

Downtown Partnership of Baltimore

Communications & Public Affairs RFP

Responses to Questions Received

1. Is there an anticipated monthly or annual budget range for this engagement?

Response:

DPOB has not established a fixed budget for this engagement. Proposers should submit a detailed fee proposal outlining their recommended scope of services, staffing approach, and associated costs. DPOB will evaluate proposals based on qualifications, demonstrated experience, proposed approach, and overall value.

DPOB is open to creative pricing structures that demonstrate value while meeting the organization's strategic communications needs.

2. Who will be the direct point of contact for the agency and who are the secondary points of contact who will be involved in the account?

Response:

The selected firm will work directly with the Chief Operating Officer (COO), who will serve as the primary point of contact and provide overall strategic direction and approval. Additional members of the DPOB team, including the President, Marketing & Communications staff, and other subject matter experts, will participate as needed depending on the initiative, campaign, or issue being addressed. The selected firm should be prepared to collaborate across multiple departments while coordinating communications through the designated primary contact.

3. How much on-site participation in Baltimore is expected or required, including leadership meetings, public meetings, hearings, media events, stakeholder meetings, and DPOB events?

Response:

The selected firm should anticipate regular on-site participation in Baltimore. While many routine meetings may occur virtually, DPOB expects the selected partner to be available for selected in-person leadership meetings, Board meetings, public hearings, media events, stakeholder meetings, crisis response activities, and major organizational events when requested.

Proposers should describe their approach to balancing in-person and virtual support, as well as their ability to respond quickly when on-site participation is required.

4. For digital and social media support, is DPOB seeking strategy, content direction, and analytics guidance, or day-to-day content creation, scheduling, posting, and community management?

Response:

DPOB is primarily seeking strategic communications support, including communications planning, messaging, content strategy, reputation management, executive communications, and performance analytics.

Day-to-day content creation, scheduling, posting, and community management are currently managed by DPOB's internal Marketing & Communications team. The selected firm should be prepared to provide strategic guidance, campaign support, and communications counsel for major initiatives, public affairs issues, and crisis communications when needed.

5. Should media monitoring platform costs be included within the monthly retainer, or may those costs be treated as reimbursable/pass-through expenses?

Response:

Media monitoring platform costs may be identified separately as reimbursable or pass-through expenses. Proposers should clearly distinguish professional service fees from third-party technology, software subscriptions, or other direct expenses within their fee proposal.

6. Does the government affairs communications scope include legislative tracking or lobbying activity, or is the need limited to communications strategy, messaging, materials, and preparation for public-sector audiences?

Response:

The scope is limited to communications strategy and public affairs support.

DPOB is seeking assistance with public affairs messaging, stakeholder communications, media relations, executive preparation, presentation materials, public meeting support, and communications related to government affairs initiatives.

Legislative tracking, lobbying, or advocacy services are not included within the scope of this engagement.

7. Should paid advertising, video production, graphic design, print production, and major campaign production be treated as outside the base retainer and priced separately if needed?

Response:

Yes. These services should be considered outside the base retainer and proposed as optional or project-based services. Proposers should identify these services separately and provide associated pricing within their proposal.

8. Is DPOB willing to consider separate, one-time project fees for some items in the RFP (crisis communications, media training, etc.)?

Response:

Yes. DPOB recognizes that certain services—including crisis communications planning, executive media training, public engagement planning, communications assessments, message development, and other strategic initiatives—may be more appropriately scoped as one-time projects. Firms are encouraged to clearly identify these services separately from their ongoing monthly retainer and provide associated pricing.

9. Can DPOB share its 90-day priorities for the first quarter of work with the selected public relations partner?

Response:

During the first 90 days, the selected partner should anticipate focusing on several strategic priorities, including:

- Developing a comprehensive communications strategy aligned with DPOB's FY27–FY31 Strategic Plan.
- Conducting an assessment of DPOB's current communications assets and identifying opportunities to strengthen media presence and public awareness.
- Establishing proactive media relationships and developing an annual editorial calendar.
- Positioning DPOB leadership as thought leaders on downtown revitalization, public safety, economic development, placemaking, quality of life, and public policy.
- Supporting communications surrounding key organizational initiatives, strategic partnerships, and public affairs efforts.
- Developing executive messaging, talking points, and spokesperson materials.
- Establishing communications metrics and reporting tools to measure effectiveness.

