

RFP Issuance Due Date: September 1, 2025

Questions Due Date: September 12, 2025, by 12:59 PM EDT

Answers Posted: September 15, 2025

Proposal Submission Due Date September 30, 2025, by 11:59 PM EDT

Notification of Short-Listed Candidates: October 10, 2025

Presentations from Short-listed Candidates: October 15 - 17, 2025

Notify Selected Candidate/Begin Contract Negotiation: October 20, 2025

SUBJECT: Request for Proposals (RFP) for Public Affairs Services

The Institute of International Education (IIE) is seeking proposals from qualified agencies or consultants interested in providing the services described in the attached Request for Proposals (RFP).

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (“RFP”) is to invite Agencies to submit a proposal for providing public affairs services outlined more fully in Sections III and IV.

IIE intends to issue a contract to a suitable Agency or consultant which demonstrates capacity to deliver quality technical assistance and is the most responsive to the requirements of the RFP.

The remainder of this RFP provides additional information that will allow an Agency to understand the scope of the effort and develop a proposal in the format desired by IIE.

Issuance of this Request for Proposal (RFP) does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the IIE. IIE reserves the right to reject any offer received in response to this request. IIE shall not be liable for any costs incurred by Agency in the preparation and submission of proposal.

The information presented in this RFP is furnished solely for the purpose of assisting the Agency in making its own evaluation of the Scope of Work and does not purport to be all-inclusive or to contain all the information you may require. This RFP is not an offer by IIE to contract, but rather an attempt to establish a common framework for IIE to evaluate potential Agencies. The Agency should make its own investigations, projections and conclusions to verify independently the information contained in this RFP, and to obtain any additional information that it may require, prior to submitting a proposal.

IIE makes no representations, warranties, or agreements with respect to this RFP. In addition, IIE makes no commitment to purchase any products or services or take any other action, including but not limited to, awarding a contract to the Agency submitting the lowest cost proposal. Material contained within this RFP is to be considered confidential and proprietary information. IIE reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP at any time for any or no reason.

In responding to the RFP, Agency is asked to provide the best possible pricing scenarios under the assumption that IIE plans to enter a contractual agreement on all or a substantial portion of its public affairs requirements.

All questions, comments, requests for clarifications must be sent in writing to communications@iie.org no later than the date and time indicated above. Questions will not be entertained after this date.

Contact regarding the RFP with members of IIE, other than with or through the RFP contact, may result in disqualification of Agency for this RFP. Any oral communications between IIE and Agency shall be considered non-binding relative to this RFP or its selection of an agency partner by IIE.

If substantive questions are received which affect the response to the solicitation or if changes are made to the closing date and time as well as other aspects of the RFP, this solicitation will be amended in writing. Any amendments to this solicitation will be issued and posted on IIE's procurement opportunities website. The worldwide web address is <https://www.iie.org/en/Work-With-Us/Subawards-Procurements>. Offerors are encouraged to check this website periodically.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Jamie Bellis (she, her, hers)
Senior Director, Operations and Special Initiatives
Institute of International Education
1350 I (Eye) Street NW, Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20005

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Statement of Work (SOW)

I. Background

IIE is a New York not-for-profit corporation that is among the world's largest and most experienced international education and training organizations. IIE was established in 1919 with the founding premise that international exchange could make the world a more interconnected place. IIE collaborates with a range of corporate, government and foundation partners across the globe to design and manage scholarship, study abroad, workforce training and leadership development programs.

II. Objectives

IIE seeks a suitable Agency to manage its public relations strategy and objectives. Agency or consultant will work to advance the Institute's position with relevant constituents as well as support the initiatives of sponsored programs administered by IIE.

