



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

Public Relations and Strategic Communications Services

Issued: May 30, 2025

Due: June 16, 2025

Issued By:

Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority
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The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (FCCFA) is soliciting proposals from qualified firms to provide public relations and strategic communications support to the FCCFA staff and Board of Directors. The selected firm will work in close collaboration with internal leadership and external partners to enhance the FCCFA's visibility, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and ensure alignment with the organization's mission and community expectations. The firm selected will demonstrate significant experience delivering integrated communications services for public sector organizations as described in this request for proposals.

BACKGROUND

The FCCFA is an independent governmental entity established in 1988 by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners to finance the construction and operation of the Greater Columbus Convention Center (GCCC), and to position Columbus as a premier destination for conventions, events, and tourism. The FCCFA's mission is to develop and manage world-class facilities that attract visitors, support economic growth, and strengthen the region's tourism economy.

Governed by an eleven-member board appointed by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the City of Columbus, and suburban mayors, the FCCFA owns and oversees several key assets in downtown Columbus, including the GCCC, the Hilton Columbus Downtown Hotel, Nationwide Arena, and six adjacent parking facilities.

The FCCFA operates through strategic partnerships with industry-leading operators: ASM Global manages the GCCC and parking operations; Levy Premium Foodservice oversees food and beverage services; Hilton Worldwide operates the Hilton Columbus Downtown; and Columbus Arena Management manages Nationwide Arena. FCCFA staff are responsible for overseeing FCCFA internal operations, managing overall financial performance, and servicing over \$1.2 billion in collective debt obligations. In addition to operational oversight, the FCCFA leads a comprehensive capital improvement program aimed at maintaining and expanding Columbus's convention, meeting, and event infrastructure. The FCCFA also works in close collaboration with Experience Columbus, the city's destination marketing organization, to ensure strategic alignment in promoting Columbus as a dynamic, competitive destination.

For more information about the FCCFA, please visit www.meetusincolumbus.com.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The FCCFA is seeking a firm to provide public relations and strategic communication services to support the FCCFA staff and the Board of Directors. The initial contract term will be one (1) year with the option to extend the agreement up to four (4) additional years based on performance. The scope of services will include but is not limited to:

Strategic Communications

- Support the development and implementation of a strategic communications plan that aligns with FCCFA's mission, values, and long-term goals, in collaboration with FCCFA leadership and other consultants.
- Assist in creating and maintaining key messaging frameworks to ensure message consistency across platforms and audiences.
- Support efforts to raise FCCFA's public profile by helping stakeholders and the community better understand its role, impact, and operations.
- Provide guidance on internal and external messaging related to economic development, tourism, public-private partnerships, and community benefit.
- Offer communications counsel during times of crisis, including contributing to messaging strategy, talking points, media responses, and stakeholder outreach, in coordination with internal leadership.

Board Engagement

- Support FCCFA staff in communications and engagement efforts with the Board of Directors and its Sales, Marketing, and Public Relations Committee.
- Assist in developing messaging, board communications updates, speeches, and presentation materials.
- Prepare talking points and "elevator speeches" for Board members on key initiatives or public-facing topics.
- Attend meetings with the Board and/or the Sales, Marketing, and Public Relations Committee as requested and assist in the preparation of agendas and presentation of meeting materials.

Mission, Purpose and Brand Alignment

- Collaborate with the FCCFA's selected brand strategy facilitator/consultant by providing strategic input and communications support during internal workshops

and discussions focused on refining the FCCFA's brand identity, mission, and purpose.

- Provide support for stakeholder perception research (as needed) and help interpret findings to assess brand resonance.
- Contribute to recommendations for brand strategies, messaging guidelines, and collaborative marketing opportunities.
- Assist in developing brand guidelines that support consistent tone, visual identity, and narrative across communications.

