



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)**  
**DELAWARE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT (DCHD)**  
**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, ADVOCACY, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**Introduction**

Delaware County (the County) is seeking a qualified firm to partner with the County’s Health Department Steering Committee (and Public Relations Subcommittee), the Foundation for Delaware County, and community stakeholders to provide strategic communications, advocacy and public relations support as the County moves to establish its first County Health Department. DCHD will fill a much-needed void in the County’s approach to promoting public health and wellness for all of its community members. DCHD’s initial and sustained will rely upon a messaging framework and outreach program that will increase overall awareness and support of the forthcoming county health department. The County anticipates obtaining the necessary approvals and funding to begin full operations in January, 2022.

This RFQ document presents background on the organization and its structure, the scope of work desired, timeline, proposal requirements and expected budget. The RFQ will be publicly advertised and will also be forwarded to number of agencies that have expressed interest in providing this support. Information related to this RFQ is generally subject to “right-to-know” requirements under applicable laws, however the County may enter into non-disclosure agreements (NDA) as appropriate and allowable.

**Background**

Delaware County is in the second of what is anticipated to be a two-year process to establish its own health department. While a group of residents have been advocating for a health department for over 10 years, this vision did not become a reality until the county voted in its first-ever, all-Democratic county council in November 2019. Council members included the establishment of a county health department in their campaign promise, and immediately went to work to make good on it.

Currently, public health services in the Commonwealth are provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) via six district health departments, with the exception of six counties and four municipalities. The district health departments provide support for the state health center in each county (like Delaware County) that is without a health department, providing a minimum set of public health services. The result is a weaker statewide public health infrastructure that is not equipped to identify and address the specific, community-based needs in the vast majority of counties. PA DOH allows counties and large municipalities to form their own, locally-governed health departments under [Act 315 of Local Health Administration Law](#). Act 315 health departments receive state funding to support specific programs and services that otherwise would be provided by the state.

Highlights of this two-year effort to establish a health department in Delaware County include the following (to date):

1. A study by the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and Hygiene to examine public health issues and infrastructure.
2. The appointment of a Steering Committee to guide the work.
3. The development of a strategic plan.
4. The opening of the Delaware County Wellness Center, in Yeadon, that initially will serve as a testing and vaccination center and grow into the main office for the health department as additional staff and programs are added.
5. PADOH awarding a "Certificate of Approval" to indicate eligibility to apply for Act 315 funds.

This timeline provides additional information on upcoming activities related to the Act 315 application activities.

The strategic plan for creating the health department includes four goals, each of which is supported by a subcommittee. The RFQ is being issued by Subcommittee #4, which support the goal to generate public support, as described below.

**Goal 1: Secure support and funding.** Act 315 has been chronically underfunded, and without additional appropriations the current amount would be divided among eleven departments, not just the existing ten, with an obvious negative impact on current county and municipal health departments. Moreover, the state has not certified a new health department since 1989, and none of the current staff have participated in this process.

The County is working to increase Act 315 to the full amount specified in the law, i.e., \$6/resident. This would entail an additional \$10 million in the 2022 budget in order to accommodate a Delaware County Health Department and also to provide the full amount of funding to the current health departments.

The County also has successfully established a relationship with relevant PADOH staff to obtain the guidance and support necessary to establishing programs that comply with the Act 315 requirements.

**Goal 2: Engage the community.** A key role of the health department is to work with different organizations to assure the conditions needed for a healthy and thriving community. In addition, public health experts will identify health-related patterns and trends by consulting with the residents who know their communities the best as well as analyzing data and consulting scientific literature. The subcommittee has begun dialogues with organizations and community representatives throughout the county through a "listening tour," i.e., sessions designed to provide an overview of health department roles and initial public health priorities followed by time for participants to share their perceptions, concerns, data, and recommendations for ongoing collaboration.

**Goal 3: Establish the programs.** This County is working with PADOH and the community to establish the initial programs required by Act 315 and to develop preliminary plans to further address the priority public health issues facing Delaware County. Program-specific “think tanks” will be held beginning in March to share draft plans and solicit additional input on how best advance health and health equity throughout the county.

**Goal 4: Generate public support.** The County issued this RFQ to select a contractor that will play a significant role in generating public support for the county health department. Even with the full support of county council, not all residents understand or support the need for a county health department. Although Act 315 will provide much-needed funds, the amount available is anticipated to be less than half of what it will take to operate a health department that is fully equipped to meet the public health needs of the county. Moreover, public health tends to be misunderstood, with many misconceptions regarding the roles, responsibilities, programs and functions of public health agencies.

At best, the pandemic has had a neutral effect on the public’s perception of the need for a health department. Early on, a prevailing sentiment about a new health department was very positive, reflecting an understanding that a county health department would have been poised to respond to the pandemic more quickly and in a more targeted manner than was possible by relying on the assistance of a neighboring county that also had to attend to its residents’ needs. Over time, however, some growing resentment emerged regarding the closures of schools and businesses, as recommended by the neighboring county health department, to slow the spread of COVID-19. Currently, the County’s efforts to vaccinate the population have the potential to help or hinder public support.

The County website includes a description of the benefits of having its own health department. Early indications are that the Listening Tour is eliciting the support of the many organizations and people who are participating. It is anticipated that the think tanks also will be an important strategy to assist with buy-in (as well as helping to ensure that the programs are effective).

An evidence-based communication toolkit, PHRASES, provides a host of concepts and language that has been shown to resonate with the general public about the importance of public health. The toolkit has been the basis of communications generated to date, and the contractor selected for this RFQ is expected to rely heavily on the PHRASES tools and not “start from scratch” when developing messages. Consistent with PHRASES, the selected contractor is expected to use asset-based language in all messaging regarding health problems, health disparities and advancing health equity.

