REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Communications Services

Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC)

RFP Number	CS-PY26-1
Issue Date	May 5, 2026
Proposals Due	June 2nd, 2026 by 5:00 PM ET
Submission Method	Electronic submission to marketing@theworkforcecouncil.org
Questions Deadline	May 21st, 2026 by 5:00 PM ET
Contract Period	September 1st, 2026 – June 30th, 2027
Estimated Budget	Not to exceed $150,000

HAMPTONROADS WORKFORCECOUNCIL

ONE REGION. ONE WORKFORCE. ONE ECONOMY.

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to:
Andrew Nissman, Hampton Roads Workforce Council
marketing@theworkforcecouncil.org

Table of Contents

I. PURPOSE 3

II. BACKGROUND 3

III. KEY DETAILS 4

IV. TARGET AUDIENCES 6

V. GOALS AND KEY OBJECTIVES 6

VI. SCOPE OF SERVICES 7

VII. AUTHORIZATION OF WORK NOT IN THE CONTRACT 9

VIII. BILLING & COMPENSATION 9

IX. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS 10

X. EVALUATION CRITERIA 12

XI. GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS 13

XII. APPENDICES 13
Appendix Item A: Certification Statement 14
Appendix Item B: Proposal Checklist 15

I. PURPOSE

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC) is seeking proposals from qualified marketing and communications agencies to provide an array of professional services, including strategic branding, event promotion, digital marketing, content development, and media relations, as outlined further in section *VI. Scope of Services*.

Through this engagement, HRWC aims to strengthen its regional visibility, enhance stakeholder engagement, and effectively communicate the impact of its workforce initiatives. Proposing agencies should clearly articulate how their approach will advance HRWC's mission and support targeted outreach to key audiences, including:

- Jobseekers and workers
- Employers and industry partners
- Workforce system partners, including government agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and funders

II. BACKGROUND

HRWC serves as the regional workforce development authority for Local Workforce Development Area 14, providing employment and training services to jobseekers and businesses across Hampton Roads, Virginia. HRWC oversees the planning and implementation of workforce programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as well as numerous federal, state, local, and private initiatives.

Our **mission** is to provide the talent employers need to grow the economy that helps everyone thrive. Our **vision** is to help Hampton Roads become one region, one workforce, and one economy that delivers economic empowerment for all.

HRWC operates in one of the nation's most strategically significant labor markets, with major workforce demand across maritime, defense, healthcare, logistics, and emerging energy sectors. The organization plays a central role in aligning workforce supply with industry demand and supporting regional economic competitiveness. The HRWC's marketing and communications efforts must effectively reach diverse audiences, translate complex workforce initiatives into accessible messaging, and drive measurable engagement across the region.

HRWC operates a network of Virginia Career Works (VCW) centers and two Hampton Roads Veterans Employment Centers (HRVEC), as well as multiple other regional employment and training programs, to support thousands of jobseekers and workers annually. The Council also serves as a trusted convener and labor market intermediary, helping align industry demand in critical local industries, such

as maritime and healthcare, with workforce supply to strengthen the region's economic competitiveness.

In recent years, HRWC has grown significantly to support more robust workforce development initiatives focused on industries facing significant talent shortages. As HRWC continues to grow, it requires a modern, integrated communications strategy to effectively showcase its programs and impact, strengthen its regional brand, and engage key audiences.

The selected marketing and communications partner will support this effort by executing a range of targeted activities, including event promotion, content development, and media outreach, in alignment with HRWC's communications strategy, messaging, and brand guidelines, and in close coordination with HRWC marketing staff and executive leadership.

Additional information regarding HRWC and its programs can be found on its website: https://www.theworkforcecouncil.org/.

III. KEY DETAILS

Contract Funding: HRWC anticipates a total funding pool of approximately $150,000 to support one or more contracts under this RFP for the initial period of September 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

HRWC reserves the right to award contracts to multiple agencies, with funding distributed across selected partners based on scope, service areas, and organizational priorities. Individual contract amounts may vary.

Respondents are encouraged to propose monthly retainer structures that clearly define level of effort, staffing approach, and included services.

More information about core service areas to be addressed is included in section *VI. Scope of Services* below.

RFP Availability: This RFP Package will be available on HRWC website (https://www.theworkforcecouncil.org/) beginning on May 5, 2026.

RFP Submission: Proposals must be submitted by email to marketing@theworkforcecouncil.org by close of business on **June 2, 2026**. Proposals received after this date or those submitted as hard copy, fax, or other methods will not be considered.

