

September 13, 2019

**Clarification I: Question and Answer**

**Ref: Bid #220-04 – Marketing Communication Support Services**

Grand Valley State University has received the following questions in regards to our request for proposal(s) for Marketing Communication Support Services.

1. Question regarding RFP page 5, Specifications: #6 GVSU is seeking agencies without a current conflict of interest with any other Michigan public university, or West Michigan based private college or university. This means work currently being done in marketing, communications, public relations, fundraising, or recruitment capacity.

Cornerstone, Calvin College, and SVSU are state of Michigan institutions we work with. We handle paid media placements, not inbound or internal marketing, communications, PR, or fundraising. We don’t feel it’s a conflict of interest, rather a benefit and valuable experience we can pass onto GVSU. We buy paid media by the numbers and placements are based on maximizing reach and frequency for individual campaign targets and objectives. Our collective leverage with media vendors/platforms and experience in higher education marketing, especially with adult target marketing is an asset that benefits GVSU.

The (agency) team members that will be committed to this project will not have active roles with another Michigan public university, or West Michigan based private college or university.

Do you consider this a current conflict of interest or are we good to submit for this RFP? Out of respect and transparency we want to ask about working with Calvin College on their traditional media buys, Cornerstone University on their underground campaigns, SVSU, and a few out of state universities. We’re hoping “Specification #6” applies more to who is handling creative concepting and direction. We’re happy to discuss these questions in more detail if it helps.

Because media buying is not one of the categories listed in the conflict statement, you are good to proceed with your bid. However, if you are providing creative services for any of those schools, we'd consider that a conflict that would exclude you from consideration.

1. Does the conflict of interest specification in the RFP extend to individual departments at a different public university in Michigan? Our agency currently provides graphic design and digital marketing services to individual departments at Michigan State University. However, we are not involved with the marketing and overall strategy of the university at large. Given this, are we still eligible to submit a proposal for your Marketing and Communications Support Services project?

Because you are providing design and digital marketing services for departments at MSU, we believe that would constitute a conflict of interest and disqualify your bid.

1. Under Specifications, #1, you ask for hourly cost estimates with "as much itemization as possible." In the Certification/Proposal/Contract Form, # VII breaks down the services required and asks for hourly costs.

- We’re assuming you simply want our rate per service completed on that form. Is that correct?

- If you’re looking for additional itemization/budget information beyond the form, please advise/describe. 

Yes, we just need your rate per service.

1. When you ask that the response be approximately 5 pages long (as possible), we assume that the Certification/Proposal/Contract form would be in addition to that. Correct?

Yes, the legalese forms would be in addition to the 5-page bid response.

1. We know the RFP is posted for the public, but it was sent directly to us. Was there a specific reason AUX was invited to participate?

{Agency name} has a good reputation at GVSU and was one of the companies we wanted to make sure was aware of the RFP

1. Does not having higher ed experience automatically disqualify us?

No

1. We are a single-owner business that does not meet 51% diversity or veteran owned status. Does this disqualify us?

No

1. We partner with agencies who specialize in market research and media strategy and placement rather than maintaining those areas of expertise in-house. Would that arrangement be a concern?

No, as long as {agency name} is the single point of contact

1. Is there a number of projects that would involve research that you have in mind?

There could be three or four market research projects in the next year

1. Would this include the development of a new campaign, or are we expected to work within an existing campaign? Do all communications follow a single campaign?

There could be new campaigns for specific areas, i.e. adult and continuing studies, graduate programs, etc. However, those campaigns will remain in the Laker Effect family for the immediate future.

1. Is there an established media budget? Or a previous year spend?

There have been budgets of approx. $85,000/yr. each for adult and continuing studies and graduate studies. Those budgets are subject to change.

1. Is there a previous media plan we could reference to better understand how many assets we’d be delivering?

I've attached a plan for graduate studies. The number of assets is similar for adult and continuing studies

1. Are there specific target regions/markets for advertising?

Currently we concentrate on West Michigan and the Detroit metropolitan area with occasional forays into Chicago. Markets could expand based on addition of online programs in the future.

