



## **Request for Proposals (RFP) – COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

February 2021

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

**Purpose of the RFP** - Deaconess Foundation (“Deaconess” or “Foundation”) is seeking a full-service communications and public relations agency/firm to assist the Foundation in the development and implementation of a strategic and sustainable multi-year communications plan aligned with the Foundation’s power-building strategy to advance child well-being through racial equity and public policy. The communications plan will include strategies to announce the hire of a new chief executive leader, promote philanthropic and advocacy efforts and garner earned media.

**Deaconess Foundation** is a grant making organization building power for child well-being through philanthropy, advocacy and organizing for racial equity and public policy change. A ministry of the United Church of Christ, Deaconess has invested more than \$85 million to improve the health of the St. Louis community since 1998. The Foundation’s advocacy and grantmaking footprint includes St. Louis City, St. Louis, Jefferson, St. Charles and Franklin Counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair and Monroe Counties in Illinois. More information can be found at [www.deaconess.org](http://www.deaconess.org).

**Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being** is a community action tank established by Deaconess Foundation. Its mission is to build power to advance child well-being in the St. Louis region by strengthening alliances for child-friendly public policy, increasing citizen contact with policy makers, positioning youth and organizers to move systems and engaging faith communities in child advocacy. Since opening in 2018, Deaconess Center has hosted nearly 12,000 child advocates, civic leaders and community organizers in more than 600 convenings aligned with Deaconess’ policy agenda. More information can be found at [www.deaconesscenter.org](http://www.deaconesscenter.org).

### **II. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

Overview: The scope includes, but is not limited to, reinforcing Deaconess Foundation’s brand externally through multiple communications and media campaigns; reinforcing the brand internally by refining the brand standards and messaging; engaging audiences through social media activity; development of videos and printed media; and other projects as requested.

- A. Agency/Firm will obtain an understanding of new and ongoing strategic initiatives, organizational goals and branding assets.
- B. Agency/Firm will assess and evaluate existing communication—both internal and external—through a comprehensive communications audit.
- C. Agency/Firm will establish a unified communication strategy that:
  1. builds public and policymakers’ willingness and capability to take actions aligned with Deaconess’ Policy Agenda,
  2. accumulates and deploys influence in the philanthropic sector in order to drive increased grantmaking practice and giving aligned with Deaconess’ Theory of

- Change, and
3. evangelize and equip faith leaders and communities within the United Church of Christ and historic Black Church traditions to integrate child advocacy into their faith-inspired activism.

The strategy will be integrated with continuity across mediums.

- D. Agency/Firm will recommend campaign strategies from conception through design, development, production and evaluation as needed. Strategies will be targeted to key audiences:
  1. Regional (St. Louis metropolitan statistical area) nonprofits advocating for children, building power for their families and seeking funding or partnership opportunities,
  2. Community members interested in advocacy related to the needs of children,
  3. National and regional movement leaders, organizers and child well-being advocates,
  4. United Church of Christ and historically Black church affiliated organizations and advocates,
  5. National and regional leaders and organizations from the faith, philanthropic and civic sectors, and
  6. Regional public policymakers.
- E. Agency/Firm will lead outreach to garner earned media placements and conduct placement monitoring.
- F. Agency/Firm will provide graphic design, photography and videography as needed.
- G. Agency/Firm will provide metrics and monitoring of implementation effectiveness, including recommendations for redirection of resources as needed.

### **III. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION**

- A. The selected agency/firm will have access to the Foundation's current library of photography and video assets.
- B. The selected agency/firm will have access to the Foundation's current communications plan and media metrics to refine institutional messaging and positioning.
- C. Deaconess will retain all ownership rights of any creative developed for media campaigns. It is expected that once a comprehensive campaign is developed, the Foundation will be able to use the templates for the development of additional collateral material.
- D. Deaconess will approve deliverables created prior to publication.
- E. Deaconess expects the personnel assigned to its account management team will serve diligently throughout the term of the contract.
- F. All creative development including copy (taglines, themes, etc.) imagery, photography, graphic design, artwork and audio-visual representations will become the sole property of Deaconess.
- G. Any communications research results will be the property of Deaconess and cannot be shared without express prior written consent.

### **IV. PROPOSAL CONTENT**

The Agency/Firm will be responsible for preparing an effective, clear, and concise proposal. In no more than twenty (20) pages, proposals should include the following information. Please provide the information in the order requested to facilitate an equitable and efficient review of the qualifications of each organization.