Proposal Formatting Requirements: To ensure consistency and ease of review, all proposals should be formatted as follows:

- Use a standard, easy-to-read font such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman, size 12 point.
- Maintain 1-inch margins on all sides.
- Include page numbers on all pages.
- Proposals should be submitted in PDF format, clearly labeled with the respondent's company name.
- Proposals should be organized using section headers that correspond to the structure outlined in section *IX. Proposal Submission Requirements* below.

Proposals that do not adhere to these formatting requirements may be deemed non-responsive at the discretion of HRWC.

Questions and Support: Questions regarding this RFP may be addressed to Mr. Andrew Nissman, HRWC Senior Director of Development & Communications, by email to marketing@theworkforcecouncil.org. All answers to questions that are not available in the RFP Package or any other clarifications or addendums regarding the RFP will be posted on HRWC website. All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted via email to no later than 5:00 PM ET on May 21, 2026. Responses to all submitted questions will be posted on the HRWC website no later than May 27, 2026.

Important Note: Proposals are not required to address all core service areas outlined in Section *VI. Scope of Services*. HRWC may evaluate proposals based on demonstrated strengths in one or more areas and, at its discretion, select multiple agencies to fulfill distinct roles and responsibilities under this RFP. Contracts will be structured as retainer-based engagements, with defined scopes of ongoing services and, where applicable, supplemental project-based work approved in advance. HRWC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to authorize additional one-year extensions. Any extension will include a mutually agreed-upon scope of work and contract amount, based on organizational priorities and available funding at the time of renewal.

Disclaimer: Submission of a proposal in response to this RFP does not guarantee the award of a contract. HRWC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to determine, in its sole judgment, whether a proposal is complete, responsive, and in the best interest of the organization.

IV. TARGET AUDIENCES

The agency will work closely with HRWC staff to develop messaging, outreach efforts, and digital marketing strategies to reach the following targeted audiences:

- **Jobseekers and Workers** – including unemployed/underemployed adults, dislocated workers, youth, career switchers, and labor organizations.
- **Industry and Employers** – including small businesses, major regional employers, industry associations, and chambers of commerce.
- **Workforce Partners** – including government agencies, K-12 public schools, community colleges, universities, proprietary schools, other training providers, funders, nonprofits, and regional policymakers.

V. GOALS AND KEY OBJECTIVES

HRWC has identified the following strategic goals and key objectives related to engaging its target audiences as described above:

Goal 1: Connect Jobseekers to Employment
- *Key Objective 1a:* Enroll Participants in Job Training Programs
- *Key Objective 1b:* Increase Awareness of Career Opportunities

Goal 2: Engage Industry
- *Key Objective 2a:* Provide Impactful Business Services
- *Key Objective 2b:* Enhance Brand Reputation & Trust

Goal 3: Develop Robust Partnerships
- *Key Objective 3a:* Demonstrate Impact & Outcomes
- *Key Objective 3b:* Provide Thought Leadership
- *Key Objective 3c:* Support Fundraising & Donor Stewardship
- *Key Objective 3d:* Drive Collaboration

Additionally, as a core component of the goals and objectives outlined above, HRWC seeks to expand its digital presence and leverage emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, social media platforms, and search engine optimization, to enhance and optimize its marketing and communications functions.

HRWC expects selected agencies to contribute to measurable improvements in outreach, engagement, and program participation. Agencies should be prepared to support performance tracking and reporting aligned with organizational goals.

Key performance areas may include:
1. **Growth in jobseeker and participant engagement**

2. **Employer engagement and participation in workforce initiatives**
3. **Event attendance and campaign reach**
4. **Digital engagement metrics**
5. **Media coverage and brand visibility**

Agencies will be expected to collaborate with HRWC to define appropriate metrics and provide regular reporting on performance.

VI. SCOPE OF SERVICES

HRWC intends to establish retainer-based partnerships with one or more marketing and communications agencies to provide ongoing, flexible support across a range of priority initiatives. Under this model, agencies will function as extensions of HRWC's internal team, delivering integrated marketing and communications services on a continuous basis rather than through discrete, project-by-project engagements. HRWC will provide ongoing direction related to priorities, campaigns, and communications needs, and agencies will be expected to allocate resources, manage workflow, and deliver services in a responsive and timely manner within the agreed-upon retainer scope.

The selected marketing and communications agency will provide ongoing support across a range of marketing and communications priorities, including campaigns, events, digital engagement, and stakeholder communications, as directed by HRWC. Services will focus on delivering defined technical and creative work that aligns with HRWC's established communications strategy, messaging, and brand guidelines.