The selected partner should serve as a strategic advisor from the outset and be prepared to adapt priorities as organizational needs evolve.

10. Is DPOB celebrating any milestones or making key announcements during the contract period that should be incorporated into the proposal?**Response:**

Yes. During the contract period, DPOB anticipates several significant initiatives and announcements, including:

- Implementation of DPOB's FY27–FY31 Strategic Plan.
- Public safety and quality-of-life initiatives.
- Economic development and placemaking projects.
- Downtown revitalization and capital investment announcements.
- Government affairs and public policy initiatives.
- Organizational milestones and strategic partnerships.
- Signature downtown events and community activations.

Additional opportunities may emerge throughout the year, and the selected firm should be prepared to provide strategic communications support for both planned and emerging initiatives.

11. Recognizing that DPOB hosts many events at varying scales, how many events should the agency be prepared to support with its promotional efforts?**Response:**

DPOB hosts numerous events throughout the year, ranging from small stakeholder meetings and community activations to large-scale signature events.

While the exact number varies annually, proposers should anticipate supporting communications for approximately **15–25 priority events** each year.

Not every event will require the same level of support. DPOB will work collaboratively with the selected firm to determine the level of communications planning, media outreach, messaging, and promotional support based on each event's strategic importance and anticipated public impact.

12. Is there an existing crisis communications plan in place for DPOB? If so, is the expectation that the agency would edit and elevate the plan, or start from scratch?

Response:

DPOB has existing crisis communication procedures; however, the organization is seeking a comprehensive review and modernization of its crisis communications framework.

The selected firm will be expected to:

- Assess existing crisis communication protocols.
- Identify gaps and recommend best practices.
- Update messaging and response procedures.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Develop templates, holding statements, and spokesperson guidance.
- Provide executive media training and crisis communications exercises, as appropriate.

The goal is not to create an entirely new plan but rather to strengthen and modernize DPOB's crisis communications program to reflect current organizational needs and industry best practices.

13. What are the highest-priority communications challenges DPOB would like the selected partner to address in the first year?

Response:

The selected partner will play a critical role in strengthening DPOB's strategic communications and public affairs efforts. Key priorities include:

- Developing and implementing a proactive communications strategy aligned with DPOB's FY27–FY31 Strategic Plan.
- Strengthening DPOB's reputation as the leading voice and advocate for Downtown Baltimore.
- Enhancing executive communications and thought leadership.
- Modernizing DPOB's crisis communications framework and establishing rapid response protocols.
- Supporting communications related to public safety, quality of life, homelessness, economic development, placemaking, and capital investment initiatives.
- Providing communications support for government affairs, public meetings, and stakeholder engagement.
- Supporting communications related to governance, transparency, and complex public-sector issues involving the Downtown Management Authority, City agencies, elected officials, businesses, residents, and community stakeholders.
- Strengthening media relationships and increasing positive earned media opportunities.
- Preparing leadership for media interviews, public presentations, legislative hearings, Board meetings, and other high-profile public engagements.

- Establishing communications metrics and reporting to measure effectiveness and demonstrate impact.

The selected partner should serve as an extension of DPOB's executive leadership team by providing proactive strategic counsel, anticipating communications opportunities and challenges, and helping position DPOB as the trusted leader and authoritative voice for Downtown Baltimore.

The firm should be responsive, collaborative, and capable of supporting executive leadership in both routine communications and high-profile, rapidly evolving situations. The successful partner should demonstrate the ability to think strategically, communicate effectively across diverse audiences, and provide executive-level counsel that advances DPOB's mission, strategic priorities, and long-term vision for Downtown Baltimore.

I believe this version is ready to issue with the RFP. It reads like a professional procurement addendum, eliminates unnecessary repetition, and provides proposers with a clear understanding of DPOB's expectations while maintaining flexibility in how firms structure their responses.

