NORTEC

Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Marketing & Public Relations Services

Paradise RISE Center - CDBG-DR Workforce Development Program

Grant / Agreement No.	18-DRWD-23001 AM.1
Issuing Agency	Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC)
Funding Source	California HCD - CDBG Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR); Federal award administered per 2 CFR Part 200
Contract Term	Estimated Contract Begin Date 11/01/2026 through 06/30/2028
Issue Date	10/01/2026
Questions Due	10/15/2026 5:00 p.m. PT
Submission Deadline	10/23/2026 5:00 p.m. PT

1. Introduction & Background

The Paradise RISE Center Workforce Development Program ("Paradise RISE") is a $17,868,376 Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) initiative administered by the Town of Paradise ("the Town") through the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), Grant #18-DRWD-23001 AM.1. The program supports the social and economic recovery of communities impacted by the 2018 Camp Fire (DR-4407) by providing free workforce training and supportive services to Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) individuals throughout Butte County.

The program is delivered through a partnership of the Town of Paradise, Alliance for Workforce Development (AFWD), Butte College, Paradise Unified School District (PUSD), Valley Contractors Workforce Foundation (VCWF), and the Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC). Training tracks include construction and building trades, plumbing and electrical, CNA/LVN healthcare pathways, welding, heavy equipment operation, utility line clearance and vegetation management, and skilled-trades apprenticeships - delivered at no cost to income-eligible participants.

The program's goal is to enroll 500 LMI participants, with at least 85% of participants verified as LMI with recruitment and outreach continuing throughout the multi-year enrollment period. The program currently maintains a public information page at rise.afwd.org, hosted by AFWD, and has begun initial outreach planning (partner roles, a critical-path outreach timeline, and a list of open branding, compliance, and materials items) but does not yet have a dedicated marketing/PR resource or a comprehensive, sustained marketing and public relations program in place.

2. Purpose of This Solicitation

NoRTEC, for the Town is seeking a qualified marketing and public relations firm or consultant to serve as the program's full-service marketing and PR partner for the duration of Paradise RISE. The selected firm will lead campaign strategy, content and materials development, paid and earned media, social media management, and public relations for the program, working in close coordination with the Town, NoRTEC, AFWD, and the program's other partners. This is a Request for Proposal (RFP): NoRTEC is evaluating firms based on relevant experience and cost as a factor in final selection, consistent with federally required procurement standards as outlined in this RFP.

3. Grant-Mandated Outreach Requirements

Paradise RISE's HCD Standard Agreement commits the program to a specific outreach and marketing approach that any selected firm must be able to fulfill. At minimum, the awarded scope must support:

- Development and execution of an outreach plan that educates, promotes, and increases participation among LMI populations, including Camp Fire survivors, unemployed/underemployed adults, youth 16–24, veterans, single parents/heads of household, justice-involved individuals, limited-English speakers, and individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- Outreach materials - posters, flyers, door hangers, fact sheets, paid advertisements (e.g., billboard, radio, television), and social media content - produced in both English and Spanish, consistent with Butte County's demographics and the program's forthcoming Language Access Plan.
- Talking points and scripts for outreach staff across all partner organizations.
- Outreach that leverages existing community partnerships (supportive housing and special-needs providers, municipal and county officials, faith-based and cultural organizations) rather than passive advertising alone.
- Compliant use of required HUD/HCD program acknowledgment language and logo requirements on all public-facing materials.

4. Scope of Services

The selected firm will provide full-service marketing and public relations support, including but not limited to:

4.1 Strategy & Brand

- Finalize and document unified program name/branding in coordination with all six partners (Town, AFWD, Butte College, PUSD, VCWF, NoRTEC).
- Develop an overall marketing and outreach strategy and annual work plan tied to enrollment targets.
- Establish brand and messaging guidelines, including required HUD/HCD acknowledgment and logo usage.

4.2 Digital & Web

- Support and help maintain the program's public-facing web presence (currently hosted by AFWD at rise.afwd.org), plus any Town-specific program content.

- Establish, manage, and grow program social media accounts across relevant platforms; maintain a minimum posting cadence (currently targeted at 3+ posts/week) and a content calendar.
- Advise on and help implement a “How did you hear about us?” / referral-source tracking mechanism tied to AFWD’s intake system, to measure channel effectiveness.