Media Relations

- Support internal FCCFA communications leadership in maintaining relationships with key media outlets (print, broadcast, and digital).
- Draft and distribute press releases, media advisories, and other media materials in coordination with FCCFA staff.
- Ensure timely, accurate responses to media inquiries and breaking news.
- Proactively suggest and pitch story ideas, as appropriate, in coordination with the FCCFA's communications director.
- Track and analyze media coverage and provide summaries of public sentiment and engagement trends.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- Assist in planning and facilitating outreach programs to inform and engage stakeholders about FCCFA initiatives.
- Support communication efforts with government officials, business and hospitality partners, and the broader community.
- Coordinate with FCCFA partners like Experience Columbus, ASM Global, and Hilton Columbus Downtown to ensure unified messaging.
- Research and recommend speaking opportunities, recognition programs, and third-party engagement strategies to elevate awareness of FCCFA's work.

Social Media and Digital Content

- Support the creation, scheduling, and population of social media content in collaboration with FCCFA staff.
- Collaborate with FCCFA staff to develop a content calendar and digital strategy that aligns with the broader communications goals.

- Monitor engagement and provide input on response strategies, particularly during periods of public attention.

Website Support and Evaluation

- Assist FCCFA staff in maintaining and updating website content to ensure accuracy, timeliness, and alignment with current messaging, branding, and organizational priorities.
- Provide editorial and technical support for website updates, including posting relevant news stories, event information, and key documents in coordination with FCCFA staff and external partners.
- Provide periodic evaluation of website effectiveness through analytics review, user feedback, and comparison with best practices.
- Provide recommendations for improvements, including potential redesigns, and assist in planning and implementing changes as needed.

Content Development and Editorial Support

- Provide drafting and editing support for newsletters (quarterly e-newsletter and monthly construction update), brochures, op-eds, speeches, scripts, and collateral.
- Assist in managing e-blasts and distribution lists; track and report on performance metrics.
- Recommend improvements to newsletter formats and digital communications.
- Support content development for milestone events, announcements, and initiatives, under the direction of FCCFA leadership.

Reporting and Evaluation

- Assist in establishing performance metrics in collaboration with FCCFA staff.
- Provide quarterly summary reports of communications activities, including media coverage, digital engagement, and progress toward goals.
- Offer data-informed recommendations to support ongoing improvement of FCCFA communications.

General Note

The selected firm will serve in a collaborative and supporting capacity alongside internal FCCFA leadership and other consultants. As FCCFA expands internal communications

capacity, the firm's role may evolve to emphasize strategic support, implementation assistance, and project-based expertise.

SELECTION PROCESS and EVALUATION CRITERIA

The FCCFA will review, evaluate and select a firm whose proposal is "most advantageous," as determined by the criteria stated in this document and in accordance with law. Evaluation will be made by a group of individuals selected by the FCCFA's Executive Director. The Executive Director will establish an Advisory Group consisting of FCCFA board and staff who will review and evaluate all proposals and may short-list firms for interviews based upon criteria listed below and the requirements of law. Upon conclusion of the evaluation process and consultation with the Advisory Group, the Executive Director, will recommend approval of the firm deemed "most advantageous" to the full Board of Directors.

Proposals submitted by interested parties will be evaluated based upon the criteria listed below. Each criterion will be weighted equally. Only that information which is submitted through the RFP process will be used for evaluation.

Criteria One: Qualifications – 20 Points

The qualifications and competence of the firm to perform the requested services as demonstrated by the technical training, education and experience of proposed team members who would be assigned to perform the work.

Criteria Two: Past Performance – 20 Points

The past performance and ability of the firm to provide the services required by this RFP as demonstrated by review of past projects completed by the firm and by evaluation of previous clients. Emphasis of past review will be placed on quality of work completed; ability to meet objectives and schedules; responsiveness; and resolution of challenges.

Criteria Three: Availability of Resources – 20 Points

The ability of the firm to perform the required services competently and on schedule as demonstrated by the availability and accessibility of experienced personnel and other resources needed to successfully provide the required services.

Criteria Four: Innovation and Strategic Differentiation – 20 Points

The firm's distinct approach to fulfilling RFP requirements, including methodology, philosophy, and specialized resources. Firms should demonstrate a deep understanding of public relations for organizations like the FCCFA, as well as awareness of current industry trends. Consideration will also be given to the firm's adaptability in a rapidly evolving global and community landscape, and how its unique strategies can enhance the FCCFA's visibility and communications effectiveness.

