

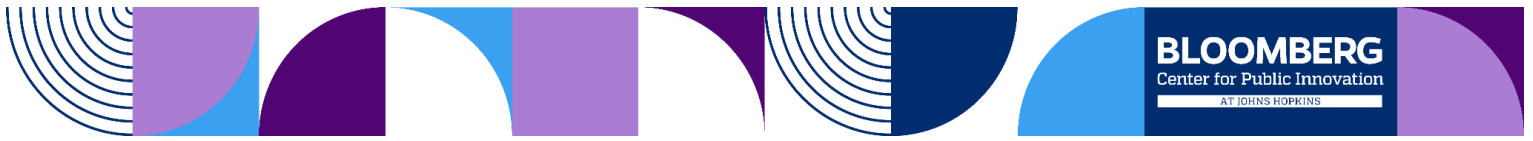


Request for Proposals

Public Relations

Released: August 6, 2024

Response Deadline: September 13, 2024



I. Summary

The Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University (the Center, BCPI) is seeking proposals from experienced and qualified vendors to assist in increasing the public profile of the Center, Center leadership and programs under the Center’s management in accordance with the requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal (RFP).

The Center invites vendors with experience and expertise in these fields, as described herein, to submit proposals that detail their proposed approach, team, related experience and expertise, and associated fees. It is our intention to select the firm whose approach, ability, and project management style best aligns with the needs of this project.

Final selections will be made based on the evaluation criteria described in this RFP.

II. About the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University

In 2021, Johns Hopkins University launched the Center to boost public sector innovation and civic engagement around the world with generous support from Bloomberg Philanthropies (BP). BCPI marries cutting-edge practice with world-class research in order to transform the culture of government, deliver exceptional results for community members, and inspire trust in public service. The Center has scaled quickly - in its first year, the Center served 20 cities through two programs. As of July 2024, the Center is serving more than 200 cities across more than 12 programs with nearly 500 additional cities receiving lighter support.

The Center is housed at Johns Hopkins University and led by an Executive Director. The team is structured into five practice areas that work together: Academic, Civic Engagement, Digital, Innovation, Communications and Operations. These practices encompass program work and core operations. Each builds upon the others’ strengths to deliver programming in collaboration with local government, shape the public innovation field, and advance the Center’s platform. Our current program offerings include, but are not limited to, those listed below.

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The selected vendor will support the Center the development and implementation of strategy, content, and tools for strengthening its brand as well as the brand of specific programming, including:

- The Center serves as the permanent home for several flagship Bloomberg Philanthropies government innovation programs, including but not limited to Innovation Teams (i-teams), Love Your Block, the Bloomberg American Sustainable Cities Program, the Public Innovators Network, Youth Climate Action Fund. These programs enable more than 200 cities to deliver bold innovation to their residents through deep technical assistance, methods and curriculums and grant funding from BCPI.
- In addition to BCPI’s website (<https://publicinnovation.jhu.edu/>), the Center hosts and manages several web properties that serve cities in connecting to resources. For example, bloombergcities.jhu.edu, which serves as the front door and a key communication platform for one of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ main audiences: city leaders. The Center also acts as a digital and creative enablement partner to Bloomberg Philanthropies for ongoing programs and initiatives, including the widely applauded Local Infrastructure Hub (localinfrastructure.org).
- The Center houses [Cities of Service](#), which was incubated at Bloomberg Philanthropies before operating independently for 6 years and then merging into JHU in 2020. Formerly a nonprofit, the Center has preserved the strong brand of Cities of Service and is now home to programs and content formerly housed at Cities of Service.

III. Project Background

Formed in the summer of 2021 when the first employee - the Executive Director - was hired, the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University has operated as a start-up,- importing pre-existing programs into the Center and re-launching them under the Center’s brand, creating and launching new programs, establishing HR/Finance/Contracting operations, integrating within JHU, hiring 50+ employees and establishing partnerships with more than 30 partner organizations. Now serving more than 200 cities with a broader network of more than 700 cities, the Center must now leverage our already strong identity and hone it quickly to advance to the next stage and position ourselves as the global leader in public innovation.