### **Objective**

The County’s objective is to support a successful launch of the newly established Delaware County Public Health Department. We aim to engage all relevant audiences within Delaware County to ensure that the mission of the Health Department is clearly communicated and the county maintains a high level of support for this initiative. Primary audiences include:

- Delaware County Residents (across all townships)
- Elected Officials (at all levels of government)
- Community Groups and Membership Organizations (e.g., churches, non-profits)
- News Media & Influencers

- Corporate Partners & Businesses
- Delaware County Healthcare Providers
- Chester County Influencers & Partners
- Key Leaders in the Pennsylvania Department of Health

Within these audience groups, we aim to promote awareness for the need and the reasons why it is in the County's best interest to have its own Health Department, along with information about the process and progress toward its establishment.

The selected Agency Partner will play a lead role in crafting the messaging and creating and executing a multi-channel communications plan to reach all of the audiences mentioned above. The agency will also provide creative, production, and media (paid, earned and owned) support to bring the campaign to life, as well as a robust measurement platform to determine the campaign's efficacy. The firm should be able to articulate and strategize against all possible responses within our key audience groups; everything from avid supporters and advocates, to neutral or passive information consumers, to detractors.

### **Scope of Work**

The following services are required over a 12-month period (detailed timeline to follow). The County has separated the assignment into two parts: (I) Strategic Planning & Proof of Concept and (II) Campaign Execution. Our intention is to work with one partner who can manage both parts, however the two are separated for budgeting purposes.

### **Part I: Strategic Planning & Proof of Concept**

The strategy and approach to the overall campaign; the road map and vision for how this campaign will come to life in the market.

- I. **Strategic Messaging Platform:** The messaging platform will include communications audit, key messages, messaging hierarchies/matrixes, audience profiles and other relevant information that acts as the foundation for all communications.
- II. **Creative Brief:** From the messaging platform, a creative brief will be written that will be used to guide creative (art/design and copywriting) execution for any creative materials produced throughout the campaign.
- III. **Proof of Concept:** Logo and at least two (2) creative directions, art design and copywriting executed through 3-5 media examples (print ad, billboard/OOH, social media assets, digital video/OLV) related to the campaign media requirements.
- IV. **Testing Protocol:** An approach for how we will test the selected platform with key audiences.
- V. **Strategic Communication Plan:** A comprehensive outreach plan to connect with all of the aforementioned key audiences through a multi-channel campaign via a PESO model. This includes:
  - a. **Channel Plan**
  - b. **Public Relations/Earned Media Strategy**
  - c. **Grass Roots Community Engagement Strategy**
  - d. **Paid Media Plan**
  - e. **Campaign Measurement Plan**

## **Part II: Campaign Execution**

Resources, asset development and management of the campaign execution, as proposed and approved through the Strategic Planning process.

- I. Senior-level Public Relations liaison to lead day-to-day communication and execution, including media outreach, events and written press materials
- II. Creative support to deliver required creative assets
- III. Media planning and buying support to execute paid media elements
- IV. Reporting and analytics support to deliver measurement plan at agreed-upon cadence

### **Reporting Structure**

The County will designate a point of contact for the successful offeror. All contractual matters will be processed through this individual. However, the successful partner will collaborate directly with a committee made up of subcommittee members, communications executives from area businesses and representation from Delaware County government.

### **Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Requirements**

The proposal process will consist of two steps. The first step requires submittal of a statement of qualifications, provided in digital format with a single hard copy. The SOQs will be reviewed by a County designated selection committee. The SOQ submittal will address the following:

- An overview of the agency, its headquarters and office location(s), size, capabilities, senior management
- An overview of the agency's history, culture, philosophy and approach
- Areas of specialty/expertise
- What the agency looks for/expects in a client relationship
- Current client list and length of service, including any clients that might pose a conflict
- Knowledge of and experience in any or all of the following:
  - Delaware County government, political and public services
  - general healthcare or public health
  - COVID-related communications
- How the agency proposes to structure an account team and allocate resources to the budget provided
- Bios of personnel who would be assigned to this account
- Description of agency's approach to diversity and how it intends to address diverse audiences
- Provision of three (3) relevant case studies that demonstrate both your related experience and capabilities across all required disciplines
- A sample Planning deliverable
- A sample Reporting deliverable
- Detailed pricing proposal according to budget parameters below

Based upon the selection committee's review, up to four (4) agencies will be asked to present to the Public Relations Sub-Committee, either live or virtually via a digital platform. Final selection will be made using input from both the SOQ review and the subcommittee.

**Budget**

Part I of the Scope of Work is to be delivered at or under \$50,000, including out-of-pocket expenses. We understand each agency may want to conduct research as part of the strategy process, and this is permitted at your discretion. There will not, however, be funding for additional research via 3<sup>rd</sup> party resources. All existing research and data will be provided to the selected Agency Partner.

Part II of the Scope of work will have a budget up to \$50,000 inclusive of media costs, depending upon resources at the time and plans developed in consultation with the subcommittee.

**Submittal Requirements**

SOQs are due to the County not later than 3:00 PM on March 26<sup>th</sup>. SOQs should be submitted to the following addressee:

Donna Burdett  
Director of Purchasing  
County of Delaware  
201 W. Front Street  
Media, PA 19063

Written questions concerning the solicitation can be sent to the following not later than March 12th:

[burdett@co.delaware.pa.us](mailto:burdett@co.delaware.pa.us)

Questions received will be posted on the procurement website.