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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)  
OASIS GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, ADVOCACY &  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT**

**Issuing Organization:** OASIS – Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs

**Issue Date:** January 23, 2024

**Submission Deadline:** March 5, 2024 at noon

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## 1. SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS) is seeking proposals from qualified firms or individuals to provide comprehensive government relations (GR) and media communications support. The selected vendor will be responsible for assisting OASIS in advocating for relevant policies and fostering positive relationships with both political and civil service government officials primarily at the provincial, but also at the federal and municipal level as well as assisting with establishing a stronger communications plan to strengthen our advocacy. We will conduct a fair and extensive evaluation based on criteria listed and select the candidate who best represents the direction OASIS wishes to go.

### Background

OASIS is an association of developmental service agencies that provide developmental services to adults and children throughout Ontario. It was established in 1996 to, amongst other things, share information and resources as well as liaise with and advocate to government as one group on behalf of all its member agencies.

Since then, OASIS has grown to represent approximately 200 member agencies. These agencies employ approximately 25,000 full and part-time staff and in turn serve an estimated population of over 65,000 individuals. OASIS member agencies currently provide more than 85% of all developmental services in Ontario.

Given the increasingly speed of change in the developmental services sector, including the Government of Ontario's move towards sector reform through its "Journey to Belonging" document and the unprecedented challenges facing the sector, OASIS has recently undergone a significant shift as an association. For its first 26 years, OASIS was a volunteer run organisation, managed by a volunteer Board made up of representatives from member agencies. However, in the last year OASIS has engaged professional management (a full-time CEO and a 3-person staff team) and shifted the Board of Directors role to one of governance and stewardship.

Although the OASIS head office is in Whitby, Ontario for corporate purposes, the OASIS staff are all fully virtual and work in towns and cities across the province.

## 2. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

This Request for Proposal represents the requirements for an open and competitive process. Proposals will be accepted until **5pm EST 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024**. Any proposals received after this date and time will not be considered.

If the organisation submitting a proposal must outsource or contract any work to meet the requirements contained herein, this must be clearly stated in the proposal. Additionally, all costs included in proposals must be all-inclusive of any outsourced or contracted work. Any proposals which call for outsourcing or contracting work must include a name and description of the individuals or organisations being contracted.

All costs must be itemized to include an explanation of all fees and costs.

Final contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning bidder for this RFP. All contractual terms and conditions will be subject to review by OASIS and our legal support and will include scope, budget, schedule, and other necessary items pertaining to the project.

### **3. PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION**

#### **Project Purpose:**

Throughout its existence, OASIS has consistently been supported by exceptionally strong government relations from several government relations and consulting firms as well as additional support from an internal GR Committee, made up of representatives from our member agencies and other expert volunteers. However, with the recent changes in structure for OASIS, and the onboarding of a dedicated staff member focused on advocacy and policy, OASIS is taking this opportunity to refocus its GR and advocacy efforts and reassess the supports it requires. The DS (Developmental Services) sector is facing deep and systemic issues. Traditional advocacy methods may not be sufficient to bring about meaningful change. Recent analysis of the political landscape has led OASIS to believe that community organizing as well as GR are required to lay the groundwork for the policy changes that are required to better support those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and ensure a strong developmental services sector to help them achieve their goals. OASIS believes that by better integrating our GR and communications functions and engaging member organizations and volunteer expertise, it can provide more effective advocacy with our member agencies and better achieve our advocacy goals.

#### **Project Description:**

OASIS is seeking Government Relations and Media support over the long term related to the key issues currently facing the Developmental Services sector in Ontario. OASIS has currently prioritized its ongoing campaign for an additional 5% increase to base operational funding for developmental services agencies in Ontario and is collaborating with other groups in this effort. This existing campaign must form part of any project plan. However, other advocacy priorities (e.g., housing for those with developmental disabilities and improving supports (wages and incentives) for Developmental Service Workers) must also be balanced with the longer-term policy reforms required to best serve the IDD (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) population and improve efficiencies and outcomes in the system. There is also a general lack of knowledge about the issues and concerns of the developmental services sector and the people it supports amongst the public. A more public-facing education and advocacy strategy may be essential for achieving our objectives.

The successful proponent will work with OASIS' Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Strategy to develop this comprehensive strategy that encompasses housing, workforce stability, and fostering more consistent involvement and engagement from all levels of government, and achieves the whole of government policies required to finally realize the 60-year-old vision established in Canada to build a more inclusive society of respect and fairness that promotes equal access, opportunity, employment and sense of belonging for those with IDD where they live, work, learn and play.

