MEDIA RELATIONS SUPPORT FOR BARR FOUNDATION MOBILITY GRANTEES - RFP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Mobility Grantees

How many grantees would this project support?

Are the 18 grantees to be prioritized in any way?

There are 18 grantees whose needs will be the primary focus of this project. They are a subset of our approximately 50 grantees, and they are the organizations that we have identified as most in need of communications support at this time. They are not further prioritized within this group of 18; however, organizations will self-select into this media relations support. Additionally, there may be one-off opportunities to support some grantees beyond the 18.

Would you provide a general example of the type of organization that has received a Mobility grant (i.e., a non-profit in Lowell that focuses on XX)?

The 18 priority grantees are listed on the last page of the RFP. For more information, please visit their websites, which are each linked.

How much media experience have the grantees had?

Some have had frequent interactions with the media, while others have had minimal experience with the media and are looking to be supported in starting to engage the media proactively.

Scope of Work

Can you provide more info on what kind of social media support would be most helpful?

What percentage of the scope of work do you believe will be for media relations, in comparison to general communications strategic guidance, and social media guidance? Can you provide a breakdown?

General communications strategic guidance would be considered out of scope for this project. The project will focus on media relations; social media guidance is a very small portion of the workload. For example, the consultant may provide general advice on using use social media to...
amplify a published story, such as “Share it on your organization’s social media accounts and ask your partners to do the same.” However, the consultant should not provide recommendations such as creating new accounts or instructions on how to use platforms.

**On average, how many hours a month will the consultant be expected to devote to this project?**

We look to the consultant to recommend a time commitment given our scope and the consultant’s proposed approach, but we anticipate a minimum of 50 hours per month, which could be spread across multiple people on the team.

**Project Management**

**Will Folake manage/triage proactive media requests from grantees and assist with coordinating responses for reactive outreach?**

**Is there a member of the Barr Mobility team that will support the agency in managing Mobility grantees?**

**Your RFP mentions that each grantee has varying internal communications capacities. Are we to liaise in various ways with each grantee? Or are all grantee efforts to be managed through Folake Oguntebi?**

**How involved are the project managers in the communications strategy and meetings?**

There is no predetermined structure, and we are flexible in terms of how this work is coordinated and conducted. The information below indicates the general parameters/assumptions we are starting from.

There is interest among the group in receiving media relations support, but their ability and willingness to take on new partnerships varies considerably based on a wide range of factors. Grantees will be invited to learn more about the selected consultant and given a choice about whether they want to receive this support. After the “getting to know you” phase, the consultant will be expected to work directly with grantees while keeping Folake and Najah informed of specific projects/stories in development.

Folake’s primary role is to provide overarching management to ensure we stay within the contract’s scope and reach overall goals. Folake will also triage requests that fall outside of the scope of this project (e.g., general communications strategic guidance) and help bring in other resources as needed. Najah’s primary role is to support connections with grantees and to ensure that all work conducted under the contract follows the regulations that limit what the Foundation may support (namely, we cannot support lobbying activities as a part of this project). Additionally, the Barr Foundation staff (Najah, Lisa, Mary, and Mariella) will provide relevant input based on their subject matter expertise and relationships with grantees.
Engaging Grantees

Can you please share the Mobility Strategy and any strategic communications documents that already exist?
As the support is for the individual grantee organizations, we do not have relevant strategic communications documents. Beyond ensuring general alignment, the consultant is not expected to engage directly with the Mobility Strategy.

Will the communications team have access to the grantees to support media pitching and announcement stories?
Yes, the consultant will work directly with grantees.

How available will grantees and constituents be to the media relations partner?
Our grantees are generally responsive to meeting with the partners that we engage to support their work. We cannot make specific guarantees about availability.

How will the media partner be expected to work with existing grantee communications staff?
The individual grantees will express how they want the consultant to engage. There will be a period of getting to know the organizations and individual staff, during which time the consultant will have the opportunity to learn about the most supportive ways that they can engage with each organization.