III. Activities and Tasks

IIE proposes to pay the selected Agency an annual fee of up to \$300,000, billed monthly. The Agency will provide IIE with the following services:

1. Advise on strategy and messaging related to key IIE communications including but not limited to major organizational announcements, compliance issues, crisis situations, and political controversies.
2. Monitor, track, and report media mentions of IIE, international education, and related themes.
3. Develop and provide counsel on proactive crisis communications preparedness and response protocols and strategies.
4. Conduct corporate reputation and issues management and thought leadership capability-building initiatives and training.
5. Translate IIE leadership decisions into effective public affairs operations.
6. Develop and leverage press relationships/contacts to pitch and secure news coverage and op-ed placements.
7. Craft and/or edit drafts of press releases, op-eds, statements, and other information for the press.
8. Manage IIE's press inbox and respond to media inquiries, coordinating with IIE team members, spokespersons, and other relevant partners.
(Note: The selected Agency will be required to undergo a review by IIE's Information Technology team and receive approval from IIE's IT team prior to signing any agreement.)
9. Create project plans/collaborate with the IIE team to plan and implement major press events, such as the *Open Doors*® annual data release, World Refugee Day, and International Day to Protect Education from Attack. This could include projects or programs that are sponsored by the US government as well as corporations, foundations, foreign governments and other sponsors. Such projects may come with program-specific requirements, which IIE will share with the Agency.

10. Lead a check-in call at least once per month to discuss work completed and proposed activities for the upcoming month and a monthly invoice detailing the work completed, the hours worked and any rollover hours available (if applicable).

Note: The selected Agency will be considered an IIE preferred vendor in the field of public relations. IIE programs and departments may request that the selected Agency take on additional work besides what is directly covered by this RFP. In such a case, IIE and the Agency will enter into a separate written agreement with IIE regarding the scope of work, budget and payment for that work. Such a contract may contain program specific terms and conditions.

IV. Duration

The initial contract will be issued to the successful Agency for one year of service, with up to four one-year renewals, for a total of five years.

Submission Information

V. Submission Information

This section contains general and specific requirements for submitting the technical and cost proposals.

Proposals including attachments must be sent electronically in PDF format to: Communications@iie.org by 11:59 PM EDT on the date indicated on page one of the RFP.

1. This RFP is issued as a public notice to ensure that all interested, qualified and eligible organizations legally registered for business in United States have a fair opportunity to submit proposals. Qualified international firms should have local and/or international experts available to provide these services.
2. The Agency is requested to submit a proposal directly responsive to the terms, conditions and clauses of this RFP. Alternative proposals will not be considered. Proposals not conforming to this solicitation may be categorized as unacceptable and eliminated from further consideration.

Agencies are allowed to submit one proposal. If an Agency participates in more than one proposal, all proposals involving the Agency will be rejected.

3. Proposals shall be written in English. Cost proposals shall be presented in USD.
4. Proposals must remain valid for a minimum of **120 (one hundred twenty) days**.
5. The person signing the Agency's proposal must have the authority to commit the Agency to all the provisions of the Agency's proposal.
6. The Agency should submit its best proposal initially as IIE intends to evaluate proposals and make an award without discussions. However, IIE reserves the right to conduct discussions should IIE deem it necessary.

7. Proposals must be clearly and concisely written and must describe and define the Agency's understanding and compliance with the requirements contained in the STATEMENT OF WORK. All pages must be sequentially numbered and identified with the name of the Agency and the RFP number/title.

PART A: TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The technical proposal shall be straightforward and concise, outlining in sequence, how the Agency intends to carry out the technical requirements under each main activity.

The technical proposal shall be limited to 20 pages in total. **Pages in excess of the 20-page limit will not be read or evaluated.**

Detailed information should be presented only when required by specific RFP instructions. Items such as graphs, charts and tables may be used as appropriate but will be considered part of the page limitation. Key personnel resumes, bio-data sheets, references and dividers are not included in the page limitation. No material may be incorporated in the proposal by reference, attachment, appendix, etc. to circumvent the page limitation.

1. **Organizational Information:**

- Organization's legal name
- Contact name and position or title
- Organization's E-mail address, physical address and telephone number
- Copy of legal registration for business in United States
- Number of years providing public affairs services

2. **Executive Summary:** Summarize Agency business including corporate history, identity, experience in the marketplace so that IIE may better understand the Agency's ability to provide products and services that will be compliant with this RFP and meet IIE's business requirements.

3. **Technical Approach:** In a narrative – the Agency will demonstrate its understanding, ability and overall approach to performing the requirements described in the Scope of Work, Activities & Tasks.