4.3 Paid & Earned Media

- Develop and place paid advertising (digital, print, and/or broadcast as appropriate), subject to the Town's confirmation of paid-advertising allowability and procurement compliance under the grant.
- Draft and distribute press releases and manage relationships with local media outlets and other regional press.
- Support media events tied to program milestones (e.g., program launch, open houses, career days).

4.4 Print & Collateral

- Design and produce outreach collateral - flyers, posters, door hangers, fact sheets - in English and Spanish, coordinated with the program's Language Access Plan.
- Provide or coordinate professional translation services for all public-facing materials.

4.5 Events & Partner Coordination

- Support recruitment events, including open houses, PUSD school presentations/career days, and employer roundtables.
- Coordinate marketing and outreach activity across all six program partners so each partner's channels (community networks, campus communications, contractor/trade networks, America's Job Centers, Town communications) work from a shared calendar and message set.

4.6 Reporting & Measurement

- Provide regular (at minimum monthly) reporting on outreach activity, reach, and engagement.
- Track referral sources and campaign performance to inform ongoing strategy adjustments.

5. Minimum Qualifications

Respondents must demonstrate:

- Demonstrated experience providing marketing and/or public relations services to a public agency, nonprofit, workforce development program, or similarly mission-driven organization.
- Experience developing bilingual (English/Spanish) outreach materials and campaigns targeted at LMI, disaster-recovery-affected, or similarly underserved populations.
- Capacity to manage social media, paid media placement, earned media/press relations, and print collateral production under one engagement.
- No current suspension, debarment, or proposed debarment from participation in federal assistance programs (see Section 6).
- Prior experience with HUD/CDBG-funded or other federally funded programs is preferred but not required.

6. Federal Compliance Requirements

Because Paradise RISE is funded through a federal CDBG-DR award, this procurement and the resulting contract are subject to federal procurement standards. Respondents should note the following (final process details to be confirmed by NoRTEC and/or the Town's compliance consultant):

- All procurement will be conducted in a fair, open, and competitive manner consistent with 2 CFR §§200.317–200.327 (Uniform Guidance Procurement Standards).
- Respondents must certify they are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or declared ineligible from participating in federal assistance programs, per 2 C.F.R. Part 180, 2 C.F.R. § 200.214, and Executive Orders 12549 and 12689 (certification attached as Attachment B) and the federal exclusions maintained in SAM.gov.
- The selected firm must maintain complete supporting documentation (invoices, work product, time records as applicable) sufficient to support reimbursement requests and program audits, and retain records for a minimum of five (5) years after grant closeout as required by the HCD/Town of Paradise Standard Agreement, and to comply with applicable federal record-retention requirements in 2 CFR §200.334.
- The selected firm must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements including, but not limited to, the following:
  - NONDISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY REQUIREMENTS

    The proposer assures us that it will comply fully with all applicable civil rights laws and regulations, ensuring that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any activity funded by CDBG-DR assistance. This includes compliance with the following laws:

    – Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.): Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.

    – Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5309): Mandates non-discrimination under any CDBG-funded program or activity.

    – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975: Prohibit discrimination based on disability and age, respectively. Digital assets, campaign materials, and websites developed under this scope must comply with the accessibility requirements in the HCD Standard Agreement and applicable law, including WCAG 2.1 AA and Section 508 where applicable.

    – Limited English Proficiency and Language Access: The contractor must implement outreach strategies that provide meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency, including translation of materials into languages required by the HCD Standard Agreement, the program’s Language Access Plan, or other applicable requirements.

    – Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs.

- CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING (24 CFR Part 87).

  Proposer certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress, in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any

cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan or cooperative agreement.

- All public-facing materials must include required HUD/HCD program acknowledgment language and comply with HUD logo/branding requirements (final requirements to be confirmed by the Town with HCD prior to contract execution).

7. Budget & Contract Term

Responses should include a budget covering the full contract term, inclusive of all professional fees, production costs, and any separately procured paid media placement costs, if applicable - see Section 4). Respondents should submit a proposed fee structure (e.g., fixed-fee, hourly, milestone-based, or hybrid compensation model) that clearly identifies which costs are included.

