



REQUESTS FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

*Rural Matters Magazine and
Related Print Publications*

ISSUED: August 12, 2021

**PROPOSALS DUE:
September 15, 2021**

SUBMIT TO:

Malini Sekhar

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1. Summary, Purpose & Goals

[The Rural Community Assistance Partnership \(RCAP\)](#) is seeking proposals for the publication of its ***Rural Matters*** magazine with the opportunity for engagement on other one-off RCAP publications. RCAP is looking for a firm to design the publication and related print materials, including but not limited to: designing layout, light copyediting, providing photographs and illustrations when needed, and publishing and distributing the finished print products. ***Rural Matters*** is the official magazine of the RCAP national network, provided to over 11,000 subscribers across the country.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from qualified, U.S.-based organizations and select the firm whose response and capacity best aligns with our needs and requirements. Our goals for launching this RFP are to:

1. Update the look and feel of the ***Rural Matters*** magazine to reflect our new branding efforts that will be rolled out in the coming months.
2. Explore and investigate options for print publication as outlined below with a medium-term goal of moving to more digital magazine formats.
3. Making sure we are doing our due-diligence around exploring the most resource-efficient printing and distribution options in light of changing industry standards and practices

2. Background

As a national nonprofit network, RCAP works to improve the quality of life in rural America starting at the tap. Through RCAP's regional partners, more than 300 technical assistance providers (TAPs) support communities in building their own capacity through technical assistance and training focused on access to safe drinking water, sanitary wastewater, solid waste, and economic development. RCAP works across every state, the U.S. territories, and

tribal lands. RCAP also brings awareness to issues facing tens of thousands of small, rural, and tribal communities by advocating for policies that will positively affect rural lives, providing data and research on important topics, and shining a light on stories and innovations that highlight the experiences and resourcefulness of rural America.

With over 11,000 subscribers, Rural Matters informs readers about the issues rural communities across America are facing and some of the best ways to tackle them. The magazine also features success stories from communities who have overcome challenges, provides insight into new ways of thinking and tackling rural issues, and shares updates from around the country. Rural Matters is provided to communities and utilities where RCAP is actively engaged and all those interested in learning more about rural America. The majority of readers are utility managers, operators, board members, and community members, along with state and federal regulators and development staff.

The magazine is published quarterly in both print and digital formats. Currently *Rural Matters* is available on [our website in pdf form](#) and it is also printed and distributed by the printer to subscribers across the country.

Though we are open to new and more efficient processes, our current process involves: submission of content and advertisements, an initial art review to discuss cover images for the upcoming issue, two rounds of drafts sent to us for review with a two-day turnaround period, and then one final review prior to finalizing and printing.

RCAP is interested in investigating a variety of cost-efficient options for *Rural Matters* moving forward, including:

- A quarterly print magazine also available in PDF format (as currently operating);
- A quarterly print magazine with a better digital format; or
- A biannual print magazine that is longer and richer in content.

3. Proposed Timeline

This Request for Proposal describes the requirements for an open and competitive process. Proposals will be accepted until September 15, 2021. Any proposals received after this date and time will not be considered. The selection will be made, and notification given no later than DATE.

4. Desired Components for Rural Matters Magazine

The following are existing components of Rural Matters. We are open to creative, cost-effective suggestions that would improve look and feel, usability, visual storytelling elements.

- Page count: No less than 10 pages but an average page count of between 24-28 pages with 2-page cover wrap Quantity: Minimum of 11,000 copies
- Design: The look and feel are designed by the publisher in consultation with RCAP and matching the look/feel of the new RCAP brand.
- Size: 8.5" x 11" (Open to recommendations)
- Web placement: Currently pdf is linked and shared here - <https://www.rcap.org/rural-matters/> but we welcome suggestions for a better digital experience that is also easy for us to maintain.
- Related publications materials might include: a mini-Rural Matters issue, a postcard survey/poll insert around moving to digital, etc.
- Spring 2021 example:
https://www.rcap.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RCAP_Spring21_Digital.pdf

5. Publications Timeline

Currently, *Rural Matters* is published quarterly in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. We anticipate a similar quarterly publishing schedule. If RCAP chooses to publish only semiannually, we need to decide which two months may be best. The accepted publisher

will begin work with RCAP on designing the new iteration of *Rural Matters* in 2021/2022, with the first publication expected for the Winter issue (~January 2022)