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IV. Statement of Work

The selected vendor will work collaboratively with the Executive Director, Communications Director, and other key Center staff and partners to build a long term strategy and approach while also achieving short term wins that quickly advance the positioning and profile of the Center, its work and support for cities, and the profile of the Executive Director. The selected vendor must ensure that strategy, content, and tools are reflective of the Center and Executive Director voice and programs, and enhance the communication and public relations skills of the Center and its leadership for long-term sustainability. The Center has priorities and goals outlined throughout the RFP; the selected vendor will be expected to bring their expertise and creativity to the partnership and expand upon and refine the stated goals and expected deliverables. Specifically, the Center is seeking a vendor to undertake the following activities:

1. Develop comprehensive external strategic communications plan and media strategy for BCPI and provide monthly, ongoing operational support to execute resulting in the refinement and elevation of BCPI's Executive Director and general organizational messaging and presence in building and leading the public sector innovation field aligned to the Center's mission, work/programs, participants/network, and programmatic and external communications objectives, target audiences, and goals. Support the strengthening and sharpening of BCPI messaging and position in the field.
2. Proactively identify opportunities to communicate the Executive Director and BCPI's message through speaking opportunities, thought leadership and writing opportunities, story placement about the Executive Director and Center's work and profile and cities engaged in BCPI's portfolio of work.
3. Conduct planned and proactive media outreach aligned to thought leadership priorities and around ongoing work and impact within cities happening daily.
4. Support the development and dissemination, and on-site coordination of press releases and public announcements with BCPI and BP lead executives including engaging and bringing in reporters into story opportunities and in-person coverage opportunities as needed.
5. Manage and act on publicity opportunities such as targeted stories, events, city highlights, program successes or opportunities, awards and presence at external events.

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6. Monitor and report daily, monthly, and quarterly on media and relevant social media coverage, key issues, cities/trends of the Center's, executive and cities in BCPI's portfolio of work and develop insights to assist in refining messaging, positioning and opportunities.
7. Support, develop, and execute high-impact social media, for both the Center and it's Executive Director, including with ability to meet modern visual and multimedia needs, as well as special opportunities such as the creation of audience-specific toolkits and/or prospective influencer engagements.
8. Develop and place op-eds, editorials, and thought leadership-related content on behalf of BCPI executive or other key leadership core to the Center's network of program participants and partners (such as City Innovation Officers), in coordination with client objectives and goals.
9. Report monthly on impact against plan's goals and objectives; conduct at least 1-2 or quarterly strategic and/or creative sessions that inform master narrative per year, as needed.
10. Align BCPI website, and other web properties like the Cities of Service website, to BCPI brand identity and ensure they align to the spirit of Bloomberg Philanthropies city portfolio.

V. Timeline

Process Steps	Deadlines
RFP Issued	August 6, 2024
Submission of Questions	August 15, 2024
Questions Answered	August 23, 2024
Proposals Due	September 13, 2024
Vendor Interviews	September 30-October 4, 2024

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Finalist Interviews	October 7-11, 2024
Vendor Selected	October 30, 2024
Tentative Project Start Date	November 1, 2024
Due Date for First Deliverable	December 15, 2024
End of Contract	October 31, 2025

VI. Budget

Vendors should provide a proposed approach, team, timeline and budget that best reflects the requested set of tasks as needed. The project is expected to be a fixed-fee arrangement based on an agreed-upon list of tasks and timeline.

VII. Deliverables

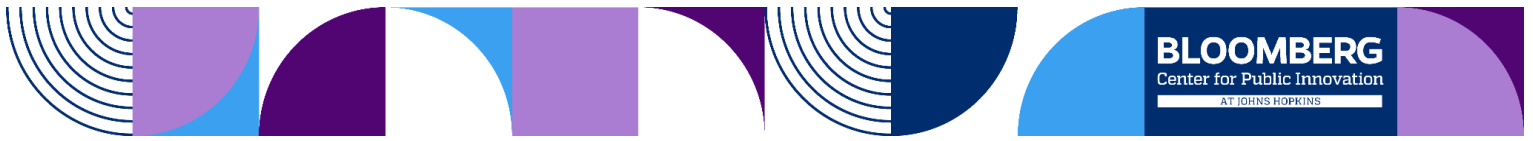
Through this work, vendors should expect to focus on building a long-term strategy while also securing short-term media placements within the first six (6) months, including but not limited to:

- Creation of a long-term strategy to assist BCPI in achieving its intended status as global leader in public innovation.
- Development and articulation of a detailed plan to achieve the long-term strategy as noted in the 'Statement of Work' section of this document, including specific deliverables, how they relate to the strategy, and a timeline.
- Creation of short-term wins, within the first six months, including at least the following:
 - Placement of at least three (3) Op-Eds in leading publications to elevate the work of the organization and the voice of the Executive Director.

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- Placement of at least three (3) articles about cities within the portfolio of the Center to advance the position of the Center’s work.
- Generation of at least four (4) high profile event/speaking engagements for the Executive Director.
- Placement of Executive Director on at least one (1) board to accelerate the position of the Center.

VIII. Submission Requirements

When responding to this RFP, the vendor should include the following, in the order listed below. Please separate and clearly label sections.