4. **Capability Statement:** A narrative – that explains Agency's capability to perform the scope of work, activities & tasks within the stipulated monthly retainer amount. The Agency will demonstrate it has the necessary organizational systems and procedures (e.g., personnel policies, travel policies, project management, equipment, supplies and personnel) in place to successfully comply with the contract requirements and to accomplish the expected results. It will demonstrate it has the in-house resources e.g. personnel, to provide the required services. A description of relevant personnel training and qualifications, including CVs for key individuals, where applicable. CVs are not included in the proposal page length limit. It will also demonstrate understanding of IIE's work and recommendations for positioning in the field of international education.

5. **Past Performance:** The Agency will submit a list of up to three current and past similar work and assignments completed in the past five years that were similar in size, scope and complexity – preferably in areas listed in the SOW – with particular attention paid to those performed in

United States.

6. **References:** References from a minimum of three (3) clients worked with in the past two years on activities similar to this scope of work. Include the contact information: company or organization, name, phone number and email.
Note: IIE anticipates reaching out to the references of short-listed candidates only.
7. **Client Profile/Account Management:** Describe account management practices for similarly situated accounts. Also include the proposed location of Account Management for IIE.
8. **Productivity and Service Level Agreement:** IIE anticipates fast turnaround requirements on some projects; timeliness of responses is critical. Provide your service level experience with similarly situated companies.
9. **Quality Control and Assurance:** Provide a description of Agency's quality assurance and proposed service metrics
10. **Customer Service:**
 - List the primary individuals who will be responsible for managing IIE's account. Include profiles or bios.
 - Describe Agency's customer service philosophy.
 - Describe how the Agency measures customer satisfaction.

PART B: COST PROPOSAL

- IIE is proposing to pay an annual fee of up to \$300,000, billed monthly, based on actual work completed, for the services. Based on the Agency's proposed technical approach, the Agency will propose a cost structure it believes is **realistic** and **reasonable** for the work. The proposed cost structure must be in accordance with the organization's standard practices and policies. Cost proposals from Agencies shall be presented in USD. Include any proposed discounts, including discounts for working with non-profits.
- For any additional work as an IIE preferred vendor in public relations, include information about how the Agency will price any such request for work. Include a pricing strategy and any proposed hourly or daily rates. This work would not be included in the proposed annual fee.

Note: The selected Agency will be required to submit to IIE highly detailed invoices. In addition to a monthly total, each invoice must be broken down into multiple line items, organized by separate charge codes to be provided to the Agency by IIE.

Agencies should specify the following in the cost proposal:

- Include any proposed additional fees for rush projects and a description of the timeline that constitutes a rushed project.
- Include proposed pricing for years 2 – 5. Indicate any willingness to cap escalation of rates for each of the subsequent years.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

IIE will select the Agency whose proposal represents the best overall value to IIE in terms of the selection criteria specified below. Agencies who do not follow the instructions in this RFP may be disqualified from consideration.

Agencies must first meet the mandatory requirements before their technical and cost proposals will be reviewed. Those proposals not meeting the mandatory requirements will be automatically rejected.

The mandatory requirements are:

	MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS	MEETS REQUIREMENT
1.	Legally registered to do business in United States – Agency shall provide a copy of its registration document with the technical proposal.	YES/NO
2.	Pass IIE's Responsibility Determination. IIE will check to make sure that final offer is not listed under terrorism list of U.S. Treasury Department, United Nations and that it is not listed as an excluded party under the System for Award Management www.sam.gov	YES/NO

The technical and cost proposals evaluation will be based on the following weighted categories:

Technical Proposal -- 75 points	Percentage 75% (maximum)
Relevant Experience including CVs of account team	25%
Customer Service (including proposed service metrics)	25%
Objectives – demonstrated responsiveness to objectives supported by content	25%
Cost Price Proposal -- 25 points	Percentage 25% (maximum)
Cost data will be evaluated based on cost reasonableness and allowability based on the following considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- IIE proposes to pay an annual fee of up to \$300,000, on a monthly basis based on actual work performed. Offerors may suggest a lower fee if they believe it is warranted by the scope of work. Given the proposed annual amount, are the proposed activities realistic for the work to be performed under the contract?- Do the costs reflect a clear understanding of the work requirements?- Are the costs consistent with the various elements of the Agency's technical proposal?	25%

VII. General Terms and Conditions

1. Any proposal received in response to this solicitation will be reviewed **strictly** as submitted and in accordance with Section VI, Evaluation Criteria.

