

# Request for Proposals

## Public Relations Services

**Date Issued:** February 10, 2025

**Responses Due:** March 5, 2025

**Contact Information:**

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## INTRODUCTION & INFORMATION

The Austin DMO, Inc. d/b/a Downtown Austin Alliance in Austin, Travis County, Texas requests the submission of responses to the following Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified firms or firm teams for public relations services (“Services”).

The selected firm(s) would raise awareness of the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation, and Downtown Parks, LLC, (“the client”) through ongoing public relations services including strategy, campaign management and day-to day- media monitoring and management, working closely with the client’s staff. Consultants should have:

- relationships with key media outlets and a strong understanding of the local, state, and national media landscape;
- knowledge of the political landscape in Austin;
- relationships with key community leaders;
- experience working with a range of local public, private and non-profit entities.

### ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN ALLIANCE

The Downtown Austin Alliance mission is to create, preserve and enhance the vibe, vitality and value of downtown Austin for everyone. We are a non-profit organization that partners with businesses, civic organizations, cultural institutions and thought leaders to usher downtown into the future.

The Downtown Austin Alliance manages the Downtown Public Improvement District (PID), which was formed in 1993 and has been subsequently reauthorized several times. The Downtown Austin Alliance leads and participates in a broad range of programs and initiatives that advance our collective vision for downtown Austin. More information on the Downtown Austin Alliance can be found at [downtownaustin.com](http://downtownaustin.com).

### ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN ALLIANCE FOUNDATION

The Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation (the Foundation) was established in 2019 as the 501(c)(3) nonprofit extension of the Downtown Austin Alliance. The Foundation’s mission is to create downtown vibrancy through art, parks, and cultural spaces by and for everyone.

The Downtown Austin Alliance Foundation is dedicated to creating a vibrant and inclusive downtown through art, park enhancements and cultural initiatives. By supporting public art and creative collaborations, the Foundation enriches Austin’s public spaces and creates a welcoming and equitable environment for all. Donations directly fund projects that enhance downtown’s cultural appeal and urban experience, making it a dynamic destination for residents and visitors. Learn more at [downtownaustin.com/about-us/foundation](http://downtownaustin.com/about-us/foundation).

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The work of the Downtown Austin Alliance (Downtown Alliance) is guided by the Downtown Austin Vision, created by community members in 2018. We designed our Strategic Plan to work toward the long-term Downtown Vision while addressing downtown's emerging projects and most pressing needs over the coming years.

As downtown's full-time advocate and champion, we provide:

- Direct Services: Keeping downtown clean, safe, beautiful and welcoming
- Advocacy: Collaborating on informed & inclusive policy making for downtown
- Planning: Bringing people and organizations together to shape our neighborhoods
- Placemaking: Activating parks and urban spaces with inclusive, appealing programming
- Research: Serving as a central hub for downtown data and metrics

The Downtown Alliance aims to be entrusted to effectively lead, influence and visibly steward a downtown for all. A proactive communication and public relations strategy is imperative to realizing this goal.

The Downtown Alliance has an internal communication + marketing department of four FTEs who focus on public relations, events, promotion, brand management, graphic design, photography/videography, social media and member/stakeholder communication. We also have a contractor team providing additional writing, graphic design, content creation and public relations support.

Our communication & marketing priorities are guided by a brand strategy (2016) and a communication strategy (2024). Since 2016, the Downtown Austin Alliance has been executing a PR strategy to build organizational awareness, credibility and trust with key stakeholders, partners and the public by focusing on clearly communicating who we are, what we do, *and* what it means for downtown and our community.

As Austin has become an internationally recognized destination, Downtown Alliance's reputation has grown with the city we serve. Local and national recognition of our wide range of services, projects, programs, events, and role in key civic issues has expanded significantly.

Our wide variety of offerings necessitate multiple PR strategies and campaigns within a comprehensive and cohesive strategy. As much of what happens downtown is out of our control, we must know where we stand on issues and be prepared with messaging to react or respond when the need arises. In addition to actively pitching stories that help advance our efforts, we receive daily media requests to contribute to stories, and are visible in local, state and national media outlets.

The Downtown Alliance creates an annual PR calendar based on the organization's signature events, reports and highest priority advocacy initiatives. From here, we work closely with our

PR team to create campaigns around each event and initiative, respond to issues as they arise and respond to daily requests.

#### Downtown Austin Alliance Guiding Documents

- [Downtown Austin Vision](#)
- [Current Strategic Plan: 2023-2028](#)
- [State of Downtown Report](#)
- [Annual Report](#)

### **ANTICIPATED NEEDS**

The Downtown Alliance is seeking a public relations consultant to work in close collaboration with the VP of Marketing + Communication and Downtown Austin Alliance program leads.

