



Public Relations and Outreach Partner Request for Proposals

Purpose

The Bush Foundation is seeking a long-term partner to help advise on and implement its public / media relations efforts and outreach goals to grow our influence in the broader field of philanthropy and awareness about our grantmaking and opportunities in the region.

About the Bush Foundation

The Bush Foundation works to inspire and support creative problem solving – within and across sectors – to make our region better for everyone. To do this, we invest in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.

Project Background

We are eager to focus our communications on efforts that amplify the work of others in our region and help others know about our grants and opportunities.

We do this by making the most of our messaging on our website; using our social media channels to reach specific audiences; engaging people who follow our work through our e-newsletters; working with our media sponsorship partners to grow our visibility; leveraging speaking engagements to share knowledge; and identifying earned media opportunities.

One of our biggest priorities is to use our influence to inspire others in our field – nationally and locally – in ways that help our field and region thrive.

Project Overview

We are seeking a partner with experience in two key areas: 1) public and media relations; and 2) outreach with diverse communities in our region.

A specialty area that would be especially helpful is savviness with public perception and the growing polarization and politicization of wide-ranging issues affecting our region. Additionally, a keen sensibility for connecting with rural audiences is important.

The partner would play the role of communications thought partner and advisor, providing an important perspective on how we share our work publicly, as well as provide some additional communications capacity related to public relations and media outreach work.

Scope of Work

Keeping in mind our goal and priority of influencing our field, these are the key aspects of the work we envision with this partner:

Public relations (PR): Grow awareness of our work and reputation as credible and trustworthy in practice and perception.

- Advise us on when, how or if to communicate specific issues as they arise that could be politicized or made controversial.
- Advise us on public-facing organizational statements and when, how or if to engage in challenging public conversations.
- Provide crisis communications expertise and guide us in assessing our reputational risk.

- Help identify opportunities for our staff and leadership to proactively influence conversations and topics and share their expertise with local and national audiences (e.g., speaking engagements, publishing opportunities, conferences or events to attend).
- Provide additional capacity in drafting press releases and talking points; working with grant partners, submitting materials for conferences or speaking engagements; and other materials needed to support PR and engagement activities.

Media relations: Deepen our relationships and work with key local media partners, and expand our network and relationships with other media outlets, locally and nationally.

- Provide promotional capacity for the Bush Fellowship program, including the annual announcement of new Fellows in the first half of the year and promotion of open applications to become a Fellow in the second half of the year.
- Support announcements related to our grantmaking activities to make sure more people are aware of grants and opportunities that we fund or support.
- Provide additional guidance and capacity in helping us to leverage our media sponsorships program.
- Provide consulting support for our key community grant partners and program partners as needed.

Outreach with diverse communities: Expand our visibility and leadership on key issues affecting our region and the philanthropic field.

- Help identify, deepen or expand our relationships and outreach opportunities with membership-based organizations across our region (e.g., Minnesota Council on Foundations, Native Americans in Philanthropy, North Dakota Association of Nonprofit Organizations).
- Support our strategic priority of community engagement, which is in the definition and planning stages.

Qualities We are Seeking in a Partner

- Proven track record of developing and implementing external PR / outreach strategies, preferably for foundations, nonprofits and/or public sector organizations with broad reach and public profiles that affect others.
- Strong expertise and experience in generating earned and paid media, writing press releases or announcements, and providing media training (staff and grantees).
- Current relationships and connections with key media outlets and journalists, nationally and locally with emphasis on the latter.
- Experience building relationships and connections with diverse media outlets and influencers, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous and communities of color, and rural communities
- Up to date on latest trends in PR / outreach / promotions and our field or a related one, as well as current events and public sentiment in our region.
- General understanding of philanthropy, private foundations and the nonprofit sector – and awareness of what our peers are doing – to be able to provide relevant perspectives.
- Organizational values and practices that align with the Foundation's [operating values](#).
- Commitment to growing equity in own operations and approaches.
- Understanding of our grantmaking region.

While we are open to partners located outside of our region, we will prioritize those that are located in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota or one of the 23 Native nations that share the same geography.

Proposal Requirements

If you are interested in this opportunity, please provide the following information:

- High-level summary of your history and relevant experience in public and media relations and outreach activities.
- Examples of three (3) projects that demonstrate your related experience and effectiveness. Include at least one example that shows your experience with racially and/or geographically diverse media outlets, influencers or community members.
- Key attributes that distinguish your approach to projects like this.
- Statement on what you see as possible reputational successes and challenges for the Bush Foundation, and how you would help us manage those factors.
- For *larger organizations*, a statement of how you propose to assign and coordinate personnel for this work. For *individuals or smaller organizations*, a statement of how you propose to structure staffing to support the work.
- Three references, including name, organization, email, phone number and their relationship to you and relevance to this proposal.

Contract Structure and Fees

The contract will be with the Bush Foundation and managed by Kari Ruth, communications director. The length of the contract will be for at least four (4) years and may be renewed if the partnership is successful, though still subject to our open RFP process.

We expect the work to vary, with some weeks or even months being minimal and others requiring full-time attention. Overall, we expect high-demand periods to be limited and episodic.

While this contract is for at least four (4) years, we will budget on an annual basis to adapt to changing needs across the organization. We have budgeted up to \$30,000 for this partnership for the remainder of 2023. We likely may not need to use that full amount, depending on the needs of the organization. (The work specific to the 2023 class of Bush Fellows announcement and support on another project is under existing contract for this year.) We will work with the partner to establish a budget for 2024 and beyond.

We are seeking a partner that can help us do the most possible good within our budgets.

How to Submit a Proposal

Proposals are due by 12:00 p.m. (noon CT) on Thursday, April 6, 2023, and should be emailed to Kari Ruth, communications director, at kruth@bushfoundation.org. Please include:

- Subject line of email: RFP response for [your organization's name]
- Your proposal should not exceed six (6) pages (PDF, Word or PPT files accepted)
- Completed [vendor demographic form](#) (fillable PDF)

Questions? Please contact Kari Ruth at kruth@bushfoundation.org.

Selection Process and Timeline

- Thursday, March 9: RFP opens
- Thursday, April 6: RFP closes at 12:00 p.m. (noon CT)
- Week of April 24: RFP finalists are selected and applicants are notified whether they're moving forward in the process
- May 1 – 19: Interview finalist(s) (via Zoom) and select partner
- May 22 – June 2: Finalize contract