



TOWN OF STRATFORD
RFP #2009-095
Agent /Broker of Record
For the Stratford Board of Education Employee Benefits Program

The Stratford Board of Education (BOE) is seeking proposals from qualified agents/brokers to provide the services of an Agent of Record for Group Medical, Prescription Drug, and Dental coverage, as well as benefits consulting, under an annual contract at a clearly established rate of compensation for services. The successful firm will serve the needs of the Stratford Board of Education.

At a minimum, the Stratford Board of Education anticipates a three (3) year relationship with the selected agent, with up to two (2) additional years of renewal possible.

I. BACKGROUND:

The insurance brokerage and consulting needs of the Stratford Board of Education have been met by The NIA Group since 2007. While The NIA Group has served the BOE well, recently the BOE has determined that it is in the community's best interest to solicit proposals for their group insurance agent/broker services in light of changes in the insurance climate, changing market opportunities, and approaches to controlling benefit costs.

All proposing firms are advised that The NIA Group is permitted to submit a proposal under this Request for Proposals.

Description of Current Benefits:

Employee benefits and their respective plan design (or benefit level) are described in the collective bargaining agreements for the respective unions representing Stratford Board of Education employees. Benefits provided to non-unionized employees are determined by the Board of Education policy. ConnectiCare, Inc. underwrites the Fully Insured Point-of-Service Medical and Prescription Drug plans for approximately 929 employees with approximate annual premium of \$8.3 million. Anthem underwrites the Self-Funded Dental PPO plan for approximately 1,000 lives on the BOE.

II. SCOPE OF WORK:

The Board of Education expects the selected agency/brokerage firm to perform the following services:

1. Advise and assist in evaluating and selecting among plan alternatives such as products, plan designs, deductibles, co-payments, out-of-pocket payments, etc.
2. Review coverage documents and invoices to assure coverage has been correctly issued and billed.
3. Assist with reviewing claims data and determining premium impact of any prospective coverage changes.
4. As requested, assist in interpreting coverage as applied to claims, as well as resolving problems associated with benefit plan administration.
5. Assist with COBRA/HIPAA administration audits, forms and questions as needed for these programs or other applicable legal compliance and notification requirements.
6. Assist with benefit renewals, ensuring that all providers, that meet the Board's needs, receive proposals and seek alternative coverage if requested.
7. Assist with its budget planning for health care costs by providing a preliminary, projected renewal no later than January 1st of each plan year.
8. During Collective Bargaining periods assist with the following:
 - Conducting detailed reviews of existing bargaining agreements
 - Development of a matrix that compares key benefits provisions in the negotiated agreements as well as YTY changes
 - Providing recommendations regarding the contract language, allowing for more flexible management of the benefits plans (e.g., changing carriers)
 - Comparing current contract provisions to the prevailing market conditions and recent contract settlements
 - Developing a Management Proposal (including financial impacts of proposed plan changes)
 - Evaluating all counter proposals by bargaining units
 - Implementation of agreed upon contract provisions
 - Support in grievance and arbitration hearings (e.g., expert witness testimony)
 - Benchmarking current and proposed plan designs v. other CT Public Sector entities
9. Provide presentations to various boards, commissions and employee groups regarding plan designs and/or plan changes.
10. Assist with establishing the annual schedule of renewals. Provide side-by-side reporting. Prepare and/or review and advise on contract renewals.
11. Provide written updates on new State or Federal legislation or judicial decisions impacting the BOE and suggested action or changes in operations or procedures to assure compliance.
12. Provide advice on data practice, records retention and privacy issues.

13. Provide a team of servicing representatives available to the BOE on an on-going basis. Representatives must be available at the all open enrollment meetings during the contract period to explain the plan and enroll BOE employees in benefit programs. Representatives must be available for all plan design and cost containment planning meetings and research benefits questions and provide advice to the BOE as needed.
14. Prompt response to BOE questions and requests is an absolute requirement. It is expected that there will be more than one individual within the firm capable of addressing possible concerns of the BOE.
15. Provide assistance, materials and resources for a wellness program, employee education materials for healthy lifestyles and explanation of benefits, and health fairs.
16. Analyze and report on YTD and YTY utilization and cost trends. Help provide overviews of these trends to management and staff, educating them on how to best limit premium increases.
17. Prepare an Annual Stewardship Report for the Board of Education, including a complete accounting of fees or commissions earned on the account, observations on relevant changes in the insurance market, views on loss exposures facing the BoE, loss control activities and insurance policy summaries.

III. SELECTION CRITERIA:

The BOE will evaluate proposals based on the needs of the BOE and its employees. Firms will be evaluated and selected based on compliance with specifications, completeness of responses, ability to provide strong administrative support to the BOE, relevant prior municipal experience, technical competence, the qualifications and experience of assigned staff, and past record of performance, each appropriately weighted in descending order of importance.

During the evaluation process, where it may serve the its best interest, the BOE reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposing firms, to reject any or all proposals or unauthorized modifications, to allow corrections of errors or omissions, or to waive irregularities.

A selection committee will evaluate the proposals based upon the factors listed above. After a review of the written proposals, selected firms also may be asked to make an in-person presentation. These interviews will be limited to not more than three (3) individuals. The individuals in attendance should be those that will have day-to-day and account management responsibilities. The BOE will choose the proposal(s) that best fits its needs. The BOE is not obligated to award the contract based on cost alone nor is the BOE obligated to award only one agent of record.

