

**Massachusetts College of Art and Design  
RFP 21-02 Public Relations Services  
Addendum #1 - Questions and Answers**

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**Budget**

**Q.** What is the estimated annual budget?

**Q.** Is there a budget range you can provide so we may tailor our recommendations appropriately. What any firm can do for \$30,000 is much different than what they could do for \$300,000. I realize there is no guaranteed monthly minimum, but having an idea would help us provide appropriate responses and examples.

**Q.** Will you disclose how much you spent, on average each month over the past year on the services detailed in the RFP? We realize past spending is no indication of future spending.

**Q.** Is there a proposed budget for this RFP? If so, how are the funds being allocated?

**Q.** What is the overall budget MassArt has allocated for this work over the 10.5-month agreement?

**Q.** What has MassArt spend on PR for the past two academic/fiscal years and what is the budget expected for the fiscal year that began 7/1/20 (knowing there is still a high level of uncertainty at the state budget level)?

**Q.** What is the budget structure for this engagement? One flat fee for the fiscal year, which would encompass the work described in the RFP or do you need/want itemized services and corresponding budgets detailed in the response?

**A.** For the past two years, MassArt has paid a fixed fee of \$10,200 per month for public relations services. The College is now moving away from that model and switching to a time and materials approach. There is currently no set budget for public relations services for this fiscal year. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the College faces revenue uncertainty caused by unknown Fall 2020 enrollment. With that in mind, it is still our goal to use the selected firm for all services described in the bid.

**Priorities / Goals**

**Q.** You listed six-college wide PR initiatives. Would you please rank order them in order of importance?

**A.** The initiatives are ranked in order of priority in the narrative document.

**Q.** How do you currently measure success of your PR initiatives?

**Q.** What does success look like after a year of the engagement? Where is the brand at that point and what other success metrics would the college hold the agency accountable for?

**A.** We measure the success of our PR initiatives solely by these criteria: substance, quality and accuracy of placements; the influence and reach of media outlets, with a focus on maintaining consistent presence in major local outlets and breaking into new outlets in general, higher education, art trade, and business/innovation sectors; and the number of overall media impressions annually.

**Q.** Is there an amount of coverage (quarterly, per semester, etc.) that MassArt expects the selected agency to secure?

**A.** No, each semester or quarter is different depending on the priorities of the College, initiatives and projects. Expectations are established per campaign or project.

**Q.** Are there any new business goals for MassArt we should be aware of?

**A.** No, none beyond those outlined in the RFP narrative.

**Q.** International media coverage is listed as part of the scope. Can you be more specific? For example, is the goal to recruit students internationally?

**A.** General media coverage in international outlets is desired, as the opportunities present themselves through faculty/academic and MassArt Art Museum projects. There is no specific goal to recruit international students via press coverage, beyond the goal to raise the institutional profile, as specified in the narrative.

### **Agency of Record**

**Q.** Is there currently an agency of record? Who is currently fulfilling MassArt's PR needs?

**A.** The agency of record is InkHouse.

**Q.** Is there an incumbent firm / vendor who will potentially be responding to this RFP as well?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is there an incumbent firm that has been working with MassArt? If so, for how long and why has the College issued an RFP?

**A.** Yes, the incumbent firm InkHouse has been working with MassArt since July 2016. The College regularly bids contracts for goods and services as a best practice to gauge current market conditions and offerings and to ensure that we continue to receive best value.

**Q.** Has MassArt worked with PR agencies in the past? If so, for how long? What's the nature of those relationships currently and is an incumbent part of the consideration set? If so, is that firm following the same process as others that are new to the process?

**A.** See answers above. Yes, the incumbent firm is required to follow the same process as others.

### **Outsourcing**

**Q.** Can applicants choose to outsource the media training to a dedicated media training firm with COVID/higher education expertise?

**A.** The expectation is that all requirements of the contract will be fulfilled by the selected firm. If there are times when the firm feels that the College will benefit from an outsourced service it would need to be proposed and approved on a case by case basis.

