



Request for Proposals (RFP)
Marketing & Community Engagement Campaign
Consultation & Advisory Services

1. Introduction

The Southwest Pennsylvania New Economy Collaborative (The New Economy Collaborative (NEC)), a coalition under the Build Back Better Regional Challenge initiative, seeks proposals from qualified marketing & community engagement firms to design and implement a comprehensive two-year Marketing & Community Engagement campaign. This campaign aims to amplify our mission, enhance visibility of project partners & programs, attract new partners and companies to our coalition and cluster and foster community engagement across the region, supporting the advancement of our five key projects focused on programs tools and services designed to advance the Adoption, Workforce and Commercialization of Robotics, Automation and AI technologies throughout the region.

2. Background

The NEC is an 11-county coalition formed to apply for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC). The Collaborative includes 90+ organizations: community-based organizations, labor unions, educational and research institutions, economic development partners and leaders from the private, public and philanthropic sectors, led by a board of directors co-chaired by Stefani Pashman, CEO, Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and Farnam Jahanian, President, Carnegie Mellon University. We focus on communities that need support, adopting a hub-and-spoke approach designed to benefit not only the urban core but surrounding communities as well.

BBBRC is the marquee program of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's American Rescue Plan to boost economic recovery from the pandemic and rebuild American communities.

The Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant funds five projects focused on adoption, upskilling infrastructure, and commercialization in the robotics sector. As these projects grow the region's impact and leadership in the robotics, autonomy and AI sectors, NEC collaborates through continued public-private partnership to see each project from beginning to completion. For more information, please visit www.swpanec.org.

3. Scope of Work

The selected firm will be responsible for:

- Developing a strategic marketing plan that aligns with NEC's vision and objectives.
 - Each of the five projects will have unique metrics/engagements to track performance/impact of Marketing Campaign (see Metrics section below)
- Creating and executing a comprehensive communication strategy, including digital, print, and social media platforms, to raise awareness and engage the community in NEC

opportunities and to leverage NEC investments to attract new partners and companies to our coalition, the cluster and region.

- Designing interactive and accessible campaigns that effectively reach and include diverse populations within Southwest Pennsylvania and clearly communicate BBBRC assets to stakeholders including companies, talent or potential partners outside the region
- Organizing and managing community engagement events that foster dialogue and participation among stakeholders, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups.
- Monitoring and evaluating the campaign's impact, providing regular reports on metrics and insights to guide future strategies.

4. Performance Metrics

The NEC Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant is comprised of five projects focused on adoption, upskilling infrastructure and commercialization in the robotics sector. As these projects grow the region's impact and leadership in the robotics and autonomy sector, we collaborate through continued public-private partnership to see each project from beginning to completion. With this campaign we will increase visibility of the New Economy Collaborative, the project lead organizations and the coalition, but emphasis will be placed on the metrics for success which are unique for each project but would be broken down primarily on **regional engagement and attraction** in the following categories:

- ~~Cluster Growth and Partner Attraction~~
 - ~~Increased inquiries, visits and conversions from companies and organizations outside the region interested in locating in the region to use commercialization, adoption, and workforce resources~~ **This will be viewed as an indirect metric/benefit/deliverable and not the primary role of the marketing and community engagement campaign.**
- **Adoption:**
 - Increased participation, conversions and awareness for small and medium sized manufacturing companies and workforce (adults from diverse backgrounds/communities who are interested in upskilling) in Catalyst Connection programs:
 - [Technology - Catalyst Connection](#)
 - [Catalyst Connection – Assessment Tools \(mfgsupplychain.org\)](#)
 - Increased participation/awareness, inquiry and conversions regarding the [ARM's Robotics Manufacturing Hub](#) De-risking services
- **Upskilling:**
 - Increased enrollment in training and/or credentialing programs provided by the following institutions:
 - Butler County Community College
 - BotsIQ
 - Carnegie Mellon University
 - Community College of Allegheny County
 - Community College of Beaver County
 - Indiana University of Pennsylvania Research Institute
 - The Pennsylvania State University

