

# Massachusetts College of Art and Design

## Request for Proposal 26-10

### Executive Search and Recruitment Search Firm Services

#### Attachment # 1 - Specifications and Description of Services

##### Relevant Background

Founded in 1873, MassArt is the only freestanding public college of art and design in the United States. The College excels in the education of professional artists, designers, and art educators and is an integral contributor to the cultural and intellectual life and creative economy of the Greater Boston region, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and beyond. Located in Boston's hub of arts and culture along the Avenue of the Arts, MassArt enrolls nearly 2,000 students and offers a comprehensive range of 18 undergraduate majors, 9 graduate degree programs, and 4 certificate programs, as well as youth and continuing education programs.

The College is committed to community engagement as a significant component of its mission and teaches its students to be engaged citizens as well as artists, designers, and educators through its curricular and extracurricular offerings. As the Commonwealth's art and design college, MassArt is also a rich resource for public programs, including innovative museum exhibitions, lectures, and events in the MassArt Art Museum, Boston's only free contemporary art museum; youth art programs that service hundreds of Boston Public Schools and Greater Boston students, ages elementary through high school; community arts partnerships and civic engagement initiatives; and professional development opportunities for educators, artists, designers, and the general public.

MassArt attracts a diverse full- and part-time student body from Massachusetts, New England and beyond. MassArt sustains high graduation rates (69%) and offers excellent student support services for all four years through its Academic Resource Center and its Compass program dedicated to supporting first-generation college students. The student-faculty ratio is 10:1 with 302 faculty members, 120 full-time and 182 part-time or adjunct faculty who are all practicing artists, designers, educators, and scholars. MassArt's faculty, its extensive studios, the wealth of resources in its arts library, and the breadth of its curriculum are widely considered to be among the best in the nation.

##### Scope of Work

The purpose of this RFP is to identify and pre-qualify executive search firms capable of supporting MassArt's leadership recruitment and search needs.

MassArt anticipates engaging search firms across two engagement tiers: Full Executive Search Services and Supplemental Search Services. Awarded Contractor(s) will be pre-qualified to conduct Executive Level Searches and provide other services as needed during the term of the contract. MassArt reserves the right to issue Requests for Quotes (RFQ's) specific to each search opportunity. The RFQ's may be issued to multiple pre-qualified search firms.

## **Tier 1: Full Executive Search Services**

A full search engagement is a comprehensive, end-to-end partnership in which the search firm manages all phases of the process. MassArt may engage a full-service firm for senior leadership roles including, but not limited to, positions at the Vice President, Dean, Associate/Assistant Vice President, Director, and equivalent levels.

Full search services shall encompass the following phases and deliverables:

### **Phase 1: Position Definition and Planning**

- Conduct intake meetings with the hiring authority, search committee, and key institutional stakeholders
- Facilitate position analysis to clarify role scope, reporting relationships, and success criteria
- Research and advise on competitive compensation benchmarks aligned with comparable public art and design institutions
- Draft or refine a comprehensive Position Profile / Opportunity Statement for use in recruitment marketing
- Develop and agree upon a detailed search timeline, communication cadence, and committee engagement plan
- Advise on search committee composition and diversity best practices

### **Phase 2: Candidate Recruitment and Sourcing**

- Conduct proactive, targeted outreach to prospective candidates through direct sourcing, professional networks, and diversity-focused pipelines
- Advertise the position through appropriate national, regional, and discipline-specific channels (e.g., Inside Higher Ed, LinkedIn, NASAD, AICAD, Chronicle of Higher Education, diversity-focused outlets)
- Manage all applicant inquiries and respond to candidate questions on behalf of MassArt
- Maintain a confidential applicant tracking system and provide access to MassArt's search committee as agreed
- Submit regular pipeline progress reports (minimum biweekly) to the hiring authority

### **Phase 3: Screening and Assessment**

- Conduct initial screening of all applications against agreed-upon qualifications
- Perform structured interviews with long-list candidates (typically 12–20 candidates)
- Prepare written candidate profiles/summaries for the search committee
- Facilitate search committee review and deliberations, including structured committee interviews
- Administer or coordinate any agreed-upon leadership assessments or psychometric tools
- Advise committee on evaluation criteria, unconscious bias mitigation, and equitable assessment practices

### **Phase 4: Due Diligence and Reference Verification**

- Conduct formal, structured reference checks on finalist candidates (minimum 6 references per finalist)
- Coordinate and interpret third-party background screening in compliance with applicable law
- Provide the hiring authority with a written summary of reference feedback
- Conduct discreet credential verification (education, employment history)

### **Phase 5: Offer Negotiation and Onboarding Support**

- Facilitate offer negotiations between the institution and the selected candidate
- Provide market compensation data and negotiation strategy guidance
- Support transition planning, including coordination with HR on onboarding logistics
- Conduct a candidate relationship check-in at 30, 60, and 90 days post-hire
- Provide a placement guarantee with a minimum 12-month replacement commitment at no additional cost if

the hired candidate departs

## Phase 6: Search Reporting and Close-Out

- Provide a final search report summarizing sourcing strategy, pipeline demographics, assessment methodology, and lessons learned
- Diversity Reporting: The Vendor will provide data capturing Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Disability Status, and Veteran Status at the conclusion of each search including:
  - Diversity Reporting on submitted candidates
  - Final Diversity Report at end of search including all Candidates contacted and Candidates submitted
- Return or securely destroy all confidential candidate materials per agreed data retention policy
- Conduct a search debrief with MassArt leadership to assess process and outcomes

## Tier 2: Supplemental Services

MassArt recognizes that not every leadership vacancy requires a full retained search. In some cases, the College may seek targeted support for specific phases or tasks. Qualified firms are invited to offer discrete, unbundled services that MassArt may engage independently or in combination. Firms offering supplemental services should provide a clear menu with associated unit pricing or fee structures.

