



Request for Proposal for Full-Cycle Management of ICMA's Online Branded Merchandise and Promotional Product Store

Questions Received & ICMA's Responses:

1. **What has been your annual spend on promotional products/branded apparel over the past 5 years?**

ICMA does not currently operate an on-demand branded merchandise store. ICMA's historical spend on promotional products and branded apparel has been approximately \$60,000-100,000 annually, used primarily for bulk purchases distributed as giveaways to staff and members at ICMA and partner events.

Because this RFP represents a new initiative, ICMA does not have data on what members or external audiences would spend through an on-demand storefront. Vendors are encouraged to draw on their experience with comparable nonprofit and membership-based organizations to inform their proposed approach and pricing model.

2. **What do you anticipate or are you budgeting for this program?**

ICMA has budgeted approximately \$100,000 in its current fiscal year for its own branded merchandise. We anticipate members will gradually become aware of options to directly purchase ICMA branded items that fit their personal styles or interests.

3. **How many employees are there at ICMA?**

ICMA has 85 employees.



4. What is the total size of the membership you serve?

ICMA serves more than 14,000 members.

5. Approximately how many entities do you serve?

N/A - ICMA operates on an individual membership model. ICMA has more than 14,000 individual members, including city, town, and county managers and other local government executives and professionals from approximately 4,500 local government entities across the United States and Internationally. In addition to its membership base, ICMA serves a broader audience of local government staff, event attendees, board members, donors, and sponsors who may also be potential storefront users.

6. Is there an incumbent vendor?

There is no incumbent vendor for this specific scope of work. ICMA does not currently operate a centralized, on-demand online branded merchandise store. ICMA currently purchases promotional materials in bulk through an existing supplier, with items distributed (rather than sold) to staff and members at ICMA and partner events. This RFP represents a new initiative to establish a vendor-managed, print-on-demand storefront solution, which does not exist in its current operations.

7. The RFP notes that ICMA does not currently have a centralized, scalable solution for branded merchandise. Could you please share how ICMA-branded merchandise is currently requested, produced, fulfilled and managed across staff, members, events and other stakeholder groups?

Please see the response to #6 above.

8. Does ICMA currently use any merchandise vendors, internal ordering processes, ad hoc print runs, conference-specific orders, or separate fulfilment arrangements that the selected vendor would need to replace or transition from?

ICMA currently orders approximately 200 conference-branded jackets/shirts



for staff and member leadership to promote the event; additionally, staff place orders for other promotional materials (socks, hats, etc.) for member giveaways.

9. **Based on the RFP, we understand ICMA’s key objectives include reducing internal administrative effort, avoiding inventory management, and creating a more scalable branded merchandise experience. Could you please confirm the top three pain points ICMA would most like the selected partner to solve?**

The top three goals for ICMA in posting this solicitation are as follows (not necessarily in priority order):

- Centralize and simplify the selection and ordering of branded merchandise.
- Enable ICMA to offer a wide range of branded merchandise to members, staff, and event participants without the need to purchase, store, or manage inventory. The model should accommodate varying preferences while shifting purchasing to an on-demand approach.
- Establish a program that generates revenue through member and event purchases while increasing visibility and recognition of the ICMA brand nationally and internationally.

10. **What would a successful first year look like for ICMA in terms of member experience, staff adoption, sales/revenue, operational efficiency, reporting, and conference support?**

A successful first year would include:

- **Member Experience:** A user-friendly, reliable online storefront that reflects ICMA’s brand and offers a curated selection of high-quality merchandise. Members should be able to easily browse, purchase, and receive products in a timely manner, with clear communication throughout the order process.
- **Engagement & Feedback Loops:** Establish a simple process to submit ideas or requests for new merchandise, ensuring the storefront evolves based on direct member/staff input.