### **RFP Process**

**Q.** How many other agencies or consultants are invited to participate in this review?

**Q.** From how many firms will you be entertaining responses to the RFP?

**Q.** How many agencies are involved in the process?

**A.** There were no direct invitations to participate in the process. The RFP will be posted publicly from July 10-28, 2020 with the goal of reaching as many firms as possible. There is no limit on number of participants.

### **Client References**

**Q.** How many client references do you require?

**A.** A total of three (3) client references -- including name, title and full contact information for the individual managing the PR account -- are required.

### **In-Person Meetings**

**Q.** Will in-person meetings be required? What is the frequency?

**A.** As indicated in the RFP narrative, there will be up to four (4) pre-scheduled in-person meetings during the one-year term of the contract.

### **Social Media**

**Q.** It appears as if social media content creation and social media channels management are not expected as part of this engagement. Is that correct, or are you seeking support for social as well as traditional media?

**A.** Correct - we are not seeking support for social media as part of this contract.

**Q.** If MassArt has had PR support from an external firm, what are the challenges that have arisen and what are the successes that have been achieved?

- A.** Among our successes is the fact that we have broken into many new media outlets in the national art trades, higher education, business press, and international art and travel. In addition, we have created a faculty experts program that has enabled us to respond to rapid response opportunities with multiple outlets, including the Associated Press. On the challenges side, we're always seeking new approaches to securing coverage for the many remarkable faculty projects that come our way in the course of an academic year.

### **Photography/Videography**

**Q.** The only question our team has is if photography and videography services will be needed?

- A.** No these services are not needed as part of this contract.

### **General Questions/ Priorities/ Success**

**Q.** What do the internal resources look like to support the work as described in the RFP? What resources are allocated within the MassArt Marketing and Comms team? What is their experience in managing and collaborating with agencies?

- A.** MassArt's three-person marketing and communications department has historically worked collaboratively with the PR firm. The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications oversees the account and the Director of Public Relations is the day-to-day contact, and collaborates with the firm on content development, responding to media inquiries and sources spokespeople.

**Q.** What media outlets are the priority and why?

- A.** While all media outlets are important to the College, the outlets that are largest and of significant influence in the Greater Boston market - including the Boston Globe, WBUR, WGBH, and the Boston Business Journal, among others - are of consistently high priority.

**Q.** We realize that you are requesting national media, for example, does that include national higher education verticals as well?

- A.** Yes.

**Q.** How closely will the PR team work with the enrollment marketing team to help inform student success stories, market intelligence and other key areas that may support story ideation?

- A.** The internal Marketing and Communications team works closely with the Admissions team to source stories for PR purposes.

**Q.** For fundraising and events, is there an opportunity for the agency to support middle and lower funnel related marketing activities, such as email nurturing, text messaging, paid social media, etc.?

- A.** No, the PR firm would remain focused on the deliverables in the contract.

**Q.** In terms of the Presidential transition, would you need support outside of media/PR work, such as internal communications, alumni and donor communications? Additionally, would there be a need to support round-robin meeting sessions with high profile donors (and the communications, message strategy, etc. around that work?)

**A.** No, the PR firm would remain focused on the deliverables in the contract.

**Q.** Are there opportunities to add projects throughout the year outside of the agreed upon retainer?

**A.** No, the PR firm would remain focused on the deliverables in the contract. Also the college will not be agreeing to a retainer but rather a time and materials fee for service approach.

**Q.** While the RFP describes how PR should impact MassArt's brand, is there any additional information you can share about the business case. Is this purely a brand awareness play, should PR indirectly impact enrollment, are there other critical areas of support that PR should influence not described in detail in the RFP?

**A.** The purpose of this contract is to secure press coverage in support of the initiatives outlined in the RFP narrative.

**Q.** What are the keys to a successful agency/client partnership?

**A.** Team members on both sides of the partnership who are excellent listeners, collaborative partners, innovative thinkers, and highly productive professionals.

**Q.** Are there particular markets around the country that would be a focus for securing media coverage and aligning with enrollment numbers? For example, while 12% of students came from other New England states, would New Hampshire be more of a focus versus Maine, for example? Additionally, what type of media in those markets are the priority? Top tier regional or hyper local? What about for your international efforts? Particular countries/cities that are of interest/focus?

