

Request for Proposal (RFP): Cannabis Expungement Education and Outreach Campaign

Introduction

Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP) is seeking proposals from experienced media companies to manage an education and outreach campaign focused on the new cannabis laws in Maryland, particularly concerning the expungement of criminal records. The campaign will educate the public, legal, social service, and community-based organizations. It will engage audience participation in efforts and practices that allow them to take advantage of the new cannabis expungement laws.

Background & Additional Information

Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP) works to end homelessness in Maryland by providing outreach, education, and free civil legal services to unhoused or unstably housed people. HPRP collaborates with persons with lived experience of homelessness to advocate for policy changes, recognizing that people have the power and expertise to determine solutions to systemic issues affecting their lives.

With the legalization of the adult use and possession of cannabis, the Maryland General Assembly appropriated \$2.5 million to Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) for programs and proposals to educate individuals on changes to cannabis and expungement laws and support expungement efforts. The Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP) received \$815,000 to be used for this project in partnership with seven other organizations. All work will be done as a coordinated, collaborative effort among Maryland's legal services agencies. With our shared knowledge and experience, we can deliver effective expungement services to clients across the State. Together our goal is to measurably increase knowledge and "change the behavior" of the targeted communities concerning the new cannabis laws and cannabis expungement laws.

Each organization will have a slightly different focus, though all the programs will conduct community outreach and engagement. Allegany Law Foundation and Harford County Bar Foundation will create localized educational brochures, press releases, and advertisements and hire attorneys to provide expungements. FreeState Justice, Community Legal Services, and Mid-Shore Pro Bono will employ attorneys, and Maryland Legal Aid will use existing staff to provide direct representation and hold clinics. Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service will provide community navigators and a paralegal to provide outreach, presentations, intake, and case research. Community Legal Services of Prince George's County will focus on services for incarcerated individuals. As part of this coordinated effort, HPRP will contract a media agency to create educational and promotional materials for large-scale information and training around this initiative. Our work will include content creation and marketing for radio, TV, podcasts, social

media, and other platforms. The education and outreach campaign aims to reach clients who may have been unable to access expungement services before by tapping into our existing networks of community partners. With a statewide coordinated approach, we will target libraries, community centers, government service agencies, and more to promote the expanded eligibility for expungement.

Scope of Work

The selected media company will carry out the following tasks:

1. Planning and Strategy
 - a) Work closely with the HPRP team and members of the grantee organizations to collaborate on a strategy to develop, execute, and track results on an education and outreach campaign.
 - b) Prepare media plans for each target audience utilizing research and expertise to develop strategic recommendations for budget allocation, market prioritization, and channel mix.
 - c) Provide HPRP with insights on emerging trends and new media to continually evolve and reach the target audiences.
 - d) Provide ongoing consultation to HPRP and other grantee legal services organizations during the campaign.
 - e) Negotiate with media providers for best rates, schedules, and added value opportunities.
 - f) Provide consistent monthly reporting on campaign program performance, including end-of-campaign wrap-up reports, a database of all assets, a dashboard of goal performance, and an executive summary of key takeaways, including qualitative and quantitative results mapping to larger objectives.
 - g) Provide clear budgets and plans outlining when payment and materials are due for paid insertions before placing insertions. The agency and client will review and approve before work begins.
2. Content Creation
 - a) Create specific messages and implement message delivery for the identified target audiences.
 - b) Develop branding and themes to unify all outreach materials.
 - c) Work with subject matter experts to develop cannabis law reform and cannabis expungement articles/features for posting on all media platforms.
 - d) Develop and execute an online resource guide to cannabis expungement information and service providers (with a companion print component).
3. Message Delivery
 - a) Leverage paid media partnerships and placements to distribute and amplify content effectively, including web banners, radio and newspaper, and out-of-home marketing (billboards, gas pump screens, etc.).
 - b) Provide education and outreach materials in all essential languages.
 - c) Implement marketing strategies to include:

- i. Print: including newsletters, brochures, booklets, flyers, rack cards, business cards, announcement posters, and awareness posters in various sizes and colors. Printing of materials should be inclusive.
- ii. Radio/Podcasts: including radio forums, radio advertising, and recordings for marketing messaging.
- iii. Display/Digital: including website content, mass media announcements, video messaging on the program website, and social media accounts. Video messaging will include concept development, filming, editing, and final product development.

Deliverables

- Event marketing for grantee organization activities and events
- Event graphic design (posters, logos, promotional graphics)
- Social media for the campaign
- Educational and editorial content on all media platforms
- Online and print resource guide
- Print, television, radio, and internet advertising
- Physical and digital billboards
- Online ads for campaign activities and resources
- Print, television, radio, and Internet advertising
- Online forms related to cannabis expungement
- Translated collateral and materials as requested
- Monthly and quarterly reports, summaries, and invoices

Proposal Guidelines

Interested media companies must submit the following information:

1. An overview of the company, including a brief history, experience, and expertise in education and outreach campaigns, especially in the social justice space.
2. A timeline and summary of the strategy for the proposed campaign, including a breakdown of the deliverables and milestones.
3. A budget for the proposed campaign, including an itemized breakdown of costs and fees.
4. Examples of previous successful campaigns conducted by the company.

