Request for Proposals: Marketing and Communications Consultation

Issued by Ride Connection

Issue date	**Sept. 28, 2026** Revison 1, 10.19.2026
Questions due	Oct. 19, 2026
Proposal due	Oct. 23, 2026
Anticipated selection	After Oct. 23, 2026
Anticipated engagement	After Oct. 30, 2026
RFP contact	contracts@rideconnection.org

1**. Invitation**

Ride Connection invites proposals from qualified marketing and communications consultants or firms to help translate awareness strategies from its 2026-2029 strategic plan into an integrated, actionable, and measurable program. The selected consultant will strengthen public understanding of customers' transportation needs and Ride Connection's distinctive role in creating accessible, community-based transportation solutions.

2. **Organizational Background**

Ride Connection is a private nonprofit organization based in Portland, Oregon. Its mission is to move lives by providing safe, personalized transportation for people who need it, and its vision is a connected community where no one is left behind. Through a regional network, it helps older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and underserved communities access essential services, independence, and community connection.

3. **Strategic Context and Purpose**

This engagement supports Ride Connection's strategic goal to increase awareness of customers' transportation needs and the organization's unique role in creating solutions. The work should build public support through authentic storytelling and data; expand volunteer recruitment; strengthen donor, corporate, public-sector, and service-partner engagement; and improve digital and media performance.

4. **Engagement Objectives**

- Develop a clear, audience-centered marketing and communications strategy aligned with the awareness goal.
- Increase awareness among public-sector leaders.
- Secure an average of at least one earned-media mention or placement per month.
- Build effective volunteer recruitment and brand-ambassador pathways.
- Equip nonprofit service partners to communicate Ride Connection's contribution in ways responsive to lived experience, language, culture, and accessibility needs.
- Establish a digital engagement strategy designed to achieve a threefold increase from an agreed baseline.

5. **Scope of Work**

5.1 Discovery, Research, and Audit

- Conduct a project kickoff and review the strategic plan, brand assets, research, analytics, communications calendar, prior campaigns, and available customer and stakeholder data.
- Interview or facilitate listening sessions with leadership, staff, customers, volunteers, service partners, donors, advocates, and public-sector stakeholders.
- Audit current brand positioning, messages, website and digital channels, content, media relations, recruitment communications, and measurement practices.
- Assess internal capacity, workflow, tools, and opportunities for multilingual and accessible communication.

5.2 **Strategy and Positioning**

- Define priority audiences, desired actions, value propositions, message architecture, proof points, and channel roles.
- Develop a customer-led storytelling and data strategy with ethical consent, privacy, accessibility, and compensation considerations.
- Recommend a movement-building narrative and advocacy communications approach to engage public-sector leaders and the broader community.
- Create a phased, multiyear roadmap with a detailed first-year implementation plan, responsibilities, dependencies, and resource requirements.

5.3 **Campaigns and Engagement Systems**

- Create a volunteer recruitment and ambassador strategy.
- Design a service-partner engagement process and adaptable toolkit that partners can use across languages, cultures, and communication contexts.
- Develop a digital engagement strategy encompassing the website, email, social media, search, paid media where appropriate, and conversion pathways.
- Create an earned-media strategy, press calendar, story pipeline, spokesperson approach, and media protocols.

5.4 **Implementation Support and Capacity Building**

- Facilitate prioritization, implementation planning, and cross-functional coordination with executive, planning and government affairs, development, volunteer, and communications leads.
- Support the development of templates, editorial and campaign calendars, briefing materials, and repeatable workflows.

6. **Required Deliverables**

1. Discovery findings and marketing and communications audit.
2. Audience framework and prioritized stakeholder map.
3. Integrated marketing and communications strategy and three-year roadmap.
4. First-year implementation plan, calendar, roles matrix, and recommended budget allocation.
5. Message platform, narrative framework, proof points, and spokesperson guidance.
6. Customer storytelling and data-use framework.
8. Volunteer recruitment and ambassador plan and toolkit.
9. Service-partner engagement process and adaptable communications toolkit.
10. Public-sector, earned-media, donor, and corporate engagement recommendations.
11. Digital strategy, content plan, channel metrics, and conversion recommendations.
12. Measurement framework, baseline plan, dashboard template, and reporting cadence.

7. **Performance Measures**

The selected consultant will work with Ride Connection to validate baselines and targets. At minimum, the measurement framework should address awareness among public-sector leaders; volunteer inquiries, applications, conversion, and referrals; partner adoption and message readiness; donor and corporate prospect movement; website, email, social, search, and conversion performance; earned-media quality and frequency; availability and use of priority messages in agreed languages; and progress toward a threefold increase in digital engagement.

8. **Consultant Qualifications**

- Demonstrated success developing and implementing integrated marketing and communications strategies for nonprofit, public-interest, transportation, human-services, or similarly complex organizations.
- Expertise in brand and message strategy, digital engagement, earned media, campaign planning, storytelling, stakeholder engagement, and measurement.
- Experience centering customers or community members and handling stories and data ethically.
- Demonstrated cultural responsiveness and ability to design accessible, multilingual communications.
- Ability to collaborate with executives, staff, volunteers, partners, advocates, donors, corporate stakeholders, and public officials.
- Strong project management, facilitation, knowledge-transfer, and implementation-support capabilities.

9. **Anticipated Schedule**

Phase	Anticipated Timing
Contracting and kickoff	November 2026
Discovery, research, and audit	November 2026 – January 2027
Strategy and roadmap development	January-February 2027
Campaign and toolkit development	February-March 2027
Implementation support and optimization	April – June 2027
Final presentation and transition	June 2027

10. **Budget and Pricing**

Proposals should present a fixed fee by phase and deliverable, hourly rates for additional services, assumptions, optional services, reimbursable expenses, payment schedule, and any third-party or media costs.

11. **Proposal Requirements**

Submit one electronic proposal in PDF format. Proposals should be concise and include:

1. Cover letter and authorized representative.
2. Understanding of Ride Connection's strategic context, challenges, and opportunities.
3. Proposed approach, methods, work plan, schedule, assumptions, dependencies, and risks.
4. Specific deliverables and the roles of the consultant and Ride Connection.
5. Project team, roles, availability, and brief biographies.
6. Relevant experience and two or three comparable examples with outcomes.
7. Approach to equity, accessibility, multilingual communication, ethical storytelling, and data privacy.
8. Approach to measurement, reporting, and knowledge transfer.
9. Detailed pricing and optional services.
10. At least three references for comparable engagements.
11. Disclosure of actual or potential conflicts of interest and any subcontractors.
12. Requested contract exceptions, if any.

12. **Evaluation Criteria**

Criterion	Weight
Understanding of strategic goals and audiences	20%
Quality, feasibility, and integration of proposed approach	25%
Relevant experience and demonstrated results	20%

Team qualifications, availability, and collaboration model	15%
Equity, accessibility, multilingual, and ethical practices	10%
Cost, value, and budget transparency	10%

Ride Connection may invite finalists to an interview, request clarifications or a revised scope and price, check references, and negotiate with the highest-ranked respondent. Selection will be based on the proposal that offers the strongest overall value, not necessarily the lowest cost.

13. **Questions and Submission Instructions**

Please email all questions and proposals to contracts@rideconnection.org.

Questions must be received by October 19, 2026, at 5:00 P.M. Pacific Time. Responses will be posted at https://rideconnection.org/about-us/rfq/ by October 20, 2026, at 5:00 P.M. Pacific Time.

Proposals must be submitted as one PDF file and received by October 23, 2026, at 5:00 P.M. Pacific Time.