Request for Proposal Cover Page

Solicitation Issue Date: Tuesday June 30, 2026			
Solicitation Closing Date: Friday July 24, 2026		Solicitation Closing Time 2:00PM (EST)	
Issued By: Downtown Partnership of Baltimore			
Address: 20 S Charles St #600 Baltimore, MD 21201 6th			
Telephone Number: 410-244-1030			
DPOB is a non-profit organization in Baltimore, MD founded in 1983 and exempt from all state, federal and local taxes.			
Responses must be received on or before July 24, 2026 , by 2:00 PM (EST).			
Electronic Responses: Please submit your Proposal to bidners@dpob.org referencing “Public Relations RFP#2026-01” in the subject line.			
For questions/information, please email mevora@dpob.org referencing “PublicRelationsRFP#2026-06” in the subject line. Questions/information must be emailed no later than Friday July 10, 2026 . All questions received by the designated date will be answered within three (3) business days and will be made available to all respondents. Questions sent to bidners@dpob.org will not be answered as this email address is not monitored on a regular basis. This is meant to receive proposals only.			
DPOB reserves the right to waive informalities or irregularities, to reject any or all proposals received, to accept the proposal deemed best for the organization, and/or request new proposals if necessary.			
Any objection to the above conditions must be clearly indicated in the proposals.			
In compliance with this RFP and to all the conditions imposed herein, the undersigned offers and agrees to furnish the services in accordance with the attached signed proposal or as mutually agreed DPOB by subsequent negotiation.			
VENDOR IDENTIFICATION			
Company Name:			
Address:			
Telephone:			
Email:			
Federal ID:			
Print Name	Title	Authorized Signature	Date

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Public Relations Services

Downtown Partnership of Baltimore / Downtown Management Authority

Issue Date: June 30, 2026

Proposal Deadline: July 24, 2026

Questions Due: July 10, 2026

Submit To: bidbers@dpob.org

1. About the Organization

The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB) has been building a better Baltimore for over 40 years. We are the convener and connector for downtown's progress — bringing together residents, businesses, civic organizations, and government to make the urban core a place where people want to be.

DPOB operates as two entities working together for all of downtown's neighborhoods. The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore is a nonprofit organization responsible for marketing, events, economic development, advocacy, and community outreach across the broader downtown area. The Downtown Management Authority (DMA) is Baltimore's oldest and largest business improvement district, focused on delivering clean, safe, green, and hospitality services within the 106-block downtown core. Together, these two entities give DPOB a broader and more powerful set of tools to serve the full downtown community.

Our vision is for downtown Baltimore to be the economic and creative heart of the region — a dynamic city center where residents, businesses, and visitors thrive together. Our mission is to steward and promote a clean, safe, and thriving urban core, collaboratively enhancing the vitality of all of downtown's unique neighborhoods.

DPOB's work spans four strategic priorities: the physical and experiential transformation of downtown; financial sustainability and resource development; organizational effectiveness; and collaborative leadership. On the ground, this means running programs like the Clean Sweep Ambassadors, Downtown Baltimore Guides, and Park Stewards; supporting small business growth through the Downtown BOOST Program and grant initiatives; and producing major public events including the Charles Street Promenade, Courthouse Market, Baltimore Restaurant Week, and the annual State of Downtown Baltimore. DPOB also leads on advocacy, alley improvements, capital investment, and issues that affect the broader downtown community.

We are seeking a public relations partner who understands not just what we do, but why it matters — and who can help us tell that story compellingly to media, stakeholders, policymakers, and the public.

2. Purpose

The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore is seeking proposals from qualified public relations firms or communications professionals to provide strategic communications and public relations services. The selected vendor will help DPOB build broad public awareness of its work, strengthen its relationships with key stakeholders, and ensure that accurate and compelling information about downtown Baltimore reaches the right audiences.

DPOB operates in a public-facing environment where perception matters. We are looking for a partner who can support both proactive storytelling and responsive communications as situations arise.

3. Scope of Services

Proposals should describe the vendor's approach and capabilities across the following areas. DPOB does not prescribe a specific methodology — we welcome each firm's best thinking on how to achieve the objectives below.

