



The Power  
of International  
Education

Solicitation Amendment / Modification

1.	Solicitation No.	090125/AK
2.	Solicitation Name	RFP for Public Affairs Services
3.	Issue Date	September 1, 2025
4.	Closing Date	September 30, 2025
5.	Solicitation Amendment No.	1
6.	Solicitation Amendment Date	September 15, 2025

7. The above numbered solicitation is amended as set forth in Item 9 below.

8. The hour and dates specified for receipt of proposals/quotations: ☒ is not extended; ☐ is extended as described in Item 9 below.

9. Description of Amendment/Modification:

The purpose of this solicitation amendment is to inform prospective offerors/bidders that the above numbered solicitation is hereby amended to provide responses to questions as follows.

Q1: This RFP is referred to as public affairs-specific, but many of the actions outlined are general public relations. The environment for international education both in the U.S. and globally has significantly changed in the past year. Given the current administration, are you able to elaborate on topline public affairs priorities and goals?

A1: IIE is a not-for-profit 501c3 status organization with the majority of our work sponsored by the US government. Our work is strictly non-partisan; IIE has worked under every administration for the last 106 years, and we do not comment on issues that are political in nature. In terms of public affairs, we continue to prioritize the quality of our research and data, thought leadership, and the life-changing impacts of our programs and initiatives such as the IIE Odyssey Scholarship and Scholar Rescue Fund.

Q2. What is the impetus to issue this RFP now? Is IIE seeking to shift its public profile and perception beyond the current state?

A2: As a U.S. government contractor, IIE conducts a solicitation for vendor services every five years at a minimum.

Q3: How will IIE define success for this engagement?

A3: A trusted relationship with an agreed upon framework for day-to-day work, availability for sensitivity checks for content, maintaining IIE's strong position of bipartisanship and leadership in the field.

Q4: Which organizations in your field do you believe set the standard for strong communications and public affairs strategies?

A4:

- MacArthur Foundation – focuses on how they’re responding to global challenges and showing the impact of their programming; successfully enters the news cycle while remaining apolitical
- Pew Research Center – measures and analyzes trending and relevant topics while upholding research standards while remaining apolitical

Q5: What external audiences are you most interested in influencing or reaching? (e.g., policymakers, media, funders, academic partners, program participants)

A5: All of the above.

Q6: From your perspective, what aspects of your communications, media, and public affairs strategies are currently working well, and which areas would benefit from improvement? What are your reputational challenges and opportunities? What are the top priorities for IIE’s leadership in selecting a public affairs partner?

A6: Our Research division is most called upon by journalists and others in the field of international education; the annual release of Open Doors data is usually when IIE attracts to most and highest profiles news coverage. We also receive significant coverage of our Spring and Fall Snapshot Surveys, which provide early indicators of trends in international education. We have been able to protect IIE’s reputation as a trusted research leader while maintaining our non-partisan status.

Prior to his retirement this year, our president emeritus, Allan E. Goodman, established his voice and was often interviewed and quoted in the media as well as other owned publications across the field; he took advantage of news coverage of the global refugee by highlighting the educational needs of displaced scholars and students. We would be interested in exploring how to refine the voices of our new leadership. We are interested in establishing our leaders as futurists: leaders who have their fingers on the pulse of how education is evolving to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world.

Q7: Understanding that communications success is more than earned/owned media opportunities and paid opportunities have increased in importance to drive visibility, will there be additional budget and resources available beyond the outlined RFP budget? Will paid media be a potential additional component of this work?

A7: We have a small budget for paid media and advertisements. (~\$20,000 in FY26)

Q8: How do you see responsibilities being divided between IIE's team and the agency when it comes to strategy versus day-to-day execution?

A8: Ideally, we would have a kick-off meeting to determine strategy and standard replies. We would meet regularly (semi-weekly tends to work well) to discuss priorities. Then meet as needed in response to items and issues outside the agreed upon standard replies.

Q9: Who will serve as the primary day-to-day contact for the agency within IIE?

A9: Jamie Bellis, who oversees the Communications team, will be in day-to-day contact with the agency. Members of the Comms team will join and support as needed. Members of the executive team may join when a situation warrants.

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Q10: Can IIE confirm whether the \$300,000 annual fee is intended to cover all services in the SOW or if certain costs such as event logistics, travel, or monitoring tools will be budgeted separately?

A10: In addition to contracted work for IIE, our sponsored program teams may identify program-specific scopes of work. These would still be invoiced centrally but would need to be broken out within the invoice for IIE's internal billing processes.

Q11: For milestone events like Open Doors® and World Refugee Day, can IIE clarify whether the agency's role is limited to media and PR support or if it extends to event logistics and production?

A11: For most IIE events, the agency's role would be limited to media and PR support. Open Doors and IIE Honors are two events that are particularly high level and may require logistics and/or production support from the agency.

Q12: Beyond the events listed, does IIE have a tentative calendar of other anticipated milestone moments where agency support will be required?

A12: IIE's Communications team prepares a high-level Comms calendar annually and will share with the agency.

Q13: Has IIE worked with an agency in the past for this work? If so, who is your incumbent?

A13: Yes, IIE has worked with an agency in the past for this work.

Q14: How does IIE define a "win" in media coverage (e.g., top-tier national placements, education trade outlets, regional/local press, or opinion pieces)? What platforms or policy conversations would you like IIE to lead on (e.g., talent mobility, refugee education, AI in learning)?

A14: IIE welcomes media coverage at all levels, especially on our data and metrics, our emergency programs for students, scholars, artists and refugees, and our leadership in international education. As a bipartisan organization, we rarely offer opinions on policy that could be politicized.

Q15: What types of issues would you consider reputational “high-risk” (e.g., compliance, student safety, political scrutiny)? Should the agency prioritize IIE’s reputation in the U.S., or are international perceptions equally important?

A15: High-risk issues for IIE include those asking for our opinion on U.S. administration policy (domestic or international) as well as impacts on students and universities. IIE must protect its reputation as a nonpartisan organization that provides unparalleled program management services. In the interest of expanding business opportunities, IIE is also seeking to enter outlets that target audiences are consuming; that includes; outlets in the Gulf Region and Europe and high-net-worth individuals and foundations seeking to issue grants.

Q16: What KPIs matter most to IIE’s leadership (e.g., volume of coverage, sentiment, share of voice, or stakeholder engagement outcomes)?

A16: In order of importance: (1) Quality of coverage – balanced, apolitical, and solutions-oriented, (2) thought leadership development – creating a distinguished POV for IIE’s new leadership and priorities, (3) share of voice, especially in reach markets such as the Gulf Region and Europe, (4) volume of coverage

Q17: Can IIE provide examples of crisis issues it has dealt with in the past or anticipates in the future?

A17: Budgetary impacts on the field and our team members, issues that impact access to education including political and environmental (e.g., visa processing, economic impact of international education in the USA), greater global competition for international students