



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Communications Service**

Issued March 24, 2021

Response Date Deadline:

Friday, April 16, 2021 7 P.M Eastern Daylight Savings Time

What We Seek and When You Must Respond

Robin Hood seeks a professional full-service communications firm to serve as our agency of record in assisting our in-house communications team with planning, coordinating, and executing external communications activities for our organization. Ideally, we are seeking a firm to work with on a retainer basis. The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from consultants with expertise in at least one or more of the following areas:

- Media relations
- Policy communications
- Strategic communications
- Storytelling and narrative change
- Executive communications
- Crisis communications and risk analysis
- Corporate partnerships
- Reputational management
- Social Media management
- Digital Content and Influence
- Events Publicity & Planning
- Public Affairs
- Metrics analysis on impact; and
- Daily monitoring/sharing of news impressions.

Our goal is to hire one communications firm that offers the broadest array of expertise to solve multiple communications challenges. This will be our primary contractor. We recognize that no single firm may be able satisfy all of communications challenges, therefore, we are also open to responses to this RFP from communications firms that may only tackle one or a small, limited set of communications challenges. These firms will be our support contractors. The primary will be contracted on a retainer basis and the support firm(s) may be contracted on a project basis for specified time.

Term of Contract

Primary Contract(s) awarded because of this RFP will have a duration of 18 to 24 months.

Responses Due By

Responses to this RFP may be in writing or a video format directed to kthompson@robinhood.org and must be received no later than **7 p.m. on Friday, April 16, 2021**. Candidate interviews are optional and are by invitation only, at the sole discretion of Robin Hood. Interviews will be held between April 19 and April 28, 2021 via Zoom. A successful candidate will be announced on or before May 1, 2021.

Not Binding

This RFP is a solicitation of proposals only and neither the issuance of this RFP nor the submission of a responsive proposal shall be binding on Robin Hood. Robin Hood reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals or to cancel this RFP for any reason or no reason. No binding agreement shall exist with respect to the provision of services unless and until a definitive agreement has been agreed and executed by both Robin Hood and the selected service provider(s). Robin Hood will not be liable under any circumstances for any expenses incurred by any applicant in connection with the proposal submission or selection process.

Who We Are

Robin Hood is a 501(c) (3) organization, unaffiliated with any for-profit business with a similar name. Founded in 1988, [our mission](#) is to elevate New Yorkers out of poverty. We do that by finding, fueling, and creating the most impactful and scalable solutions that advance economic mobility for the nearly 2 million New Yorkers that live in poverty.

In 2020, we invested more than \$200 million through more than 1,100 grants for COVID relief, meals, housing, education, legal services, workforce development, and more with nearly 700 nonprofit community partners who provide direct services to low-income New Yorkers in all five city boroughs. Robin Hood is New York City's largest poverty fighting organization.

Understanding Our Ethos

Robin Hood is an early pioneer of venture philanthropy and we continue to evolve our unique and comprehensive approach to fighting poverty. We pride ourselves in possessing an agility to perform, respond, and adapt to the ever-changing landscape of poverty. We are deeply committed to assessing risk and utilizing research, data, and metrics to execute strategies that advance economic mobility for New Yorkers living in or near poverty.

This past year best exemplifies how we have melded our past and present together. Since 9/11, Robin Hood has maintained [a relief fund](#) that has been activated three times over the last twenty years -- the COVID-19 pandemic being the most recent occurrence.

Relief is in our DNA. Through our relief efforts, we have been able to assist New Yorkers in meeting their most basic needs for survival – after [9/11](#), [Superstorm Sandy](#) and now the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). While we are meeting people in need where they are, we remain focused on the long game. Through our long-standing core grantmaking program, we are addressing the generational and systemic underpinnings of poverty, many of which are further exacerbated today by deepening disparities characterized by race, gender, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and zip code.

The racial reckoning of 2020 illuminated the starkness of these disparities in an undeniable and unprecedented manner. Like many philanthropic organizations, Robin Hood engaged in its own soul searching. And while we are still on that journey, we have made a conscious decision to differentiate ourselves from other philanthropies by realigning our grantmaking efforts to place race at the center of our fight against poverty.

The principles of proximity, inclusion, and community-led decision-making both inspire and influence our approach to grantmaking. Two years ago, we launched a national initiative, [Mobility Labs](#), to pioneer new, community-led solutions to poverty in nine communities across the country. Last year, we launched [The Power Fund](#) initiative to elevate leaders of color in New York City who share our mission of increasing mobility from poverty, while addressing the

interplay of racial and economic injustice through their work. This spring, we will help launch a new racial equity initiative aimed at striking a core systemic issue that has long exacerbated the nexus of race and poverty.

Our Culture and Structure

Robin Hood has a collaborative, team-oriented culture. [We are nearly 130 people strong](#). Functionally, Robin Hood has both a vertical and horizontal management and operational structure. Employee autonomy, transparency, accountability, and innovation are highly valued. Our internal teams include:

- **Administration** - includes finance, legal, information technology, office operations and human capital.
- **Programs** - includes our grantmaking, monitoring, and evaluation team for our core grants' portfolio, our [Poverty Tracker](#) database, [a Fund for Early Learning \(FUEL\)](#), as well as a [management assistance arm](#) to help build the capacity of our community partners (grantees).
- **Partnerships + Impact** - includes [The Power Fund](#) and a soon to be announced racial equity initiative.
- **Advancement** - includes Development, Communications, and Events.
- **Policy** - includes advocacy at the federal, state, and municipal levels of government.
- **Relief and Bespoke Initiatives** - includes our Relief Fund, Capital (Real Estate), [Mobility Labs](#), [Blue Ridge Labs](#), [Learning +Tech](#), and the Pershing Immigrant Opportunity Fund.