Services will be delivered on an ongoing basis within the framework of the agreed-upon retainer. HRWC will assign priorities and initiatives on a rolling basis, and agencies will be expected to respond with appropriate staffing, timelines, and level-of-effort planning.

For services that fall outside the agreed-upon retainer scope, HRWC may request additional proposals outlining scope, timeline, and cost for review and written approval prior to initiation.

Important Note: Proposals must address at least one of the core service areas outlined below; however, respondents are not required to address all areas. HRWC reserves the right to select multiple agencies to advance its goals and objectives and may award contracts to more than one marketing and communications partner to support distinct projects and priorities described in this RFP.

Proposals should clearly articulate how agencies will address one or more of the following core service areas.

Core Service Areas:

1. **Event Promotion and Logistics Support**
   The agency will provide creative development, promotional support, and logistics coordination for HRWC-hosted events, ensuring timely delivery of marketing assets and event materials as directed by HRWC. This includes, but is not limited to, the following programs and events:
   - **Workforce Innovation Awards** (annually in September)
   - **Top 20 Under 20 Awards** (annually in May)
   - **Worlds of Work Expo** (annually in October)
   - **Job Fairs & Hiring Events** (multiple throughout the year)
   - **Hampton Roads Veterans Employment Center Events** (multiple throughout the year)
   - **Press & Media Engagements** (multiple throughout the year)

2. **Video Production & Technical Media Services**
   The agency will deliver video production services, including filming, editing, and formatting, to produce compelling video content that promotes HRWC programs, partners, and events. In addition, the agency will support intensive graphic design tasks, such as the development of an annual snapshot or report that visually highlights HRWC's programs, services, and outcomes, ensuring high-quality design and alignment with brand standards.

3. **Search Engine Optimization & Marketing (SEO/SEM)**
   The agency will provide technical SEO services, including keyword research, on-page optimization, metadata development, and content recommendations to enhance the performance of HRWC's digital assets. The agency may also support paid digital advertising campaigns (e.g., Google Ads, social media advertising) by coordinating with HRWC staff on campaign design, audience targeting, implementation, and performance reporting.

4. **Regional Brand Identity Campaign**
   The agency will support the development and execution of project-based creative campaigns that strengthen HRWC's regional brand identity and ensure consistent messaging across outreach efforts. This may include the creation of templates, style guides, branded assets, and other collateral to enhance visibility and recognition across key audiences. All creative deliverables must align with existing brand standards and receive prior approval from HRWC.

5. **General Communications Support**
   The agency will provide on-demand communications support to assist HRWC staff with ongoing outreach and stakeholder engagement efforts. This may include the design and distribution of email marketing templates, development of quarterly or special newsletters, creation of flyers, social media graphics, and other collateral to support program announcements, events, and general

workforce communications. All materials will be developed using HRWC-provided content and direction, ensuring consistency with existing messaging, style, and brand guidelines.

Onboarding: Following contract award, HRWC will conduct a kickoff process with selected agencies to align priorities, communications strategy, brand standards, and initial work plans. Agencies will be expected to quickly onboard and begin providing support within the retainer structure.

Guidance from HRWC: HRWC leadership, including the President & CEO, Chief Innovation Officer, and Senior Director of Development & Communications, will provide strategic direction, programmatic content, access to subject matter experts, and timely feedback to support agency execution. HRWC will also maintain ownership of brand standards, messaging frameworks, and final approval of all public-facing materials.

VII. AUTHORIZATION OF WORK NOT IN THE CONTRACT

From time to time, HRWC may request services that fall outside the scope of the agreed-upon retainer. In such cases, HRWC will request a supplemental proposal from the agency outlining the scope of work, timeline, and associated costs. Work will not begin on any such services without prior written approval from HRWC.

VIII. BILLING & COMPENSATION

The contract(s) resulting from this RFP will be structured primarily as retainer-based engagements, supported by defined scopes of ongoing services and deliverables. Under this model, selected agency partners will provide ongoing marketing and communications support aligned with HRWC's priorities, with specific tasks and initiatives assigned by HRWC on a rolling basis.

HRWC will provide direction on priorities, initiatives, and requested services on an ongoing basis, and selected agencies will be expected to respond with appropriate staffing plans, timelines, and level-of-effort estimates, as needed. Any services outside the agreed-upon scope will require prior review and written approval by HRWC. Agencies should include a comprehensive breakdown of proposed fees, hourly rates (if applicable), and any additional costs, as described in *Section IX. Proposal Submission Requirements*.