We anticipate this to include:

- Writing press releases
- Speech writing
- Crisis management
- Performing market research
- Media training
- Internal copywriting
- Developing a comprehensive annual public relations calendar
- Developing a storyline and messaging around work of the Downtown Austin Alliance and our strategic initiatives to resonate with various target audiences
- Provide strategic advice on issues as needed
- Provide media training annually to key spokespeople for the organization
- Coordinate Strategic Press Events
- Write blog recaps for educational events and safety forums
- Implement a comprehensive media relations plan:
  - Maintain a custom list of media contacts
  - Set up background interviews with key reporters
  - Draft & send pitches, advisories and releases
  - Respond to media requests in a timely manner
  - Draft messaging for spokespeople and provide media prep sessions as needed
  - Advise on, draft and place op-eds
- Monitor media coverage and relevant stories and send to key staff
- Provide monthly activity and coverage reports including ROI analysis

Fulfillment of this contract generally includes daily collaboration with staff lead to evaluate and fulfill media requests and to ensure timely execution of all aspects of the media relations plan.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Maintain Downtown Alliance’s reputation as the expert on downtown and steward for a clean and safe downtown, balanced with;
- Expanding Downtown Alliance’s visibility and reputation as an entrusted leader, and representative, dynamic face of an inclusive, welcoming downtown Austin.
- Increasing recognition of the Foundation’s programs to enhance the vibe of downtown Austin, including Writing on the Walls, Downtown Austin Space Activation and Musicians Activating Spaces.
- Executing a data informed and proactive strategy around policy, planning and mobility issues impacting downtown:
  - Increase understanding of the importance of downtown to the city as a whole.
  - Increased recognition from public officials on our positions and why they matter to downtown and the community.
  - Building grassroots champions for downtown.
- Continuous and consistent media coverage locally and nationally.

## BUDGET

The selected firm will be paid on a monthly retainer. See submittal for more details.

## ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE

The anticipated schedule supports our upcoming CEO transition and is mindful of AISD spring break.

February 10-March 5, 2025: Proposal Collection

*\*Office hours to answer questions will be made available based on interest.*

March 24-27, 2025: Hold for interviews as needed

May 2025: Contractor selected; contract signed

## DATE AVAILABILITY AND OTHER ASSUMPTIONS

Please hold time the week of March 24 for interviews to be held on an as-needed basis.

Selected consultant should anticipate an in-person kickoff meeting with the project team. Consultant should be available for virtual, weekly check-ins with the client.

## **SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Please include the following components in the RFP Submittal.

- Letter of interest. Include basic background of firm(s), such as name, address, phone number and URL. Letter of interest should state any intent to perform as a WBE/MBE/DBE firm and/or describe commitment to inclusive practices.
- Summary of team qualifications. Include similar clients and highlight successful implementation results, where applicable. Feature charts or graphics where relevant.
- Brief biographies of key personnel that will be assigned to the project. Indicate roles and identify the project manager.
- Proposed process. Include an approach to meet anticipated needs, and a schedule that identifies proposed meetings, time frames for client onboarding.
- Proposed monthly retainer cost, to include staffing plan, billable hours and rates.
- References. Include contact information for up to three (3) references for clients for which the prime contractor has recently provided similar services.
- If applicable, provide a statement concerning conflict of interest, including those interests of the firm that would impede or interfere in the carrying out project in the best interest of the Project Partners.

## SELECTION & AWARD

### EVALUATION OF RESPONSES

Firms/teams will be evaluated based on the following parameters:

- A. Experience with similar projects: proven experience providing public relations services for non-profits, downtown management and/or similar organizations.
- B. Qualifications of the firm(s): ability to execute public relations services for similar organizations with multiple audiences and priorities.
- C. Professional qualifications of the staff assigned to the project: based on expertise and experience working with clients similar in size/scope, including experience of identified project manager and team members.
- D. Firm references: References including the names and contact information for four (4) references for clients for which you have recently provided similar services.

### DEADLINE TO SUBMIT

Please submit responses electronically by Wednesday, **March 5, 2025, 5:00 p.m. CST**.

Short listed firms/teams will be requested to participate in a virtual interviews on March 27 and 28, 2025.

### CONTACT / SUBMIT TO

Applicants may submit a completed proposal and letter of interest in PDF format to:

Vanessa Olson, Vice President, Communication + Marketing  
Downtown Austin Alliance  
[volson@downtownaustin.com](mailto:volson@downtownaustin.com)

## DISCLAIMERS

### ANTIDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The Downtown Austin Alliance does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), sexual orientation, military status, or disability.

### MINORITY OWNED, WOMEN OWNED AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

MBEs/WBEs/DBEs are encouraged to participate as prime contractors, subcontractors, or joint ventures. A list of currently certified MBEs, WBEs, and DBEs in various professional fields is available on the City of Austin [Finance Online website](#). The Downtown Austin Alliance does not maintain a separate list of certified firms.

Vendors are not required to be a certified MBE/WBE/DBE with the City of Austin to be considered for this project opportunity.

### RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

The Downtown Austin Alliance with its partners reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP and reserves the right to short list respondents and base final selection rankings on personal interviews.

Fees provided for in contracts or agreements shall be reasonable. Downtown Austin Alliance with its partners shall consider fees to be reasonable if they are not in excess of those ordinarily charged by the profession as a whole for similar work. Downtown Austin Alliance with its partners will negotiate for procurement of professional services, whereby competitors' qualifications are evaluated, and the most qualified competitor is selected, subject to negotiations of fair and reasonable compensation.

Downtown Austin Alliance with its partners is not obligated to award a contract solely based on this request or to otherwise pay for information solicited.