

# TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

## Request for Proposals (RFP) My Texas Future (MTF) – Outreach Engagement

**RFP No. 781-4-02342**

### Questions and Answers

April 26th, 2024

1. Is there an incumbent? If so, are you able to provide the contract number and/or award amount?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

2. Are you able to share your budget for this project?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

3. The solicitation mentions the following: "Respondent will execute marketing strategies rooted in an existing overall marketing plan." - Is there a copy available of the marketing plan that is willing to be shared?

**RESPONSE:** The plan is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

4. Would you like us to include proposed creative with our proposal?

**RESPONSE:** Proposed creative is not required, however, selected vendor must have capability to develop diverse creative assets and sharing a past portfolio of work would be helpful.

5. Would you like media recommendations included, or how we approach media buying in general?

**RESPONSE:** It would be helpful to include your approach to media buying in general.

6. If you would like an actual media plan, what media budget should we base it off of?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

7. Should we include media buy hard costs in our pricing, or only our costs to complete the buy?

**RESPONSE:** Yes, pricing should include media buy hard costs.

8. The multifaceted nature of communications-related deliverables requires further clarification of pricing schedules because prices can vary greatly according to the location of a billboard or the ratio of short form video to long form video, to name only a couple of examples. So, are we to estimate a range of pricing per deliverable (i.e. out of home advertisement = \$500 for one ad campaign – \$2,000 for five ad campaigns)? Please clarify scope of pricing.

**RESPONSE:** As this is a competitive solicitation, THECB is not able to share specifics on an overall project budget. However, the approach of including a range of pricing per deliverable is acceptable.

9. Is there an incumbent agency? If so, who?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

10. We are in state but not in Austin. Will regular in person presentations and follow ups be required to take place in Austin?

**RESPONSE:** Presentations and meetings can occur remotely and selected vendors will not be required to be in Austin.

11. I was curious if there was a way to be notified of the awarded firm.

**RESPONSE:** Notice of award will be posted on the ESBD.

**12.** Is there an incumbent on the project or any preferred vendor list typically used for THECB?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

**13.** Does the current marketing plan detail a specific strategy, ideal placements, or ideal rollouts for targeted audiences?

**RESPONSE:** The plan is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**14.** This is a statewide campaign. Have the data, key stakeholders, and guidelines already been identified across the state to reach the varied audiences mentioned in the RFP?

**RESPONSE:** The plan is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**15.** Will the current marketing plan be shared, or are key objectives posted?

**RESPONSE:** The plan, including key objectives, is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**16.** Why has the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board decided to release this RFP?

**RESPONSE:** Please refer to section 1.0 of RFP.

**17.** What is the budget for this project?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**18.** Does the budget include media hard costs?

**RESPONSE:** Yes, the budget is inclusive of hard media costs.

**19.** Is there an incumbent vendor? Who is the incumbent?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

**20.** What tactics do you consider to be the most successful in meeting your goals?

**RESPONSE:** Successful tactics will be determined based on market research and the development of a marketing plan. This work is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**21.** What is your measurement of success?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan, which will include measurements of success, is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**22.** What are your current/past major campaigns? Which ones, if any, are continuing?

**RESPONSE:** Past campaigns include a paid social campaign for the FORWARD loan, a paid digital campaign for My Texas Future for adult audiences, and a paid digital campaign for DataBridge. The latter two campaigns are ongoing but will end in spring 2024.

**23.** What type of media have you been running the past couple of years, and what have been the results/how well have they performed for you?

**RESPONSE:** THECB has run paid campaigns using animated and static display ads, animated and static social ads, video ads on YouTube, paid search ads, and public radio ads. THECB finds animated ads to be more successful than static ads, with video performing exceedingly well.

**24.** What are your key performance metrics?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan, which will include key performance metrics, is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**25.** How does the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board currently plan and buy media? In-house or with an agency?

**RESPONSE:** THECB works with an agency to plan and buy media.

- 26.** What is the name of the advertising agency Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has worked with regularly in the past?

**RESPONSE:** The Texas Higher Education Foundation has worked with numerous vendors in varying capacities over the past several years, including Mighty Citizen, Hahn PR, Texas Creative, Edelman PR, and Steel Advertising, to provide advertising services for the benefit of the THECB. Additionally, THECB has worked directly with Roadtrip Nation and Satori for advertising services in the past.

- 27.** What are the top three qualities Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is looking for in an agency partner?