1. How will the success of the project be measured?

Analytics, increase in inquiries, and increased enrollment

1. How many direct client contacts would we have?

Two to three

1. Has your previous agency been included in this RFP? If not, why will you not be working with them?

Our previous agency has asked not to be included in this RFP due to personal reasons

1. What percentage of the work would fall into a same-day/24-hour turn time?

<10%

1. Are you open to a consistent retainer for monthly billing purposes? Or would we bill per month for the works that’s been completed?

We prefer to be billed monthly

1. Do you have an existing media agency partner?

We do not have a media buying partner

1. Under creative services you mention same day and 24-hour turn around.  Can you share what % of your creative projects will have an immediate turn around expectation or 24-hour turn around? Is this something that would be applied to all projects with design services?

<10% require 24-hour or same day turnaround and that applies to all design services.

Do you have budget details for historic media spends and budgets applied for outside assistance in development of brand elements? This will help our team focus our bid for best clarity.

For our current annual graduate awareness campaign, the budget is $87,450. The amount budgeted for media planning and administration, creative support if needed, and agency mgmt. is $2,200. The numbers are similar for our adult and continuing studies plan.

1. Our agency has hourly rates for services, however our rates are developed for specific roles, example Graphic Designer or Senior Strategist.  For your pricing you are asking based on deliverables.  For us to outline pricing in this manner we will need to approximate hours and resources to deliver on items.  This may extend beyond your one-line allowance on the template shared.  We feel more detail will provide you with better clarity and cost transparency for your scope, but being sensitive to your page limit preference, we also wanted to get clarification on format for pricing.  Can we deviate from your format to provide more detail or can you share a potential project example that might help us understand your expectations further?

Yes

1. What are your project goals with regard to enrollment figures? For example, you now enroll X students per year, but with this project you hope to enroll Y per year, or see a Z% increase each year.

We do not have specific number goals at this time other than to significantly increase enrollment in adult education and graduate education.

1. Your RFP states that this project will reach media “… markets throughout Michigan, surrounding states, and internationally.” (Pg. 4). Specifically, which states and countries/provinces? (This is important for budgeting purposes.)

Outside of Michigan, we do some advertising in northwestern Ohio and the Chicagoland region. We recruit lightly for international students in China, Russia, Korea, Japan, Mexico, France, and Brazil.

1. Speaking of which, what is the budget for this project? In order to create a plan, we need to know a ballpark figure you are willing to spend.

Our budgets this year for graduate awareness advertising is $85,000. That does not include individual program campaigns which are usually in the $5-$15K range. For adult and continuing studies, the budget has been about $80,000 per year. These numbers are all subject to change based on budget prioritization, program needs, etc.

1. Related question: Has Grand Valley State recently conducted any market research? If so, will we be given access to that research (impacts budgeting)?

We have conducted overall image research and you would be given access to the results of that research. There may be a need for more market research for individual graduate programs that we could ask the agency to manage.

1. Your RFP mentions the winning firm will be “… expected to have multiple in person meetings …” (Pg. 3). What is your expectation for the number of in person meetings (again, for budgeting purposes)? {Agency name} meets with clients in person and supplements those with web-based meetings when possible.

We prefer the agency to be able to meet in person with graduate program directors, the Executive Director of Adult and Continuing Studies, and institutional marketing project managers, but understand most of those meetings can happen remotely. There are probably 15-20 times a year we meet with the agency and our clients.

1. Related question: Is there an incumbent for this project? If so, is the incumbent local to Grand Valley State?

No, the agency we've worked with for the past 20+ years has decided not to continue or bid due to personal reasons.

1. What is the budget?

Our budgets this year for graduate awareness advertising is $85,000. That does not include individual program campaigns which are usually in the $5-$15K range. For adult and continuing studies, the budget has been about $80,000 per year. These numbers are all subject to change based on budget prioritization, program needs, etc.

1. Can you please confirm that work samples do not count as part of the 5-page limit?

Confirmed

1. Do the requested bios count as part of the 5-page limit?

Yes, they do count to that limit. You can provide links to online bios.

