



CITY OF MAPLEWOOD, MISSOURI

Request for Proposals (RFP) Bond Referendum Communications Consultant Services

RFP Released: Wednesday, July 30, 2025, at 9 am

Proposals Due: Wednesday, August 20, 2025, at 4:30 pm

Submission Contact: Amber Withycombe, City Manager

SECTION 1. PURPOSE AND INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The City of Maplewood is seeking qualified communications consultants to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) for bond referendum communications services. The City anticipates entering into negotiations for a professional services agreement with the responding consultant selected as best suited to effectively provide these services to the City.

Proposals shall be received electronically, by mail, or in person by the City Manager until 4:30 pm on Wednesday, August 20.

The City of Maplewood anticipates completing the selection and award process by September 9.

Community Background

Incorporated in 1908, the City of Maplewood is a vibrant inner-ring suburb of St. Louis with approximately 8,200 residents, located in central St. Louis County. Strategically positioned between the City of St. Louis and neighboring communities of Webster Groves, Brentwood, and Richmond Heights, Maplewood offers convenient access to both urban amenities and regional destinations via Interstates 40 and 44.

Maplewood has experienced significant revitalization over the past two decades, particularly in its Special Business District, which encompasses the Historic Downtown and key commercial corridors. The community is known for its walkable neighborhoods, independent businesses, diverse culinary scene, and strong civic engagement. The city's residential areas feature an eclectic architectural mix ranging from historic Victorian and Arts & Crafts homes to modern developments, creating a distinctive community character.

As a Charter City operating under Missouri statutes, Maplewood is governed by a Mayor and six-member City Council representing three wards. The City provides comprehensive municipal services including police, fire, public works, parks and recreation, and municipal court services. Residents are served by the award-winning Maplewood Richmond Heights School District.

Our Commitment to Community

The City of Maplewood is committed to being a safe, inclusive, innovative, and forward-thinking community that values and cares for its residents. We strive to be an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable community that embraces transparency, inclusivity, and excellence in service delivery and governance.

Our mission is to promote a high quality of life for residents by providing equitable and accessible services that are fiscally responsible, collaborative, customer-focused, and continuously improving. This commitment to transparency and community engagement guides our approach to important civic decisions, including infrastructure investments that ensure the City can effectively serve residents for decades to come.

Why This Bond Referendum Matters

Maplewood residents have consistently demonstrated strong civic participation and community engagement. The City values this tradition of informed citizenship and seeks to ensure voters have comprehensive, factual information about municipal decisions that affect their community's future. This bond referendum represents a critical investment in public safety infrastructure and municipal operations that will serve the community for the next generation.

Current Facility Background

The City's current municipal facility was built in 1962 and underwent renovations in 2009 at a cost of approximately \$1.7 million. The 2009 renovation included energy-efficient upgrades, conversion of the former Maplewood Library space into City Council Chambers, additional Police Department offices, ADA improvements with elevator installation, complete rewiring of data communications, new floor coverings, and painting throughout.

Despite these improvements, the facility continues to face significant operational challenges. According to a recent Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) preliminary accreditation report from April 2025: "Currently, the Maplewood Police Department consists of thirty-two (32) sworn police officers. The police facility is contained within the City Hall building which has very limited space for the amount of officers. Officers operate in a multi-purpose room with extremely minimal space. The police department currently processes its prisoners at a neighboring police department's facility... there needs to be major improvements for police operations to be effective and efficient."

A comprehensive feasibility study completed in April 2025 by Navigate Building Solutions identified critical infrastructure needs totaling approximately \$11 million for renovations and expansion to address:

- Police Department space deficiencies and CALEA accreditation requirements
- ADA accessibility improvements
- Decades of deferred maintenance
- Modernization of City Hall operations and layout
- Enhanced public safety infrastructure including prisoner processing capabilities

SECTION 2. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The City of Maplewood is seeking an experienced and strategic communications consultant or firm to provide comprehensive support for a proposed \$11 million general obligation bond referendum planned for the April 2026 ballot. This bond will fund critical renovations and expansion of the City

Hall facility to address police department space needs, CALEA compliance requirements, ADA accessibility improvements, and infrastructure modernization.