Payments will be made in accordance with the agreed-upon retainer structure, supplemented by compensation for any approved services outside the retainer scope. Invoices must reflect services provided during the applicable billing period and include a summary of activities performed, level of effort, and any applicable

direct or pass-through costs. For any services outside the retainer scope, invoices must correspond to previously approved supplemental work.

Work performed within the agreed-upon retainer scope does not require separate authorization. Any services requested outside the retainer scope must receive prior written approval from HRWC. HRWC will not be responsible for costs incurred for work performed outside the scope of approved project authorizations.

IX. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for this contract, respondents must submit a proposal that is structured and responsive to the scope of services and ongoing engagement expectations outlined in the Scope of Services.

Proposals must include the following components:

A. Cover Letter & Agency Overview

As an introduction to the RFP response, agencies must include a formal introductory letter on company letterhead. Include in the letter general background information about the agency and its history, areas of specialization, relevant experience, and qualifications in providing marketing and communications services.

B. Scope of Work

Respondents should address one or more of the following core service areas as described above in the *VI. Scope of Services* section:

1. **Event Promotion and Logistics Support**
2. **Video Production & Technical Media Services**
3. **Search Engine Optimization & Marketing (SEO/SEM)**
4. **Regional Brand Identity Campaign**
5. **General Communications Support**

For each service area addressed, agencies should describe their approach to delivering these services within an ongoing, retainer-based engagement:

- A brief description of relevant experience and technical capabilities.
- A description of the proposed approach to delivering these services, including processes for estimating, managing, and reporting on ongoing work and initiatives.
- Proposed rates and/or fee structures for each service area, including any minimum engagement requirements.

All services will be delivered on an as-needed basis within the framework of the agreed-upon retainer, with HRWC providing ongoing direction on priorities, initiatives, and assignments. HRWC will prioritize agencies that demonstrate flexibility, responsiveness, and a proven ability to deliver high-quality creative and

technical services in a dynamic, fast-paced environment. Respondents should describe their approach to managing workflow, allocating resources, and providing clear estimates of level of effort, timelines, and anticipated deliverables, particularly for services that fall outside the core retainer scope and require prior approval.

C. Approach to Ongoing Engagement and Account Management

Respondents should describe their approach to managing an ongoing client relationship under a retainer-based model. This section should demonstrate the agency's ability to provide consistent, responsive, and high-quality support across multiple initiatives. At a minimum, responses should address the following:

- Communication cadence and reporting structure (e.g., weekly check-ins, monthly reporting)
- Expected turnaround times and approach to responsiveness for priority and ad hoc requests
- Workflow and project management tools used to track tasks, timelines, and deliverables
- Approach to prioritization and resource allocation across multiple concurrent initiatives
- Methods for collaborating with internal staff and adapting to evolving organizational needs

D. Experience & Past Work Samples

For each core service areas addressed, the agency should provide examples of technical deliverables completed as part of relevant previous projects or campaigns, such as websites, videos, or digital ad campaigns. These examples of past work should demonstrate the agency's ability to deliver quality and results while meeting client deadlines, budgets, and expectations on defined projects.

E. Team Bios and Qualifications

Respondents must identify and provide brief biographies for the key personnel who will be directly assigned to support HRWC projects. For each individual, proposals should include:

- Full name, title, and expected role on HRWC projects
- Summary of relevant expertise, including technical capabilities, industry experience, and core service areas aligned with the Scope of Services (e.g., video production, SEO/SEM, graphic design, digital marketing, and content development)
- Previous experience working with workforce development, economic development, government, nonprofit, or public sector clients (if applicable).

HRWC values transparency regarding team composition. Any substitution of proposed key personnel following the contract award must be pre-approved by HRWC and accompanied by personnel of equivalent experience and qualifications.

F. Billing Structure and Rate Sheet

Respondents must provide a clear, detailed, and itemized rate sheet for all services proposed under this RFP. Responses should align with the services described in *Section B. Scope of Work*. The rate sheet should include:

- Hourly rates for key personnel and service categories (e.g., graphic design, video production, SEO/SEM support, event promotion, and digital marketing)
- Retainer pricing structures, including what services and level of effort are included within the base retainer
- Flat-fee pricing, where applicable, for common or repeatable deliverables (e.g., video production packages, newsletter development, or campaign support)
- Any applicable minimum engagement requirements, overtime rates, or expedited/rush fees
- A clear description of any third-party or pass-through costs (e.g., stock imagery, advertising placements, software tools, or subcontracted services), including how such costs will be billed and approved

Invoices must reflect services provided during the billing period and align with the agreed-upon retainer scope and any approved supplemental work.