Firm(s) that are awarded this contract shall submit an action-plan and timetable for assuming responsibilities within thirty (30) days from notice of award. The successful firm will be required to enter into a written agreement with the Board of Education that will include service agreements and compensation for all coverages. This agreement will last for the minimum engagement period of three (3) years and will contain a review process and termination provisions. Such written agreement must be executed within sixty (60) days of the award or the BOE reserves the right to render the proposal invalid and may award the contract to another qualified vendor in its sole discretion.

Fees:

The Stratford Board of Education will consider proposals from firms willing to place coverage under either of two options. Proposals must provide two compensation options.

- Option #1: Standard Commissions. Please identify what services would be included if the only compensation granted was a commission. Under a commission arrangement, please indicated the difference in services offered at the following levels:
 1. 1.0% (Fully Insured Equivalent Premiums)
 2. 1.5% (Fully Insured Equivalent Premiums)
 3. 2.0% (Fully Insured Equivalent Premiums)
- Option #2: Net of Commission. Please propose the fixed fee you believe necessary to provide the services contemplated for the Stratford Board of Education. Use hourly rates, person days, or whatever means you feel are appropriate to explain how the proposed fee was derived.

The BOE reserves the right to determine whether compensation will be provided on a commission or fee basis.

IV. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

Proposals should demonstrate the qualifications, service level, costs for services, competence, and capacity of the firm. Proposals must address all the points outlined here:

A. Firm History and Experience:

1. Brief history of firm, including size and any specialty areas.
2. Organization of the firm, number and location of offices, and number and type of employees in the office that would service this account.
3. Background company data, including financial references.
4. Particular expertise or involvement in the insurance/employee benefits industry.

5. What experience do you have going through a Public Bidding Process? Please provide your process.
6. Municipal account servicing experience. Does your company have a dedicated Public Sector team? If so, please provide individual biographies.
7. What experience does your firm have in moving Union contracts from one insurance carrier to another?
8. List of potential markets the firm will use to place BOE coverages. This list will note all potential markets with which your firm has a contingent commission relationship.
9. Expected frequency and content of client meetings.
10. Describe your firm's experience with your existing clients providing re-enrollment services.
11. Explain your firm's ability to identify ineligible employees and dependants who may be (or who may seek to be) medical plans participants on the insurance carrier eligibility files and your proposal or method to have them removed lawfully and as quickly as possible.
12. Describe the ability of your firm to develop a comprehensive database of collective bargaining units, Group Insurance benefits available to each unit, and the corresponding rates, headcounts, and annual premium of each unit.
13. Explain what steps you have taken to become HIPPA compliant.
14. Explain what sort of experience and support your firm is positioned to provide to the BOE regarding Medicare Rx (Part D), as well as subsidy filings.
15. Describe what additional "value added services" that your firm can provide? Are they proprietary or outsourced?
16. What, if any, initiatives have your firm taken to design, implement, and promote Wellness programs among your clients? Please describe any measurable successes that you have achieved.
17. What, if any, Project Management tools does your firm employ to track project scope and progress with regard to each of your clients?
18. Please provide examples of Strategic Planning initiatives that your firm has implemented with your clients.
19. What sort of internal Underwriting expertise and depth does your firm offer your clients?
20. Benefits Administration:
 - Can your office perform end-to-end COBRA administration?
 - Can your office perform end-to-end Medicare D subsidy filing, on-going updates to RDS and compliance notifications as needed?
 - What sort of experience and ongoing support can your firm offer with regard to the design, development, and operation of web-based "self service" benefits tools, including Intranet development, implementation, and support?
 - Can your firm itself produce annual confidential Benefit Statements for each BOE employee?

B. Qualifications:

1. Description of service philosophy.
2. An outline of the account team that would be dedicated to the Stratford BoE account, noting name (and specific roles, qualifications, and experience), and distribution of responsibilities, including support capabilities.
3. Action plan and timetable for assuming responsibilities, as well as future design/cost containment suggestions.
4. Detail of services that will be provided to the BoE as a part of regular compensation.
5. Indicate current responsibilities and recent assignments of person designated to serve as lead contact for the BOE.

C. References:

1. List new clients acquired within the last three (3) years, as well as those clients that have left you within the last three (3) years.
2. List of five (5) municipalities you currently represent with similar premium volume, covered lives, and lines of coverages. Provide the contact names and telephone numbers for each.

D. Conflict of Interest:

1. Disclose any conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest.
2. Identify what procedures your firm utilizes to identify and resolve conflicts of interest.

E. Copies of the following items:

1. Errors and omissions coverage.
2. Statement of compliance with federal and state laws.

F. Transition Plan:

It is planned that the successful firm will start its engagement with the BOE effective July 1, 2010. As the start date will be after coverages have been renewed, proposing firms should describe their transition from the current agent and compensation in the first year of service.

Additional relevant information may also be submitted as part of the proposal. Marketing brochures need not be included.

Mr. Benjamin Branyan, Chief Operating Officer, will serve as proposal coordinator. This individual may be contacted at the Stratford Board of Education, 1000 East Broadway, Stratford, CT 06615. Phone number: 203-386-3149.

Technical questions on the procurement process should be directed to Mr. Michael Bonnar, Purchasing Agent. This individual may be contacted at the Stratford Town Hall, 2725 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06615. Phone number: 203-385-4044.

Five (5) copies of all letters of interest and requested materials must be received no later than **11:00 a.m. on Friday, January 29, 2010.** Responses received after this date and time will not be considered.

Submit responses to:

Purchasing Department
Stratford Town Hall
Rm 202
2725 Main Street
Stratford, Ct 06615

Please note the RFP number and title on the outside of the package.

Proposals will be reviewed by an internal committee where firms will be evaluated and ranked. Proposing firms may be asked to participate in an interview to further discuss qualifications and to answer questions from the internal committee.