Criteria Five: Knowledge of FCCFA – 20 Points

Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the FCCFA, its facilities, organization, board members, staff, functions, responsibilities and history.

Criteria Six: Price – 20 Points

The competitiveness of the proposed pricing for public relations services.

REQUIRED SUBMITTALS

One original, five copies and one electronic copy of each proposal shall be delivered to the following addressee on or before June 16, 2025 at 4:00 PM EST.

Jordan Edmonds, In-House Counsel
Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority
400 North High Street, Fourth Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to Jordan Edmonds at jedmonds@fccfa.org on or before close of business on June 6, 2025. Responses to all questions submitted prior to the deadline for submittal will be distributed to interested firms on record that have received a copy of this RFP. Responses will be distributed on or before close of business on June 10, 2025.

To enable the FCCFA to efficiently evaluate submittals, Respondents should prepare their submittal on 8.5 x 11 paper utilizing the format guidelines described below. Please feel free to include other materials, such as covers, table of contents, transmittal letter, appendices, brochures, etc., at your discretion.

The following outlines the information to be included in each submittal. This outline is not all-inclusive, and information may be added as deemed necessary. Submittals are to be

paginated, and the section number, title of section, and each sub-part should be clearly identified.

Section I – Firm Description

General information should include, but not be limited to:

1. The name, address, telephone number, fax and email address of an individual who will serve as the firm’s contact for any questions or correspondence regarding the RFP process.
2. A certification of accuracy provided by the highest ranking individual responsible for the firm’s submittal.
3. A summary highlighting why the firm is uniquely qualified to fulfill the requirements of this RFP.

Section II – Profile & Organization

The profile should include but not be limited to:

1. Information describing the firm’s current organization, date of incorporation, ownership, corporate office, number of years in business, size of business, services offered, operating philosophy, number of employees and employee demographics.
2. If applicable, information describing any other participating firm’s current organization, date of incorporation, ownership, corporate office, number of years in business, size of business, services offered, operating philosophy, number of employees and employee demographics.
3. Provide an organizational chart and staffing plan for the team who will be working directly with the FCCFA. Identify key members and describe the services, roles and responsibilities of each. Show the relationship of key team members to each other, the prime firm and other member firms. Indicate the availability of key team members.
4. Provide information that describes the firm’s current workload as well as outlines the availability of necessary personnel, equipment and resources needed to satisfy the requirements of this RFP.

Section III – Approach

A description of the firm’s approach to providing public relations services for the FCCFA. Identify possible challenges and discuss how these challenges will be addressed through

the implementation of the requested services. Provide information on how the firm will enhance the public perception and visibility of the FCCFA.

Section IV – Resumes of Key Individuals

Provide professional resumes and job titles for individuals that will be working with the FCCFA including each member’s education, qualifications, and relevant experience.

Section V – Experience

Provide a list of clients that the firm has worked with during the past five years that are similar in size and function to the FCCFA. The firm’s role with each client should be clearly identified as well as the role of individual team members. Information should include a description of services provided; examples of successful strategies implemented that improved outcomes; and unique characteristics of the services provided that resulted in a positive outcome for the client. Include references for each listed client. References should be prepared to be contacted by the Executive Director’s Advisory Group.

Section VI – Fee Proposal

Provide a pricing and fee structure for providing the public relations services proposed in this RFP. Provide information that documents the basis for proposed pricing and fees. Also include pricing, if any, for any additional services and reimbursable expenses that are needed but are not covered in the base price/fee.

Section VII – Other Requested Information

Each firm should provide specific information describing their understanding of the required services for the project along with a description of any services not provided by the firm. Please include any other pertinent information in this section.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS, NOTIFICATIONS AND INFORMATION

FCCFA's Best Interest – the FCCFA reserves the sole right to (1) evaluate the proposals submitted; (2) waive any irregularities therein; (3) select candidates for the submittal of more detailed proposals; (4) accept any submittal or portion of a submittal; and/or (5) reject any or all responses to the RFP, should it be deemed in the FCCFA's best interest to do so. This RFP is not intended to be an offer, contract, obligation, or commitment of any kind.