1. Does the Certification/Proposal/Contract count as part of the 5-page limit

No

1. Are we to use the exact format for the hourly costs provided in the provided form or is there flexibility within it - i.e. our Media Buy is commission rate not an hourly rate.

You have flexibility to include costs in whatever format is necessary.

1. What segments comprise GVSU’s “adult students” category?

The category includes all of our graduate studies as well as our adult and continuing studies

1. Is there particular target markets (geographic) of interest to GVSU?

Primarily West Michigan and Traverse City with some opportunities in Detroit and Chicago.

1. What proportion of GVSU’s graduate degrees/programs are offered only onsite and what proportion are offered online?

I am a not certain of the exact proportion, but a fair approximation is 90% in person, 10% online.

1. Are there existing GVUS brand standards or guidelines that the partner agency will use?

The campaigns will fall under our Laker Effect campaign but have their own looks. The Laker Effect brand guide will be provided.

1. Does the university have any existing market research on the adult audience that it will share with the selected partner?

No

1. What are GVSU’s adult student enrollment goals (undergraduate and graduate)?

We do not have specific number goals at this time other than to significantly increase enrollment in adult education and graduate education.

1. How many adult students are currently enrolled at GVSU (undergrad and grad)?

There is appx. 2,800 graduate students and 1,000 other adult or non-traditional students.

1. Does the university collect adult student inquirer information, including email address?

Yes

1. How many adult students are currently enrolled at GVSU (undergrad and grad)?

There are 2,921 total graduate students enrolled at GVSU. There are 1,441 undergraduate and 1,898 graduate students ages 25+.

1. Does the university collect adult student inquirer information, including email address?

Yes

1. About how many adult prospective students make inquiries to the university each year (undergrad and grad)?

We do not have a comprehensive way to measure this. Adult and continuing studies estimates there are receives 500+ inquires per year.

1. The RFP states that the university is looking for “…assistance with overall campaign media buying.” Please explain what assistance is required.

Media buying for all online, outdoor, subscription radio, and OTT television. We handle most print and local transit.

1. What is the media only budget vs the overall budget?

For our current graduate image awareness campaign, our spend is $36,975. Of that, all but 3.4% ($1,250) is media. This is similar to adult and continuing studies campaigns.

1. How many programs does said budget need to cover?

Budgets for individual programs are on a campaign by campaign basis. They are generally y in the $5-$15K range. We expect between 5-10 graduate campaigns per year in addition to the awareness campaigns for grad programs and adult and continuing studies.

1. What will the paid media campaign be judged by?

Analytics, inquiries, and increased enrollment.

1. What is the timing to be in market?

We run two awareness campaigns a year each for graduate and adult and continuing studies (Sept.-Nov. and Mar.-May)

1. Regarding Project Scope on page 4: what is the anticipated overall media budget spend for this initiative?

The annual budget for both programs is in the $80,000-$85,000 range each.

1. Regarding item #6 on page 5: our agency currently works with Hillsdale College, a private institution located in south central Michigan. Do you consider Hillsdale to be a conflict for GVSU?

Yes

1. The Project Scope is fairly limited/vague, can the following be defined a little more clearly:  
   - Are there any estimated hours, based on history, of each of the Project Scope areas?

No, but I can tell you each campaign has 8-10 tactics that need to be strategically designed, written, media bought and placed, and project managed for each of two $85,000+/- campaigns for grad studies and adult and continuing studies each year. In addition, there will be campaigns in the $5-15K range for about five individual graduate programs each year as needed.

1. Is there currently a marketing communications strategy/plan in place and will the new firm continue to execute an existing plan or start from scratch?

There are existing plans for both grad studies and adult and continuing studies. We'd expect the agency to reevaluate those plans and make any recommended adjustments.

1. Are there previous marketing strategies/plans including spending levels and with outcomes/results that can/will be shared?

I've attached our current graduate awareness campaign plan. I don't have analytics handy for this campaign.

1. Has a marketing model or SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) for Grand Valley State University in the last two years?