The contract term is intended to run through 06/30/2028, subject to an annual review of performance, LMI participant target, continued availability of grant funds, and any HCD budget revision requirements. NoRTEC reserves the right to terminate for convenience or for cause consistent with standard NoRTEC contracting terms.

8. Submission Requirements

Respondents should submit the following:

1. Proposal Cover Sheet. (***See Attachment A***)
2. Firm overview and relevant experience, including at least three examples of comparable marketing/PR work (public sector, nonprofit, workforce development, or disaster recovery preferred).
3. Proposed approach and work plan addressing the scope in Section 4, including how the firm would coordinate with AFWD's existing outreach activity and the program's other five partners.
4. Key personnel and relevant qualifications, including bilingual (English/Spanish) capacity.
5. At least three professional references from comparable engagements.
6. Proposed fee structure and budget (Section 7).
7. Certification of non-debarment/non-suspension (Section 6). (***See Attachment B***)
8. Proof of applicable business licensing and insurance (general liability and, if applicable, professional liability), or a statement of ability to obtain prior to contract execution.
9. Conflict of Interest Form. (***See Attachment C***)

9. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria.

Criterion	Weight	Notes
Relevant experience & past performance	30%	Public sector / nonprofit / workforce or disaster-recovery marketing experience
Proposed approach & understanding of program	25%	Quality of work plan; grasp of LMI/bilingual outreach requirements

Criterion	Weight	Notes
Cost / fee reasonableness	25%	Clarity and reasonableness of fee structure
References	10%	Quality and relevance of professional references
Bilingual & LMI outreach capability	10%	Demonstrated capacity for English/Spanish materials and hard-to-reach populations

10. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be in PDF format and submitted by email to cindy.newton@ncen.org no later than 5:00 p.m. PT on 10/23/2026. The email subject line should read "Marketing RFP." Late submissions will not be considered. Questions regarding this RFP may be submitted by email to cindy.newton@ncen.org no later than 5:00 p.m. PT on 10/15/2026. Responses to questions will be provided in writing to all known recipients of this RFP.

11. General Disclaimers and Provisions

- No costs will be paid to cover the expense of preparing a proposal or contracting for services or supplies.
- Proposers are advised that most documents in the possession of NoRTEC are considered public records and subject to disclosure under federal and state public records laws.
- NoRTEC may require selected proposers to attend oral interviews, participate in negotiations, and rewrite their statements of work as agreed upon during contract negotiations.
- NoRTEC is not required to select the lowest-cost proposal. Award will be made to the responsible proposer whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the program, considering all disclosed evaluation criteria.

Revisions

At the discretion of NoRTEC, if it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum will be provided to all known recipients of this RFP and posted on NoRTEC's website. Respondents are responsible for checking the website frequently to remain informed about the procurement process and other information that may affect this RFP.

Right to Cancellation

NoRTEC reserves the right to cancel all or any part of this RFP at any time without prior notice and reserves the right to modify the RFP process and timeline as is deemed necessary.

Nonresponsive Proposals

Proposals may be judged nonresponsive and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur:

- The proposal is not received on a timely basis in accordance with the terms of this RFP.
- The proposal does not include all the specified elements.

Minority Business Participation

NoRTEC, as a recipient of State and Federal funds, subscribes to the practices below and will fully comply with Federal, State, and Local laws and directives governing non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action in all activities.

- No person shall be discriminated against whatsoever on the grounds of race, religion, color, age, sex, disability, or national origin.
- No person shall because of race, religion, color, age, sex, disability, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded entirely or in part by NoRTEC, the State, or the Federal Government.
- Affirmative Action shall be taken by all levels of governments, where necessary, to support the underlying objectives of said anti-discrimination policies.

To further support policies related to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination, NoRTEC will make every effort to ensure that Minority Business Enterprises have the maximum practicable opportunity to participate in construction contracts and in the procurement of goods, professional services, and supplies. Contractors are encouraged to indicate in their RFP response if they are a certified minority business as certified through the State of California. A listing of certified minority businesses, as well as the services and commodities they provide, is available from the Department of General Services 916-375-4940.