Addenda and Modifications – Changes in the specifications or terms and conditions of this RFP may be made in writing by the FCCFA prior to the required due date. Results of informal meetings or discussions between a Respondent and any FCCFA or GCCC, Hilton, or Columbus Arena Management official may not be used as a basis for deviations from the requirements contained within this RFP and may subject the Respondent to immediate disqualification.

All addenda, amendments, and interpretations to this RFP shall be in writing. Any amendment or interpretation that is not in writing shall not legally bind the FCCFA. Only information supplied by the FCCFA in this RFP, or in connection with this RFP, shall be used in preparing submittals. All contact that a Respondent may have had before or after receipt of this RFP with any individuals, employees, or representatives of the FCCFA and any information that may have been read in any news media or seen or heard in any communications regarding this RFP should be disregarded by Respondents in preparing responses to this RFP.

Clarification – the FCCFA reserves the right to conduct discussions with Respondents who submit proposals, or statements of qualifications, for the purpose of clarifications or corrections regarding a submittal to ensure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the requirements of this RFP.

No Gratuities – Respondents shall not offer any gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value to any official, director or employee of the FCCFA nor its advisors for any purpose or reason that could be construed as influencing the selection process. Any attempt by a Respondent to influence the selection process by any means, other than disclosure of qualifications and credentials through the proper channels, shall be grounds for exclusion from the selection process.

No False Information – Respondents who provide false or misleading information, whether intentional or not, in any of the documents presented to the FCCFA for consideration in the selection process shall be excluded.

Conflicts of Interest – All Respondents must disclose, within their proposal, the name(s) of any officer, director, agents, or immediate family member (spouse, parent, sibling, child) who is also an employee of the FCCFA or have a familial business relationship with any FCCFA director. Further, all proposals must disclose the name of any FCCFA employees who own, either directly or indirectly, an interest of 10% or more in the Respondent or any of its affiliates or subcontractors.

Preparation Costs – Under no circumstances will the FCCFA be responsible for any costs incurred by anyone in (a) the submittal of proposals or qualifications, (b) in any subsequent follow-up to the submittal, (c) in any subsequent negotiations of a contract, or (d) in any other aspect of the effort to select the most advantageous Respondent.

Confidentiality – To the extent permitted by law, the FCCFA will make reasonable efforts to safeguard the confidentiality of confidential information submitted in response to this RFP, provided that the information is conspicuously marked “CONFIDENTIAL”. The FCCFA will not be required to defend any litigation seeking disclosure of confidential information. The FCCFA will make reasonable efforts to notify a Respondent to give the Respondent the opportunity to defend any request or litigation seeking disclosure.

Note that the wholesale use of headers/footers bearing designations such as “confidential”, “proprietary”, or “trade secret” on all or nearly all a proposal is not acceptable and may be deemed by the FCCFA as a waiver of any exemption claim. The identification of exempt information must be sufficiently specific to allow for the FCCFA to identify the exempt data in responding to public records requests.

Public Records – Respondents are hereby notified that all proposals and qualifications, including without limitation, any and all information and documentation submitted therewith, will be available for public inspection after the award of the contract, in compliance with Ohio Revised Code 149 and other applicable public records laws.

By submitting to the FCCFA a document that the Respondent designates as “confidential” or “trade secret”, the Respondent agrees that in the event a third party brings any action against the FCCFA or any of its officials or employees to obtain disclosure of the document, the Respondent will indemnify and hold harmless the FCCFA and any affected officials and employees from all costs, including attorney’s fees

incurred by or assessed against any defendant, of defending against such action. The Respondent also agrees that at the FCCFA's request, the Respondent will intervene in such action and assume all responsibility for defending against it, and that the Respondent's failure to do so will relieve the FCCFA of all further obligations to protect the confidentiality of the document. The FCCFA assumes no responsibility for disclosure or use of unmarked data for any purposes.

