

Strategic Communications RFP Q&A Document

Last Updated: June 27, 2022

The substantive Q&A window for the [Strategic Communications Support RFP](#) has closed as of June 24, 2022 at noon ET. If you have technical questions about the proposal platform, Formstack, please email [rfs\(at\)baltimorespromise.org](mailto:rfs(at)baltimorespromise.org) and we will do our best to respond to your inquiry within 48 hours.

Q: It appears that you do not have dedicated staff for communications staffers, is that the case?

A: There are two Baltimore's Promise staff with communication responsibilities: the Chief Operating Officer and the Senior Manager, Operations. Neither of them are full-time communications staffers. We also work with a team of consultants on various communications deliverables.

Q: Do you intend on hiring or using an agency to support execution of the communications plan?

A: Baltimore's Promise staff and a team of external communications consultants will support execution of the plan. We anticipate that the communications team from the Annie E. Casey Foundation will be involved in this work given our partnership through the Thrive By 25® initiative.

Q: What is the budget for this project? Are you required to take the lowest bid? Does this RFP cover both phases of the scope of work: June 2022 - May 2023 and June 2023 - May 2024?

Baltimore's Promise is not required to take the lowest bid. We are reviewing proposal budgets on a case-by-case basis. We are interested in budgets that reflect what firms think it will take to do the work to deliver a robust communications plan for large-scale results, keeping in mind that the work will primarily involve planning in the first year. It will also be helpful if you break down your budget into Phase 1 and Phase 2 costs.

Q: Would a national firm with expertise and staff in Baltimore be considered competitively against locally based firms?

A: We are open to proposals from all firms, with a preference for those with extensive experience working in the Baltimore and Greater Washington DC area.



Q: Is there an incumbent firm bidding on this work?

A: While we work with a team of external consultants to develop our communications deliverables, the services and supports requested through this RFP have not been previously contracted. No bids have been submitted to the RFP at the time of this Q&A's posting.

Q: How many firms are responding to your RFP (or were approached)?

A: The RFP was an open call posted on our website, social media, and shared with communications professionals via email and affinity groups. No bids have been submitted to the RFP at the time of this Q&A's posting.

Q: Do you already have any communications metrics in mind to measure the success of this initiative? What does success look like?

A: The development of success metrics based on measurable objectives and key performance indicators is a core component of the strategic planning work for which we are seeking proposals.

Q: Why is Baltimore's Promise interested in a more focused push on communications outreach now? What is the impetus for this work at this moment? Are there any important dates or milestones you anticipate informing the timeline?

A: Baltimore's Promise has existed for a decade. Over the past ten years, the work of Baltimore's Promise and its role in the city has evolved significantly, and our stakeholder base is stronger and more expansive than ever. This 10 year milestone, the ways in which our work has expanded, and the pressing need for us as an organization to provide actionable data and content more routinely to influence and initiate important citywide efforts are all impetuses for this RFP. Most importantly, youth outcomes have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, and we have more urgency than ever to expand our impact through strategic communications -- sharing best and promising practices, data and research, and lessons from our work with the city and collective impact sector.

Q: What other key decision makers do you envision being involved in approvals? Do you anticipate participation from your Board of Directors?

A: We anticipate that the communications team from the Annie E. Casey Foundation will be involved in this work given our partnership through the Thrive By 25[®] initiative. More information on that can be found [on our website](#). We also work with a team of external communications consultants who will be a part of the process to execute communications deliverables that are a part of the communications plan.

Q: Is there a strategic plan for policy and programs? What are your priorities for this 2-year period?

Baltimore's Promise has an existing planning document and multi-year work plan related to our participation in the [Thrive By 25](#)[®] initiative that we are able to share with the selected team. Our priorities include the following:

- Generate greater levels of investment to support youth opportunities for young people ages 14 - 24.
- Develop new and shift existing resource allocation mechanisms to center participatory processes and proximate decision-making.
- Increase the quality and quantity of youth opportunities for young people ages 14 - 24, inclusive of governance, leadership, and decision-making roles, especially in organizations and processes related to youth wellbeing.

Q: In addition to the hiring of a firm, is there additional budget for this initiative - paid media, events, etc.?

A: We currently work with a team of external communications consultants that are contracted separately from this RFP opportunity and will support the development and execution of deliverables that will be part of the communications plan.

Q: Will Baltimore Promise be rolling out additional initiatives during the scope of this project?

A: There are several initiatives that will roll out over the course of this project:

- Baltimore's Promise has recently committed to an ambitious ten-year plan to improve older youth literacy outcomes in Baltimore City, which you can read more about on the [initiative's landing page](#).
- In addition, the organization will be celebrating its 10 year anniversary throughout 2022. The strategic communications plan will be used to inform the celebration plans for this milestone.
- The [Baltimore Youth Data Hub](#) was recently signed into legislation, and we expect to collaborate with the strategic partners of that initiative.
- The [Baltimore City Youth Opportunities Landscape](#) (BCYOL) will be refreshed with current data, and a complementary component, the Baltimore Youth Opportunities Index (BCYOI), will launch. BCYOI will indicate how "opportunity rich" a neighborhood is based on what youth opportunities are available in a given neighborhood and how closely aligned the opportunities are to what young people and parents/caregivers have prioritized as important.



- Finally, we are in the process of co-developing and launching a citywide youth-led grantmaking structure for Baltimore City that puts young people at the center of decision-making. Read more about the recruitment process for this effort [on our website](#).

For a list of our current work, please visit our [Initiatives](#) Page.

Q: Can you please elaborate on the specific deliverables for communications support?

A: We look forward to understanding how submitted proposals plan to structure and stage the desired deliverables outlined in the posted RFP.

