



Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Marketing and Communications Services



I. BACKGROUND AND KEY DATES

Summary

The Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (“ACAM”), on behalf of the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative (“GHOYC”), is requesting qualifications for marketing and communications services to:

- Develop and execute a roll out plan for the release of a data report on youth disconnection, thereby raising awareness of the issue;
- Showcase effective interventions underway; and
- Stimulate action by targeted stakeholders particularly in communities with the will and leadership to reduce disconnection rates.

Timeline

RFQ Opens: April 19, 2023

Application Deadline: May 8, 2023; interviews for finalists will take place the week of May 15th.

Select and Notify Consultant: Week of May 22, 2023

Project Dates: 9-12 months

Project Budget: \$50,000 - \$100,000

About GHOYC

GHOYC is a coordinated, cross- sector regional collaborative with the mission to create and scale education and career pathways for young adults who are disconnected from education and employment, defined as opportunity youth (“OY”).

What are values that drive the work of the GHOYC?

- Equity - just and fair inclusion in a society in which all can participate, prosper and reach their full potential.

- A youth-centered approach - young people have the right to represent their own interests, identify their challenges, and design their own solutions to issues that most impact them. We seek to ensure that youth expertise and youth-led change are centered at the core of our work.
- Strengths-based - youth and young adults possess unique characteristics (potential, strengths and capabilities) that help them evolve and move along their journey. They are the storytellers in their own lives.

GHOYC's core areas of work are:

- Designing, piloting and scaling reconnection models;
- Convening stakeholders for networking, education on research-based practices, and building partnerships;
- Raising awareness of the issue of disconnection and solutions underway; and
- Elevating the voice and experiences of young adults to expand access to and improve services.

About ACAM

ACAM is the lead coordinating agency for GHOYC. ACAM is a nonprofit management support organization fostering innovative collaboration through a diverse network of 59 nonprofit and community organizations. ACAM is designed to be the hub for a wide range of basic needs and self-sufficiency services utilizing partners from various sectors, serving diverse client groups across a broad geographic area. Over the past 18 years, ACAM has led 649 collaborative programs, braiding together over \$14.2 in private and federal funding to funnel resources into, and build the capacity of, the regional human service safety net.

The Issue

Youth disconnection is at a crisis level in Texas: 4.8M youth/young adults are disconnected in the US, and Texas accounts for 510,900 of them, second only to California.^[1] Of the 510,900, nearly 120,000 are situated in the Houston MSA. GHOYC's overarching goal is to reduce this number by decreasing community, high school, postsecondary, and workforce disconnection rates for OY, using an equity lens.

Recent History

The release of the Kinder Institute's study "Houston's Opportunity: Reconnecting Disengaged Youth and Young Adults to Strengthen Houston's Economy" in fall, 2016, sparked a community conversation about youth disconnection. Following the report release, JPMorgan Chase, in partnership with Educate Texas and JFF, developed the Bridge to College and Career Success pilot program. The pilot tested models, established partnerships and served as a "learning lab" for the best ways to tackle youth disconnection in Houston. Lessons learned from the pilot can be found here: [oy-recommendation-document final.pdf \(edtx.org\)](#).

The end of the pilot program period dovetailed with an exciting next phase: the opportunity to engage Houston-area stakeholders in a planning process to scale reconnection pathways through a planning grant from the Aspen Institute in 2020. The stakeholder group identified two reconnection pathways (which later received funding from the Aspen Institute), and the Greater Houston Opportunity Youth Collaborative was born.

Since 2020, GHOYC has accomplished the following:

- Designed and launched two reconnection models.
 - The models have engaged OY in career/college advising, enrolled OY into education and/or training programs, employed OY in living-wage career pathway roles and established employer partnerships for career pathway roles with Ben & Jerry's, Burlington, HCA, Memorial Hermann, and Sam's Club.
- Convened stakeholders (ranging from 60-90 per strategy session) to establish priorities:
 - Develop Inventory of collective resources, Asset Map and/or Database
 - Create a space for organizations to share current programs, offerings and outreach
 - Provide Navigation for youth programming and support services
- Piloted an Opportunity Fellows program and established a Youth Advisory Board to support a reconnection strategy targeting high school graduates.
- Secured a planning grant from the Texas Opportunity Youth Network Innovation Fund to develop a peer navigation model to improve OY recruitment and engagement
- Received three rounds of funding from the Aspen Institute
- Created a partnership with ACAM to serve as the lead coordinating agent for GHOYC
- Developed funding partnerships with corporate and private foundations
- Established a Steering Committee to guide the Collaborative's priorities and support implementation. The Committee comprises leaders representing nonprofit organizations, local government, and philanthropy.

II. THE PROJECT

The Houston Area Youth Disconnection Report

One of GHOYC's priorities in 2023 is to raise awareness about the issue of youth disconnection and stimulate influencers to act. A key asset to accomplish this goal is under development, the Houston Area Youth Disconnection Report. The study will be completed by June 2023.

Measure of America (MOA), an advocacy and research program of the Social Science Research Council, is partnering with GHOYC, ACAM, community organizations, nonprofits, researchers, policymakers, and funders to develop a Houston Area Youth Disconnection Report. MOA has been collaborating with partners to produce groundbreaking research on youth disconnection since 2012, and they are excited to work on their first report for the Houston Area. An Advisory Panel has been formed, comprising 15-20 thought leaders and eminent scholars from across disciplines, sectors, racial and ethnic groups, and across different parts of Houston.

