REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

For

MEDIA RELATIONS SUPPORT
FOR THE 2021 HOMELESS COUNT

For the

COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS OF HOUSTON/HARRIS COUNTY,
WHICH SERVES AS LEAD AGENCY TO
THE WAY HOME (TX-700) CONTINUUM OF CARE

NOV. 20, 2020
A. Introduction and Purpose

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Way Home CoC

The Coalition for the Homeless leads in the development, advocacy, and coordination of community strategies to prevent and end homelessness. Founded in 1982 and incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit in 1988, the Coalition has evolved to leading the system that is leading the nation in solving homelessness.

The Coalition for the Homeless believes that we can create and sustain a community where no one will be without permanent housing for more than 30 days. We lead The Way Home Continuum of Care (CoC), which is the collaborative effort to solve homelessness in Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties. We drive toward this reality every day by: using data to drive our region’s decision-making and strategy; providing training, education, and Technical Assistance on nationally-recognized best practices to increase the capacity of our partner agencies; facilitating collaboration through expertly-delivered project management services; and educating the public — and advocating for positive change — about homelessness and related issues.

Since the creation of The Way Home CoC, the Coalition has been positioned as an expert on homelessness and fields many requests from local news media, producers, and other stakeholders to speak on behalf of the Coalition and/or The Way Home about homelessness. The Coalition is also responsible for a number of social media platforms, web, and graphic design projects for its own organization and for The Way Home system.

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to solicit proposals from interested and qualified consultants to provide media relations services to the Coalition for the Homeless — both as an independent organization and as lead agency to The Way Home Continuum of Care — related to its homeless count in 2021. The scope of work includes providing project-related public and media relations support to the Coalition’s Communications and Development teams. More detail on potential tasks and responsibilities can be found in Section B.
The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

The Coalition for the Homeless coordinates the annual PIT Count on behalf of the local homeless response system, The Way Home. The Count informs the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of the effectiveness of collaboration and homeless programs in Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties.

The annual Count cannot provide an exact number of people experiencing homelessness for several reasons including the daily fluctuating number and the large size (3,700+ square miles) of the area being canvassed by volunteers. However, it is considered a critical metric and is highly effective at illustrating trends over time. The Count results are combined with additional data points, like the information stored in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), to gauge progress of the local homeless response system. Both people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness are counted.

Read the press release about the 2020 Count here: https://www.homelesshouston.org/2020-homeless-count-results-show-the-need-for-additional-resources

See the results of previous years’ Counts here: https://www.homelesshouston.org/houston-facts-info#ReportsandData

The results of the Count are among the most sought-after data points produced by the Coalition about the local homeless response system each year; however, it is important to help both the media and the public to understand what the numbers can actually tell us (e.g., trends) — and what they can’t (e.g., a definitive answer about the number of people experiencing homelessness in our region).

Associated with the Count are two primary opportunities to engage media:
(1) When the count takes place, in January 2021 (week of Jan. 25)
(2) When the results of the count are released, exact timing TBD, likely in spring 2021.

A note about the Count in 2021: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Count will likely not be able to be conducted in the same way as in recent years. As a result, we face an additional communications challenge in helping the public to understand that the 2021 count and its results will not be able to be compared apples-to-apples to those of previous years.
B. Consultant Tasks:

The consultant will perform the following tasks related to the Coalition’s 2021 homeless count:

- Assist in the creation of messaging and press materials related to the Count
- Assist in organizing virtual press conference(s) and media interviews
- Turnkey crisis communications support and media management, as needed.
- Media list research and development
- Press strategy calendar with target release dates, pitch opportunities, and editorial deadlines for key news items at two key project times:
  - In January 2021 when the count takes place
  - In spring 2021 when the count results are released
- Press release writing and distribution
- Direct outreach to local, regional, and national media in print, digital, radio, and broadcast.
- Talking points development and general media consulting
- Project management support for communications-related activities and events
- Media monitoring and tracking to be provided in at least two reports, following the Count and the results release
- Strategic counsel for broad communications tools and audience impact

The consultant selected will work closely with the Coalition for the Homeless’ Communications and Development teams, as well as with Coalition leadership and The Way Home CoC leadership.

**Expected timeline and consultant time required**

- Approximately mid Dec. 2020 through early Feb. 2021:
  - Expect to need an average of 5 hours/week in support (will be fewer hours at the beginning and more hours in the weeks leading up to — and following — the week of the Count, the week of Jan. 25)
  - Expected total: 40 hours
- Spring 2021 (exact timing TBD)
  - Expect to need an average of 7 hours/week in support in the weeks leading up to — and following — the release of the 2021 Count results
  - Expected total: 20 hours
C. Submission Requirements

Interested consultants should submit their proposal electronically to:

- Concetta Scerbo at cscerbo@homelesshouston.org.
- The deadline for submission is 11:59AM CST on December 8, 2020.

Prospective consultants must include the following information in their proposals:

- List of key personnel assigned to this contract;
- Resumes of key personnel assigned to this contract;
- A history of working with homeless service or nonprofit organizations;
- Evidence of experience with public and media relations;
- Hourly and lump sum price to perform the scope of work; and
- List of at least three (3) professional references.

Criteria used for selection of a consultant will include, but not be limited to, experience, qualifications, as well as the proposed fee. Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County reserves the right to award all or part of the project based on budget restraints.

The work would occur between Dec. 2020 and spring 2021, with the bulk of the work occurring around the count in January and the results release in spring 2021, as noted above. At the discretion of the Coalition, the consultant ultimately chosen for this scope of work could be renewed for up to two additional years without re-procurement.