



615 N. Alabama St., Ste. 410, Indianapolis, IN 46204

tel 317 – 634 – 4957 fax 317 – 634 – 3221

web [www.smartpartnersalliance.org](http://www.smartpartnersalliance.org)

**Request for Proposal**  
**Rebranding and Development of an Integrated  
Marketing Program for the Indiana State Use Program**

**1. Overview**

Smart Partners Alliance requests proposals from qualified agencies to assist in the rebranding and development of an integrated marketing program for the Indiana State Use Program and its affiliated service and production companies. The plan should assess and make recommendations on how to improve visibility, decrease “brand confusion” among related companies, contain a supporting graphics package, identify ways to reach target markets, identify appropriate vehicles for communication, and develop an implementation strategy. A project budget, timeline, and action items should be clearly identified. The plan should focus on establishing a clear identity for the State Use Program for use both globally by Smart Partners Alliance and individually by affiliated companies.

**2. General Instructions**

- a. **Issuing Office.** This request for Proposals (RFP) is issued by the Smart Partners Alliance, on behalf of the Indiana State Use Program.
- b. **Questions.** All questions may be directed to:  
Christiaan Campbell at (317) 634-4957 or via e-mail at [Christiaan@inarf.org](mailto:Christiaan@inarf.org)
- c. **Response Date.** One original, plus five (5) paper copies and one (1) electronic version (Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format) must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked “State Use Marketing Proposal” to the Smart Partners Alliance office, 615 North Alabama Street, Suite 410, Indianapolis, IN 46204, on or before 5:00 p.m. (EDT) of Friday, September 12, 2014. All proposals will be held, unopened until the deadline. The proposals will then be forwarded to the Board of Directors. The Board will review the proposals and determine whether interviews will be required. If the Board deems that interviews are necessary, they will be scheduled soon after the initial review.
- d. **Content.** To be considered, agencies must submit a complete response to this RFP in the form requested. Submittals that do not respond to items requested in this RFP or indicate exceptions to such items may be rejected.
- e. **Right of Refusal.** Smart Partners Alliance reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or any parts thereof, or to waive any informality or defect in any bid if it is in the best interest of INARF and its members.

- f. **Liability of Costs.** Respondents are responsible for their own expense in preparing, delivering or presenting a proposal, and for subsequent negotiations with Smart Partners Alliance, if any.

### **3. About Smart Partners Alliance and the Indiana State Use Program**

#### **a. Smart Partners Alliance**

Established in 1988, Smart Partners Alliance is the 501(c)3 non-profit organization designated as the Central Coordinating Agency (CCA) by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration to administer the Indiana State Use Program. While its broader mission is to work to expand the range and quality of life-enhancing opportunities available to individuals with disabilities, the primary function of the organization continues to be the State Use Program and the jobs for individuals with disabilities that it maintains.

As the CCA, Smart Partners Alliance is the liaison between government purchasers and companies that employ individuals with disabilities to provide products and services for sale to the public sector. It is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the program, developing new products, monitoring quality, and researching fair market pricing. Finally, with its affiliated companies, Smart Partners Alliance is responsible for increasing sales and opening new markets for the goods and services offered by individuals with disabilities.

Although Smart Partners Alliance is a stand-alone company, it is staffed through a management agreement with its sister company, the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (INARF), the principal trade association in Indiana representing providers of services to individuals with disabilities. There is a single CEO in place for both companies, although she reports to two separate boards of directors.

#### **b. Indiana State Use Program**

The Indiana State Use Program was established in 1976 as a means to provide sustainable, fulfilling employment to individuals with disabilities. By partnering with disability-based employers around the state, the program provides quality goods and services to state and local governments at reasonable prices. Every purchase provides the opportunity for employment for individuals with disabilities.

The program is made possible by two Indiana Laws. The first, IC 16-32-2, establishes the State Use Committee that is responsible for oversight of the program and approval of new vendors, products, and pricing. As the CCA, Smart Partners Alliance staff carry out the daily functions of the program and report to the committee. The second law, IC 5-22-13, outlines the provisions of Indiana State Use. Indiana State Agencies, through the State Use Law, are required to purchase products and services through the program, as long as specifications and fair market pricing requirements are met. State, County, and City government entities may establish a contract directly, without going through the normal competitive bidding process.

There are currently over 35 disability-based companies that are designated as Qualified Work Centers. These companies employ an average of 346 individuals with disabilities each month, and have enjoyed sales of over \$10 million dollars in the last fiscal year. Contracts with the state of Indiana range from disposable examination gloves to custodial services for Indiana rest areas. State Use products and services have a reputation for quality, although there are some challenges in pricing due to the higher cost of employing individuals that may not be as productive as individuals without disabilities.

Additional information on Smart Partners Alliance, the State Use Program, and INARF can be found by visiting [www.smartpartnersalliance.org](http://www.smartpartnersalliance.org) and [www.inarf.org](http://www.inarf.org).

#### **c. Current Issues of Note**

1. The term, "State Use," is not a required program title, but rather a term that came into use in the 1970's to describe the preferential purchasing program. As such, it has no meaning in current times, and says nothing about what the program is or what the program does. There is no recognition of the name outside of those companies and individuals directly connected to it.
2. A primary objective of the program is to expand beyond state government into local (county and city) governments. The term "State" itself is a deterrent to these markets, as it is sometimes misinterpreted as a portion of state government dictating local purchasing policy.
3. The same staff represent the State Use Program, Smart Partners Alliance, and INARF. This causes brand confusion among stakeholders and customers. As INARF is an established brand, with strong recognition, all activities tend to be identified as INARF activities. Smart Partners Alliance, and more importantly, the State Use Program must be recognizable as a distinct brand, and identified with quality, customer service, and a powerful mission.
4. Although the State Use Law mandates preferential purchasing from Qualified Work Centers, the law is loosely interpreted and not always followed by government procurement staff. While efforts will continue to increase compliance, the brand itself must be desirable for government purchasers. Excellent quality, exceptional customer service, and ease of contracting would ideally be associated with the brand.