MOA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan program dedicated to creating easy-to-use, methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America. Through reports, interactive websites, and custom-built dashboards, MOA works with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of highest need, pinpoint levers for change, and track progress over time. To learn more about its work, please visit: www.measureofamerica.org.

The Project Scope

ACAM is seeking marketing and communications expertise to build out a messaging campaign for the MOA report, develop the GHOYC brand look and feel, and to develop content for a website landing page and preliminary toolbox. The aim is to raise awareness about youth disconnection post-pandemic, and effective interventions and stimulate action. The overarching message to convey is that the region's young adults are embraced as Houston's future, with contributions to make to themselves, their families, communities, and economy. Marketing and communications expertise is needed to sharpen this message and to develop approaches that resonate with multiple groups of key stakeholders.

The goal of this effort is ultimately to refine GHOYC's pathways development by co-creating place-based strategies. The sheer size of the Houston area, number of educational institutions (K-12 and postsecondary), variety of employers and limited mass transit create a challenging environment for coordination and collaboration. In addition, the causes of disconnection and profile of disconnected youth vary by community. To reduce youth disconnection rates in a region the size of the Houston metropolitan area requires a place-based, hyper-local approach. For example, what works in Southeast Houston might look different than solutions in Northwest Houston. GHOYC's aim for the data report is to galvanize community action in areas where there is community will, capacity and leadership to reduce disconnection rates.

A key part of this work involves developing relationships with targeted community leaders and prioritizing audience subgroups, given the large group of influencers that impact young adult outcomes. The broader group of influencers for the messaging campaign includes: K-12 system superintendents, postsecondary education system leaders, employers, large service delivery organizations, local government leaders and philanthropy. GHOYC's assumption is that, for practical reasons, both employers and philanthropy must be prioritized.

The main challenges/questions we face in messaging:

- How do we package the information so that audiences are motivated to want to learn more?
- Who are the trusted, respected community leaders who can inspire others to listen?
- What are the key narratives that need to change?
- How might stakeholders engage together to create a new narrative to replace existing, limiting narratives?
- How can we overcome negative perceptions (views of disconnected young adults as disinterested, and "It's not my problem")
- Lack of awareness about the existence of services or how leaders or volunteers can plug in

Current Marketing Technology:

- Website: [Young Adult Employment – Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries \(acamweb.org\)](http://acamweb.org)
- Social media: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook

Deliverables:

Requirement	Detail
Web Enhancement & Copy Writing	<p>Transform existing content (both GHOC content and MOA content) into attractive, digestible and actionable information to be placed on a website.</p> <p>Design look and feel for site</p>
Events and Presentations	<p>Plan and execute 3-5 report release events targeting key audiences. This can include leveraging events hosted by other community organizations/institutions. Include a community dialog component.</p> <p>Securing time for presentations at key influencer gatherings or board meetings.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with GHOC Steering Committee in designing events and presentations.</p> <p>Targets for desired attendance TBD.</p>
Media	<p>Collaborate on media outreach in order to draw attention to OY and local data/opportunities.</p> <p>Co-create success measures for media coverage including: # of views of report # of downloads of the report # of news stories about the report</p>
Social Media	Development of a 6-month social media calendar
Youth Engagement	Work collaboratively with GHOC's Youth Advisory Board(s) to shape messaging events. Youth to have a role in the report release events.
Other	Generate creative examples that illustrate possible outputs of the project.

GHOC plans for a longer-term communications strategy. This scope of this RFQ is for an initial phase, with a primary emphasis on the report rollout. Longer term objectives include:

- Work with youth with lived experience and stakeholders, to identify key messages and call(s) to action to uplift.
- Shape messages and develop plan for pushing out messages via various social media platforms (to reach the young adults) and traditional channels (to reach their guardians, family/friend influencers).
- Evaluate changes in public perception over time.

III. APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be received by May 8th. GHOYC will reach out to selected applicants for an interview, at which time, questions by applicants can be addressed. GHOYC encourages all interested parties with experience in marketing, communications, opportunity youth and place-based stakeholder engagement to submit the following information. Applications must be submitted electronically to Bren Gorman at bgorman@acamweb.org.

Application Materials

1. Cover letter to include:
 - **Company Overview:** Include the number of full-time employees, number of contract employees, office location(s), and date founded.
 - Primary markets served
 - Number of customers served
 - Marketing services offered directly as an agency
 - Marketing services that you currently sub-contract
 - Awards won over the past 3 years, other recognition
 - **Your interest in this work:**
 - Identify areas of unique expertise
 - Expand on your approach to building partnerships with both influencers and youth leaders
 - Why you want to support narrative change for Opportunity Youth
 - **References:** Minimum of 3 professional references
2. Resume or CV for each proposed team member
3. Relevant work samples - Share 3 creative examples of prior work

Application Evaluation Criteria:

All proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria. In your response, please be specific about how you meet or do not meet the line item below.

- Experience with data report roll outs and web-based tools.
- Track record of moving target audiences to action through messaging campaigns.
- Experience with working with youth/young adults in creating messaging and executing events.
- Measuring success of engagements using both quantitative and qualitative data.

^[1] [ADisruptedYear.pdf \(s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com\)](#), accessed 1/31/23.