

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)
Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC)
Statewide Digital Platform - Development Project

1. Introduction

The Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) is searching for qualified firms to design, develop, and deploy a fully customized online Statewide Digital Platform that will transform how federal, state, and local elected officials seek valuable insight into the resources and support provided by the 12 Regional Councils across the State of Alabama. The online platform will function as a centralized, statewide entry point that helps users discover funding opportunities, technical assistance, mentorship, training programs, events, and local and regional support networks. It will also highlight the unique value and services offered by each of Alabama's 12 Regional Councils.

The AARC is seeking a qualified vendor with experience in statewide or regional online platforms, resource directories, UX/UI design, and ADA-compliant development. This project will enhance community and economic development capacity across Alabama and give end-users a clear, reliable path to the resources they seek.

This RFQ outlines the required scope, deliverables, technical needs, and evaluation criteria.

2. Background

The Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) represents Alabama's 12 Councils of Government (COGs), each serving a distinct geographic region covering all 67 counties across the state. These councils provide critical services including:

- Economic & community development
- Grant writing & administration
- Workforce development
- Regional transportation planning
- Aging & disability services
- Technical assistance to local governments
- Early childhood education

AARC aims to strengthen its statewide value by developing a modern, mobile-responsive, user-friendly online platform that helps individuals and organizations navigate Alabama's complex landscape of opportunities and support services. This

online platform will be designed specifically for Alabama and structured to emphasize the value of Alabama's 12 regional councils.

3. Project Objectives

The final online platform shall:

A. Centralize statewide resources with a searchable database, filtered by geographic region and/or proximity, of regional services that highlights funding opportunities, technical assistance, mentorship, training programs, events, and local and regional support networks.

B. Showcase Alabama's 12 Regional Councils.

Each region will have a dedicated landing page that includes, at a minimum:

- Key contacts for each Region, including, but not limited to Regional Council staff, economic developers, human service organizations, and elected officials.
- Local opportunities for community and economic growth.
- Local events and development programs.
- Key documents including, but not limited to, each Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), community comprehensive development plans, and resource documents connected to the Area Agencies on Aging, Transit Agencies, and Early Childhood Education.

C. Provide a user-friendly experience.

D. Ensure administrative self-sufficiency.

4. Scope of Work

4.1 Online Platform Design Requirements

- Custom interface aligned with AARC branding
- Mobile-first design
- Meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) ADA accessibility
- Clean UX optimized for federal, state, and local elected officials, and other community leaders such as Economic Development Organizations (EDO)
- Homepage with calls-to-action
- Geo-navigation for the 12 councils

4.2 Online Platform Development Requirements

1. Searchable and filterable resource directory
2. Regional Landing Pages (12 Total)
 - Map or boundary graphic
 - Logo
 - Website link
 - Services overview

- Contacts
- Local resources/events
- Contact submission form

3. Statewide calendar
4. Local administrative controls
5. Secure data and user logins
6. Resource Submission Portal
 - Allows councils, nonprofits, Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), and state agencies to submit resources for approval.
7. Administrative Dashboard
 - Resource management
 - Event management
 - Submission approvals
 - Analytics dashboard
8. Hosting, Security, Maintenance
 - Vendor must outline and/or describe: hosting, backups, SSL, data protection, uptime, scalability, use of artificial intelligence, and maintenance plans.

5. Deliverables

1. Project plan – How will you get from inception to completion?
2. UI (user interface) and UX (user experience) Mock-ups or examples.
3. Description or visuals of a fully developed online platform.
4. Example of Admin dashboard
5. Description of staff training
6. Provided manuals/documentation
7. Hosting setup
8. Maintenance plan – short-term, long-term

6. Qualification Document Requirements

1. Name, address and brief history of firm.
2. Resumes for key personnel to be assigned to this contract.
3. Related experience for each project component during the last three years.
4. Understanding/Interpretation of Scope of Work.
5. Projected timeline for completion of project, phased.
6. Internet links to past projects.
7. Additional/Relevant Information: You are invited to include a maximum of two pages of information not included above if you feel it may be useful, and applicable, to this project.

7. Schedule of Activities by the AARC

1/13/2026 Requests for Qualifications sent to potential vendors.

2/12/2026 Qualifications due by close of business 5:00 PM CST.

2/26/2026 Develop abbreviated list of no more than three (3) potential vendors.

3/2/2026 Notifications sent to abbreviated list of vendors for interview or briefing date.

3/2/2026 Notifications sent to other firms expressing appreciation for interest.

3/9/2026 Interviews or briefings begin. Virtual or In-person.

3/16-20/2026 Negotiations with most qualified firm as to detailed scope of work and contract price. If negotiations are unsuccessful, they are terminated and commenced with the next most qualified firm.

April 2026 Contract with selected firm approved by Alabama Association of Regional Councils.

Each submission will be evaluated based on experience, clarity, feasibility, and alignment with AARC's statewide objectives.

8. Submission Instructions

Submit qualifications via email in PDF format to AARC with subject "Statewide Digital Platform - Development Project".

9. Point of Contact

Robby Cantrell – rcantrell@narcog.org

All submissions shall be via email in PDF format. One virtual or teleconference meeting can be scheduled prior to February 12, 2026 and must be completed during normal business hours between 8:00 AM CST and 5:00 PM CST, limited to 1 hour in duration and limited to questions seeking clarity to the scope of work.

10. Rights Reserved

AARC may reject, negotiate, cancel, or reissue the RFQ.

11. Conclusion

The Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) seeks a vendor capable of delivering a high-quality online platform that will transform how federal, state, and local elected officials seek valuable insight into the resources and support provided by the 12 Regional Councils across the State of Alabama.

**Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC)
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Scoring Rubric**

1. Relevant Experience & Qualifications	20 pts
2. Technical Approach	25 pts
3. UX/UI Design Approach	30 pts
4. Timeline & Project Management	20 pts
5. References	5 pts

Each proposal will be scored based on experience, clarity, feasibility, and alignment with AARC's statewide objectives.