

Request for Proposals: Strategic Communications Support

Overview

Baltimore's Promise is a city-wide collaborative composed of public, business, higher education, nonprofit, community, and philanthropic leaders. The organization serves as a catalyst for organizing efforts and resources around a shared vision: all Baltimore City youth will travel a safe, healthy, and successful educational path from cradle to career.

Baltimore's Promise is working to generate greater levels of investment and support for young people ages 14–24, and eliminate barriers and disparities for young people of color by;

- helping high school graduates connect with job training programs that lead to career paths in a variety of fields and access supportive services through [initiatives](#) including [Grads2Careers](#);
- effectively sharing lessons and stories to build will, resources, and opportunities;
- providing evidence that supports reshaping systems and removing gaps in opportunity; and
- increasing young people's access to quality opportunities, including governance, leadership, and decision-making roles, especially in organizations and processes related to youth well-being.

We're seeking a partner to help develop and execute a strategic 12-month communications plan to support these efforts and, ultimately, ensure all young people in Baltimore City can access the opportunities needed to thrive.

The following request for proposals provides background on Baltimore's Promise's needs, target audiences, key deliverables, and timeline. The document also addresses the role of the communications partner, including proposal requirements and evaluation criteria.

Plan for Baltimore's Promise work on behalf of youth and young adults, 2022-2024

- Develop and help to execute a strategic 12-month communications plan that builds awareness about the challenges and opportunities young people ages 14–24 in Baltimore face and generates greater investment and support for these youth. This plan must include measurable objectives and key performance indicators.
- Provide communications training and capacity building for Baltimore's Promise staff.
- Advise on branding, messaging, and dissemination of key data products, including the Baltimore Youth Data Hub.
- Identify vehicles, including speaking opportunities and earned media placements, to deliver messages and data about Baltimore City youth.
- Draft and disseminate key materials, including blog posts, media pieces, and promotional collateral.

Audiences

Baltimore's Promise seeks to reach and engage decision makers and influencers who can implement policies and practices that lead to better, more equitable outcomes for young people in Baltimore City. Primary audiences for our work generally include:

- city and state agency administrators;
- city and state legislators;
- local youth-serving organizations and practitioners, including those in the education and workforce fields, as well as community-based service providers;
- advocacy organizations seeking to expand youth opportunities;
- journalists and social media outlets with an interest in youth well-being issues and trends;
- community leaders; and
- young people and their families.

Deliverables and Timeline

Baltimore's Promise seeks proposals covering key deliverables over two distinct time periods:

Phase 1 (Onboarding and planning) June 2022 – May 2023

- Develop a 12-month strategic communications plan based on an analysis of stakeholders and audiences and inclusive of specific approaches and differentiated messaging for stakeholder and audience groups.
- Conduct trainings for internal staff on messaging and communications best practices and skill-building.
- Produce key collateral, including one-pagers, social media posts, blogs, etc.

Phase 2 (Adaptation, execution and capacity building) June 2023 – May 2024

- Update communications plan to reflect new priorities and opportunities.
- Execute specific deliverables from the communications plan as needed to complement the work of Baltimore's Promise staff and consultants.
- Continue building staff capacity to implement communications activities and advise on strategies to build internal bandwidth.

Role of the Communications Partner

Baltimore's Promise seeks a partner to help plan and execute key activities and build our internal capacity to implement strategic communications work beyond this two-year engagement. The partner will report to Janelle Gendrano, our Chief Operating Officer, but also will take direction from our Executive Leadership Team and input from key partners in the work.

Proposal Requirements

Interested applicants must submit their proposals via [Formstack](#). Proposals submitted by email will not be accepted. Please submit the required proposal materials below in PDF format by 5:00 PM ET on Friday, July 1, 2022. All proposals should include:

- Applicant Name

- Primary Contact Email - Please list the best email to receive a copy of the submitted materials and to be notified of our final decision.
- Primary Contact Phone Number - Please list the best phone number to call if proposal reviewers have questions.
- Proposal Narrative: A description of the partner's approach to planning and completing the requested deliverables.
- Case History: Brief case histories that demonstrate the partner's ability and experience developing communication strategies and messages aimed at state and local policymakers, agency administrators, service providers and young people.
- Budget & Timeline: A detailed budget including your requested contract amount, how the contract amount requested will be used to complete both sets of deliverables, and a timeline for completion.
- Billing Information: An explanation of billing procedures including rates, mark-ups, etc.
- Resume: CVs or resumes of key staff
- Biography: Biographies of proposed team members, billing rates, and level of account participation.
- References: Name, email, phone number, and relationship of three (3) current and former clients for whom you have conducted similar work.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated understanding of Baltimore's Promise and its priorities and challenges, particularly for youth and young adults.
- Understanding of Baltimore and Maryland policy audiences and landscape, and history of effective communications efforts involving these audiences.
- Demonstrated commitment to equity and inclusion and ability to integrate these principles in communications.
- Ability to work with people who have diverse perspectives and backgrounds to facilitate strong relationships and shared interests.
- Strategic approach and vision for products and initiatives.
- Presentation of fresh, creative vision for deliverables.
- Presentation of strong solutions applicable to print and online.
- Demonstrated experience in policy-related, programmatic launches, and long- and short-term projects, with proven capacity for reaching priority audiences.
- Staffers who are dedicated to Baltimore's Promise projects.
- Demonstrated ability to secure media attention across print, online, and social media.
- Demonstrated knowledge of trade, field, and niche media.
- Experience with and capacity for brand and identity creation if needed for campaigns and initiatives.
- Experience with and capacity for in-depth messaging development.
- Ability to write compelling op-eds and blog posts, media pieces, promotional, and other materials.
- Capacity for graphic design to accompany and promote products.
- Demonstrated capacity for flexibility and quick response to changing needs while keeping planned deliverables on schedule.

- Ability to understand data and data collection and to suggest creative, clear approaches for explaining and visualizing data.
- Ability to execute the proposal within budget.

Questions about the RFP

Applicants may also submit written questions about the RFP via email to [rfps\(at\)baltimorespromise\(dot\)org](mailto:rfps(at)baltimorespromise(dot)org). Please use the subject heading "Strategic Communications Support RFP". All questions must be submitted by Friday, June 24, 2022 by 12:00 PM ET (noon).

All questions and their responses will be posted on the [Strategic Communications Support RFP landing page](#) on or about Monday, June 27, 2022.

Important Dates

- Friday, July 1, 2022, 5 PM ET – Proposals due via [Formstack](#). Proposals submitted via email will not be accepted.
- Friday, June 24, 2022, 12 PM ET - Deadline for questions about the RFP
- Week of July 25, 2022 – Applicants notified of final decision via email in their application