Strategic Communications

- Develop and maintain an overarching communications strategy aligned with DPOB's organizational priorities
- Advise leadership on messaging, positioning, and communications decisions
- Ensure consistency of message across all channels and audiences

Media Relations

- Build and maintain relationships with local, regional, and national media contacts
- Pitch and secure earned media placements including news stories, features, op-eds, and broadcast opportunities
- Draft press releases, media advisories, talking points, and other media materials
- Manage inbound media inquiries and prepare spokespeople for interviews

Media Monitoring & Performance Reporting

- Ongoing monitoring of print, broadcast, digital, and social media for coverage of DPOB, its programs, and downtown Baltimore
- Regular reporting on media sentiment, volume of coverage, and key narrative themes
- Metrics that demonstrate the reach and impact of communications efforts over time
- A system for flagging significant or negative coverage requiring prompt attention

Digital & Social Media

- Support DPOB's social media presence with strategy, content direction, and best practices
- Advise on digital communications tools and platforms appropriate for DPOB's audiences
- Provide analytics and performance tracking for digital efforts tied to PR activity

Stakeholder & Community Engagement

- Identify and help engage key stakeholders including business leaders, civic organizations, community groups, and elected officials
- Support outreach to constituencies within and beyond the downtown district
- Assist in building coalitions and mobilizing third-party voices on behalf of DPOB initiatives

Government Affairs Communications

- Support DPOB in communicating with and educating public sector partners at the city and state levels
- Prepare materials for elected officials, agency partners, and policy audiences as needed
- Monitor policy and legislative developments relevant to downtown Baltimore and advise on communications implications

Crisis Communications

- Develop and maintain a crisis communications plan and rapid response process
- Provide counsel and support during reputational or operational challenges
- Be available to respond quickly when situations require immediate attention

Events & Programming Support

- Support communications around major DPOB events and public programs
- Coordinate media outreach and provide post-event coverage recaps

Legal and Public Engagement Awareness

The selected vendor shall demonstrate experience supporting public agencies, quasi-public organizations, or nonprofit organizations operating in highly visible public environments and a working knowledge of the Maryland Open Meetings Act and other applicable public transparency requirements. The vendor shall provide strategic communications guidance to DPOB leadership and designated spokespersons regarding public engagement during open meetings, public hearings, media events, and other official proceedings.

Services should include, at a minimum:

- Advising on media access considerations and public transparency requirements applicable to open meetings and public proceedings.

- Recommending appropriate engagement protocols for interactions with reporters, journalists, stakeholders, and members of the public.
- Supporting leadership and designated spokespersons in preparing for public meetings and high-profile public engagements.
- Assisting with message development and communications strategies for legally sensitive, high-profile, or publicly scrutinized matters while coordinating, as appropriate, with DPOB's legal counsel.
- Providing recommendations for communications planning before, during, and after public meetings or other public-facing events.

The vendor should also develop internal guidance, training materials, and/or workshops to prepare staff and leadership to communicate effectively, maintain message consistency, and operate in accordance with applicable public transparency requirements and organizational communications protocols.

4. Proposal Requirements

Interested firms should submit a proposal that includes the following:

- Overview of the firm, including history, size, and relevant areas of expertise
- Description of experience working with organizations similar to DPOB — nonprofits, business improvement districts, civic organizations, or public-private partnerships
- Proposed approach to this engagement, including how the firm would structure the work and staff the account
- Biographies or profiles of the specific team members who would be assigned to DPOB
- Description of media monitoring capabilities and sample reporting format
- At least three (3) professional references from comparable clients
- Proposed fee structure, including monthly retainer and any services billed separately

5. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- Demonstrated experience in public relations and strategic communications for mission-driven or civic organizations
- Knowledge of and relationships within the Baltimore media and civic landscape
- Quality and clarity of the proposed approach
- Strength and relevance of the assigned team
- Media monitoring and reporting capabilities
- Overall value and fit with DPOB's needs and culture

6. Contract Terms

- The initial contract term is one (1) year, with the option to renew upon mutual agreement
- Either party may terminate the agreement with thirty (30) days written notice
- All work product developed under this engagement is the property of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore
- The selected vendor shall maintain confidentiality of non-public organizational information
- Additional services beyond the scope of the retainer — such as video production, paid advertising, or print materials — will be negotiated separately and require prior approval

7. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted by to bidders@dpob.org with PublicRelationsRFP#2026-06 in the subject line. Late submissions will not be considered. DPOB reserves the right to request follow-up presentations, negotiate with one or more firms, or decline any or all proposals received.

Proposals should be informative, yet concise and not exceed 15 pages (excluding appendices). Submissions should use a standard 11- or 12-point font and be formatted for readability.

Questions regarding this RFP may be directed to mevora@dpob.org with PublicRelationsRFP#2026-06 in the subject line no later than July 10, 2026. Responses to questions of general interest will be shared with all firms who have expressed interest.