This engagement is for information-only communication purposes to educate and inform voters about the necessity of these capital improvements for public safety, operational efficiency, and community accessibility. The selected consultant will work collaboratively with City staff to develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy that builds community understanding and engagement around this important civic investment.

The City has allocated resources for professional communications consulting services for this project. Proposals should demonstrate how services can be effectively delivered while achieving the project's communication objectives.

Bond Issue Details:

- \$11 million general obligation bond
- April 2026 ballot placement
- Bond will require an increase to the City's debt service tax levy to fund annual debt service payments
- Funding for City Hall renovation and police facility expansion
- Address CALEA accreditation requirements
- Improve ADA accessibility
- Modernize aging infrastructure

Communication Objectives:

- Educate residents about current facility limitations and public safety needs
- Inform voters about the scope and necessity of proposed improvements
- Provide clear, transparent information about the tax impact and debt service requirements
- Build community understanding of long-term operational benefits
- Ensure transparent, fact-based communication about project costs and timeline
- Foster civic engagement and informed voter participation

SECTION 3. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected consultant will provide focused bond referendum communication services including:

1. Strategic Planning and Message Development

- Conduct initial stakeholder consultation to understand community concerns
- Develop core messaging framework emphasizing public safety necessity and community benefits
- Create fact-based content explaining current facility limitations and proposed solutions
- Develop key talking points addressing fiscal responsibility and long-term value
- Create taglines and consistent messaging for all communications

2. Communication Strategy and Materials

- Design multi-channel communication plan utilizing cost-effective digital and print approaches
- Draft content and create graphics for City staff to post, share, print, and mail
- Develop complete social media content package including post copy, graphics, and scheduling recommendations for existing City platforms

- Create website content including complete copy and visual elements ready for upload
- Design and provide print-ready files for one informational direct mail piece, including copywriting, layout, and graphics
- Develop complete presentation materials (slides, talking points, handouts) for community meetings and public forums
- Provide materials in final, ready-to-use format

3. Community Engagement Support

- Provide strategic guidance for community information sessions
- Create FAQ document addressing anticipated voter questions
- Develop strategies for reaching diverse community demographics within budget constraints
- Provide consultation on timing and messaging for public engagement activities

4. Timeline and Task Management

- Develop project timeline with specific milestones and deadlines aligned with April 2026 ballot placement
- Create comprehensive task assignment matrix clearly delineating consultant responsibilities vs. City staff responsibilities
- Establish regular check-in schedule and communication protocols
- Provide project management support to ensure timeline adherence
- Deliver materials with sufficient lead time for City staff review and approval before implementation

5. Implementation Support

- Assist with execution of communication plan across selected channels
- Provide ongoing consultation and strategic guidance throughout campaign period
- Monitor public response and recommend message adjustments as needed
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements for municipal communications

6. Evaluation and Reporting

- Provide progress reports on communication activities
- Track engagement metrics where available
- Conduct brief post-campaign analysis and recommendations

Note: The consultant will be responsible for creating content, graphics, and materials in ready-to-implement format. City staff will handle posting, sharing, printing, and mailing of consultant-provided materials. The consultant should deliver turnkey solutions that require minimal City staff time for implementation.

SECTION 4. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Interested consultants must include the following information in their proposal:

1. Cover Letter

- The response should contain a cover letter signed by a person authorized to commit to the offer and perform the work included in the proposal.

2. Company Information

- Company name, address, phone, and email address

- Brief description of the company and relevant experience
- Name and title of primary contact person
- Key personnel who will work on this project

3. Relevant Experience and Qualifications

- Summary of experience providing bond communication services
- Examples of successful campaigns within similar budget constraints
- Experience with Missouri municipal election requirements
- Understanding of public safety facility needs

4. Project Understanding and Approach

- Description of understanding of Maplewood’s needs and budget constraints
- Proposed communication strategy that maximizes impact within a limited budget
- Implementation timeline showing delivery dates for materials and task assignments between consultant and City staff
- Approach to cost-effective community engagement and voter education

5. References

- Contact information for three (3) recent clients

6. Fee Proposal

- Detailed fee proposal for services
- Breakdown of costs by service category

7. Sample Work Products

- Examples of communication materials from previous campaigns
- Sample messaging frameworks developed for similar projects