1. Statement of understanding of the project objectives.
2. Philosophy and methodology specific to this project. This should include a description of the approach and methodologies that will lead to the successful completion of the project as well as a proposed approach for completion of the short- and long-term deliverables.
3. Proposed timeline, budget and detailed cost breakdown for each phase of the project. Prices must be presented in USD.
4. Case studies and work samples, including public URLs, of projects you have completed of comparable size, scope, and complexity in order to demonstrate capacity and experience.
5. Resumes for the specific members of your proposed team who would lead and work on this project, including name, position at the company, years with the company, years in the industry, relevant experience and training related to the project in this RFP, and role on this project if awarded.
6. Description of your overall experience working for private organizations, non-profit organizations, private philanthropy and governments, including work completed for Bloomberg Philanthropies and any Johns Hopkins entity, if applicable.
7. Current reference information for three current or former clients, preferably organizations that are comparable to the Center, that have utilized services outlined in this RFP. Select a mix of long-standing and recent clients. For each reference include the following:
 - a. Company name and physical address

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- b. Contact name and title
 - c. Phone number
 - d. Email address
 - e. Three- to five-sentence description of the work provided, duration and approximate budget amount
 - f. Date work was completed by your organization
8. Profile of your organization including number of years in business, core competencies, and the firm's organizational capacity to manage this work (e.g. total number of permanent staff and positions, contract or freelance workers, equipment, software, physical space, office locations). Please denote if you have any previous experience with SiteExecutive.
 9. Completion and submittal of the vendor Acknowledgement of RFP Conditions and Authorized Signature (included at the end of this RFP).

IX. Additional Requirements

1. The proposal must be received no later than **4:00 p.m. EDT on September 13, 2024**.
2. Proposals are not to exceed a total of **40** pages in length, including portfolio examples.
3. The proposal must include a flat fee for the services requested and should be inclusive, with any foreseeable costs excluded from that amount identified and listed separately.
4. Any **proposed subcontractors should be identified** in this proposal and the general work performed defined.
5. All costs associated with the delivery of the project should be presented in a flat rate, fee-for-service format, and a projected hourly rate per team member.
6. Any costs or time accrued to develop and submit the proposal, or for the interview process, will not be reimbursed.

X. Qualifications

- Selected firm must demonstrate that they have been in business for at least five (5) years.
- Selected firm must demonstrate presence or clear strength of media relationships in Baltimore and DC-area, as well as globally in this field of work.

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- Selected firm must demonstrate work in delivering media and external communications campaigns for local governments or relevant organizations in the public sector/civic space.
- Selected firm must demonstrate experience researching, preparing, and conducting meetings and workgroups with brand stakeholders to gain agreement on direction forward.
- Selected firm must demonstrate a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity in both their practice and work.

XI. Evaluation Criteria

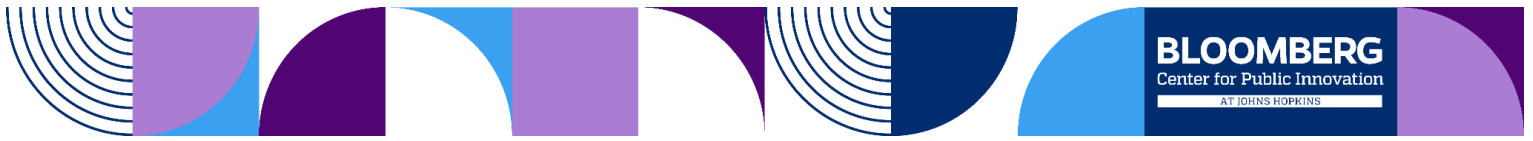
Factors that will be used to evaluate the submissions include:

- **Comprehension of the Organization and the Project** – The proposal demonstrates the bidder’s understanding of the organization and project needs as outlined.
- **Suitability of the Proposal** – The proposed solution meets the needs and criteria set forth in the RFP, and conveys the ability to meet the RFP requirements, including design, development, deliverables, timeframe and budget.
- **Expertise** – Skills in planning, designing, recommending, and executing solutions as evidenced by the proposal. Candidate has successfully completed similar projects and has the qualifications necessary to undertake this project evidenced by past and current project experience, references and organizational capabilities.
- **Pricing and Terms** – The price is commensurate with the value offered by the vendor.
- **Quality Customer Service and Support** – Organization profile demonstrates the ability to provide consistent service and support.
- **Depth and Suitability of Staff** – The bidding firm has an appropriate number of qualified staff to complete the project in the required timeframe.
- **Proposal Presentation** – The information is well organized and presented in a clear, logical manner. We welcome examples of your design aesthetic in the presentation of the proposal.

