



Request for Proposal (RFP) for Government and Public Affairs Services

Issued by:

Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO)

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Proposal Submission Deadline:

November 12, 2024

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Introduction

The Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO) seeks proposals from qualified firms to provide comprehensive government and public affairs services. The selected firm will work with AEO to enhance proactive engagement with congressional leaders, advocate for government grants and contracts, and position the organization and its CEO as industry and thought leaders in entrepreneurship and small business.

About AEO

The Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO) is the leading voice of innovation and opportunity in microbusiness in the United States. AEO works to create economic opportunity for underserved entrepreneurs by advocating for policies and practices that support them and their ventures. AEO's President and CEO, Natalie Madeira Cofield, is a nationally recognized leader and advocate for small businesses. To learn more visit, www.aeoworks.org.

Scope of Services

1. Partner Development & Engagement

The selected firm will be responsible for:

- **Identifying Strategic Partners:** Collaborate with AEO to identify and engage key third-party organizations such as think tanks and small business associations. This includes fostering new partnerships, securing speaking opportunities, and attending high-profile events that align with AEO's objectives.
- **Thought Leadership Strategy & Messaging:** Develop and execute strategies and messaging to position AEO and its CEO as forward-thinking leaders within the small business and entrepreneurship sectors. Develop a 2025 engagement plan that includes key announcements, media outreach, webinars, and social media campaigns. The messaging should spotlight the innovation and resilience of underserved entrepreneurs, emphasize their challenges, and showcase AEO's critical role in helping them navigate these obstacles.

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- Utilizing the Small Business Network for Research & Advocacy: Work with AEO to engage its small business network, conducting two surveys to gather insights that will shape AEO's public policy and government affairs priorities. Use these findings to craft compelling stories highlighting the challenges and successes of small business owners, and share these narratives through social media, webinars, and AEO's website to support policy advocacy in hearings and briefings.

2. Strategic Policy Development

The selected firm will be responsible for:

- Policy Alignment Mapping: Identify where AEO's policy priorities intersect with other organizations and pinpoint opportunities for collaboration and advocacy. This process will guide targeted stakeholder engagement.
- Policy Agenda Creation: Facilitate strategy sessions with AEO's leadership team to define key policy focus areas and AEO's annual legislative priorities and policy positions on key issues impacting entrepreneurs and small business owners. Collaborate with external stakeholders to develop a formal policy agenda, aligned with legislative opportunities and AEO's strategic goals.
- Quarterly Legislative Briefings: Provide legislative briefing for AEO leadership, offering updates on key policies, legislative developments, and trends. Conduct analysis of how these trends and policies may impact entrepreneurs, business resource providers, and AEO's strategic goals.
- Outreach & Engagement Planning: Design a comprehensive outreach strategy aimed at key government officials, both within the Administration and Congress, to promote AEO's policy initiatives, especially in areas related to small business and inclusive economic growth.
- Third-Party Collaboration: Identify and recommend opportunities for AEO to engage with internal and external stakeholders, including current corporate partners, aligned business groups, and advocacy organizations to promote policy initiatives and foster collaboration.
- Incorporating Policy into Major Events: Assist AEO in planning policy-focused sessions at its key events, such as Regional Councils convenings and other

major conferences, to elevate policy discussions and further AEO's influence in public policy related to small business support and economic equity.

3. Government Relations

The selected firm will be responsible for:

- **Engagement with the Administration:** Support AEO in expanding its engagement with the Administration and key federal agencies, including the Small Business Administration (SBA), Department of Commerce, and Department of Transportation. Build relationships with these agencies to increase their support for AEO's initiatives and policy goals.
- **Strengthening Capitol Hill Outreach:** Enhance AEO's visibility on Capitol Hill by building relationships with Congressional members and staff, especially those on relevant committees. Provide intelligence to shape AEO's legislative strategy and foster relationships with lawmakers who support policies promoting economic equity and small business growth.
- **Expanding Partnerships:** Assist AEO in developing new strategic partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, including small business leaders, philanthropic organizations, and non-traditional partners who align with AEO's policy objectives. These partnerships will help strengthen AEO's policy influence and broaden its advocacy network.
- **Engaging Corporate Partners:** Develop strategies to engage the government relations teams of AEO's existing corporate partners, facilitating direct conversations and providing timely updates on key policy developments to encourage further collaboration.
- **Coalition Building:** Research and recommend coalitions that AEO could join to amplify its voice within the broader small business community. Facilitate introductions to relevant coalitions and networks to strengthen AEO's advocacy efforts.

4. Federal Funding Opportunities

The selected firm will be responsible for:

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- Identifying Federal Funding: Research and recommend available federal funding opportunities that align with AEO's mission. Identify potential sources of support for both AEO and the small businesses it serves.
 - Strengthening Agency Relationships: Help AEO strengthen relationships with key federal agencies that frequently contract with private sector businesses. This effort will uncover opportunities for AEO and its network to access federal contracts and financial support.

Deliverables

- Regular engagement and outreach to congressional leaders and relevant stakeholders.
- Identification and pursuit of government grants and contracts for AEO.
- Strategic positioning of AEO and its CEO as thought leaders through media and public speaking engagements.
- Creation and communication of AEO's annual legislative priorities.
- Quarterly legislative briefings and op-eds with updates on key policy trends and recommendations.
- Weekly and monthly reporting on progress against deliverables and relevant government events, partnerships, funding opportunities etc.

Proposal Requirements

Interested firms should submit a proposal that includes:

- A brief overview of your firm and its capabilities, including experience relevant to this project.
- A detailed approach and methodology for delivering the services outlined above.
- Experience working with non-profits, government agencies, and organizations focused on entrepreneurship and small business.
- Case studies or examples of similar work.
- Key personnel involved and their qualifications.
- A detailed timeline and budget for the project.
- Contact information for at least three references from previous clients who can speak to your firm's capabilities and success in similar project.

Submission Instructions

Please submit your proposal no later than November 12, 2024. Proposals should be submitted electronically to opsadmin@aeoworks.org. For additional information or questions, contact Marieka Walsh, Senior Director of Operation, AEO, mwalsh@aeoworks.org.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Understanding of AEO's mission and needs.
- Relevant experience and proven success in government and public affairs.
- Creativity and strategic thinking.
- Proposed budget and timeline.

We look forward to reviewing your proposal and working together to advance AEO's mission of supporting entrepreneurship and small business through impactful government and public affairs strategies.