

Strategic Communications and Public Relations RFP

Questions and Responses

March 8, 2023

Contract/Project Dates

1. **Can you clarify the dates of the project? In the RFP, it says the start date is March 27, 2022. Can you please confirm it is a 3-month contract starting March 27, 2023?**

Response: Under RFP Addendum #1, the anticipated contract start date has been revised to April 3, 2023. The contract period will be approximately 3 months, ending on June 30, 2023.

2. **How long is the contract term? The RFP lists a date in March 2022 and ends in June 2023.**

Response: See response to question 1.

3. **Can you confirm the length of the awarded contract? The RFP states that the contract is expected to begin on or about March 27, 2022 and end no later than June 30, 2023. Should this be March 27, 2023 through June 30, 2024?**

Response: See response to question 1.

4. **In Section I(D), Anticipated Contract Type, it notes “the contract is expected to begin on or about March 27, 2022 and end no later than June 30, 2023.” Did FPHNYC intend to write March 27, 2023 through June 30, 2024 (a contract lasting 14 months total)? Please clarify the dates and length of the contract.**

Response: See response to question 1.

5. **Section I.B RFP Timetable states that the expected contract start date is March 27, 2023, however, Section I.D Anticipated Contract Type states that the contract is expected to begin on or about March 27, 2022 and end no later than June 30, 2023. Can you kindly confirm the start/end dates and duration for this contract?**

Response: See response to question 1.

6. **Is there any significance to the three-month period you identified?**

Response: The contract is scheduled for 3-months due to work centered on specific agency messaging and projects.

Proposal Requirements

7. **Is there a minimum or maximum length for a proposal?**

Response: There is no minimum page requirement; however, proposal narratives may not exceed 14 pages in length.

8. **In section III (A)(4)(II)(e), Content of Proposal/Proposal Narrative/Organizational Capacity & Experience, where it states to “Provide at least 3 examples of strategic plans, press releases, and other materials from previous projects” – please clarify if you are seeking three examples of each noted category or three examples in total.**

Response: Please provide three examples total and include one example for each category listed.

- 9. We are happy to provide the examples you're looking for in Section III: Proposal Narrative. Since these are longer documents, are you open to including them as hyperlinks in the main proposal document? Also, are you OK with receiving strategic plans that redact the client names?**

Response: Yes, hyperlinks may be provided in lieu of attaching materials. Please ensure three examples are provided, one example for each category listed. Strategic plans or other materials with redacted information will be accepted.

Submission Deadline

- 10. Could we request an extension to the submission deadline?**

Response: Addendum #1 was issued on 3/7/2023 extending the submission deadline to Monday, March 13, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. ET. The addendum can be accessed [here](#).

Vendor Preferences

- 11. Are you giving greater weight to firms versus individual consultants, or are proposals being treated/weighted equally regardless of whether they are coming from a firm?**

Response: Both are being considered and treated equally.

- 12. Could you let us know if you have a local preference or are you open to a Canadian agency specializing in Healthcare that has done similar work with clients across the United States, with some currently being the States of California, Colorado and Wyoming?**

Response: It is helpful for the selected vendor be knowledgeable to the New York City communications and media market. However, any applicant who can demonstrate the needed expertise and knowledge will be considered.

Pricing

- 13. Our firm works on a monthly retainer model for pricing. Are you OK with receiving a price proposal structured as a monthly retainer?**

Response: Yes, price proposals based on a monthly retainer are acceptable.

Strategic Planning/Goals and Objectives/Measuring Success

- 14. Was the 2022 DOHMH internal planning process spurred by COVID or were there other factors involved?**

Response: There were multiple factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, that led to the Agency's decision to undertake a strategic planning process.

- 15. What went into strategic planning - how did you arrive at these specific priorities?**

Response: The strategic planning process, including setting of priority areas, was based on internal and external interviews, as well as benchmarking of NYC population health data against other large U.S. cities.

16. We are excited to see the key program areas you've established coming out of your internal planning. Do any of these objectives take priority or precedent over another?

Response: They are equally important.

17. Can you provide more information about the NYC Health Department's broader public health agenda and its priority areas as defined in its strategic plan?

Response: DOHMH's strategic plan identifies five key areas of focus: 1. Making the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene a Response Ready Organization; 2. Improving Chronic Disease Outcomes by Tackling Upstream Root Causes; 3. Addressing the Second Pandemic of Mental Illness of Social Isolation; 4. Reducing Black Maternal Mortality by Engaging with Communities and Taking an Anti-Racist Health System Approach; and 5. Mobilizing Against the Health Impacts of Climate Change. The agency recently released its new [Mental Health Plan](#).

18. Anything else topline that can be shared on the two first 'framework docs' leading this push?

Response: Additional details cannot be shared at this time. More information will be shared with the selected vendor.