What is the expectation for support set with the Mobility grantees with regards to partnership? Is it monthly calls?
There is no predetermined structure. The consultant should be prepared for several “get to know you” meetings and to be able to respond to the media relations needs of grantees as individual organizations.

To what extent has the group of Mobility grantees worked together already? Do they already meet regularly? Will the consultant be working one-on-one with each grantee, or is the program designed to provide support to the grantees as a cohort through shared trainings, meetings, etc.?
Most of the grantees know each other, though their level of engagement with each other varies greatly. Many are in coalition spaces together, but they each have their own bodies of work that we hope to be able to support through this contract.

While the structure will likely evolve in response to the grantees’ needs, the initial engagements with grantees will be one-on-one. If training arises as a desired form of support, we will invite all 18 organizations and some of our other Mobility grantees to opt into participation.
Do the groups have any shared goals, or would the consultant be assisting each group with their own specific goals? If there are shared goals, have those goals and associated communications campaigns been established, or would the consultant’s work involve helping them decide what they want to accomplish together?

The consultant should expect to begin this work with grantees one-on-one. We do not dictate structures for how grantees work together. At this time, it is not the consultant’s responsibility to strategize on how grantees can more intentionally work together – we would consider this to be misaligned with the trusting relationships we are looking to build.

That being said, we do expect the consultant to stay apprised of mobility and climate-related news in Massachusetts and nationally, and to be informed about the work of our grantees. As a result, we would expect the consultant to share information when there may be opportunities for grantees to collaborate on stories.

Are there certain expectations around in person and virtual touch points with Mobility Grantees?

We anticipate that most touchpoints will be virtual. Given the nature of mobility work (i.e., a significant amount of place-based work), grantees may need on-site support when engaging the media about specific projects.

Is the expectation that the communications consulting firm will be the on-call PR shop for each of the 18 grantees individually?

Not in the traditional sense, as a key purpose of this contract is to help the grantees to build their own media relations competencies. Additionally, we hope that the consultant will engage as a genuine partner with us and our grantee organizations. That is to say, we anticipate a higher level of engagement beyond just being on call to discuss specific stories/news opportunities. As needed, Folake and Najah will provide assistance in prioritizing requests.

It sounds like the media relations consultant will both provide direct communications support and assist the organizations in building their own communications capacity. Can you describe the balance you envision between capacity building and direct support?

Yes, that’s correct. Our expectation is that the consultant will use every touchpoint as an opportunity to help grantees develop their competencies or make connections. While we do not envision a future where every grantee is 100% self-sufficient in media relations, we believe there are always opportunities for skill-building and that the grantees will learn by doing alongside the consultant.
**Geography**

Are you considering out of state submissions?

How open are you to considering agencies outside of MA?

Yes, we will consider out-of-state submissions, but the consultant must have a pre-existing understanding of the Massachusetts landscape and relationships with media outlets in the state.

We consider teams located in the state to have an advantage derived from their direct connection to and knowledge of the Massachusetts landscape and political environment.

Where are the grantees located?

The 18 grantees who have been prioritized for this support are all located in Massachusetts.

Are the majority of these non-profits in the Boston area or relatively spread out across the state?

The work of the grantee organizations is spread across the state of Massachusetts.

Although the majority of Barr Foundation Mobility Grantees are headquartered in Greater Boston and within I-495, will equal emphasis be given to all regions of the Commonwealth?

Given the nature of our grantees’ work, we do not have a structured method for defining “regions” in Massachusetts and, at this time, are not seeking to track this work in that way.

**Success**

What are the specific needs of the grantees?

Each organization has a unique body of work and needs. We envision the consultant spending the beginning of this engagement getting to know the grantees and their specific needs. Over the past year, we have surveyed our grantees about their communications needs and also had discussions with them. Media relations was one area that rose to the top.

