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## New Economy Initiative

### Strategic Communications Support Request for Proposals

#### Introduction

The New Economy Initiative (NEI), a project of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, is a philanthropic collaboration working to build a regional network of support for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Our mission is to grow a thriving culture of entrepreneurship in southeast Michigan that benefits all residents and strengthens the regional economy. For more information about NEI, visit our [website](#).

NEI is seeking a communications firm that will provide strategic support for the organization. The goal would be to assist NEI in supporting messaging and content designed to reach our target audiences, elevate the profile of the organization, and raise awareness of our grants and grantee organizations. This will include elevating the stories of small business owners and grantees, emphasizing how NEI's work is building a more resilient southeast Michigan. In addition to general communications support, the firm will create NEI's annual report with support from the NEI communications associate. This work will include videography, photography, design, writing and printing services.

#### Qualifications

The ideal communications firm should possess the following qualifications:

- Demonstrated interest and experience in creating work focused on business support organizations, small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Proficiency in industry-standard design software and tools.
- Strong communication skills and ability to collaborate effectively with our team.
- Creative and innovative design sensibilities.
- Strong attention to detail.
- Commitment to managing multiple deadlines for projects simultaneously, including rapid response and prioritizing each project effectively.
- Deep knowledge of current design trends and best practices on social media.
- Demonstrated ability to supplement core team capabilities by identifying and managing qualified subcontractors for specialized or complex services (e.g., videography, animation, media buying), subject to NEI's approval.
- Have a deep understanding of the Michigan media landscape.



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## Contract Duration

Approximately Monday, October 20, 2025 to Tuesday, October 20, 2026

## Scope of Work

### **Overall Strategy**

- 12-month strategic communications planning and support, including recommendations for social media strategy and visual storytelling.
- Key messaging and talking points support, as needed.
- Sync all of NEI's projects into the communications strategy to create a seamless brand.

### **Public Relations, Digital Outreach, and Project Management**

- Media relations support to identify, plan, and capitalize on news angles in the media in both Lansing and the Metro Detroit media markets.
- Support with the development and distribution of press releases and story pitching to journalists, as needed.
- Development of marketing materials and storytelling content to showcase NEI's impact and raise brand awareness.
- Leverage NEI thought leadership for emerging news articles and current events in the business ecosystem.
- Support with paid advertisement, as needed.
- Create email marketing templates to assist with NEI Worktable communications.

### **Social Media**

- Development of content and graphic designs to showcase NEI's impact and raise brand awareness for social media.
- Create a strategic social media plan that aligns with NEI's goals, prioritizing awareness and engagement.
- The selected firm will be responsible for producing a recurring, short-form digital video series that feature business support organizations in Southeast Michigan. This series will complement our new upcoming digital platform and spotlight programs and services offered by each BSO in a concise, engaging format.

### **Graphic Design**

- Development of NEI one-pagers, updates to existing documents, and creation of social media graphics incorporating visuals and data.



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### **Website Updates**

- Update and recommend website copy and content changes as needed, including overall review of website at start of the contract.
- Develop webpage copy for the Michigan Microbusiness Coalition and update the grants webpage copy. Recommend any other webpage copy updates.
- Develop a monthly blog article that will post on both NEI's website, LinkedIn, and MI Small Business Helper.

### **Annual Report**

- Develop an annual report project plan and outline with deadlines.
- Project manage, interview stakeholders, and produce annual report content development, copy writing, and editing.
- Design and print annual report.
- Development of supplemental content to maximize value annual report, which could include video storytelling, social media graphics/toolkit, or other ways to increase visibility of content within the report.
- Film and edit video content to promote the NEI annual report.
- NEI's annual report is due to funders March 31, 2026.

### **Newsletter**

- In collaboration with the NEI team, develop bimonthly newsletter content. The NEI communications associate will then insert the content into the newsletter platform and distribute it to our subscribers.

### **Conference and Speaking Engagement Pitching**

- Identify relevant conferences, panels, speaking engagements, and award programs where NEI can gain visibility.

### **Crisis Communication**

- The selected firm must provide crisis communications services, including the development of a proactive crisis response plan, real-time media relations support, and clear protocols for rapid response to protect the organization's reputation during unforeseen events.

## **Proposal Submission**

Interested communications firms should submit the following:



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1. A statement expressing your interest in working with the New Economy Initiative and highlighting our ecosystem of business support organizations. Please include your contact information, including phone number, email, and website.
2. A proposal reflecting the scope of work request.
3. A detailed portfolio showcasing relevant projects and examples of work centering business support organizations, small businesses, and entrepreneurs.
4. A cost estimate.
5. The proposal should highlight key staff that would be assigned to the project, their experience, and role.

### Submission Deadline

**Proposals must be submitted by Thursday, September 18 at 5 p.m.** Please send materials to [neicommunications@cfsem.org](mailto:neicommunications@cfsem.org).

### Selection Process

The New Economy Initiative team will review all proposals and select the most qualified agency based on experience, portfolio quality, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with our mission and values. Shortlisted candidates may be invited for an interview or presentation. **Our ideal contract start date is Monday, October 20, 2025.**

We look forward to reviewing your submission.