

Communications & Public Relations Support Master Services Agreement

The Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District is seeking proposals from qualified firms and independent contractors to provide communications and public relations support services to Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District's Communications team.

The District wishes to enter into a three-year Master Services Agreement for communications and public relations support services. The selected vendor will serve as an extension of the District team, be a consultative partner to the Communications and Public Affairs Manager, and provide proactive communications and public relations services and deliverables. The scope of these services is outlined in the Scope of Services & Deliverables section.

Proposals will be accepted until 4:00 p.m. CST on Monday, November 2, 2026, via email to rfp@madsewer.org. The subject line must clearly state "**Public Relations MSA.**" Any questions should be directed to rfp@madsewer.org.

Bidders are responsible for ensuring their emailed bid is received and complies with published Microsoft Quarantine email guidelines. Confirmation of receipt will be sent within one business day. If you do not receive confirmation, contact 608-222-1201 EXT 110 immediately.

All proposal responses and their contents will be public record.

The District is federal and state tax-exempt. The District reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive any technicality, and accept any proposal that may, in its opinion, be advantageous to the District.

Project Manager Contact

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About the District

Established in 1930 to protect the lakes and streams of the upper Yahara watershed, the District is a wastewater collection and treatment utility serving about 440,000 people in 24 Madison-area owner communities covering about 190 square miles. Organized as a municipal corporation, the District is governed by a nine-member Commission appointed by the communities we serve.

The District owns and operates 150 miles of pipe and 18 regional pumping stations that convey approximately 37 million gallons of wastewater to the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant daily. Through the treatment process, we recover valuable resources from the wastewater we receive before returning clean water to the environment.

Our mission is to protect public health and the environment. The District is dedicated to service, reliability, and sustainability, and our tradition of innovation has positioned us as a leader among clean water utilities.

Learn more at www.madsewer.org.

Background

The District has a small Communications team comprised of one full-time Communications and Public Affairs Manager and two full-time Communications & Marketing Specialists. The selected vendor will serve as an extension of the District team, acting as a consultative partner to the Communications and Public Affairs Manager, helping to execute communications projects, and providing proactive communications and public relations services.

Scope of Services & Deliverables

The scope of services and deliverables falls within four task areas: Communications Planning; Media Relations; Thought Leadership/Reputation Management; and Consultative and Support Services.

The scope of services and deliverables is outlined by task area:

1. *Communications Planning*

- A. Support the Communications staff in developing a new District communications plan, including:
 - Scoping project, assisting with analysis of existing program, identifying and/or facilitating input opportunities, setting milestones, establishing a plan outline/framework, surfacing opportunities for inclusion into the plan, etc.
- B. Support to the Communications staff in developing a crisis communications plan, including:
 - Scoping project, setting milestones, establishing a plan outline/framework based on best practices/experience, etc.

2. *Media Relations*

- Proactively identify opportunities for media coverage, both locally and regionally, and work to facilitate that coverage, with a focus on elevating awareness of the District; highlighting District work/programs; and telling the story of the District's aging infrastructure, emphasizing the need to support the repair and replacement of this critical infrastructure.
- Draft relevant messaging, news releases, advisories, and backgrounders to promote the District and generate placement in regional news and media organizations.
- Track and respond to stories in the media that might benefit from a response from the District.
- Monitor and report on the effectiveness of the District's press releases, story pitches, and activities.

3. *Leadership Engagement & Reputation Management*

- Identify and develop key messaging for District leadership to build both individual reputation and organizational reputation as a thought and/or industry leader.

- Identify key publications, events, conferences, organizations, and groups in which District leadership should be involved and facilitate connections, invitations, or membership.
- Recommend topics and publications for articles, columns, social media messaging, and op-eds that help establish the District and its leadership as thought/industry leaders.
- Develop and pitch articles, op-eds, columns, etc.
- Identify event opportunities for Executive Leadership engagement and assist with the development and execution of those events.

4. Consultative and Support Services

- Meet regularly with the Communications Manager (and/or other Communications as relevant) to identify and scope emerging communications needs and opportunities, which include but are not limited to:
 - Campaign assistance
 - Non-executive event planning and execution
 - Project, program and organizational message development
 - On-call services
 - Other needs as identified in regular meetings
- Annual reporting, by January 15 of each year for the prior year of services, which includes:
 - Major deliverables of each task area
 - Assessment of impact of work product(s) delivered
 - Key communications successes in/highlights of the year
 - Opportunities for improvement in the next year

The Master Service contract agreement will be for a term of three years. Task 1A will be executed in 2027. Task 1B may be executed in 2027, but no later than June 30, 2028. Tasks 2 through 4 will be executed on an ongoing basis.