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XII. Legal

Confidentiality Requirements

All reports, documentation, and material developed or required by the vendor as a result of a direct requirement specified in the contract shall become the property of the Center. The vendor shall agree and understand that all discussions with the vendor and all information gained by the vendor as a result of the vendor's performance under the contract shall be confidential and that no reports, documentation, or material prepared as required by the vendor shall be released to the public without the prior consent of the Center. The vendor must ensure complete confidentiality of all data/information to which they have access.

General Information

This section provides additional information as relates to the submission of proposals and selection of a Supplier.

1. The Center reserves the right to accept any and all proposals, in whole or in part, received as a result of this RFP, to waive minor irregularities, to negotiate in any manner necessary to best serve the interest of the Center. The Center reserves the right to make a whole award, multiple awards, a partial award, or no award at all. Non-acceptance of a proposal will mean that one or more others were deemed more advantageous to the Center, or that all proposals were rejected.
2. Any award resulting from this RFP will not alter the general business practices of the Center. The Center will continue to purchase other services on an as-needed basis.
3. Questions pertaining to this bid shall be directed to publicinnovation@jhu.edu and reference BCPI PR RFP in the subject line. All emails will initially be acknowledged for receipt and then answered fully.
4. The Center reserves the right to amend this RFP at any time prior to the due date. If it does become necessary to amend any part of this RFP, BCPI will furnish an addendum to all suppliers. Amendments shall be distributed within a reasonable time to allow suppliers to consider them in preparing their proposals. If the time and date for receipt of bids does not permit preparation, the time shall be increased to the extent possible in the amendment.

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5. Proposals must include all applicable requested information and meet all specification requirements. If significant errors are found in the proposal, or if the proposal fails materially to conform to the requirements of the RFP, the proposal will be rejected.
6. Proposals must be made in the official name of the firm or individual under whom business is conducted (showing official business address) and must be signed by a duly authorized person.
7. Proposals are to be prepared simply and in a manner designed to provide the Center with a straightforward presentation of the supplier's capability to satisfy the requirements of this RFP.
8. Based upon the initial review of proposals, the Center may invite, without cost to itself, selected suppliers to make a virtual presentation of their proposal and their capabilities as a further consideration in the selection process. The Center reserves the right to make an award with or without negotiation.
9. Awards shall be made in writing and confirmed via email to the responsible person at the Supplier organization whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the Center, based upon the requirements and evaluation criteria listed herein.
10. All work completed for this project becomes the property of the Center and may not be used for any other purposes without the express permission of the Center.

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Vendor Acknowledgement Form

Pursuant to and in compliance with your Request for Proposal dated July 29, 2024, and the contract related documents, the undersigned agrees to enter into an agreement with the Center to fulfill the needs described in this proposal.

The undersigned affirms that to the best of his/her knowledge, there exists no actual or potential conflict between his/her firm and the Center, and its services under this agreement.

The selected supplier will inform BCPI at PublicInnovation@jhu.edu regarding possible conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of such a change. The selected supplier also affirms that there exists no actual or potential conflict between a Center employee and the supplier.

Corporate Name of Supplier:

Authorized Individual (Print Name):

Title:

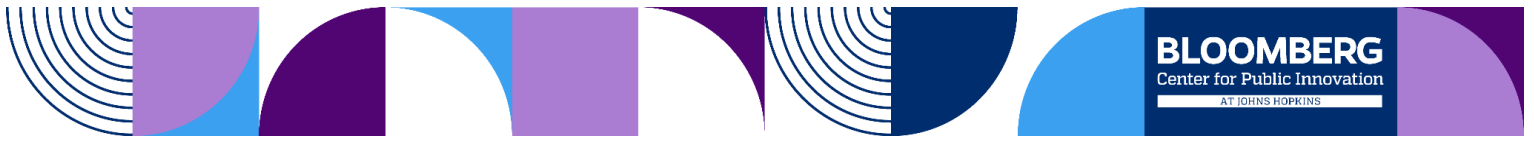
Address:

City: State: Zip Code:

Phone Number:

Signature of Authorized Individual:

Date:



XIII. Delivery

Proposals will be accepted by Johns Hopkins until 5:00 p.m. EDT on August 29, 2024. Please submit a soft copy (via email) of the proposal. The proposal should be submitted in a single volume.

Proposals should be emailed to: publicinnovation@jhu.edu and reference BCPI PR RFP in the subject line.

Contacts

Amy Miller, Director of Strategy and Operations | amy.miller@jhu.edu

Jovan Hackley, Communications Director | jovan.hackley@jhu.edu

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