Available a la carte service modules may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Service Module	Description	Pricing Basis
Position Profile Development	Drafting or refining a compelling Position Profile / Opportunity Statement including role overview, qualifications, institutional narrative, and application instructions	Per Deliverable
Compensation Benchmarking	Research and written report on competitive compensation and benefits for a defined role, benchmarked against comparable institutions (public art/design colleges, regional universities)	Per Report
Diversity & Inclusion Strategy	Development of a targeted outreach plan to reach historically underrepresented candidate pools, including identification of networks, publications, and organizations	Per Engagement
Sourcing & Pipeline Development	Proactive, targeted candidate identification and outreach for a defined role; delivery of a curated long-list of prospective candidates with brief profiles	Per Engagement
Candidate	Structured screening interviews (phone/video) and written summaries for a defined pool of applicants/nominees;	Per Candidate / Per

Screening	deliverable is ranked short-list with assessments	Pool
Search Committee Training	Facilitation of a search committee orientation session covering legal compliance, equity best practices, structured interviewing techniques, and evaluation frameworks	Per Session
Reference Check Services	Conduct and document structured, professional reference interviews for a defined number of candidates; delivered as written summaries	Per Candidate
Interview Facilitation	Design and facilitation of structured candidate interview processes, including question development, committee coordination, and debrief facilitation	Per Day / Per Search
Offer Negotiation Support	Advisory support to the hiring authority during offer structuring and candidate negotiation, including market data and strategic counsel	Per Engagement
Interim Leadership Placement	Identification and placement of qualified interim executives to fill leadership gaps during transition periods	Per Placement
Succession Planning Consultation	Facilitation of a structured succession planning workshop with institutional leadership; includes written summary of findings and recommendations	Per Session
Leadership Assessment	Administration and interpretation of validated leadership assessment instruments for a defined candidate pool or existing leader	Per Assessment

## **Qualifications and Minimum Requirements**

To be considered for inclusion on MassArt's pre-qualified vendor list, respondents must demonstrate the following minimum qualifications:

### **Organizational Qualifications**

- Minimum five (5) years of demonstrated experience conducting executive searches in higher education, nonprofit, or public sector environments
- Demonstrated experience placing candidates in senior leadership roles at art, design, and/or creative institutions is preferred
- No conflicts of interest that would prevent the firm from serving MassArt's interests

- Compliance with all applicable state and federal employment and anti-discrimination laws

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

- Demonstrated commitment to diversity in recruitment practice, including evidence of diverse candidate pools presented to clients
- Ability to describe specific strategies used to identify and recruit diverse candidate pools

## **Vendor Response and Evaluation Criteria**

A complete proposal should include:

### **1. Firm Overview:**

- a. Firm name, address, year established, and organizational structure
- b. Brief description of the firm's mission, core practice areas, and client base
- c. Number of full-time consultants; describe relevant specializations
- d. Statement of any potential conflicts of interest with MassArt or the Massachusetts public higher education system

### **2. Relevant Experience:**

- a. Summary of recent (within five years) executive searches conducted in higher education, public institutions, or arts/design organizations
- b. A representative list of completed placements, including institution name, position title, and year placed (where confidentiality permits)
- c. Description of experience with art, design, and/or creative institutions

### **3. Search Methodology:**

- a. Description of the firm's standard approach to full-service executive searches, including sourcing strategies, candidate assessment methods, and timeline management
- b. Description of the firm's approach to DEI in the search process
- c. Description of any technology platforms, databases, or tools used in search management and candidate tracking

### **4. Supplemental Service Offerings:**

- a. List of services the firm is prepared to offer on an unbundled basis
- b. Description of service delivery approach for each offered module
- c. Proposed fee structure for each service module (see Section 5)

### **5. Fee Structure and Pricing:**

- a. Respondents should provide a transparent description of their fee structure. MassArt understands that fees for retained executive search vary based on the position level and total compensation. Firms should provide:
  - i. The firm's standard fee methodology for full retained searches (e.g., percentage of first-year total compensation, flat fee by position tier, or hybrid model)
  - ii. A unit fee schedule for each supplemental service module offered
  - iii. A description of what is included in the fee and what constitutes a reimbursable expense
  - iv. Any volume discount or preferred pricing available to public institutions

**6. References:**

- a. Minimum three (3) client references from higher education or comparable institutions for completed searches within the past three (3) years. At least one reference from an institution of comparable size and/or type to MassArt is preferred

**7. Team Members:**

- a. Identification of the lead consultant(s) who would manage MassArt engagements
- b. Biographies or CVs for key personnel, including relevant credentials and prior experience
- c. Description of how the firm staffs and manages multiple concurrent engagements

**Please note, there is no guarantee of volume to the awarded bidders. Needs may vary; however it is anticipated that the College will utilize selected pre-qualified firms for all service needs described herein.**

Bidders should also be cognizant of the fact that MassArt is a public institution of art and design. Therefore, the College must have high quality AND cost-effective services. The successful bidders will have to demonstrate the ability to achieve both objectives. MassArt will use the entirety of responses in the section of the RFP titled "Vendor Response and Evaluation Criteria" as the evaluation criteria. Rates are an important factor, but the selection will also take into consideration the firm's ability to deliver on the other criteria.