- Penn State Beaver
 - Penn State Greater Allegheny
 - Penn State New Kensington
 - Pittsburgh Technical College
 - Robert Morris University
 - Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board
 - UMWA Career Centers, Inc.
 - Westmoreland County Community College
- Increased awareness and utilization of on-the-job training resources provided by the following Workforce Investment Board partners:
 - Partner4Work
 - Tri-County Workforce Investment Board
 - Washington Greene County Job Training Agency, Inc.
 - Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board
- **Commercialization**
 - Increase traffic, interest & participation by local robotics startups in [Robotics Factory](#) Create/Accelerate/Scale programs
 - Increase enrollment of diverse entrepreneurs activity for Innovate PGH’s [Expanded Pathways for New Economy Careers](#) programs
 - CMU [PEER Fellowship Program](#) (increase enrollment and waitlist)
 - Increase enrollment and awareness of the Riverside Center for Innovation [TMACE program](#)
 - Increase participation, awareness and overall traffic at the six Innovation Accelerators (makerspaces) and participation in workshops and programming.
 - Cambria (Made Johnstown)
 - Indiana University of Pennsylvania
 - STEAMSHOP
 - STEAMSHOP Armstrong
 - PSU: New Kensington
 - CCAC Innovation Accelerator
 - Westmoreland Community College Innovation Accelerator

5. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

- An overview of the firm’s experience in marketing and community engagement, with specific examples of past projects that demonstrate a commitment to equity and inclusion.
- A detailed plan outlining the proposed approach for the NEC campaign, including timelines, platforms, and key messages.
- An equity and inclusion strategy that describes how the campaign will reach and engage diverse communities, including racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity.
- A proposed budget that itemizes costs for all aspects of the campaign. (**estimated budget range: \$400-\$500,000 for the two-year campaign**)
- References from previous clients, preferably from similar projects focusing on community engagement and equity.

6. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Experience and Expertise (25%): Firm's track record in successfully delivering comprehensive marketing and community engagement campaigns, with an emphasis on innovative approaches and engagement with marginalized communities.

Approach to Equity and Inclusion (30%): Clarity and effectiveness of the strategy to ensure the campaign is inclusive and equitable, reaching diverse populations and promoting active participation.

Quality of Proposed Plan (25%): Cohesiveness, creativity, and feasibility of the proposed marketing and community engagement strategy, including the ability to meet project timelines.

Cost-Effectiveness (10%): The proposed budget's alignment with the scope of work, demonstrating value for money and efficient resource use.

References (10%): Strength of references, with a focus on previous projects that highlight the firm's commitment to community engagement and equity.

6. Submission Guidelines

Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format **by April 15th** to Ben Pratt at bpratt@allegHENYconference.org.

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to Ben Pratt at bpratt@allegHENYconference.org by March 15th.

Late submissions will not be considered.

7. Timeline

- RFP Release Date: March 4th, 2024
- Information Session webinar for Questions & Answer: Wednesday March 13th, 2024 1:00 pm
 - **Webinar Question & Answer Recording:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndrZyLfstc4>
- Deadline for Questions: March 15th, 2024 (**COMPLETE**)
- Proposal Submission Deadline: **Close of Business Monday, April 15th, 2024.**
- Presentations from select firms: **Friday, April 19th, 2024. (PLEASE HOLD THIS DATE IN ADVANCE)**
- Expected Decision Date: April 26th, 2024
- Project Kick-off: May 6th, 2024
- Project Conclusion: September 30th, 2026

The NEC is committed to fostering an inclusive economic future for Southwest Pennsylvania. We look forward to receiving proposals that not only meet our marketing and engagement needs but also embody our values of equity and inclusion.

Submitted Questions with Responses

1. Can you share and prioritize target audiences for this initiative?
 - a. The target audiences are different for each project.
 - i. Project 1: Small & Medium Enterprises- Advanced Manufacturers
 - ii. Project 2: Small & Medium Enterprises- Advanced Manufacturers
 - iii. Project 3: Workforce Development- Stakeholders for Upskilling and Training Programs. Any school aged individuals throughout the 11 county region that could participate in training programs offered by our affiliate organizations with an emphasis on:
 1. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)
 2. Rural Residents
 3. Veterans
 4. Individuals/Families of disrupted Coal Mining Communities
 - iv. Project 4: Startups, Entrepreneurs, Robotics/Technology Startups
 - v. Project 5:
 1. Robotics Fellowship: Emerging entrepreneurs of marginalized populations that could benefit from Robotics/Entrepreneurship training
 2. TMACE: Minority Women and Veteran own business
 - vi. Community at Large: Coalition Support
 1. Public, Private, and Non-profit entities who are working to improve/transform the region through the growth and expansion of a robust Robotics & Technology Cluster.
2. Is it safe to assume that each of the 5 projects has an existing marketing plan and this plan is to communicate the overall program?
 - a. Each project will have varying capacities and levels of marketing and communication plans. This plan is to communicate the overall program while elevating the platform/visibility/continuity of each project.
3. Geography:

- a. Cluster Growth and Partner Attraction: When you say companies and organizations outside the region interested in locating in the region, do you have specific geographies in mind? **This has been edited in the RFP above.**
 - b. Adoption: For small and medium-sized manufacturing companies and workforce. Geography for manufacturers? Geography for workforce?
 - i. **All participants should reside within the 11-county region.**
 - c. Upskilling: Are individual institutions also promoting their training and credentialing programs? Would they consider joining their paid search budgets for this, so they don't bid against one another for specific robotics/AI/education programs? Do you have an age target for upskilling? Is there a specific program for high school students? Or is it all 18+? **I believe this firm could create comprehensive coordination techniques and criteria for each of the workforce development programs to participate in the "Training Marketing Campaign" and use the criteria to encourage collaboration (i.e. One example of a technique: "Fill out this form to describe your existing marketing efforts and capacities, target audiences/territories and enrollment periods... and build an enhanced strategy in response?)**
 - d. Are their awareness programs via Workforce Investment Board partners independent from these marketing efforts? **Yes, but they are limited and lack coordination in messaging, are difficult user experience to navigate where/what programs)**
4. Local events:
- a. Those can be very time-consuming and costly. Can you prioritize the goals of the local events?
 - i. Overall community awareness and engagement of embracing robotics/autonomy/AI?
 - ii. Is it to attract start-ups or relocating businesses?
 - iii. Is it to attract a workforce?
 - iv. Is it to get community leaders to be your grass roots legs to help amplify message and recruit?
 - v. Can we set up types of events and have partner organizations promote and host them?
 - b. **This firm would work with New Economy Collaborative to identify existing community events (not create new events) throughout the region that we could leverage/coordinate with to build awareness of all the projects/programs and attract target audiences described above.**
5. Budget:
- a. What role does PR play in this? **New Economy Collaborative and the Allegheny Conference will provide the PR support.**
 - b. Are you open to reframing the budget with limited spend on events? **Yes.**
 - c. Are there key regional trade shows or events that we can leverage? **Yes, this is the preferred approach.**
 - d. Would the partner agencies be open to hosting a large robotics one-time event just like is done with the hydrogen summit? **Yes.**
6. Results:
- a. Who is responsible for monitoring/gathering performance analytics?

- i. Cluster growth and partner attraction
- ii. Adoption
 1. Technology – Catalyst Connection
 2. Catalyst Connection – Assessment Tools
 3. ARM’s Robotics Manufacturing Hub
- iii. Upskilling/Enrollment in college and university training programs
- iv. Commercialization
 1. Robotics Factory
 2. Expanded Pathways for New Economy Careers
 3. CMU Peer Fellowship Program
 4. TMACE
 5. Innovation Accelerators

b. Each of our project lead organizations will be monitoring and gathering performance analytics pursuant to their Grant Administration Plan responsibilities. New Economy Collaborative will continue its role in consolidating performance analytics for the Coalition.

1. What is the fifth area of focus you referenced? We only saw 4 listed in the brief? **These are the three areas of focus.**

- Cluster Growth and Partner Attraction
- Adoption
- Upskilling (two parts)
- Commercialization (two parts)

2. On the Vendor/RFP call, the question about additional spend towards media buy (beyond the stated budget) was asked, and SWNEC mentioned there would be additional channel partners and possibly additional funding available for the media buy, post creative production/events. Could we be more specific about anticipated support both in budget dollars and or in-kind from existing partners?

a. **The New Economy Collaborative is an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD). ACCD is leveraging their marketing & communication resources to provide in-kind support. We recommend building out a scope of work that would provide the greatest results, and New Economy Collaborative and ACCD would work with the firm to identify where overlaps or cost savings could exist.**

3. It was mentioned the Conference has an understanding of PR. Can you elaborate on if/what the expected capabilities of PR the conference has and what their role would be?

a. **The ACCD currently has a PR firm under contract. Their role would be to evaluate this firm's PR needs and determine where they can provide support. The New Economy Collaborative and the ACCD would evaluate any gaps in executing the PR strategy would build a course of action.**

4. Can you please put prioritization to the five projects in order of most to least vital? This will help in determining optimal budget allocations.

a. The priorities would be the following:

- Tier 1: Projects 3 & 5 & the Innovation Accelerators
 - Greatest Need for Support
 - Pittsburgh Robotics Network Coordination (Discovery Day)
- Tier 2: Project 4:
 - Ongoing Create Summits (Public Facing)
 - Accelerator Enrollment
 - Scale/Growth Program
- Tier 3: Project 1 & 2
 - Catalyst Connection and ARM are on track to meeting goals ahead of schedule and are “oversubscribed”. Their existing marketing and communication efforts appear to be effective. We are working to secure additional resources to expand these program offerings.

5. Will Cluster Growth & Partner Attraction be removed or deprioritized given the focus of this RFP is “in region” and not “increasing inquiries/visits/conversions from organizations outside the region...” to use NEC resources? **Yes,**