6. Services Desired from Publisher

- Design Rural Matters magazine and possible related materials articulated above in consultation with RCAP
- Management, coordination and publication of *Rural Matters* in print and digital formats
- Coordination of including print-ready photography and/or artwork (as needed) for the content submitted by RCAP (note: RCAP will share the photos it has in support of the publication).
- Inclusion and placement of advertisements into publication as identified.
- Light copyediting support if needed.
- Digital/online version of the publication accessible by RCAP members
- Mailing of publication to *Rural Matters* magazine subscribers so the publication arrives in mailboxes no later than 7 days after finalizing the issue
- The potential to provide mobile app or tablet versions of the publication.
- Ability to make digital publication accessible from a 508 compliance perspective (E.g. proper headings and formatting in a pdf version, etc.)

7. Services to be Provided by RCAP

- Content for Rural Matters magazine.
- Input and feedback on design of *Rural Matters* magazine based on RCAP branding specifications.
- Input and feedback on artwork and photography included in publications.
- Subscriber information for mailing of completed publications.

- RCAP will hold copyright for the publications and will handle the registration of copyright and sharing of copyright acknowledgements and information with all authors and interviewees of the magazine and additional print publications.

8. Proposal Submissions

Please include the following information for our consideration in your proposal submission:

Contact Information and Publisher Background:

1. Main contact for the Publisher submitting, including address and contact information.
Proposals will be accepted from U.S.-based companies only. We highly encourage small woman and minority-owned businesses to submit!
2. A detailed description of your organization's experience in producing such publications as described above, including working with other issue-focused non-profit organizations.
3. A detailed, itemized list of any/all publication elements that your organization offers (including additional technological enhancements/features such as an app or Kindle version) that would support the publication RCAP is looking to produce (see #2 above).

For Rural Matters specifically:

4. A projected timeline from content generation to publication and relevant touchpoints with Rural Matters per printing.
5. Cost per printed copy:
 - a. For a quarterly publication
 - b. For a semiannual publication
6. Estimated mailing costs for 11,000 copies of 10 page minimum plus cover publication.
7. Recommendations around format, sizing and/or transition plan to digital based on previous issue samples.

OPTIONAL – for additional publications and materials

8. Provide information on additional printing capabilities such as guidebooks, brochures, etc., available through your organization. This description should include examples of guidebooks and brochures currently produced, and approximate additional costs.

References, Samples, Working Partners, and Financial Information

9. The names and contact information for references from at least two (2) organizations for which you have produced similar publications.
10. A sample of magazines produced.
11. Acknowledgement of your intention to subcontract any of the responsibilities. If so, provide the services provided by the subcontractor and the name(s) of the subcontractor(s) you are considering in this proposal.

9. Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Delivery

Understanding of the project, vendor experience, creativity, and cost will all be considered in awarding this contract. RCAP reserves the right to call those who submit proposals to seek additional information and may follow up with questions and meetings with publishers who best meet the evaluation criteria to determine the most appropriate publishing partner.

Proposals can be delivered electronically to Malini Sekhar at msekhar@rcap.org. Questions can be addressed to Malini at the e-mail above.

Proposals are due on September 15, 2021.

10. Conflict of Interest

The Bidder must disclose, as an exhibit to the proposal, any possible conflicts of interest that may result from the award of the Contract or the services provided under the Contract. Except as

otherwise disclosed in the proposal, the Bidder affirms that to the best of its knowledge there exists no actual or potential conflict between the Bidder, the Bidder's family's business or financial interests ("Interests") and the services provided under the Contract. In the event of any change in either Interests or the services provided under the Contract, the Bidder will inform RCAP regarding possible conflicts of interest, which may arise as a result of such change and agrees that all conflicts shall be resolved to the RCAP's satisfaction or the Bidder may be disqualified from consideration under this RFP. As used in this Section, "conflict of interest" shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Giving or offering a gratuity, kickback, money, gift, or anything of value to a RCAP official, officer, or employee with the intent of receiving a contract from RCAP or favorable treatment under a contract.
2. Having or acquiring at any point during the RFP process or during the term of the Contract, any contractual, financial, business or other interest, direct or indirect, that would conflict in any manner or degree with Bidder's performance of its duties and responsibilities to RCAP under the Contract or otherwise create the appearance of impropriety with respect to the award or performance of the Contract; or [L]
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3. Currently in possession of or accepting during the RFP process or the term of the Contract anything of value based on an understanding that the actions of the Bidder or its affiliates or Interests on behalf of RCAP will be influenced.