- **Staff Adoption and Operational Efficiency:** ICMA staff are able to effectively use the administrative tools to manage storefront content, product offerings, and pricing with minimal administrative burden. The vendor-managed, print-on-demand model should eliminate the need for ICMA to manage inventory, fulfillment, or logistics, while providing consistent quality and dependable turnaround times. Staff should feel confident in making updates, accessing reports, and coordinating with the vendor.
 - **Proactive Catalog Management:** Maintain a collaborative rhythm with the vendor to stay informed on the latest promotional product trends, ensuring the storefront is regularly refreshed with modern, relevant items.
 - **Streamlined Selection Process:** Simplify the internal process for evaluating and approving new merchandise ideas, allowing staff to move from "concept" to "live in store" with minimal friction.
 - **Sales and Revenue** - While ICMA does not have defined sales targets for the first year, success would include steady adoption and engagement from members and staff, with a revenue-sharing model that demonstrates the potential for long-term sustainability and growth.
 - **Reporting and Analytics** - Access to clear, actionable reporting on sales, product performance, and customer activity. ICMA should be able to easily access and export data to inform decision-making and future enhancements to the program, including using sales data and search trends to retire underperforming items and replace them with high-demand products.
 - **Conference and Event Support** - Effective support for ICMA's Annual Conference and other events, including coordination of on-site or integrated merchandise sales as applicable. This includes a seamless connection between online and on-site experiences and professional management of event-based sales operations.
11. **Could ICMA please provide the number of users or audience size for each intended storefront, for example members, staff, event attendees, sponsors or program-specific audiences?**

ICMA serves over 14,000 members and has 85 staff. ICMA's annual

conference attracts approximately 5,500 attendees, with 20-25 sponsors.

12. **Does ICMA have any historical or estimated order volumes, including expected monthly online orders, annual purchases, and anticipated demand around major conferences or events?**

See answer to #6 above – this is a new initiative.

13. **Could ICMA please confirm the primary shipping geographies for launch, including whether fulfilment is expected mainly within the United States or across international member locations as well?**

Orders will be primarily shipped within the United States. ICMA has approximately 300 international members.

14. **Section 7 refers to on-site support for conferences and events, including retail setup/POS, pre-event inventory planning, on-site stock management, customer service and post-event reconciliation; however, the wider scope also refers to a print-on-demand, non-inventory model.**

Could ICMA please clarify whether on-site support is expected to involve physical merchandise being produced, shipped to the event and sold on site, or whether an event-specific online storefront / QR-code purchasing model would meet the requirement?

ICMA is seeking a flexible approach to conference and event support that can incorporate both physical on-site merchandise and online purchasing options. See response to Questions #2 and #8 above for additional context regarding ICMA's current merchandise purchasing practices.

ICMA envisions a largely print on demand, non-inventory model (less its direct purchases). However, ICMA is open to having a limited selection of preproduced merchandise available for on-site sale at conferences and events. As on-site inventory is depleted, attendees may be directed to purchase items through an event specific online storefront or other digital ordering method.

Respondents may propose approaches that include preproduced merchandise for limited on-site sales, event specific online storefronts, QR code-based



purchasing, or a combination of these methods. ICMA welcomes vendor recommendations on the most effective approach to support the customer experience and operational logistics.

The selected vendor should be able to coordinate pre-event planning, support on site or integrated sales as appropriate, and ensure alignment between online and event-based purchasing, along with post event reconciliation as outlined in the RFP.

15. **Would ICMA consider a model where a limited set of sample products is produced ahead of the event and displayed on site, allowing attendees to view product quality, sizing and design options physically, while purchases are completed through the online storefront or QR code?**

Yes

16. **The RFP notes a preference for a print-on-demand, non-inventory model, while Section 7 also refers to on-site merchandise sales and stock management.**

To ensure we propose the right operating model, could ICMA please clarify whether physical merchandise is expected to be available for sale at the event?

See answers to #14 and #15 above. ICMA would prefer to have some stock of merchandise available on site, and is open to having product displayed for viewing, with the option to place orders online.