- A. Name and Contacts - Include agency's/firm's complete name and contact information. If this is a collaborative effort with another firm or firms, or if any of the work is subcontracted to another party, please provide the same information for all consultants and indicate who will be the lead consultant.
- B. Firm Profile - Provide a brief description of the size of the firm(s) and the composition of professional staff by level.
  - 1. Include the racial/ethnic and gender demographics of your firm and its leadership. Indicate any regional or national resources available to the local team.
  - 2. Describe the recent experience of your firm in working with comparable organizations: faith-based, grantmaking, engaged in advocacy, nonprofit, etc. Provide the names of organizations and contact information for 501(c)(3) organizations and foundations for whom you have worked within the past three years.
  - 3. Deaconess believes that diverse and inclusive teams lead to better outcomes. Describe your firm's efforts to recruit, retain and support professional people of color.
- C. Qualifications - Provide number of years the firm has been in business and the firm's qualifications and experience performing similar communications/public relations tasks. Include information on the agency's/firm's ability to manage a project in partnership with management, adaptiveness and experience in providing coaching and training support to staff teams.
- D. Quality - Briefly describe the firm's system of quality control to ensure that the work is adequately performed.
- E. Communication – Describe your firm's approach to communications with Deaconess throughout the engagement and for ongoing support.
- F. Key Personnel – List staff directly assigned to this project, including name, job title, duties and responsibilities and relevant experience. Please include the racial/ethnic and gender demographics of the team working on the account.
- G. Conflict of Interest – Describe any existing or potential relationships with board members or employees of Deaconess Foundation that could impact your firm's independence by creating an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- H. Fees – Provide a standard fee schedule (hours rates, or other fee schedule) for the personnel who would be assigned to this project. Included an overall not-to-exceed fee for the services described above. The fee is to be inclusive of all out-of-pocket expenses. Describe your billing rates and procedures for technical questions and break down hourly rates by management level.
- I. References – Provide at least three current references for similar types of projects. Briefly describe the scope of your work for these references, the year completed, and a contact name and telephone/email for each one. (This information may be included with Item 'C' above.)
- J. Additional services – Feel free to provide information on additional services that you believe would be pertinent and align with Deaconess' operating and capacity goals.

## V. SELECTION CRITERIA

Each proposal received will be evaluated and a determination will be made if it meets the minimum requirements. Failure to meet these requirements will be a cause for eliminating the proposal from further consideration.

Deaconess reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive any technicalities, informalities and irregularities, to accept or reject all or part of the proposal, and to be the sole judge of the suitability of the proposals offered.

Evaluation of the proposals will be made by the Director of Advocacy and Freedom Schools. In addition to evaluating written proposals, oral interviews may be requested.

Proposals will be evaluated generally on the following criteria, which is neither weighted nor prioritized:

- Qualification and experience of the respondent's organization and staff;
- Understanding of the work to be performed and scope of services available;
- Knowledge of best practices, latest standards and innovative solutions;
- Firm's alignment with Deaconess mission, vision and values, including racial equity;
- Individualized service approach, and
- Effective financial stewardship related to Fees.

## VI. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND SELECTION TIMELINE

- A. Submission - The proposals must be submitted in a PDF format via e-mail to [apply@deaconess.org](mailto:apply@deaconess.org) by **5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time on March 29, 2021**. Inquiries or questions regarding your submission may be directed to:

Constance Rush  
Director of Advocacy &  
Freedom Schools  
[apply@deaconess.org](mailto:apply@deaconess.org)  
314.332.9484

Please direct all inquiries to the Director of Advocacy and Freedom Schools only. Please do not contact any Board members. The failure to comply may result in disqualification.

- B. Selection Timeline - Deadlines and Selection Timing is as follows:

March 29, 2021	Deadline for submitting a proposal
March 30-April 5, 2021	Proposal Review and Reference Checking
April 8-9, 2021	Firm Presentations and Interviews
April 15, 2021	Notification of Acceptance

## VII. COMMITMENTS AND CONDITIONS

- A. Racial Equity Commitment - Deaconess strongly encourages firms owned and led by members of historically under-represented and undercapitalized groups, including African Americans, Latinx, Indigenous communities, women and small businesses to submit proposals, to participate as partners, and/or to participate in other business activity in response to this RFP.

Any firm awarded the contract agrees to use its best efforts to subcontract and employ individuals from and firms owned and led by members of historically under-represented and undercapitalized groups, including African Americans, Latinx, Indigenous communities and women. Deaconess is an equal opportunity employer and requires its entire contractor to comply with policies and regulations concerning equal employment opportunity and community benefit.

Our fully articulated commitments to racial equity in governance and operations can be found [here](#).

- B. Withdrawal of Proposal - Proposals may be withdrawn before and after the RFP submittal deadline by submitting a written request to the Contact Person. Re-submittal before the RFP submittal deadline can be made. However, proposals may not be re-submitted after the deadline.
- C. Proposal Costs - All costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of the RFP shall be completely borne by the responding party to the RFP. All documents submitted as part of the RFP will become the property of Deaconess Foundation. Requests for specific material to be returned will be considered. Any material submitted that is confidential must be clearly marked as such.