**RESPONSE:**

1. Agility: The ability to shift swiftly and with flexibility to respond to campaign performance, including development and deployment of new campaign creative when required.
2. Data-Driven: Pursues decisions rooted in analytics, insights, advertising performance, and product conversions to change methodologies and respond to consumer behavior.
3. Partnership: For us, this means transparent communication, reliability, attention to deadlines, respect for difference of opinions, and collaboration with the THECB team.

- 28.** Have you discussed this scope of work or possibility of this RFP with vendors prior to the no contact period?

**RESPONSE:** THECB has not discussed this scope of work or RFP with vendors prior to the no contact period.

- 29.** Why is a HUB Subcontracting Plan not required for this RFP?

**RESPONSE:** THECB has determined there are no HUB Subcontracting opportunities within the scope of work of this RFP.

- 30.** Does Attachment B, HUB Subcontracting Plan, need to be filled out and submitted as a self perform, or does "Intentionally omitted" mean to not submit whatsoever?

**RESPONSE:** THECB has determined there are no HUB subcontracting opportunities within the scope of work of this RFP. There is no required submittal for Attachment B.

- 31.** What has been Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's media/advertising spend each of the last four years? Can you share with us a ballpark breakdown between traditional and digital media?

**RESPONSE:** Over the past 4 years, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has spent \$50,000 on paid media/advertising. This budget was allocated fully to digital media. THECB has received additional donated advertising services through the Texas Higher Education Foundation.

- 32.** What is prompting this search for a new supplier? Do you have a specific project in mind?

**RESPONSE:** Please refer to section 1.0 of RFP.

- 33.** What is the budget allocated for this project?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

- 34.** Will THECB give preference to Texas-based companies?

**RESPONSE:** Please refer to Attachment A of the RFP for information on preferences.

- 35.** Does THECB have an incumbent or preferred vendor in mind for this project?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent or preferred vendor for this scope of work.

- 36.** How current is your existing research? Are you willing to share research, data, and insights with offerors? Will there be any need to conduct new research?

**RESPONSE:** Current market research is in development. Findings and information will be shared with selected vendor(s).

- 37.** Can you please provide an estimated budget for the work outlined in the RFP?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**38.** The RFP includes language on the selected agency developing creative based on existing strategy. Can you please confirm this is the approach the selected agency will be required to take?

**RESPONSE:** THECB can confirm that an existing marketing plan based on market research will be provided to the selected vendor as a basis for creative development.

**39.** Will the selected agency be required to be headquartered in Texas, or is the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board open to selecting an out-of-state agency?

**RESPONSE:** The Coordinating Board is open to out-of-state agencies.

**40.** Do you have existing video assets that can be used for this work, or will new video need to be shot to build out the assets?

**RESPONSE:** THECB expects to develop creative assets for this campaign prior to beginning this scope of work but is seeking a vendor capable of creating additional video assets for the campaign as required.

**41.** Do you have existing photography assets that can be used for this work, or will we need to plan for a photoshoot/use stock photography to build out the assets?

**RESPONSE:** THECB has access to existing photography assets as well as an account with Adobe Stock for additional assets that may be required.

**42.** Knowing that budgets are typically limited, are there any key regions/cities within the state that you'd like the campaign to help influence?

**RESPONSE:** Preferably, this campaign would influence K-12 students and families statewide. However, THECB is amenable to responding to regional performance of the campaign.

**43.** Is there an ideal percent split between agency and media fees?

**RESPONSE:** Agency fees for media buys should not exceed 30%.

**44.** Is there a budget range for the project?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**45.** Do you anticipate needing help with website and landing pages to enhance campaign optimization?

**RESPONSE:** THECB does not anticipate needing help with website and landing page development.

**46.** Do you have any existing primary/secondary research?

**RESPONSE:** Current market research is in development. Findings and information will be shared with selected vendor(s).

**47.** Is there an incumbent agency?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

**48.** Which CRM would you use to help track leads and attribution?

**RESPONSE:** THECB has access to Salesforce Marketing Cloud but does not currently use it to track leads and attributions.

**49.** Do you need help with lead/conversion nurturing?

**RESPONSE:** This campaign will primarily be an awareness-building campaign, though THECB would welcome strategic suggestions for conversion nurturing.

**50.** Do you have any current lists of the primary audiences for the agency of record to utilize, or would the campaign start from scratch?

**RESPONSE:** THECB does not have lists of the primary audiences for the campaign. However, THECB does have lists of secondary audiences THECB could leverage if beneficial.