The three-year Master Services Agreement contract is not to exceed \$200,000.

Timetable

This timetable is tentative and may be changed by the District at any time.

Target Date	Step	Notes
<i>Thursday, Oct. 1, 2026</i>	MSA issued	Publicly posted to District website and online procurement portals
<i>Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026 4 p.m. CST</i>	Deadline for Respondent Questions	Must be submitted via email at rfp@madsewer.org
<i>Monday, Oct. 19, 2026, 4 p.m. CST</i>	Respondent Questions Answered	Answers will be posted on the District website.

<i>Monday, Nov. 2, 2026, 4 p.m. CST</i>	Respondent Proposals Due	
<i>Monday, November 9, 2026</i>	District Proposal Review Completed	Completed by internal selection committee
<i>November 15-24, 2026</i>	District Interviews with Candidates	The District may omit this step if adequate information was obtained from written proposals. Interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams.
<i>Tuesday, December 1, 2026</i>	District Selection Made and Applicants Notified	
<i>Thursday, December 17, 2026</i>	Commission Transaction Approval	
<i>Monday, January 4, 2027</i>	Engagement begins	The exact date may be adjusted as mutually agreed upon by the District and the selected respondent.

Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed for responsiveness to the proposal requirements listed above. Responsive proposals will be evaluated by a committee composed of District staff. Proposals will be scored based on 100 possible points, with the evaluation criteria weighted as follows:

Evaluation Criteria	Points Allocation	Key Focus Areas
Expertise & qualifications	0-25	Demonstrated experience and qualifications in the task areas identified; experience working with public sector or utility clients.
Understanding of need, scope & approach	0-25	Demonstrated ability to deliver all deliverables in a timely manner.
Portfolio	0-20	
Cost	0-10	Value relative to scope. Proposals should reflect a not-to-exceed cost with a clear breakdown of hours and billable rates.
Overall impression & fit	0-20	Qualitative assessment by team

Following the proposal evaluation, the District may, at its discretion, further evaluate applicants by interviews. All interviews will be remote via the Microsoft Teams platform. Interviews will be scheduled for the period in the timetable above.

The District reserves the right to contract for all or part of the agreement. The contract and associated scope of work will be a “not-to-exceed” contract.

Award shall be made to the consultant determined to be the best qualified, based on the evaluation criteria outlined above and upon negotiation of compensation determined to be fair and reasonable. If compensation cannot be agreed upon with the best-qualified consultant, negotiations may be conducted with such other consultant or consultants in the order of their respective ranking, and the contract may be awarded to the consultant then ranked as best qualified.

How to Apply

Proposals should be concise and limited to no more than 15 pages (excluding specific items noted below). Core narrative pages must be numbered and include all information relevant to the evaluation. The evaluation team will not review proposals that exceed the page limit.

Proposals should include the following:

- **Contact information** for the primary contact.
- **Expertise and qualification:** Brief description of the relevant experience and skills of the firm/agency and/or individual(s) to be involved (including subcontractors, if any). Include any experience working with a government agency and/or public utility.
- **Understanding of District needs, proposal scope/deliverables and approach**
 - Discuss how your firm is a fit for this work and the District and, in general terms, how you would approach the tasks outlined in this proposal to meet the District’s needs.
 - Specifically for Tasks 1A and 1B, provide an estimated timeline of work
 - Discuss your approach to partnering with District staff and facilitating a beneficial relationship to support the requested work.
- **Portfolio**
 - Provide a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 work product examples or campaigns that highlight your work and experience in relation to this proposal, prioritizing public-sector or utility clients within the last five years.
 - Digital format(s)/link preferred
- **Pricing**
 - For Tasks 1A and 1B, provide an estimated total of hours and the associated totals.
 - For Tasks 2 through 4, provide a recommended number of committed hours per month
 - Total of all tasks per year for each year of the agreement.

- If a subcontractor will complete any aspects of the work, include the subcontractor costs/rates and their hours committed per task.
- **References:** Include name, title, organization, phone, and email for at least two references. The District will not contact references until after a selection is made.

