

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Proactive PMR Consultant

Issued by the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC)

I. Introduction

The **Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC)** is seeking proposals from qualified public and media relations (PMR) consultants or agencies to support the development and execution of a comprehensive proactive communications strategy. The selected firm will elevate Baltimore's economic development story locally and nationally, positioning Baltimore City as a premier destination for business growth, investment, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

II. Background

BDC is the economic development agency for the City of Baltimore, dedicated to driving inclusive economic growth, supporting small businesses, attracting investment, and telling Baltimore's story as a thriving place to live, work, invest and grow a business.

The selected partner will help shape and amplify BDC's brand positioning through strategic storytelling, targeted media engagement, and integrated marketing efforts that highlight the people, projects, and partnerships powering Baltimore's economy. The consultant will support BDC's Executive, Senior, and Business Development teams in developing and implementing Equitable Economic Development and, the City of Baltimore's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), aimed at strengthening Baltimore's reputation as a city that fosters and supports diverse businesses across all sectors and demographics.

III. Scope of Work

A. Media Relations & National Visibility

- Develop and execute a proactive media outreach strategy targeting national and global outlets focused on business, innovation, investment, life sciences, tech, logistics, manufacturing, arts and culture, and urban development as it relates to Equitable Economic Development in Baltimore City.
- Secure national earned media placements that highlight Baltimore's momentum, leadership, and local success stories.
- Facilitate thought leadership opportunities, including expert commentary, speaking engagements, op-eds, and feature storytelling.

B. Local Public Relations & Community Engagement

- Drive media opportunities for senior leadership that reinforce BDC's role and visibility within Baltimore.
- Strengthen relationships with local journalists, influencers, and community stakeholders.
- Support storytelling about local small businesses, entrepreneurs, and neighborhood-based development.

C. Strategic Messaging & Story Development

- Craft narrative frameworks that authentically reflect Baltimore's transformation story, highlighting progress while acknowledging historical context and ongoing challenges
- Develop data-driven storytelling capabilities that translate complex economic indicators, demographic trends, and development metrics into compelling business cases
- Create culturally competent messaging that celebrates Baltimore's majority African American identity as a strategic asset rather than a challenge to overcome
- Identify storylines aligned with major BDC initiatives, market trends, press-worthy milestones, and investor/site selection decision factors

D. Measurement & Reporting

- Track outreach and earned coverage with regular performance reports.
- Provide clear KPIs tied to visibility, message penetration, and engagement.

E. Digital Strategy and Online Presence

- Develop and execute integrated digital communications strategy across social media platforms, targeting key demographics including young professionals, entrepreneurs, and investors
- Monitor and manage online reputation through proactive content creation and rapid response protocols
- Create digital content strategies that showcase Baltimore's authentic culture, innovation ecosystem, and business climate
- Leverage influencer partnerships and digital storytelling to reach national audiences

F. Crisis Communication and Rapid Response

- Provide 24/7 rapid response capabilities for emerging issues or negative coverage
- Develop proactive messaging frameworks to address common misconceptions about Baltimore

- Create crisis communication protocols that protect and advance BDC's reputation during challenging news cycles
- Maintain relationships with national fact-checkers and business journalists for rapid clarification of misinformation

IV. Qualifications

Proposers should demonstrate:

- **Urban Transformation Expertise:** Minimum 10 years developing PR strategies for post-industrial cities, economic development agencies, or organizations managing complex urban transformation narratives
- **Equity-Focused Communications:** Proven track record creating inclusive communications strategies and authentic community engagement, particularly with majority-minority communities
- **Investment Attraction Experience:** Direct experience supporting business attraction, retention, and expansion efforts, including familiarity with site selection consultants and corporate location decision-making processes
- **Digital and Traditional Media Integration:** Demonstrated expertise managing multi-platform communications strategies that reach diverse stakeholder groups from local community members to national investors
- **Data Storytelling:** Ability to transform economic development metrics, demographic data, and market research into compelling narratives for various audiences
- **Crisis Communications:** Experience managing rapid response communications and reputation management in complex urban environments
- **Cultural Competency:** Demonstrated ability to authentically represent and communicate about diverse communities without relying on deficit-based narratives or stereotypes
- **Experience in collaborating and coordinating with Mayor's Offices, State regional and local economic development agencies in articulating a shared announcement, message or campaign.**
- **Strong relationships with local, regional, and national media outlets, including business, urban affairs, and demographic-specific publications**
- **Experience leading media training and preparing spokespeople for complex topics including equity, inclusion, and urban economic development**
- **Ability to rapidly respond to emerging opportunities and news cycles**
- **Capacity to collaborate as a seamless extension of the BDC team**

V. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

1. **Agency/Consultant Overview:** Background, structure, and areas of expertise.
2. **Relevant Experience:** Case studies or examples of similar engagements.
3. **Proposed Approach:** How your team would execute the scope of work.
4. **Team Structure:** Provide a list of key personnel, their roles, and short bios highlighting each member's qualifications and specific responsibilities within this project.
5. **Budget Estimate:** Cost breakdown by phase or deliverable, including optional add-ons. Please also indicate any retainer requirements or minimum engagement fees associated with initiating work under this scope.
6. **Timeline:** Proposed timeline aligned with project phases.
7. **References:** At least three (4) references from past or current clients. At least one reference must be from outside of the Baltimore Metropolitan Area and/or State.
8. **Equity and Community Engagement Plan:** Describe your approach to authentic business community engagement and how you will ensure communications strategies reflect and amplify voices from Baltimore's diverse business communities, particularly historically underserved populations.

VI. Contract Term

Initial contract term of two (2) years with the option to extend based on performance and mutual agreement.

VII. Submission Instructions

Please submit proposals electronically by December 13th in PDF format to:

Kimberly A. Clark

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC)

KClark@baltimoredevelopment.com

Subject line: *RFP Submission – Proactive PMR Consultant*

We will accept questions until **12pm on November 25th**.

Responses to all questions will be posted on the website **by 5:00 p.m. on November 26th**. No emails or phone calls will be answered individually.

VIII. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- Demonstrated understanding of BDC's mission and communications goals
- Cultural competency and authentic community engagement approach
- Experience with post-industrial city repositioning and urban transformation narratives
- Digital strategy integration and multi-platform campaign experience
- Crisis communications and reputation management capabilities
- Relevant experience and strategic approach
- Creativity and originality in proposed tactics
- Qualifications and capacity
- Cost-effectiveness and value
- References and past performance

IX. Terms & Conditions

BDC reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals.
- Negotiate terms with any proposer.
- Award all or part of the scope to one or multiple vendors.
- Cancel this RFP at any time without liability.