**51.** Is there an Incumbent for the project?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

**52.** Is there a budget for the project?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**53.** Will multiple vendors be utilized for this project, or just one?

**RESPONSE:** THECB will select one vendor for this scope of work.

**54.** Can you please provide clarification on the difference between [Page 3 Section 2.03]and the Key Personnel section from 2.02? What additional information are you looking for here?

**RESPONSE:** If the resumes or other information provided in response to Section 2.02 can evidence that the key personnel have the appropriate background skills, knowledge, experience, and training to perform the requested services, no additional information is needed.

**55.** Video and photography assets are listed in the requested deliverables. Will we be utilizing stock video/imagery? Existing video/imagery? Or do we need to include video/photo shoots in our plan?

**RESPONSE:** THECB expect to develop creative assets for this campaign prior to beginning this scope of work but are seeking a vendor capable of creating additional assets, including video/ animated and static, for the campaign as required. Usage of stock video and photos will be allowed if needed.

**56.** “An existing, research-based marketing plan” is referenced several times throughout the RFP. Can we please see this marketing plan that our tactical plan needs to be based off of?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**57.** In our response, what would you like to see here? [Page 5 Section 3.04] A statement saying we confirm our understanding of this section? Or is there a specific deliverable you would like to see?

**RESPONSE:** Respondent shall provide confirmation of understanding and may provide evidence of proposed processes to demonstrate understanding.

**58.** In the requested deliverables list, there are many variables that will impact the pricing of each asset (for example, the length of video in a short form social video, or the sizes of display ads). Are we able to provide an hourly rate for each of our services? Or if you indeed do require a list of prices for each deliverable, can you please provide detailed specifications for each deliverable?

**RESPONSE:** Deliverable pricing can be based on estimated hourly rates.

**59.** Qualifications is listed as 30% but worth 25 points. Can you please clarify?

**RESPONSE:** The 30% is a typo and should read 25%. See Addendum #1.

**60.** Project plan provides an acceptable and reasonable timeline for development and execution in order to launch go-to-market campaign in time for the new academic year. Can you clarify your expectations for the Project Plan?

**RESPONSE:** Project plan should include clear and reasonable timelines, milestones, and deadlines aligned with stages in scope of work, including creative development, campaign implementation, and reporting and closeout.

**61.** Is the THECB's goal to have target specific campaigns for (1) postsecondary students, (2) postsecondary students' networks [their families and educators/counselors] plus working-age Texas? OR Is the THECB's goal to have one campaign conveying the value of higher education and the role of My TX future?

**RESPONSE:** THECB's goal is to drive awareness and adoption of My Texas Future for students in grades 7-12 and their families.

**62.** Are one-page Bios acceptable? We want to confirm formal resumes by individual are not required.

**RESPONSE:** One-page Bios are acceptable.

**63.** Does the THECB already have an account set up or will the selected vendor be required to create an account on behalf of the THECB?

**RESPONSE:** THECB already has social media accounts set up for this scope of work.

**64.** Does the research confirm target specific creative is needed?

**RESPONSE:** Current market research is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**65.** For pricing purposes, can the THECB confirm how often or how many messages are expected to be pushed in a given school year?

**RESPONSE:** Frequency of messaging for a statewide 12-month campaign, as indicated by the RFP, will be dependent on what respondent budget allows.

**66.** For pricing, does the THECB wish for proposers to submit an estimated cost for the nine deliverables outlined under 3.01?

A. Short-form social media videos

a. Video length?

b. Is there a preference on purchasing and editing stock videos or is the THECB wanting original productions with on-site or in-studio shoots?

B. Social media captions

C. Social media graphics

D. Animated Display ads

E. Static Display ads

F. YouTube video ads

a. Video length?

b. Is there a preference on purchasing and editing stock videos or is the THECB wanting original productions with on-site or in-studio shoots?

G. Large-format advertising

H. Radio ads

I. Podcast ads

Plus the estimated agency fees for the Expected Activities outlined under 3.02, 3.03 and 4.0?

**RESPONSE:** It would be valuable to understand an estimated cost for each deliverable, though the campaign may not ultimately make use of all deliverables, dependent on the forthcoming marketing plan and what the budget will allow. Including a range of pricing per deliverable is acceptable. Estimated agency fees should also be included in the submitted budget.

Short-form social media videos

- a. Video length? THECB looks to the respondent to offer this guidance.
- b. Is there a preference on purchasing and editing stock videos or is the THECB wanting original productions with on-site or in-studio shoots? THECB has access to Adobe Stock.