**A.** There is some potential in seeking media coverage in key recruitment markets with favorable demographic trends, e.g., California, Florida, New York, and Texas in the college-bound population. To achieve greatest impact in visibility, top tier outlets seem the logical choice.

**Q.** How has COVID impacted your international recruiting strategy and enrollment numbers? How high up the priority list is international media as a result of what may or may not be happening in that regard?

**A.** We have experienced an impact on international student numbers, as have all our peer institutions subject to COVID-19 travel restrictions and the uncertainties caused by fluctuating government policy regarding visas. International media is not a priority for this purpose.

**Q.** How engaged are your faculty when it comes to participating in media opportunities? Are they quick to jump on an inbound opportunity or does the process need to be more methodical and planned out? Do you have a strong list of go to faculty and administration for media efforts? You refer to media training for the new president, should that also be extended to faculty and staff as needed?

**A.** Yes, we have an engaged and responsive group of faculty to call upon for media opportunities. Media coaching is done with specific faculty in preparation for upcoming interview opportunities.

**Q.** Is there a timeline for the presidential selection?

**A.** There is no definite timeline at this time.

**Q.** Do you have additional background that can be shared related to the marketing plan for MAAM? Our agency believes in integration and collaboration between marketing and PR efforts. Understanding the marketing plan will allow us to provide ideas for PR support that will align with marketing efforts.

**A.** A review of the MassArt Art Museum website ([maam.massart.edu](http://maam.massart.edu)) and portfolio of press coverage provide an effective view of the approach we took to publicly positioning the museum for the 24 months leading up to its February 2020 launch.

**Q.** Is there an educational institution comparable to MassArt whose PR or media strategy you view as a model or goal for this effort?

**A.** Not necessarily; we are always looking for strategic and innovative approaches and outlets in which to showcase the College and the excellence of the art and design education we offer.

**Q.** How would you describe the MassArt approach to PR to date? We have read the press releases issued and the resultant press coverage received, but were thinking in terms of how the approach has been internally. For example, has the approach been more pro-active vs reactive, strategic vs opportunistic, tightly controlled within a set amount of spokespeople vs trying to increase awareness and visibility across a range of disciplines and specialists?

**A.** Our approach to PR has been both proactive by campaigns highlighting priority initiatives, and reactive to take advantage of incoming press inquiries. Our approach has been highly strategic, featuring a small number of key spokespeople who are carefully prepared for press opportunities; and focused on building awareness and visibility across a range of disciplines.

**Q.** Who would be the main point of contact for an agency?

**A.** The account lead for the College is Ellen Carr, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications; the day-to-day lead is Susie Stockwell, Director of Public Relations.

**Q.** How has MassArt worked with agencies to date, specifically for PR, as well for creative and social, if any?

**A.** MassArt has worked with PR agencies for several years, through arrangements of varying descriptions; and with creative agencies to design and produce signature publications for Admissions purposes. We have always managed social media internally.

**Q.** How would you envision a potential split of expected time and focus in the coming year between the areas highlighted for attention, (of course knowing any announcement of a new president would be depending upon when a decision is made)?

**A.** The major initiatives of raising the institutional profile and reputation management, along with supporting fundraising initiatives, will be the top areas of focus.

**Q.** Please describe any preferences or experiences within MassArt for wanting a traditional PR approach, vs a more fused approach between PR and Social?

**A.** While the scope of this contract is confined to traditional media, we have often experienced the confluence of traditional and social media in the way reporters source and place stories; for this reason, the internal team works in an integrated way to capitalize on all opportunities for visibility.

**Q.** Obviously the response to this question is highly fluid due to the current health pandemic, but, if we assume a hopeful return to a “new normal” by late Fall/early Winter, would you also be looking for in-person PR support for events such as introduction of a new President, reopening of museum, etc.?

**A.** While it’s difficult to answer this question given the number of unknowns in our future, we do occasionally require in-person PR support for our larger on-campus, in-person events.