

EASTERN KENTUCKY



CONCENTRATED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, INC.

Request for Proposals

for

Marketing & Outreach

Strategy Services

Issued by

**Eastern Kentucky
Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.**

July 3, 2024

I. Description of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) and Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. Local Workforce Area

The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) is the workforce development strategy and policy board for the Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. local workforce area, formed and certified under the provisions of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. The Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. local workforce area consists of these 23 counties in far Eastern Kentucky: Bell, Breathitt, Carter, Clay, Elliott, Floyd, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Wolfe.

Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. (EKCEP), Inc. is a non-profit corporation that serves as the administrative entity and staff for the Eastern Kentucky WIB, executing the WIB's decisions and pursuing its objectives. However, EKCEP, Inc. does not provide Direct Workforce Services to clients of the workforce system, preferring instead to contract for the delivery of those services. Although Direct Workforce Services are provided through contractors, EKCEP staff and/or partners may provide workshops, seminars, etc. (e.g., soft skills training, computer literacy) that are aimed at actively engaging private industry in ways that support the placement efforts and other Direct Workforce Services provided by its contractors. Once those contracts have been awarded, EKCEP, Inc. interacts administratively with the contractors, providing leadership, guidance, professional development, technical assistance, monitoring, and other activities to ensure that the contractors faithfully execute the strategies and policies of the Eastern Kentucky WIB.

Primary funding for EKCEP, Inc. comes from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, through the Kentucky Cabinet for Education and Workforce Development, under WIOA. EKCEP also provides services funded by grants from a variety of other sources, both public and private.

II. Services Solicited by This Request for Proposals (RFP)

EKCEP is seeking proposals from a qualified marketing firm to develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and outreach strategy. The selected firm will work closely with the EKCEP communications department and agency management to enhance brand awareness, increase visibility of EKCEP and its partner activities, and achieve the following objectives:

- **Elevate Public Awareness:** Develop targeted campaigns to raise public awareness of EKCEP's mission, services, and impact on communities within its 23-county service area.
- **Strengthen Brand Identity:** Analyze the current EKCEP brand and explore opportunities to refine or develop a brand identity that effectively communicates our values and resonates with our target audiences.
- **Promote Contracted Partner Visibility:** Increase awareness and public recognition of EKCEP's workforce partners—especially contracted service

delivery organizations—to drive traffic and build awareness of available direct job seeker and employer services.

Background and Scope of Services

EKCEP plays a critical role in connecting job seekers with employment opportunities and employers with skilled workers within its service area. To further amplify this impact, EKCEP is seeking a qualified marketing and public relations firm.

This project will focus on enhancing EKCEP's brand image and reputation, along with increasing awareness of its programs and services among both job seekers and employers. The chosen firm will develop and help implement a multi-channel communication strategy to effectively reach target audiences. This includes increasing website traffic and engagement, along with creating a social media strategy to build brand awareness and engagement. Additionally, developing messaging that effectively communicates the value proposition of EKCEP's services is crucial.

EKCEP will consider proposals from qualified marketing firms, though a firm with experience in the non-profit and workforce development sectors is a plus. A firm that understands the Eastern Kentucky labor market and the challenges faced by job seekers and employers in the region is preferred.

As a means of achieving the objectives outlined above, the scope of this project will include three main components: Brand Recognition, Digital and Traditional Media Strategy, and Measurement and Reporting.

1. Brand Recognition

While EKCEP has operated as the workforce development agency in Eastern Kentucky since 1968, more work needs to be done to improve awareness of workforce services within the region to ensure everyone who is eligible for services knows how to take advantage of the resources available to them. That begins with an effective brand. As such, EKCEP seeks a firm that can develop an effective strategy for our agency branding and the brands of programs under the EKCEP umbrella, including the following:

- A. **Kentucky Career Center JobSight:** EKCEP operates the Kentucky Career Center JobSight network of workforce centers throughout its 23-county service area. The career centers are located within the facilities of EKCEP's nine Community Action contractor partners and employ trained staff to assist job seekers and employers with a wide range of workforce services.
- B. **Recovery & Reentry Services:** Since 2019, EKCEP has operated programs specifically designed to assist people in recovery from Substance Use Disorder and who are sufficiently prepared to enter or re-enter the workforce with career and employment services. Sub-programs for this division of EKCEP include the Strategic Initiative for Transformational Employment and Barrier Relief.
- C. **Teleworks USA:** Teleworks USA is an innovative program that

provides services to prospective teleworkers and connects them with remote-work opportunities with a number of partner companies in the digital economy.