17. **Could ICMA please clarify what it expects to be included in post-event reconciliation, for example sales reporting, revenue share calculation, returned stock counts, unsold inventory reporting, or customer/order reporting?**

ICMA expects post-event reconciliation reports to provide both detailed and summary-level information for all financial and transactional activity associated with the event. At a minimum, this should include:



Sales and Revenue Share Reporting:

Detailed reports of all transactions, including sales, add-ons, and other items, along with a clear calculation of any revenue-sharing components, including basis for the split, applicable fees, and net revenue due to each party.

Transaction-Level Detail:

Customer order-level data that ties to summary totals, including payment methods, amounts collected, refunds, discounts, and adjustments, to support reconciliation and audit requirements.

Payment Reconciliation and Settlement Statement:

Reconciliation of total cash received (by payment type) to amounts remitted to ICMA, including processor and vendor fees. This should also include a clear summary of total revenue, all deductions (fees, commissions, expenses), and the final net amount payable to ICMA.

If so, who would be responsible for managing the event stock before, during and after the conference, including transport, storage, display, sales, stock counts and reconciliation?

Post-event reconciliation should give ICMA a clear picture of how merchandise performed at the event. At a minimum, this would include sales reporting, revenue share calculations, and a summary of inventory, including what was sold, returned, or remaining. Customer and order-level reporting is also helpful where available. The goal is to ensure ICMA has clear, usable information on overall performance and financial outcomes following each event.

In terms of operations, ICMA prefers that the selected vendor takes the lead on managing event-related merchandise. This includes planning for inventory (if applicable), coordinating transport, storage, display, and point of sale, as well as managing on-site sales, inventory tracking, and reconciliation after the event.

That said, ICMA understands there are different ways to approach this and is open to vendor recommendations on what works best.

18. Does ICMA have a preferred revenue-share or royalty structure in mind?

ICMA does not have a prescribed revenue share or royalty structure in mind and is open to vendor proposals. The goal is to establish a model that is transparent, sustainable, and aligned with the overall program.

ICMA is interested in understanding how respondents structure pricing, margins, and revenue sharing across both online and event-based sales. Proposals should clearly outline base product costs, suggested retail pricing, and how revenue would be shared with ICMA.

ICMA will evaluate proposed models based on overall value, ease of administration, and the ability to support long-term growth of the program.

19. Are there specific product brands and categories ICMA would like prioritized for launch, particularly for apparel, accessories, drinkware or conference merchandise?

ICMA does not have a preference for brand(s). The typical product categories were listed in the RFP. ICMA would expect the initial catalog to include a balanced mix of apparel, accessories, drinkware, and select promotional items that align with the ICMA brand and appeal to a broad range of members and event participants. Quality, variety, and inclusive sizing are important considerations, particularly for apparel.

ICMA welcomes vendor recommendations on specific brands and product selections that are well-suited for this audience and program.

20. Would ICMA be willing to share an indicative budget range for the Online Branded Merchandise and Promotional Product Store (including platform and merchandise/fulfillment)? If a specific figure isn't available, even a general budget band?

ICMA has budgeted approximately \$100,000 in its current fiscal year for its own branded merchandise purchases. See response to Question #2 above for additional context.



ICMA has not established a fixed budget for the overall online merchandise program. As this is ICMA's first time implementing a centralized, vendor-managed program of this kind, the organization does not yet have a defined baseline for anticipated participation or sales volume.

ICMA's Annual Conference typically draws more than 5,000 attendees, and additional demand may come from members and staff throughout the year. ICMA also has committees, affinity groups, and smaller conferences where there may be interest in offering branded items tailored to those audiences. These may present additional opportunities for targeted storefronts, limited-run merchandise, or event-specific offerings.

ICMA recognizes that vendors may have a stronger understanding of participation levels and purchasing behavior for similar organizations and events and welcomes insights as part of the proposal.