FCCFA Policies and Ordinances – Respondents should be aware of and therefore familiar with all pertinent ordinances and policies that will relate to contracting with the FCCFA. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict between the process of requirements set forth in this RFP and FCCFA policies and ordinances, or other requirements of law, such policies, ordinances, or other requirements shall take precedence.

Right of Refusal – the FCCFA reserves the right to reject any proposal in which the Respondent takes exception to the terms and conditions of this RFP; fails to meet the terms and conditions of this RFP, including but not limited to, the standards, specifications, and requirements specified in this RFP.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (NON-DISCRIMINATION) POLICY

Through the adoption of this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy ("DEI Policy") the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority ("FCCFA") affirms its commitment to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all aspects of its operations including, but not limited to, contracting and procurement, employee recruitment and selection, compensation and benefits, professional development and training, promotions, transfers, layoffs, and terminations. Pursuant to this DEI Policy the FCCFA will not participate in either active or passive unlawful discrimination of any type and will strive to maintain an open, diverse, and inclusive workplace for all employees, officers, contractors, and subcontractors.

It is the position of the FCCFA that discrimination of any kind based upon age, sex, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, genetic information, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family or marital status, military or veteran status, or any other basis prohibited by the laws of the United States, the State of Ohio, or the City of Columbus ("Protected Status") is prohibited. No person shall be unlawfully denied the benefit of, or otherwise be discriminated against in connection with their employment, the award or performance of any contract, or the modification of any contract or award.

The fundamental tenets of this DEI Policy are as follows:

- All Contractors shall have an equal opportunity to compete with respect to contracting and procurement activities of the FCCFA, regardless of age, sex, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, genetic information, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family or marital status, military or veteran status, or any other Protected Status;
- No Contractor or FCCFA employee shall have engaged or shall engage in any kind of unlawful discrimination involving age, sex, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family or marital status, or any other Protected Status, whether or not such unlawful discrimination is related to the FCCFA or any contract with the FCCFA;
- The FCCFA and any Contractor seeking to do business with the FCCFA shall, whenever possible, craft bid specifications which enable MBE/WBE participation that is consistent with demographics for the City of Columbus;
- The FCCFA through its staff, facility management companies and other contractors will (i) monitor and provide periodic reports to the FCCFA Board of Directors regarding compliance by the FCCFA and its Contractors with this DEI Policy; (ii) collect and record information on the inclusion of minorities and women in their contracting, procurement, and workforce activities; and (iii) analyze data to evaluate the inclusion of minorities and women in the FCCFA's contracting, procurement, and workforce activities. Specific reporting requirements shall include:
 - Semi-annual diversity profile updates from all key service partners and facility management companies;
 - Documentation of contractor compliance with this DEI Policy in any recommendation of award presented to the FCCFA Board of Directors;
 - Monthly board reports describing MWBE participation rates for all ongoing construction projects.
- The FCCFA shall review this DEI Policy periodically to ensure that it effectively promotes and achieves diversity, equity, inclusion, non-discrimination and equal opportunity in connection with the FCCFA's operations, and all contracting and procurement activities; and
- All Contractors and employees shall comply with this DEI Policy. A Contractor's success or failure to comply with this DEI Policy will be a factor in any award of a contract to such Contractor. An employee's success or failure to comply with this DEI Policy will be a factor considered in connection with any disciplinary measures or continued employment with FCCFA.

The FCCFA through its staff, facility management companies and other contractors shall be responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this DEI Policy.

If the FCCFA determines that the objectives of this DEI Policy are not being achieved, the FCCFA Board of Directors may, in their discretion, direct the Executive Director to conduct further investigations into the reasons for not achieving such objectives.

This DEI Policy applies to all contracting and procurement activities of the FCCFA, including contracting for construction, professional and non-professional services and procurement of goods and supplies.

This DEI Policy shall be referenced in each bid and Request for Proposal or Qualifications document issued by the FCCFA. A Contractor's failure to comply with this DEI Policy may result in (a) debarment from participation in future FCCFA contracting opportunities, (b) liability for breach of contract and (c) the enforcement of any other remedies available under the related contract or applicable law.