19. Will any corresponding investments be made with the plans?

Response: Similar to the [Mental Health Plan](#), DOHMH will work with city, state and federal partners to ensure meaningful investments in each area.

20. How will these plans relate to others the City is rolling out (i.e. Mental Health Agenda)?

Response: Similar to the recently released [Mental Health Plan](#), the plans will lay out the public health rationale, provide data about the extent of the problem, lay out a theory of change that includes prevention and intervention, and will outline initiatives and collective goals.

21. What are your public affairs priorities and policy objectives?

Response: For this project, the key objective will be supporting the successful launch of upcoming plans/strategies around the agency's priority issues, with a focus on media and social media promotion.

22. How will success be measured and evaluated for this project?

Response: DOHMH will work with the selected vendor to develop key performance indicators to measure progress in achieving agency objectives.

23. How will you quantifiably measure the success of this engagement?

Response: See response to question 22.

24. Are there any key milestones around these program areas we should consider in our planning process?

Response: We expect at least one plan to launch in late April.

25. What have been the challenges you've encountered in past communications campaigns/efforts?

Response: Overly complex messages that do not resonate with key audiences.

26. What has made projects like this one successful in the past?

Response: Clear and open communication between the agency and the vendor; acknowledgement and understanding of the existing communication structure at the agency.

27. Have you worked with communications firms in the past? If so, what has worked well and what hasn't?

Response: See response to question 26.

28. What benefits and challenges come from DOHMH's unique culture and organizational complexity?

Response: It would be difficult to summarize all of the benefits and challenges. However, one of the agency's biggest challenges is clearly communicating complex public health information.

29. You mention an audit of efficiency and effectiveness. What is the impetus of this audit and your desired outcomes?

Response: Communications is a critical focus of public health infrastructure. Coming out of the COVID-19 emergency, we are reviewing our current processes and structure to make sure we are set up for success in a changing public health landscape.

30. In your experience to date, what has worked most effectively in communicating with your constituents?

Response: The effectiveness of communications strategies differs depending on the issue and audience. To maximize reach and impact, we try to incorporate multiple mediums for all messaging.

31. Are there current communications organizations that you are already working with?

Response: SKDK, Meltwater, as well as multiple advertising agencies and media buyers on contract with the Department and Administration.

Current Program

32. Can you tell us a little about DOHMH's existing communications and digital team? How many people and what titles?

Response: The Bureau of Communications is housed within the Office of External Affairs. There are 64 employees working across multiple units including language access, publications, marketing, press, and digital. The Agency's organizational chart can be accessed [here](#).

33. We understand that assisting with the design of the structure of the communications team is a key piece of this work. By way of structural planning, does DOHMH have any projections or restrictions on the size of this team moving forward?

Response: We do not anticipate any significant changes to the size of the team in the near future. In addition to the 64 current employees; there are a few grant funded positions that will be added over the next few months.

34. Regarding analyzing infrastructure, can you identify any of the agency leaders you would include in your digital/social assessment?

Response: The Commissioner of Health and other agency leaders who report to the Commissioner.

35. How does DOHMH's communications and public relations team work with other departments and stakeholders within the agency to enhance its communication capacity? What are some of the challenges you face in doing so?

Response: The central communications team works with the programmatic divisions to carry out their communications priorities. Some of the challenges the agency is looking to address are

streamlining processes to increase efficiency and enhance the agency's ability to identify strategic opportunities.

36. How do FPHNYC and DOHMH coordinate with other city agencies and Mayor's Office? And how often?

Response: There are many existing channels for communication through City Hall, and direct agency to agency relationships. Communication between agencies and with the Mayor's Office is regular and frequent.

37. How does DOHMH collaborate with third-party allies such as NGOs, community health workers, local organizations, academic institutions, media outlets and private sector entities to enhance its communication capacity and impact?

Response: We have many touch points with external stakeholders, both at the leadership level and related to specific topics and initiatives. Community outreach and stakeholder engagement is a key activity of the agency.

38. Do you have any existing press relationships? Are there reporter beats or specific types of press that are a target for you?

Response: Yes, to both questions. We expect that the agency's existing assets and any specific targets will be incorporated into the communications strategies once the vendor is selected.

39. Are there any relevant enterprise platforms, such as Salesforce or other technologies, that should be considered? Are there any collaboration tools or best practices already utilized by the Department of External Affairs?

Response: We are exploring different technologies to help with internal processes and efficiencies. We are open to suggestions.

40. Can you share an inventory of DOHMH's current communication channels?

Response: Currently we use our website, printed materials, vehicles for specific audiences such as the provider community, and social media channels.

41. What does the current approval structure look like for the organization? What additional stakeholders need to be engaged here?

Response: Agency leadership, including the Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs and the Commissioner, as well as City Hall colleagues.