#### **4. Project Objectives**

This project has the goal of rebranding the State Use Program as an entity, separate from INARF and Smart Partners Alliance, that projects an image of quality and more clearly represents the purpose and identity of the program. The brand, and associated marketing program must be impactful globally (representing the program itself) and locally (unifying disability-based companies and

products). Smart Partners Alliance expects that the development and implementation of the marketing program will:

- a. **Engage Critical Stakeholders.** The selected agency will create and facilitate a process for engaging all relevant groups/target markets/stakeholders in the brand development process. A discussion of tools and methods to be used should be included. Relevant groups include, but are not limited to:
  1. **Smart Partners Alliance Staff and consultants**
  2. **State Use Committee**
  3. **Qualified Work Centers (all levels of staff)**
  4. **Individuals with disabilities employed at Qualified Work Centers**
  5. **State Government customers**
  6. **Potential local government customers**
  7. **Legislators**
  8. **Various State Agencies**
  9. **Advocacy Partners**
- b. **Develop a new brand for the State Use Program-** The selected agency will develop a brand that will clearly illustrate the identity of the program, does *not* contain a reference to "State," and promotes the values of quality and customer service.
- c. **Raise awareness of the program and increase penetration into state and local government agencies-** After developing the brand, the agency will make recommendations on how to (re) introduce the program, engage customers, and raise awareness within target markets.
- d. **Develop a supporting graphics package**
- e. **Identify vehicles for communication to work centers, customers, and the community**
- f. **Implementation strategies** – Recommend strategy options for implementation of the plan that permits flexibility for the targeted audience and that insures the integrity of the campaign. Additionally, the implementation strategy should include consideration/proposals for an ongoing campaign. This includes a commitment to provide training for Smart Partners Staff, State Use Committee Members, and Qualified Work Center staff on the brand and marketing plan, including an overview of the State Use campaign, how to implement the plan, and how the brand can be used individually and collectively to further the goals of the program.

## 5. Submissions

All proposals must be received in their entirety at or before **5:00 pm on Friday, September 12, 2014**. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their proposal, however submitted, is received on time and at the location specified. At a minimum each respondent shall submit the following information:

- a. **Company Background Information**, including:
  1. Years in business,
  2. Company history
  3. Company structure; number of employees
  4. Composition of project team, including names and expertise
  5. The approximate percentage of agency resources that will be put toward the project.
  6. Names of businesses that you may contract for this project and services offered by each business
  7. Additional in-house services firm offers beyond the scope of this project
  8. References
  9. Contact information
  10. Proposal must be signed by an authorized official for the submitting agency
  
- b. **Related Experience**, including:
  1. Professional services similar to those requested by the RFP
  2. Non-Profit Organizations
  3. Marketing to governmental entities
  4. Disability community
  5. Multiple, related companies
  
- c. **Work Plan**. Describe the technical approach recommended to accomplish the required work. Describe the makeup of the team, and the time that Smart Partners Alliance staff will need to dedicate to the project. Include tasks, methodologies, and a description of the client/stakeholder involvement in the process.
  
- d. **Timeline**. Provide a project schedule with key meetings and deliverables noted. Smart Partners Alliance desires the selected agency to begin immediately following the award of the contract, to build on the momentum that has been created to date.
  
- e. **Fees**. Provide a fixed fee quotation for the services outlined in the work plan. Price may not be a determining factor in the award. Proposed fees should include hourly rates, a not-to-exceed amount, and costs for reimbursable expenses. If any additional services are proposed, they should be clearly identified. Please include a separate rate sheet that would be used for contracting additional services or meetings.
  
- f. **Deliverables**. Provide a detailed list of work products that will be developed as a result of the rebranding and integrated marketing program. Both hard and electronic versions of the final integrated marketing program should be provided to Smart Partners Alliance.

## 6. Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee. Each proposal will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following:

- Thoroughness and clarity of proposal
- Agency experience with similar work

- Personnel experience with this proposed project
- Agency's reputation for quality, integrity, meeting budget, meeting schedule
- Responsiveness to client
- Proposed budget and timeline
- Understanding of the issues impacting the State Use Program

The most qualified agencies may be short-listed for interviews to be held in Indianapolis soon after the proposal deadline. The purpose of the interviews is to compare the agencies' different approaches to the development of the plan, as well as their understanding of the project. It is essential that the agency's personnel to be assigned to the work, as well as key representatives, be present at the interview.

The top ranked agency shall be selected based on the merits of the proposal and/or interview. The final selection will be made by the Smart Partners Alliance Board of Directors. The selected agency and Smart Partners Alliance representatives will negotiate a contract, subject to approval by the Board of Directors. The dates shown in this Evaluation section, in the Schedules section below and throughout this RFP are subject to change by Smart Partners Alliance at its sole discretion.

## **7. Schedules**

**All dates are 2014:**

- **Request for Proposals released: August 11**
- **Proposals Due: September 12**
- **Proposals reviewed by SPA Board: September 19**
- **Selected Agency interviews to SPA Board: September 29**
- **Contract awarded: September 29 or as may be determined by the SPA Board of Directors**
- **Project start date: October 1**