How do you measure qualitative success? Can you give an example of the expectations of number of stories placed and in what time frame?

There are 18 Mobility Grantees that will receive media support. Each of these organizations will have different and unique needs when it comes to communications/pr strategy. In the course of this year-long project how many stories does Barr want written? How many of the 18 grantees should be covered in stories?

We would consider 15-25 stories over the course of the year to be a success. The primary purpose of this support is to help the 18 organizations further develop their media relation skills, regardless of their current skill set. For some, this means helping them to get more earned media; for others, this will entail helping them to understand what a press release is and so on.
We also welcome innovative one-off opportunities for elevating the perspectives of our grantee organizations. For example, intentional efforts were made to ensure that Barr Mobility grantees were included in this story about ideas for fixing the MBTA.

For measuring success 'evidenced through survey feedback' - will these surveys be administered to the grantees, or others? Can you advise on what will be included in the surveys so that we may benchmark our efforts accordingly?

The surveys will be administered to the grantees. We do not have specific questions developed, but we generally desire to understand if grantees had a positive and supportive experience and if they were able to grow their skills in a way that led to outcomes aligned with our shared work.

**Engaging Media Outlets**

What are the top national media outlets you’d like to see grantees in?

What are the dream media outlets for coverage? (For example, would the top goal be a local general-interest newspaper, or a national transportation journal?)

We do not desire to dictate specific outcomes for the grantees based on our perceptions of various media outlets. We will encourage the selected consultant to engage directly with grantees about these types of questions, and to support them in engaging desired media outlets.

Does the foundation and the grantees organize and host media facing site-visits/events?

The scope of this project does not include providing media relations support for the Foundation. Most grantees have at least some experience engaging with the media during events, but they have not necessarily organized specific site-visits/events themselves.

Is there a budget to sponsor journalist travel to MA to speak with the grantees?

Potentially, depending on the needs and interests of grantees.

**History of this Work**

Is the Mobility program new or is this just the first year the Barr Foundation will invest in PR to promote it?

The Mobility Strategy has been in place since 2010. This work results from our refreshed strategy and evolving approaches related to “beyond the grant” support.

Is there an incumbent agency?

The Foundation and the Mobility Team have worked with many agencies in the past, including current contracts for other bodies of work. This RFP is the first time we are developing a project to provide this type of support directly to Mobility grantees.
Other

What percentage of time do you anticipate your PR agency devoting to land use vs. mobility?

“Mobility” reflects the inherent connection between transportation and land use/development. We do not view transportation and land use/development as separate, and our grantees’ work does not include hard lines between the two.

Aside from the diversity of media outlets (e.g., language, geography, and reach) what diversity, equity and inclusion work has been considered/planned for the media relations partner toward creating sustainable change?

We don’t intend to do diversity, equity, and inclusion work for the media relations partner. However, we expect the partner to center diversity, equity, and inclusion in this work in line with Barr’s core values. We also offer this public resource which is designed for grantees, but may be useful to anyone reading these responses.

What is your typical engagements or impressions on social media?

We are not seeking support to manage the Foundation’s or our grantees’ social media.

What data & insights might be available to inform message development - i.e. Does Barr have access to polling? Is there a set of goals/initiatives/strategies to anchor messaging recommendations?

Yes, we have access to polling. Each grantee has their own specific goals, initiatives, and strategies that they are working toward individually, and some are engaged in coalition spaces that have shared goals.

How many firms received the RFP?

We do not know how many firms received the RFP, as we intentionally requested support from several distribution partners. Twenty-two firms or individuals completed the question and interest form.

What type of involvement do MA government leaders have in your work?

We maintain close partnerships with and provide a range of support to municipalities and the state. All our grantees are involved in work that requires direct engagement with government entities.

What type of pushback do you get from authorities holding jurisdiction (AHJ’s)?

We are not sure how to answer this question.