SECTION 5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated success with bond referendum communications
- Realistic strategy that maximizes impact within budget limitations
- Competitive pricing and clear value proposition for services offered
- Experience and expertise of proposed team members
- Thoroughness, clarity, and professionalism of submission
- Award will be made to the proposer whose submission is determined to be the most advantageous to the City based on the evaluation factors described above

SECTION 6. TIMELINE

Request for Proposal Issued	Wednesday, July 30, 9 am
Deadline for Vendor Questions	Wednesday, August 13, 4:30 pm
Proposal Submission Deadline	Wednesday, August 20, 4:30 pm
Proposal Evaluation Period	August 21 - 22
Interviews (if conducted)	August 25 – September 2
Contract Award	September 9
Project Commencement	September 10

SECTION 7. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submission Details

- Deadline: Wednesday, August 20 at 4:30 pm
- Delivery: Electronically, by mail, or in person to:
Amber Withycombe
City Manager
City of Maplewood
7601 Manchester Road
Maplewood, MO 63143
awithycombe@maplewoodmo.gov
- Format: Electronic submission preferred; hard copies accepted
- Page Limit: 15 pages maximum (excluding cover letter and appendices)

Contact for Questions

Questions should be received by Wednesday, August 13 at 4:30 pm and can be directed to the City Manager at awithycombe@maplewoodmo.gov.

SECTION 8. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Method of Selection

This solicitation is a request for proposals (RFP). Proposals received via the competitive process will be reviewed by a committee of senior staff. Interviews may be requested with one or more responding consultants; however, the City may choose to proceed without interviewing. The City anticipates negotiating a professional services agreement with the selected respondent.

Legal and Compliance Requirements

- All services must comply with Missouri election laws and municipal communication regulations
- Work product and communications must adhere to legal requirements for municipal bond information campaigns
- The City follows Missouri Sunshine Law (Section 610), and all submitted materials may be subject to public disclosure

Reservation of Rights

The City of Maplewood reserves the right to:

- Accept any proposal or reject all proposals
- Waive any requirement or condition of the RFP upon finding it is in the public's best interest
- Waive any irregularities in the process
- Extend the time for submissions
- Request clarification or additional information from any proposer

Additional Terms

- Any submissions received after the specified date and time will be rejected and returned unopened
- Submissions may not be modified after the submission deadline
- The City shall not be responsible for any costs incurred in the preparation or presentation of submissions

- All materials submitted shall become the property of the City and shall be subject to laws and regulations relating to disclosure of public information
- No guarantee of privacy or confidentiality is offered or implied

Contract Terms

- The selected consultant will be required to enter into a written agreement with the City
 - Contract is subject to City Council approval
 - Performance period will extend from contract execution through April 2026 election completion
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DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS: Wednesday, August 20 at 4:30 pm

No public opening is scheduled for this item. City Staff shall be solely responsible for selecting the time, date, and venue to open submittals for review, except the opening of any submittal shall not occur until the submittal deadline is passed.

For questions regarding this RFP, please contact:

Amber Withycombe
City Manager
City of Maplewood
(314) 646-3603
awithycombe@maplewoodmo.gov

The City of Maplewood reserves the right to reject any or all proposals submitted.

ADDENDUM, 8/14/2025: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**Q1: Do resumes and work samples count toward the 15-page limit?**

A1: Resumes count toward the 15-page limit. Work samples do not count toward the page limit. Links to work samples and online portfolios are acceptable and encouraged.

Q2: What is the target budget for this project?

A2: The target budget is \$20,000 - \$25,000. Council initially established a more modest allocation, but staff recognizes that may not be feasible for achieving the comprehensive scope outlined in the RFP. We're interested in learning from prospective vendors how they would approach the project within this range and what creative solutions they might propose to maximize impact.

Q3: Do you anticipate wanting paid media (digital, social or traditional)?

A3: We have not allocated separate funds for media buys beyond the direct mail piece included in the scope. However, we're open to proposals that demonstrate how paid digital or social media could be integrated cost-effectively within the overall budget. We recognize that traditional earned media coverage and organic social media engagement can be unpredictable for municipal issues. Council is open to exploring community engagement strategies that could generate broader support if they fit within the overall approach.