Q: While the RFP states that onboarding will begin in June 2022, the RFP also states that the proposal for this contract is due July 1, 2022. Given that the proposal is due after the onboarding window is set to begin, when should the Contractor anticipate the start of the onboarding process?

A: We will adjust the onboarding start to coincide with the execution of this contract. Our current timeline anticipates that decisions are final by the end of July and that we can complete the contract and onboard the consultant(s) in August 2022.

Q: We know that through the communications partnership, 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. How will you measure success for this goal?

A: Baltimore's Promise maintains the [Baltimore Youth Data Scorecard](#) that is inclusive of dashboards showing youth outcomes over time, disaggregated by race and gender when possible, that helps us and our stakeholders understand how young people are doing and whether disparities are decreasing or increasing over time. Baltimore's Promise works at a population level and as such uses these indicators in addition to initiative-specific metrics to measure our progress toward our goals.

Regarding investment, we have a few resources from which we can measure progress. First, our [2015 Cradle to Career Investments in Baltimore City report](#) shows baseline investment figures we can use to determine our progress. Also, we developed the [Baltimore City Youth Opportunities Landscape](#), which indicates how many youth opportunities are available in the city overall as well as by age group and program type. We plan to refresh this landscape and based on the growth or decline of opportunities, we will have proxy information to understand whether investment is generally increasing or decreasing in the out-of-school time space and for specific age groups. We also have year over year data of funding that we are administering or facilitating



through our own initiatives (e.g. funding collaboratives) and can see at an organizational level our progress against our goals.

Q: Through the RFP, you've shared your list of primary audiences. Does the team have existing target audience profiles – overviews identifying these audiences' values and barriers (what stops them from taking action) – or is this something we should include in our proposal?

A: We would welcome this addition in your proposal as we do not currently have this as a resource.

Q: Can you please confirm that proposals should provide a total proposed budget for a two-year period of performance?

A: Yes, we are seeking to review proposals and associated budgets that cover the entire period of performance.

Q: Is there a preference to work with an individual consultant or a team?

A: We do not have a preference. Proposals may be submitted by individuals, teams, or collaborations.

Q: What is your current system/structure to gather stories from the youth you have worked with in the past?

A: Baltimore's Promise values participatory processes and, as such, we rely on many methods to collect qualitative data from and about youth in Baltimore City. Our most recent and comprehensive set of data is the [Baltimore City Youth Opportunities Landscape](#) (BCYOL), an initiative in which we consulted youth and parents/caregivers in a series of engagement sessions (focus groups) to understand what they most desire in youth-serving programs. We have utilized similar strategies in all of our current initiatives, details of which can be explored on our website at www.baltimorespromise.org/our-initiatives. However, we do not have a standardized system or infrastructure across our organization at present. We gather stories on an initiative or deliverable basis.



Q: Have any insights/personas been developed or created to gain insights into your key demographics that we can build on, or would this be a welcome addition to the work (e.g., focus groups and audience persona development)?

A: Our primary audience is local businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions, government, and philanthropic leaders who serve youth and young adults in Baltimore City, especially youth ages 14-24 because our research for the [Baltimore City Youth Opportunities Landscape](#) has shown a lack of opportunities for older youth.

Outreach efforts for many of our initiatives, especially Grads2Careers and the youth and young adult grantmaking initiative, require direct engagement with youth in our city. We have demonstrated effective youth engagement in small group, qualitative data collection settings and we would welcome strategies to more effectively recruit and engage youth via social media.

While we believe we have the information, data, and insight needed to develop audience personas, we do not have them developed by stakeholder group and integrated into an engagement strategy and would welcome a process that accomplishes this as a part of a submitted proposal.

Q: Who are the current key spokespersons for Baltimore's Promise? Who would you like them to be? What type of speaking opportunities and trainings have been done with your spokespeople to date?

Presently, the key spokespersons for Baltimore's Promise are our Executive Leadership Team (ELT), the Board of Directors, initiative funders, youth leaders engaged in the development and implementation of initiatives, and alumni of our current initiatives. Baltimore's Promise is currently in the process of launching a Community Advisory Board and a youth grantmaking initiative, both of which will present opportunities for the members to represent the organization and its interests publicly. Our ELT and other Baltimore's Promise staff members regularly share about the organization's initiatives publicly and welcome any opportunities for training as we continue to advocate for more equitable and participatory opportunities for youth in Baltimore. Please review our [News & Announcements](#) page to see some of the previous public conversations in which our team has participated.

Q: Do you have a set of policies that you want to advocate for or more general issue areas? Do your advocacy efforts target the local, state, and/or national scenes?

A: An example of state-level advocacy we engaged in was the five-year effort to actualize the Baltimore Youth Data Hub (the Hub), an integrated data system that links data across



youth-serving organizations into an anonymous system subject to community oversight and strict guidelines, recently came to fruition. The Hub was signed into legislation in April 2022. We anticipate that subsequent advocacy will be needed for the expansion of this work; however, it is more likely to occur through an influence strategy rather than mass communications.

Three priority goals related to our participation in the [Thrive By 25](#)[®] initiative are as follows, and they will likely need advocacy strategies at the local and state level over the course of our work's development:

- Generate greater levels of investment to support youth opportunities for young people ages 14 - 24.
- Develop new and shift existing resource allocation mechanisms to center participatory processes and proximate decision-making.
- Increase the quality and quantity of youth opportunities for young people ages 14 - 24, inclusive of governance, leadership, and decision-making roles, especially in organizations and processes related to youth wellbeing.

As mentioned previously, we are launching ongoing efforts to improve literacy outcomes for older youth in Baltimore. As we continue to build and implement the demonstration models, or pilots, opportunities for local and state advocacy may arise. A priority for our organization is making the insights and analysis that arise from our ongoing data collection and analysis work actionable and utilized by our partners, including those in the advocacy space.