The following materials are the only items excluded from the 15-page limit:

- Cover page and table of contents
- Team member resumes
- Portfolio

Master Services Agreement

Following the selection of a qualified firm for the work of this MSA, a signed master services agreement will be required. The District supplies the Master Services Agreement (Attachment A) as the basis for negotiations, which will include Terms & Conditions and the Scope of Services for performance. Proposers must notify the Project Manager of any questions or concerns about the standard Terms & Conditions during the request for proposal process.

Insurance Requirements

The District's insurance requirements are included below. A bidder may propose exceptions or modifications to the District's insurance requirements that may or may not be acceptable to the District. The District retains the right to establish the final insurance requirements during negotiations with the highest-ranked bidder based on the nature and scope of the services, potential liability exposure, involvement in design or construction, anticipated site activities, contract amount, and the availability of coverage. If the District and the highest-ranked bidder cannot reach an acceptable agreement, the District may discontinue negotiations and proceed to the next-ranked bidder. The final insurance requirements will be incorporated into the executed Agreement.

Contractor shall maintain Commercial General Liability, Automobile Liability, Workers Compensation, Professional Liability (Errors & Omissions), and Cyber Liability insurance throughout the term of the agreement. Minimum limits shall be \$1,000,000 per occurrence/\$2,000,000 aggregate for General Liability; \$1,000,000 combined single limit for Automobile Liability; statutory Workers Compensation limits; \$1,000,000 per claim Professional Liability; and \$1,000,000 Cyber Liability/Privacy Liability. The District shall be named as an Additional Insured on the General Liability policy, and coverage shall be primary and non-contributory.

Additional Documentation

Proposers may find the following materials and documents helpful as they consider proposals:

- [District Strategic Plan](#)
- [District Three-Year Plan, 2026-2029](#)

- [District Brand Standards](#)
- [2023 Community Values Survey](#)
- [2024 Stakeholder Focus Group Results](#)

Additional Provisions

Equal Employment Opportunity Requirements

In connection with the performance of work for this project and under the related contract, the Proposer agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of age, race, religion, color, disability, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other status protected by law. This provision shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion, or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship.

Use, Disclosure, and Confidentiality of Information

The information supplied by a Proposer as part of a response will become the property of the District. Proposals will be available to interested parties in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Records Law. None of the proposal responses will be made available to the public until after the negotiation and award of a contract or cancellation of the procurement.

To the extent allowed by law, the District will treat trade secrets as confidential (if designated as confidential and submitted separately in a sealed envelope). If a Proposer wishes for a proposal to remain confidential, the Proposer must, before submitting a proposal, establish to the District's satisfaction that the proposal be given confidential status. The District reserves the right to make any final disclosure determinations in accordance with the law. (Note: Pricing information will not be considered confidential.)

Use of the District's Name

Upon entering an agreement, the successful Contractor agrees not to use the name of the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District in relation to the agreement in commercial advertising, trade literature, or press releases to the public without the prior written approval of the District. The District has the right to enjoin the Contractor from any such use in violation of this provision, and the Contractor shall be responsible for damages and reimbursement of actual, reasonable legal fees incurred with regard to legal evaluation and/or legal action taken by the District because of the Contractor's violation of this provision, including fees incurred to obtain an injunction.

Confidentiality

Subject to Wisconsin's Public Records law, any data or other information regarding the District's customers, operations, or methods obtained by the Contractor during the course of the project shall remain confidential and shall not be released to third parties without the express written consent of the District.

Errors in Proposals

Proposers will not be allowed to change or alter their proposals after the proposal submission deadline. The District reserves the right, however, to correct obvious errors, such as math errors in extended pricing (not unit pricing). This type of correction may only be allowed for “obvious” errors such as arithmetic, typographical, or transposition errors. Any such corrections shall be approved by the District and countersigned by the Proposer. Proposers are advised to ensure that their proposals are accurate and complete.

Revisions to the RFP/MSA

The District may modify or amend this RFP/MSA at any time. In such an event, the submission deadline may be extended, at the option of the District, to allow Proposers the opportunity to revise their proposals accordingly.

Addendums

If it becomes necessary to materially alter the request for proposal, the Project Manager will issue an official addendum.

Sub-consultants and Third-party Payments

All sub-consultants shall be pre-approved by the District and must abide by all terms and conditions of the contract. The prime Consultant shall be responsible for all sub-consultant(s) work and payment. The District will not directly pay any sub-consultant or third parties.