G. Certification Statement

Agencies must submit a completed Certification Statement affirming their agreement to comply with all terms and conditions of this RFP and certifying that the proposal meets all applicable requirements and specifications. The Certification Statement must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the proposing agency. A blank Certification Statement is included in this RFP package as *Appendix A*.

X. EVALUATION CRITERIA

HRWC will evaluate RFP responses based following weighted criteria:

Evaluation Area	Weight
Demonstrated Experience and Technical Expertise in Marketing & Communications Services	25%
Quality and Relevance of Past Work Samples	20%
Approach to Ongoing Support, Responsiveness, and Workflow Management	20%
Strategic Approach and Alignment with HRWC Goals and Target Audiences	15%
Qualifications and Experience of Proposed Team	10%
Cost Competitiveness and Clarity of Pricing Structure	10%

HRWC will prioritize agencies that demonstrate the ability to:

- Provide consistent, high-quality support in a retainer-based environment
- Respond quickly and effectively to evolving priorities
- Collaborate closely with internal staff and stakeholders
- Deliver both strategic insight and technical execution

HRWC reserves the right to request additional information or conduct interviews with selected respondents. Final award decisions will be based on overall value and alignment with HRWC's ongoing marketing and communications needs.

XI. GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

The Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC) is an Equal Opportunity Program/Employer and does not discriminate against any individual in the United State on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, sex stereotyping, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, or political belief or citizenship. The full HRWC EO/Nondiscrimination Policy 15-14 is posted on HRWC website.

A contract awarded under this RFP will be funded in whole or in part with Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds from the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOL ETA), through the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), to HRWC through the City of Virginia Beach, Virginia, the designated WIOA Grant Recipient for HRWC.

XII. APPENDICES

Included as appendices are the following documents and forms:

- Appendix Item A: *Certification Statement*
- Appendix Item B: *Proposal Checklist*

Appendix Item A: Certification Statement

The undersigned hereby certifies that they are an authorized representative of the proposing agency and are fully empowered to submit this proposal on behalf of the organization. The proposing agency affirms that:

1. **Accuracy of Information:** The information contained in this proposal is true, accurate, and complete to the best of its knowledge.
2. **Compliance with RFP Requirements:** The agency has read, understands, and agrees to comply with all terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in this Request for Proposals (RFP). The proposal meets all applicable specifications unless otherwise clearly noted.
3. **Commitment to Perform:** The agency agrees to provide the services described in its proposal in accordance with the terms of this RFP and any resulting contract.
4. **Compliance with Laws:** The agency certifies that it is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances.
5. **Conflict of Interest:** The agency certifies that it has no conflicts of interest that would preclude it from entering into a contract with the Hampton Roads Workforce Council (HRWC), or that any such conflicts have been fully disclosed in the proposal.
6. **Debarment and Suspension:** The agency certifies that neither it nor its principals are currently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in federally funded contracts or programs.
7. **Non-Discrimination:** The agency certifies that it does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law, and that it complies with all applicable equal opportunity laws and regulations.
8. **Authorization to Contract:** The agency certifies that it is properly licensed (if required), in good standing, and authorized to conduct business in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
9. **Right to Reject:** The agency acknowledges that HRWC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive informalities, and to accept the proposal deemed to be in its best interest.

By signing below, the agency acknowledges acceptance of the above statements and certifies its intent to be bound by the contents of its proposal.

Authorized Representative Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

Agency Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix Item B: Proposal Checklist

To assist respondents in preparing a complete proposal, HRWC recommends using the following checklist prior to submission. Please note that this checklist is not a required component of the RFP and does not need to be included in the final submission; this tool is meant to help responding agencies ensure that their applications are complete:

□ **Cover Letter**, including general background information, areas of specialization, relevant experience, and qualifications.

□ **Scope of Work**, including descriptions of relevant experience/capabilities, proposed approaches/processes for managing individual ongoing work and initiatives, and proposed rates for each core service areas.

□ **Experience & Past Work Samples**, including team bios/qualifications, summaries of relevant expertise, and summaries of previous experience working with similar organizations, if applicable.

□ **Certification Statement**, dated and signed by agency representative.

To ensure compliance with proposal formatting and submission requirements, please ensure that all submitted documents adhere to the following guidelines:

□ Easy-to-read, size 12 font (Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman)

□1-inch margins on all sides.

□ Page numbers on all pages.

□ Proposals submitted in PDF format

□ Proposals submitted by email to marketing@theworkforcecouncil.org by close of business on June 2, 2026.