HPRP is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, striving to ensure that all members of the organization, current and future, feel welcome and have an equal opportunity to connect, belong, and grow. Any agencies HPRP works with are expected to hold the same values and commitment to these principles.

Submission Guidelines

Proposals should be submitted electronically to HPRP's Executive Director, Kirsten Gettys Downs, at kgettysdowns@hprplaw.org, by May 31, 2023. The subject line should read: "Cannabis Expungement Education and Outreach Campaign - [media company name]."

Evaluation Criteria

A selection committee of grantee organization members will review the proposals with the general criteria described herein. The selection committee may request an in-person or virtual presentation by the respondents. Respondents should be prepared to provide additional information the selection committee feels necessary for the fair evaluation of proposals. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Experience and expertise in multi-platform education and outreach campaigns, especially regarding social justice issues.
2. The proposed campaign strategy's creativity and innovation in reaching traditionally hard-to-reach populations.
3. The proposed campaign's timeline and budget.
4. Understanding of Maryland cannabis laws and the potential impact that recent legal reforms can have on impacted individuals, communities of color, and the economic health of the State.
5. Demonstrated experience with nonprofit storytelling, strategy, and marketing.
6. Proven ability to educate the public and identify targeted audiences for systemic legal reform.
7. Proven ability to demonstrate and implement a community-based social marketing campaign to effect behavioral change.
8. Proven ability to work with multiple stakeholders to achieve consensus support for campaign strategies and tasks.
9. Administrative and account support, from strategic level planning to concise day-to-day communication to timely billing that aligns with budget plans provided by HPRP.
10. Proximity to the State of Maryland and availability to meet with the HPRP team in person.

Timeline

Estimated dates for the RFP and contracting process are as follows. HPRP may adjust this schedule as needed.

- Proposal Submission Deadline: May 31, 2023
- Review of Proposals (2 weeks)
- Interview of Top 3-5 Proposals (2-3 weeks)
- Selection of Agency/Team/Consultant (1-2 weeks)
- Recommendation of Selection Committee (1-2 weeks, depending on interview timeline)
- Review and Approval of Recommendations by grantee organizations (1-2 weeks)
- Contract Negotiations (1-2 weeks)
- Contract Time Frame Begins (Time of Signed Contract)
- Contract Period (One year)
- Contract Expiration Date - One year from the date of the signed contract

Provided Information and Assistance

Applicants may review resource materials, including the following while developing their proposals:

History of Expungement in Maryland

<https://ubaltlawreview.com/2023/02/05/marijuana-expungement-in-maryland-ready-for-reform/#:~:text=An%20expungement%20provision%20in%20Maryland%E2%80%99s%20House%20Bill%20837,automatically%20expunges%20all%20criminal%20marijuana%20possession%20records.%20>

Expungement Law – Broader Context

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Legislation/Details/sb0037?ys=2023RS>

Effects on Individuals with Criminal Records

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2023RS-SB0088-REIN.pdf>

Cannabis Expungement Charges

<https://mvslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Expungement-of-Cannabis-Charges-Factsheet-Final.pdf>

Expungement and Cannabis Legalization

<https://baltimorebeat.com/a-radical-change/>

Incurring Cost

The Respondent shall be responsible for any cost incurred in preparing, transmitting, presenting, or modifying the proposal or material for this RFP.

Amended Proposal

The Respondent may submit an amended proposal before the deadline for receipt of proposals. Such amended proposals must replace the previously submitted proposal and be identified in the transmittal letter.

Respondent's Right to Withdraw Proposal

A Respondent may withdraw their proposal at any time before the deadline for receipt of proposals. The Respondent must submit a written withdrawal request to Caitlin Goldblatt, Administrative Specialist, Homeless Persons Representation Project, at cgoldblatt@hprplaw.org.

Proprietary Information

Restrictions on any information included in the proposals must be identified. Proprietary information submitted in response to this RFP will be handled following applicable purchasing procedures. Every page of the proprietary material must be labeled or identified as "proprietary" or "confidential."

Ownership of Proposals

All documents submitted in response to this RFP shall become the property of HPRP and will not be returned to the respondent.

Disclosure of Proposal Contents

The proposal will be kept confidential.

No Obligation

This RFP does not obligate HPRP or any associated grantee organizations to the eventual rental, lease, purchase, etc., of any equipment, software, or services offered until a valid contract is executed.

Terms and Conditions

The contents of a successful proposal will become part of the contract upon award. The Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP) reserves the right to negotiate with the successful Respondent any additional provisions to those contained in this RFP. All computer software, publications, and marketing material developed with MLSC funds must be made available to MLSC or its other grantees at a cost of not more than the cost of duplicating the particular program or materials.

Termination

This RFP may be canceled at any time, and proposals may be rejected in whole or part when the program determines that such action is in the best interest of HPRP or the associated grantee organizations. All RFPs are subject to funds availability.

Sufficient Appropriation

Any contract awarded as a result of this RFP is contingent upon the appropriation of funds. A contract award may be determined or reduced in scope if sufficient appropriate or authorization does not exist. Such terminations will be affected with written notice to the contractor. The program's decision as to whether sufficient appropriations and authorizations are available will be accepted by the contractor as final.