How We Are Governed

Under law, Robin Hood is designated as a 501(c) (3) public charity. We are governed by a [board of directors](#), with an executive committee and standing committees, several of which have oversight with authority to approve grants. Additionally, we have a donor-led Leadership Council and several of our special initiatives maintain advisory committees or panels. The CEO reports directly to the board of directors.

How We Are Resourced

Robin Hood does not have an endowment, rather, we raise every dollar we grant from our donors. Additionally, to ensure that every dollar raised goes to those in need, our board underwrites 100% of our operating cost.

Robin Hood's donor base exceeds 100,000 people. Although, donors come from across the nation, our most active and generous donors are from the New York metropolitan area. In a typical year, fundraising for grantmaking totals about \$140 million. Nearly 90% of those dollars are contributed by roughly 300 donors. Many of our donors are long-term benefactors, consequently, stewardship is a centerpiece of both our development and communications efforts. [Most Recent Financials](#). [Current 990 Form](#).

Current Communications Challenges (Listing in no order of priority)

We realize no one firm can help us resolve all the challenges listed below. However, we are interested in working with a firm that can multi-task and work with us to resolve multiple challenges. We face several of these challenges every day, others, less frequently. While each of the challenges below are important to us, our primary challenge is our narrative: how we talk about the work we do, its impact, and how we talk about poverty. Ideally, we want to center our communications vehicles about our narrative and the impact of our work around storytelling.

Consequently, we are listing all our other major communications challenges below without prioritization so that respondents to this RFP can match challenges to their areas of expertise.

The successful respondent to this RFP will address our communications challenge on narrative and at least four other challenges listed below. Firms interested in responding to only one, two, or three of the challenges listed are welcomed but *may* not be considered for a retainer fee; rather, we *may* elect to utilize your services on a project-by-project basis.

Additional communications challenges include:

- Pitching reporters and beefing up our coverage in local mainstream media (NYDN, NYT, NYP, local TV and radio news.) Positioning Robin Hood as the “go to organization” for comment or understanding poverty issues among New York-based reporters.
- Generating and maintaining a sense of urgency and impact around our programmatic efforts in our messaging and among reporters and editors. (We are still living through a pandemic and economic crisis.)
- Lifting up and generating excitement, buzz, and news coverage about annual events hosted/sponsored by Robin Hood that are now presented in a virtual format.
- Creating and maintaining through lines in our messaging among the disparate activities and announcements at Robin Hood.
- Sustaining drumbeats for storylines.
- Relating the totality of our work to racial equity and consistently highlighting the nexus between race and poverty.
- Raising the visibility of our Bespoke Initiatives and linking them to our core grantmaking.
- Linking our programmatic priorities of Learning Loss, Getting People Back to Work, Cutting Child Poverty in Half, and Investing in Leaders of Color to the themes of recovery, reform, and renewal. (Getting people back on their feet, back to work and back to school.)
- Safeguarding our reputation and brand identity amidst market confusion with a financial app that bears our same name.
- Traversing the *mission* terrain from our origins as a charity to a change agent organization focused on dismantling the systemic underpinnings of poverty.
- Positioning Robin Hood as a thought leader and policy expert amongst reporters in NYC, DC, and Albany.
- Expanding the reach of our audiences on social media platforms.
- Enhancing our SEO.
- Completing a public affairs audit.
- Amplifying the reach and impact of special initiatives like the Power Fund and FUEL for reporters and editors.

What You Will Need to Do to Respond to the RFP

Prepare a proposal on how you would help Robin Hood address its narrative challenge and at least four other aforementioned challenges. Tells us about your expertise and experience. Share a strategy and your tactics to confront each challenge. Give us a sense of the guiding principles or philosophy that governs your firm’s approach to communications. Be sure to tell us about projects your firm has successfully completed for clients in the philanthropic or nonprofit sector and share with us how your firm helped a former client overcome a challenge similar ours.

Tell us about your team. Share their bios/resumes. Tell us about any potential conflicts of interest, and please, tell us how much it will cost us to work with you.

Finally, Robin Hood continuously seeks to diversify its vendor capacity. If your firm is owned by people of color, women, LGBTQ identified, or the differently abled, please highlight that information in your proposal. Similarly, if your firm has staff at senior levels representing any of the aforementioned groups, please highlight their names and titles in your proposal.

Respondents who are submitting proposals to help us address one, two, or three of the challenges should follow the same instructions but be clear in your response document or presentation about which challenge(s) you are responding to and clearly indicate that your submission is not for retainer consideration.

All proposals received will be considered in final format. Late submissions will **NOT** be accepted.

Review of Proposals

The review team will consist of members of Robin Hood's Communications Coordinating Committee, the Chief Advancement Officer, the Chief Operating Officer, and the CEO.

We expect to make a final decision on this matter on or before May 1, 2021 and will move swiftly to place the successful respondent under contract immediately.

Robin Hood will evaluate multiple criteria to select the most appropriate firm(s). The major qualitative areas that Robin Hood will evaluate include but are not limited to the following:

- The respondent's commitment to diversity as demonstrated through the firm's ownership and/or its senior staff.
- The proposed approach to resolving each communications challenge.
- The level of experience of the individual(s) identified to fulfill the project.
- The individual's/organization's experience with similar projects.
- The total proposed cost.

Conflict of Interest

Respondents agree that they or their employees do not currently have, nor will they have, any conflict of interest between themselves and Robin Hood. Any perceived or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in the proposal.

Contractual Agreement

Robin Hood will issue a contract with the selected respondent.

Questions

All questions should be directed to:

Kevin F. Thompson
Managing Director, Communications
Robin Hood
kthompson@robinhood.org