaction? What considerations should be included in a contract vehicle to allow such flexibility?

D. Industry Advancements & Technical Operations

17. How is the communications landscape (both traditional and digital) evolving and how is your organization adapting to industry innovations and latest trends? Which trends and communications efforts have proven most effective to promote brands, vision and products across most audiences?
18. What emerging communications and digital services is your organization focusing on for the next 4-6 years? Why?
19. Where do you see social media channels and social media monitoring technologies heading in the upcoming years?
20. How do you see public and media relations evolving in view of social media and artificial intelligence technologies?
21. How do you see CRM, marketing and personalization systems evolving in the upcoming 4-6 years? Why?
22. Are there any technical aspects of communications and digital services that are not already captured in the attached appendix that should be considered by the government as part of this initiative?
23. What technology do you leverage for media relations?
24. What are the best practices in newsrooms and how are they adapting this new era or technology, SM and quick access to information?
25. What best practices do you employ for crisis management?

E. Similar Experience

The USCB is requesting your organization's similar experience including subcontractor relationships and especially experience in managing an enterprise level Communications and Digital Services as described in Section IV and Attachment I.

26. Describe your organization’s relevant Federal Government experience (no more than three (3) similar engagements) of similar size, scope, scale, and complexity to the USCB’s requirement described in Section IV and Attachment I.
- a. Scope, size and complexity of the effort (integrated communications campaigns, digital services support, establishing data-driven customer experience, research and analytics, partnership programs, outreach and promotions, public relations and social media outreach, etc.) and point of contact at the Federal agency;
 - b. Include all relevant contract details (e.g., contract vehicle, contract dollar value, period of performance, contract type, contract number, performance objectives/measures);
 - c. Did your organization complete the project alone or with other teaming partners (either as a prime or a subcontractor)? Clearly describe your organization’s role in the project to include identifying your position as the prime contract holder or a subcontractor. If the prime, indicate whether large or small businesses or both were part of your team. Describe the type of teaming/subcontracting arrangement your organization entered.

SECTION C: SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Responses shall be submitted in a single document, using 8.5” x 11” paper, 12-pitch font size in Times New Roman, and single-spaced. Clearly specify and separate responses as Section A and Section B. Please limit responses to Section A to three (3) pages and to Section B to 22 pages, totaling twenty-five (25) pages, cover page not included. If more than 22 pages are submitted in response to Section B, the additional pages will not be considered and will be discarded upon receipt. In addition, no information beyond responses to Sections A and B shall be submitted.

Questions regarding this announcement shall be submitted in writing by e-mail to the Contracting Officer and Contract Specialist listed below. Verbal questions will NOT be accepted. The Contracting Officer will answer questions via the email provided; accordingly, questions shall NOT contain proprietary or classified information. Questions are due no later ~~Friday~~**Tuesday**, July 7, 2020 at 5:00 PM EST. The Government does not guarantee that questions received after July 7, 2020 at 5:00 PM EST will be answered.

Responses are due no later than 2:00 PM (Eastern Standard Time) **on July 24, 2020** and shall be submitted via email, as an attachment (Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat formats only), to:

- Carrie Parker at Carrie.M.Parker@census.gov, Contracting Officer
- Amanda Nicole White at Amanda.N.White@census.gov, Contract Specialist

The subject line shall read, “[Name of Company] - RFI - Strategic Communications and Digital Services.”

The USCB representatives may or may not choose to meet with potential offerors. Such discussions would be for Market Research purposes only and intended to get further clarification of potential capabilities to meet the requirements.

Proprietary information and trade secrets, if any, **MUST BE CLEARLY MARKED** on all materials. All information received that is marked Proprietary will be handled accordingly. Please be advised that all submissions become Government property and will not be returned. All government and contractor personnel reviewing RFI responses will have signed non-disclosure agreements and understand their responsibility for proper use and protection from unauthorized disclosure of proprietary information as described 41 USC 423. The Government shall not be held liable for any damages incurred if proprietary information is not properly identified.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) ONLY to identify sources that can provide Strategic Communications and Digital Services to the USCB. The information provided in the RFI is subject to change and is not binding on the Government. The U.S. Government has not made a commitment to procure any of the items discussed, and release of this RFI should not be construed as such a commitment or as authorization to incur cost for which reimbursement would be required or sought. All submissions become Government property and will not be returned.