2. Digital and Traditional Media Strategy

EKCEP envisions a two-pronged approach to elevate marketing and outreach and increase awareness of available services, utilizing both traditional and digital media. The anticipated scope of work should include analysis of the regional market and strategy development to determine how best to reach those who would be eligible for and benefit from EKCEP's program services.

Additionally, the firm selected as a result of this RFP will be expected to submit a digital media plan that includes a comprehensive strategy incorporating social media, email and text marketing, web-based multimedia, and other relevant outreach platforms.

While the impact of traditional media has decreased over the past two decades, EKCEP considers those sources important avenues to disseminate information about available services. Proposals should also take into consideration how traditional media such as local television and radio stations, and newspapers, may play a role in any marketing and outreach efforts.

Marketing and outreach efforts must also include a strategy to most effectively incorporate EKCEP's contracted partners. While EKCEP administers WIOA programs within its 23-county service area, its nine Community Action contractor partners deliver direct services to clients. Any outreach plan should include this aspect of the program delivery to ensure clients are connected with those partner organizations as the front-line service providers.

3. Measurement and Reporting

While informing the public of available services is the focus of this project, EKCEP understands the importance of measuring the impact of its marketing and outreach efforts. Metrics will play a key role in determining the best methods for outreach, and as such the selected firm will be tasked with closely tracking the performance of any traditional and digital media campaigns. This includes monitoring website traffic and social media engagement to gauge reach and audience interaction.

The selected firm will also analyze this data to identify areas where outreach efforts can be improved. This ensures that EKCEP's message reaches the right people in the most effective way possible.

Term

EKCEP seeks to contract with a qualified firm for the term of 12 months, beginning in

August 31, 2024 through August 31, 2025.

Budget

EKCEP will consider any proposal that includes reasonable costs for marketing services. For budgeting purposes, EKCEP requests a detailed cost breakdown in your proposal, including:

- Any applicable hourly rate
- Fixed fees for specific deliverables
- Any anticipated additional costs (travel, lodging, etc.)

III. Procurement Timeline and Proposal Evaluations

This RFP will be available on the EKCEP, Inc. website at www.ekcep.org, beginning July 3, 2024. The timetable for this procurement process is:

- RFP Release Date: July 3, 2024
- Proposal Deadline: July 31, 2024
- Review of Proposals: August 1, 2024 — August 15, 2024
- Contract Award Date: August 31, 2024

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications and experience of the firm and its team.
- Understanding of the non-profit and/or workforce development sector(s).
- Creativity and expected effectiveness of the proposed marketing strategy.
- Experience with developing and implementing successful marketing campaigns for non-profit organizations.
- Experience working within the various markets in Kentucky, with particular interest in experience marketing to Eastern Kentucky residents and/or businesses.
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposal.

Right to Reject, Cancel, and Negotiate

EKCEP, Inc. reserves the right to delay, amend, reissue, or cancel all or any part of this RFP at any time without prior notice.

This RFP does not commit EKCEP to accept any proposal. EKCEP will not be responsible for any costs incurred by a bidder in the preparation of responses to this RFP.

EKCEP reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to accept or reject any or all items in any proposal, and to award contracts in whole or in part as is deemed to be in the best interest of EKCEP, Inc. EKCEP, Inc. reserves the right to negotiate with any bidder after proposals are reviewed. EKCEP, Inc. reserves the right to negotiate the final terms of the contract with successful bidders.

Proposals from foreign firms located outside of the United States of America will not be considered.

Questions

Any questions regarding this RFP should be directed to rfp@ekcep.org. Answers will be included both in the email response and online at ekcep.org/rfp.

Questions issued via other avenues such as direct messaging over social media, email accounts other than rfp@ekcep.org, or otherwise will not be answered. No questions will be accepted after 4:00 p.m. EDT on July 29, 2024.

Submission Instructions

Interested firms should submit a proposal that includes the following information:

- Firm profile and qualifications, including:
 - Name of firm.
 - Business address and phone number.
 - Principal contact for the purposes of this RFP.
- Team members who will be working on the project and their relevant experience.
- Project narrative describing the firm's overall approach, including strategies for accomplishing the scope of services and metrics used to determine success.
- Timeline for implementation.
- Budget breakdown, including details for projected costs for activities listed in the scope of services.
- References.

EKCEP, Inc. must receive proposals no later than 4:00 p.m. EDT on July 31, 2024 COB. Bidders must submit an electronic copy of their proposal via email to: RFP@EKCEP.org.