Request for Proposal (RFP) for Communications and Public Relations Services

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RFP Title:
Communications and Public Relations Services for The Michigan Center for Adult College Success

Issue Date:
October 28, 2026

Proposal Submission Deadline: November 13, 2026, 5p.m. EST

Proposal Review Period: November 16-20, 2026

Vendor Selection: Nov. 23, 2026

Contract Execution: No later than November 25, 2026

Contact Information:
Jeremy Hendges
Executive Director
The Michigan Center for Adult College Success
j.hendges@talentfirst.net
517-303-6026

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1. Overview

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success (hereinafter referred to as "The Center") is seeking proposals from qualified communications and public relations firms to partner with us in elevating our profile as a trusted expert in adult postsecondary education. The Center's mission is to serve as the state's primary resource for research, support and best practices on increasing adult enrollment and completion of postsecondary credentials and degrees.

2. Objectives

The primary objectives of this RFP are to:

- Increase awareness of The Center among key stakeholders, including postsecondary institutions, policymakers, employers, philanthropy, and nonprofits.
- Establish The Center as a leader and trusted expert in the realm of adult postsecondary education.
- Foster dialogue and collaboration around improving adult enrollment and completion rates in Michigan.
- Generate media coverage and enhance The Center's visibility both at the state and national levels.

3. Background

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success, an initiative of TalentFirst, was established in statute to serve as the state's primary resource for research, support and best practices on increasing adult enrollment and completion of postsecondary credentials and degrees. The Center collaborates with postsecondary institutions, employers, policymakers, and nonprofits to develop and implement best practices that increase adult enrollment and completion rates.

Key initiatives include supporting the Michigan Reconnect Program, providing relevant research, and hosting design labs for deep learning opportunities. Michigan's unique decentralized postsecondary system resulting in multiple organizations attempting to fill the void of a higher education authority highlights the need for a robust communications strategy to elevate The Center's profile, establish it as a key player in the state's education landscape, and raise awareness among our stakeholders of the opportunities for support and assistance.

4. Scope of Work

The selected firm will be responsible for developing and executing a comprehensive communications and public relations strategy that includes, but is not limited to:

- **Strategic Communications Planning:**
  Develop a detailed communications plan that aligns with The Center's goals and objectives, identifying key messages, target audiences, and channels.
- **Media Relations:**
  Establish and maintain relationships with local, state, and national media outlets with an emphasis on the Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing markets. Secure coverage in major Michigan news outlets and key national publications. Facilitate media interviews, press releases, and op-eds to increase visibility.
- **Social Media Management:**
  Develop and manage a social media strategy to increase The Center's online presence. Publish regular content, engage with followers, and track metrics to measure effectiveness.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
  Develop strategies to introduce The Center to a broader group of stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, and postsecondary institutions. Foster meaningful relationships through targeted outreach and personalized communications.
- **Event Support:**
  Assist in planning and executing events, webinars, and presentations to showcase The Center's work and engage stakeholders.
- **Content Creation:**
  Create compelling content, including newsletters, blogs, case studies, and reports, that communicates The Center's value and expertise.

- **Crisis Communications:**
  Develop a crisis communications plan to manage any potential challenges or issues that may arise.

5. Deliverables

The selected firm will be expected to deliver the following:

- A comprehensive communications and public relations plan within the first 60 days of the contract.
- At least one op-ed published in major Michigan news outlets per year.
- Layout and design of reports created by The Center and other needed collateral.
- Media coverage in at least two key national publications over the next year.
- A community of engaged employers and postsecondary partners across Michigan.
- Regular updates to The Center's website and social media channels, with measurable increases in traffic and engagement.
- Regular reports on key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with the objectives of the communications strategy. These should include metrics related to media coverage, social media engagement, stakeholder outreach and content distribution. The firm will work with The Center to refine and agree on specific metrics for each deliverable.

6. Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals should include the following:

- **Executive Summary:**
  An overview of your firm, including your understanding of The Center's objectives and how your approach will help achieve them.
- **Firm Qualifications:**
  A description of your firm's experience in communications and public relations, particularly in the education or nonprofit sector. Include case studies or examples of similar work.
- **Proposed Approach:**
  A detailed outline of your proposed communications and public relations strategy, including key tactics, timelines, and deliverables. Provide a detailed description of your approach to gathering content, reviewing and revising materials for publication. Include how you would use KPIs to track the success of the work.
- **Team Composition:**
  A description of the team that will be assigned to this project, including their qualifications and relevant experience.
- **Budget:**
  A detailed budget proposal, including a breakdown of costs associated with each component of the scope of work. Firms should specify whether they operate on a flat fee, hourly rate, or retainer model and provide an estimate of hours allocated.

- **References:**
  Contact information for at least three references from similar projects.

7. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Understanding of The Center's mission and objectives.
- Experience and qualifications of the firm and assigned team members.
- Quality and creativity of the proposed approach.
- Demonstrated success in similar projects.
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposal.

8. Submission Instructions

Please submit your proposal electronically in PDF format to j.hendges@talentfirst.net by 5pm EST on Nov. 13, 2026. Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.

9. Contract Terms & Budget

The contract will be awarded for a period of one year, with the possibility of renewal based on performance and mutual agreement. The Center reserves the right to terminate the contract at any time for unsatisfactory performance. Proposals should not exceed $90,000.

10. Questions and Clarifications

For any questions or further information, please contact:

Jeremy Hendges

Executive Director, Michigan Center for Adult College Success

j.hendges@talentfirst.net

tel: 517.303.6026

We look forward to receiving your proposal and partnering with you to advance the mission of The Michigan Center for Adult College Success.