No

1. What are the three important goals we want to achieve in aggregate with our efforts? Can you help define expectations further?

Measurable analytics, increased inquiries, increased enrollment.

1. Do you have a current benchmark for each of these goals so we can measure our progress?

We don't have very good analytics for most tactics. I'm sure we can benchmark inquiries and enrollment.

1. While the introduction within the RFP indicates “attract and retain adult students,” can you further clarify the primary audiences/targets? Secondary?

The audiences are adult students ages 25-34 who want a college degree to get better jobs and students interested in one of our graduate programs.

1. Is the Project to target enrollment for adults, or parents of high-school graduating admissions?

Adults

1. Same clarification as it pertains to core target areas/geographies?

Our primary geographic areas are West Michigan and Traverse City for adult and continuing studies and West Michigan for graduate programs. Detroit and Chicago are minor markets for both audiences.

1. What is current enrollment and what does the university look to achieve in the way of incremental/new enrollment?

Current total enrollment is 24,677. There are 2,921 total graduate students enrolled at GVSU. There are 1,441 undergraduate and 1,898 graduate students ages 25+. I don't have the specific goal numbers, but we expect to increase graduate and adult and continuing studies students’ semester over semester.

1. We see on your website areas/regions where enrollment is heaviest but there may be a desire for outreach in other markets. Can you indicate if there are such markets to secure increased enrollment? Michigan? Surrounding states? Internationally?

Graduate programs are targeted to a 50-mile radius of Grand Rapids. Adult and continuing studies is targeted to West Michigan and Traverse City. We do statewide, regional, and international recruiting for traditional students.

1. Is there a priority for enrollment by market/region?

West Michigan and Traverse City

1. Of the 94 undergraduate degree programs, which are you most interested in highlighted? Why?

The undergraduate degree we promote for adult and continuing studies students is our Bachelors of Science or Arts in Integrative Studies with an emphasis in Leadership. If students already have 55+ college credits, they can finish the program in 19 months.

1. Of the 42 graduate programs, which are you most interested in highlighting?  
   Why?

Our goal in our image graduate campaign, our goal is to create awareness in our Graduate School, not any one specific program. We do run smaller campaigns for individual campaigns as programs have budget to support them.

1. How are you presently using your dedication to sustainability in your marketing efforts? Do you wish to highlight that commitment more, less or about the same moving forward?

It is not a factor in our graduate awareness advertising. We only touch on it occasionally in our adult and continuing studies advertising.

1. Do you offer courses/majors in sustainability?

Yes, we offer four undergraduate degrees related to sustainability and nearly 100 relevant courses. There are no graduate degrees in sustainability.

1. Would you like to create or strengthen strategic ties with any specific business sectors and area organizations that match up well with your key undergrad and graduate programs?

Yes, we always want to strengthen our relationships with the business community across all sectors. It has not been a specific goal of our graduate or adult and continuing studies advertising as of this time.

1. Who handles public relations duties for the university? How would the selected firm interact with that department/person? We’d want our efforts to be in synch. both ways.

University Communications manages all our PR and social media as well as photography and video. The agency has very little direct interaction with the department. The agency would work primarily with me, project managers from our department, and leaders from grad and adult and continuing studies.

1. We assume the selected firm could interact/collaborate with the University’s Alumni Association(s), correct?

Yes, we get lists from the Alumni Association. I am the intermediary.

1. What type of market research has been conducted in the past? Will findings be available for review?

We do market research on image and awareness every three years. You'd have access to the results.

1. When was the last time market research was conducted?

2018

1. Is there a number of focus groups you may desire to have conducted?

We do not have a specific number in mind.

1. As the selected firm is involved with strategy development/planning is such strategy crafted for entire year or is it on a project basis, or can apply to both scenarios?

It would be both scenarios. We run two campaigns each year for grad studies and adult and continuing studies. In addition, there are specific grad program campaigns throughout the year depending on programs' needs and ability to fund them.

1. While the University has developed key messaging, will/can the selected firm play a role in the crafting/authoring of new messaging including the potential of newly devised slogans/tags?