42. What is the demeanor of the current Commissioner toward communications in terms of time and willingness?

Response: The Commissioner engages routinely with the media and views communications as a necessary and powerful tool for the Department's work.

43. Are there any areas of your current digital and communications that you consider particularly strong/in less need of agency support? Conversely, are there any specific blind spots we should pay special attention to?

Response: We are exploring new digital platforms and would welcome suggestions on how they can be incorporated into our existing communications to New Yorkers.

44. Are there any city departments or agencies that you think are doing an exceptional job when it comes to comms and digital engagement, that you may look to aspirationally?

Response: Given the nature of our communications, direct comparison is difficult to other city government handles. We are looking at our colleagues that are using Tik Tok and other newer social platforms.

Scope of Work

45. How much of this is launching the plans versus more general PR?

Response: For this project, we'll be considering the strategies developed for roll out of the plans as use cases through which we can develop broad PR strategies.

46. How fully developed will the plans be? How much support are you looking for on plan/product development v strategies to elevate them?

Response: We are not looking for help developing the health plans; we are seeking help communicating about the plans.

47. Will the selected consultant/firm be responsible for creating all communication materials, or will the internal DOHMH team be providing some of the content?

Response: It will be a partnership.

48. Are you working with a graphic designer to ensure that the collateral speaks to the communities we are working to reach?

Response: Yes. The Communications Bureau has a Publications team and works with several contracted vendors. We also have a Language Access Unit that routinely translates all materials into at least the top 13 languages spoken in the city.

49. When it comes to developing communication strategy and the recently completed strategic plan, do you have existing audience research for your programs or any personas attached to these objectives? How do you envision your agency partnering assisting in audience research and segmentation?

Response: Yes, the agency does collect data; however, submitted proposals are not expected to include strategies for engaging specific audiences. This will be discussed with the selected vendor.

50. Who are your most important audiences for this communications effort? How would you rank those audiences in terms of importance?

Response: There are multiple audiences including: the general public; community-based organizations; the public health community; policy makers; sister agencies; and the private sector. All are critical to reach and engage.

51. Are translation services an expected part of the engagement as they would be necessary component to a successful outreach campaign?

Response: No, the agency has a translations services unit that can assist with this.

52. Are there separate resources for the accessibility of the deliverables from this engagement? e.g. language translation services.

Response: No, the agency has internal resources, including a translations services unit, that can assist with this.

53. Are there any restrictions or guidelines for communication messages that need to be considered, such as legal or ethical constraints?

Response: Yes, this will be discussed in detail with the selected vendor.

54. What is the biggest pain point we can relieve for you?

Response: This will not factor into the evaluation and selection process. Any pain points or issues to be resolved will be discussed with the selected vendor.

55. Does DOHMH have concerns over COVID fatigue, with programs/services receiving less attention or coverage post-pandemic?

Response: The biggest challenge is clearly communicating complex public health information.

56. Would paid media campaigns be overseen internally by FPHNYC or externally by the agency?

Response: Any paid media campaigns will be overseen by DOHMH.

57. Who will be responsible internally for the sustainability of this work after the end of the contract?

Response: The agency's Office of External Affairs will be responsible for sustaining the work begun under this project.

Meetings

59. Can you give us a rough estimate of how many meetings yours and DOHMH's communications and digital teams participate in per week? Month, if relevant?

Response: There are multiple internal meetings each week. We would expect the vendor to participate in at least 2 meetings per week with the team.

60. What is the expected frequency and cadence of routine communications and digital team meetings?

Response: The vendor is expected to be in frequent weekly communication with the project team. The specific cadence will be discussed and agreed to when finalizing the contract scope of work.

61. Are the weekly and routine meetings noted throughout section B (Scope of Work) in person meetings or virtual meetings? And if they are in person, can you please indicate where the meetings take place?

Response: The meetings are expected to be held virtually; the specific structure will be discussed and agreed to when finalizing the contract scope of work.

62. Are the meetings in person or virtual? How do you like to work and partner?

Response: The meetings are expected to be held virtually. It is expected that the vendor takes a heavy advisory role on the process and in constant communication with the Office of External Affairs and the Commissioner's Office.

Contacts/Communication

63. Who will be the key point(s) of contact on the DOHMH side for your selected agency partner?

Response: The key points of contact will be Chief of Staff Jenna Mandel-Ricci and Maura Kennelly, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of External Affairs.

64. How do you plan to share key information with your selected partner?

Response: Information will be provided via email and meetings.

FPHNYC Partnership

65. What does your partnership/workflow with DOHMH look like?

Response: For the purposes of this engagement, FPHNY will serve as fiscal agent.

66. Is there a desire to elevate the Fund as well?

Response: This engagement will focus exclusively on DOHMH.