2. EXECUTIVE ORDER 13224 ON TERRORIST FINANCING

Agencies are informed that IIE complies with U.S. Sanctions and Embargo Laws and Regulations including Executive Order 13224 on Terrorist Financing, which effectively prohibit transactions with persons or entities that commit, threaten to commit or support terrorism. Any person or entity that participates in this bidding process, either as a prime or sub to the prime, must certify as part of the bid that he or it is not on the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) List and is eligible to participate. IIE shall disqualify any bid received from a person or entity that is found to be on the List or otherwise ineligible.

Firms or individuals that have an active exclusion on the System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) shall not be eligible for financing and shall not be used to provide any commodities or services contemplated by this RFP.

3. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Agencies are responsible for review of the terms and conditions described.

4. CONTRACT MECHANISM

IIE is anticipated to award a services contract to the Agency whose proposal will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria described previously. Based on the merits of the offers received, IIE reserves the right to award more than one contract.

5. WITHDRAWALS OF PROPOSALS

Agencies may withdraw proposals by written notice via email received at any time before award. Proposals may be withdrawn in person by a vendor or his/her authorized representative if the representative's identity is made known and if the representative signs a receipt for the proposal before award.

6. RIGHT TO SELECT/REJECT

IIE reserves the right to select and negotiate with those firms it determines, in its sole discretion, to be qualified for competitive proposals and to terminate negotiations without incurring any liability. IIE also reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received without explanation.

7. DISCLAIMER

This RFP represents only a definition of requirements. It is merely an invitation for submission of proposals and does not legally obligate IIE to accept any of the submitted proposals in whole or in part, nor is IIE obligated to select the lowest priced proposal. IIE reserves the right to negotiate with any or all firms, but with respect to price, costs and/or scope of services. IIE has no contractual obligations with any firms based upon issuance of this RFP. It is not an offer to contract. Only the execution of a written contract shall obligate IIE in accordance with the terms and conditions contained in such contract.

8. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FIRM GUARANTEE

All information submitted in connection with this RFP will be valid for 120 (one hundred twenty) days from the RFP due date. This includes, but is not limited to, cost, pricing, terms and conditions, service levels and all other information. If your firm is awarded the contract, all information in the RFP and negotiation process is contractually binding.

9. OFFER VERIFICATION

IIE may contact Agencies to confirm contact person, address, bid amount and that the bid was submitted for this solicitation.

10. FALSE STATEMENTS IN OFFER

Agencies must provide full, accurate and complete information as required by this solicitation and its attachments.

11. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Agencies must provide disclosure of any past, present or future relationships with any parties associated with the issuance, review or management of this solicitation and anticipated award in or outside of the country of performance.

Failure to provide full and open disclosure may result in IIE having to reevaluate selection of a potential vendor.

12. RESERVED RIGHTS

All RFP responses become the property of IIE, and IIE reserves the right in its sole discretion to:

- Disqualify any offer based on Agency failure to follow solicitation instructions.
- Waive any deviations by vendors from the requirements of this solicitation that in IIE's opinion are considered not to be material defects requiring rejection or disqualification, or where such a waiver will promote increased competition.
- Extend the time for submission of all RFP responses after notification to all vendors.
- Terminate or modify the RFP process at any time and reissue the RFP to whomever IIE deems appropriate.
- Issue an award based on the initial evaluation of Agencies without discussion.
- Award only part of the activities in the solicitation or issue multiple awards based on solicitation activities.
- Not compensate Agencies for preparation of their response to this RFP.
- Not guarantee that IIE will award an agreement based upon the issuing of this RFP.
- Award an agreement to more than one Agency for specific parts of the activities in the RFP.

13. Terms of Payment

Payment terms for the award shall be agreed upon and established in the resulting agreement. Payment shall be made by the Institute of International Education (“IIE”) via check or electronic funds transfer/bank wire. The final payment terms in the contract will control, not this RFP.

14. Annual Renewal

Annual Renewal: Selection(s) may be renewed annually, at IIE’s sole discretion, for up to five years before re-competition. IIE reserves the right to exercise any one of the following options:

- Negotiate any updates/changes; or,
- Decide not to renew.