YouTube video ads

- a. Video length? THECB looks to the respondent to offer this guidance.
- b. Is there a preference on purchasing and editing stock videos or is the THECB wanting original productions with on-site or in-studio shoots? THECB has access to Adobe Stock.

**67.** Can we add an extra column to the right of the Price column to provide pricing parameters?

**RESPONSE:** That is allowable.

**68.** Are any of the deliverables required in any language other than English?

**RESPONSE:** If budget allows, THECB will prefer to include deliverables available in Spanish.

**69.** The scope of work references an “existing campaign strategy” – was this strategy developed in-house at THECB or with a contractor? If it was developed with a contractor, does that contractor provide the services that this RFP is seeking?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**70.** Will you please share an expected annual budget or budget range for this contract?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**71.** Regarding the pricing that this RFP is looking for – are you looking for pricing for agency services as a monthly retainer or hourly rates for the different services included in this scope? Since media and production costs can vary significantly depending on volume and scope, will you please provide additional clarification around how you will be evaluating the pricing proposed by respondents?

**RESPONSE:** THECB would prefer to see pricing that reflects estimated deliverable costs. It is fine to estimate these based on projected hourly rates. The budget should also include hard media costs extracted out of other overhead and campaign management costs. Pricing will be considered as 10% of the total score. A stronger response will include greater allocation toward deliverables and hard-paid media costs.

**72.** What research has been completed and will it be available for use during campaign development?

**RESPONSE:** Current market research is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**73.** Is there an incumbent for this project?

**RESPONSE:** There is no incumbent for this scope of work.

**74.** Has a project budget been identified?

**RESPONSE:** A project budget has been identified; however, as this is a competitive solicitation, THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**75.** How has the existing marketing plan been targeting these audiences to date - as two overarching audience groups, or prioritizing specific subsegments within each?

**RESPONSE:** This campaign will represent the first effort that THECB is making to target these audiences. A marketing plan for these audiences is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

- 76.** Has there been audience research/profiling work done across these core audiences, particularly around content consumption behaviors and engagement preferences, or is this something you would be looking for the partner to provide?

**RESPONSE:** Current market research is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

- 77.** From a regulatory standpoint, are there any channel, targeting, or engagement considerations we should be mindful of when thinking about our approach to paid media planning (e.g., TikTok)?

**RESPONSE:** The awarded respondent shall not conduct or purchase any media advertisement or other marketing activity on behalf of THECB on a media outlet for which THECB is prohibited by state or federal law from viewing, accessing, contracting with, or conducting any other similar activity, including TikTok.

- 78.** What are the elements of the existing overall marketing plan? Any context you can provide into the work done to date will be helpful in identifying if any upfront strategic planning needs to be done.

**RESPONSE:** Current market research and a marketing plan for these audiences are both in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

- 79.** How would you describe the paid media presence for My Texas Future to date? Are there core insights or learnings from campaigns that would be valuable to consider?

**RESPONSE:** To date, THECB has run paid digital campaigns for My Texas Future, though for a different audience of working-age Texans. That presences included paid search, display ads, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. THECB had the most success with video and animated ads, paid search, and targeting by geographic audience, lookalike audiences, and retargeting audiences. THECB saw the poorest performance with static social and display ads.

- 80.** How is THECB defining success for the marketing plan? What are the current objectives?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan, including objectives and measurements of success, is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**81.** Can you share the elements of the existing marketing plan, strategy or messaging that we would be building off of?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**82.** What are your top KPIs for this campaign?

**RESPONSE:** A marketing plan, including KPIs, is in development and will be shared with the selected vendor.

**83.** What has worked well and what hasn't?

**RESPONSE:** This campaign will represent the first effort that THECB is making to reach these specific audiences. In paid campaigns for other audiences, THECB has seen video and paid search both perform very well, as do social ads for lookalike and retargeting audiences. Static and display ads do not perform as well.

**84.** Can you share any budget guidance?

**RESPONSE:** This is a competitive solicitation. THECB is not able to share the overall project budget.

**85.** For budget, what is the percentage breakdown between creative and the media buy?

**RESPONSE:** A higher allocation of the budget should go toward the media buy.

**86.** Do you want proposed budget in the RFP or should we include estimated agency fees and, hard costs?

**RESPONSE:** A proposed budget should be included in the respondent submission and this budget should include estimated agency fees and hard costs.

**87.** Is it a conflict of interest to work with another higher education institution not on your list?

**RESPONSE:** No.