The grad and adult and continuing studies campaigns will continue to fall under the Laker Effect umbrella but have some room for individual creativity.

1. We like to present “what if” scenarios…so, what if a specific tactic/activity was not in the initial RFP submission but presented itself during the year of implementation, by example only – film product placement? Or, a traveling exhibit?

We’re open to all ideas.

1. Please define “event advertising?”

This could include open houses, fairs, or other events that need promotion.

1. While the RFP requests hourly costs for each project scope area, what about hard costs for specific needs – by example list acquisition or mailing costs/postage? Will these costs need to be presented as part of the RFP or as projects are developed?

Those costs will be part of the budget as the projects are developed.

1. Will the University require a 3-bid quote?

No requisition is required for quotes under $5,000; $5,00-10,000 requires informal quotes from multiple vendors; $10,000-$25,000 requires competitive written quotes from multiple vendors; projects over $25,000 require sealed bids from multiple vendors. Is that what you are asking?

1. It is customary for marketing/advertising firms and media agencies to use an agency commission structure where a total media budget is placed at a gross level, but the pay-out is based on the net and “agency” receives that as a commission (15%). Is this an approach that can be implemented?

We recognize that there are different ways to bill. As long as we stay within budget and get the appropriate media value, we're open to different approaches.

1. What are the primary flights/key moments during the year that are used for executing any marketing and/or media activities?

The graduate campaign and adult and continuing studies campaigns both run from Sept.-Nov. and Mar.-May.

1. What type of media has been implemented in the last two years? What channels/platforms - billboard, TV, radio, direct mail?

See plan attached.

1. Are you satisfied with your current media mix? Concerns? Changes?

We're comfortable with the current plan but welcome suggestions.

1. In what markets has media/advertising been deployed?

West Michigan and Traverse City.

1. Can you share what the total traditional media/advertising budget has been in these two years?

See attached.

1. What type of paid digital media have you done in the last three years: Google Ads, Facebook ads, YouTube, re-targeting campaigns, geo-fencing campaigns, etc.

Ad network digital display, re-targeting, Facebook, geo-fencing

1. What are the typical weekly hours presently dedicated to social media work/research, posting?

Do you see that as a fair number of hours moving forward, would you like to see more/less?

I don't have a good feel for how much time University Communications spends on social media for these two areas. We would love to see more organic social media but it's not in our hands.

1. Who currently creates, curates and post content for you? Your agency or are there other stakeholders participating on certain levels?

University Communications manages all institutional social media. Departments often contribute their own social media as well.

1. What has been your digital marketing/social media budget the last two years?

See attached for graduate programs. Adult and continuing studies has been similar.

1. Do you have baseline analytics compiled for your digital, email and direct mail tactics?

Yes

1. Related to Insurance, it would appear that the selected firm/agency would only need to carry Commercial General Liability Insurance, Workers Compensation and the Umbrella/Excess Liability. It does not appear, based on scope of work, that the additional coverages would be required. Please clarify.

This type of work includes a Professional Liability exposure, and coverage should be carried.

1. Also related, if the firm/agency operates with staff that are freelance (1099 relationships) and not “salaried” employees, is the Workers Compensation still required?

Workers Compensation is driven by statute.

1. Will the Privacy & Network Security Liability be required if exchange of data is in play. Or, would the selected firm/agency have access to store information on the University’s own servers providing the necessary security/protection and limiting external storage?

The agency will not have access to Grand Valley servers.

1. Can you share who will be part of any selection committee/panel to select those agencies to make a presentation in a second round?

Rhonda Lubberts, Associate Vice President Institutional Marketing; Valerie Rhodes-Sorrelle, Vendor Relations Manager Procurement Services; Jennifer Allard, Associate Director for Student Recruitment Marketing Institutional Marketing; Me.

1. Related, who will be part of any panel to present to?

Rhonda Lubberts, Associate Vice President Institutional Marketing; Valerie Rhodes-Sorrelle, Vendor Relations Manager Procurement Services; Jennifer Allard, Associate Director for Student Recruitment Marketing Institutional Marketing; Me.