ATTACHMENT A: Proposal Cover Sheet

Name of Respondent:
Business Address:
Phone:
Fax:
Years in Business:
Unique Entity ID (UEI): **FEIN Number:**
Name, title, and contact information of person authorized to answer any questions about the proposal, negotiate the contract terms, and contractually bind the respondent: **Name and Title:** _____ **Phone: ( )_____Fax: ( )_____Email: _____**
I do hereby certify that this proposal is submitted in accordance with the provisions and conditions outlined, that this firm acknowledges and accepts the terms and conditions of this RFP by tendering an offer to NoRTEC; that all the information is complete and accurate, and that this proposal represents a firm offer to provide the requested services. This offer shall remain valid for a minimum of 90 days. I also certify that the fees in the proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other bidder or with any other competitor for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such fees; and no attempt has been made or will be made by the bidder to induce any other person or organization to submit or not submit a proposal for the purpose of limiting or restricting competition. I further certify that this organization can and will provide and make available, at a minimum, all services described in the proposal.

Signature of Authorized Representative: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name and Title of Authorized Representative: _____

ATTACHMENT B - Debarment Certification

Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters

Lower Tier Covered Transactions (2 CFR Part 180 and HUD implementation at 2 CFR Part 2424)

Solicitation: Marketing and Public Relations Services - Paradise RISE Center

Issued by: Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC), for the Town of Paradise

Funding source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds, administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), Grant No. 18-DRWD-23001

Instructions to Proposers

1. Every proposer must complete, sign, and include this certification with its proposal. Proposals submitted without it may be considered non-responsive.
2. The certification must be signed by a person authorized to bind the proposing firm.
3. If the proposer cannot certify to any statement below, it must check the box in Section 2 and attach a written explanation. An explanation will not automatically disqualify a proposer, but it will be considered in determining whether the proposer is responsible.
4. Proposers should be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM.gov). NoRTEC will verify the selected proposer's status in SAM.gov before any contract is awarded.
5. This certification is a material representation of fact relied upon when the contract is awarded. If it is later found that the proposer knowingly provided an erroneous certification, the Town of Paradise, NoRTEC, HCD, and HUD may pursue all available remedies, including termination of the contract.

Section 1 - Certification

By signing and submitting this proposal, the proposer certifies that neither it nor any of its principals:

1. Is presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any federal department or agency;
2. Has, within the three-year period preceding this proposal, been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against it for fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (federal, state, or local) transaction or contract, or for violation of federal or state antitrust statutes, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;
3. Is presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with commission of any of the offenses listed in item 2; or
4. Has, within the three-year period preceding this proposal, had one or more public transactions (federal, state, or local) terminated for cause or default.

The proposer further agrees that it will:

- Provide immediate written notice to NoRTEC if at any time it learns that this certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous because of changed circumstances; and
- Include this certification requirement, without modification, in all lower tier subcontracts under this contract, and not knowingly enter into any subcontract with a person or firm that is debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded.

Section 2 - Exception

☐ The proposer is unable to certify to one or more of the statements above. A written explanation is attached.

Section 3 - Signature

I certify under penalty of perjury that the information in this certification is true and correct. I understand that a false statement may be subject to criminal prosecution under 18 U.S.C. 1001.

Firm name: _____

Address: _____

SAM.gov Unique Entity ID (UEI): _____

Name of authorized representative: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For NoRTEC use only - SAM.gov verification before award

Date SAM.gov checked: _____

Result: ☐ No active exclusions ☐ Exclusion found (do not award)

Verified by (name/title): _____

Attach a dated screenshot or printout of the SAM.gov entity and exclusions search to this form and keep it in the procurement file.

ATTACHMENT C: Conflict of Interest Form

By submitting a proposal, the bidding entity certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief, that there is no conflict of interest (real or apparent) inherent in the bid or in delivering the scope of work if NoRTEC awards a contract. A conflict of interest arises if any individual involved in the preparation of this proposal and delivery of services has a financial or other interest or would be likely to gain financially or personally from the award of a contract. The same would hold true for any member of the individual's family, partner, or an organization employing or about to employ any of the above as a direct result of the successful award of a contract under the RFP. NoRTEC reserves the right to disqualify a bidding entity should a conflict of interest be discovered during the solicitation process.

_____ _____

Principal Agent Signature Date

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____