#### 4. PROJECT SCOPE

Please provide a brief proposal outlining your approach and concept for this project, including your use of the funds budgeted for this project.

The selected bidder will be expected to:

- Conduct a thorough analysis of OASIS' current government relations efforts.
- Conduct a comprehensive landscape assessment to evaluate the current communication and branding of OASIS and similar organizations.
- Develop and implement a strategic government relations and media plan aligned with the goals and mission of OASIS.
- Help design an engagement plan for OASIS members and volunteers and partner organizations.
- Provide strategic advice to OASIS' Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Strategy, GR Chair and GR Committee
- Assist with and refine key messages, reports and other documents as needed.
- Expand the scope and reach of OASIS' advocacy efforts through more effective communication.
- Have at least one representative attend regular OASIS GR Committee Meetings.
- Plan and execute public education campaigns to raise awareness about the developmental services sector, dispel misconceptions, and highlight its importance.
- Assist OASIS' Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Strategy, GR Committee Chair and GR Committee with establishing and maintaining relationships with key government officials, agencies, and stakeholders.
- Work with the Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Strategy to monitor legislative and regulatory developments that may impact OASIS, as well as media coverage and public opinion.
- Provide regular updates and reports on government relations and communication activities.

A successful proposal should include details on the following:

##### **Strategy:**

Outline how you will develop an ongoing strategy for OASIS' joint government relations and media strategy with an overarching goal of both improving supports to our members and engaging them while ensuring a positive impact on the developmental services sector. This should include elements that explain how you will:

- establish or improve relationships with government.
- support OASIS' priority issues and objectives.

- better mobilize member agencies and stakeholders to advocate for the developmental services sector's interests.
- target advocacy efforts, including expanded targeted media and social media elements, to better educate government officials and the public about the developmental sector's needs, contributions, and impact.

This should all be done with the consideration to help ensure OASIS is best positioned for effective engagement with its members as well as with our external partners including other developmental service organisations, other membership networks, and the public.

Develop measurable outcomes to achieve and ways to track and evaluate progress and success on greater impact and expansion of our objectives and those outcomes.

### **Sector Analysis:**

The selected bidder must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the Developmental Services context in Canada and Ontario (history, priorities, successes, and challenges) as well as the various elements of the system that exists to support those with IDD in the province. OASIS aims to develop advocacy/policy files to assess the current state of enabling legislation and political efforts and the gap with the evidence-based policies that exist or are planned in other jurisdictions.

### **Coordination:**

Please outline how you will improve coordination of OASIS' government relations and media efforts for a cohesive and integrated approach that recognizes the multi-player system and the leveraging of current assets (the Director of Advocacy, Policy and Strategy, the GR Chair, OASIS GR Committee, and the potential of 1800 board members from member agencies across the province).

### **Adaptability:**

Whilst there are overarching, long-term and ongoing issues facing the developmental services sector, new issues consistently emerge. Any successful strategy must be able to easily adapt to take advantage of policy windows and opportunities that appear (or counter threats that emerge). The strategy will be regularly reviewed and adapted based on feedback, assessment of the political landscapes, and emerging issues.

The proposal statement of work should be presented in a conceptual, high-level format with the understanding that the actual scope of work will be refined after selection. The OASIS' Director of Advocacy, Policy and Strategy will work with the selected bidder to design the strategic steps that best aligns with OASIS' resource' and objectives.

## **5. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL AND PROJECT TIMELINE**

### **Request for Proposal Timeline:**

All proposals in response to this RFP are due no later than **5pm EST 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024**



Evaluation of proposals will be conducted from **6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 until 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024**. If additional information or discussions are needed with any bidders during this window, the bidder(s) will be notified.

The selection decision for the winning bidder will be made no later than **Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024**.

Upon notification, the contract negotiation with the winning bidder will begin immediately. Contract negotiations will be completed by **29<sup>th</sup> March 2024**.

Notifications to bidders who were not selected will be completed by **29<sup>th</sup> March 2024**.

### **Project Timeline:**

The successful bidder will enter a multi-year (3 years - with potential 1 year extension) with OASIS with evaluations occurring annually.

## **6. BUDGET**

All proposals must include proposed costs to complete the tasks described. Costs should be stated as one-time or non-recurring costs (NRC) or monthly recurring costs (MRC). The monthly cost of this proposal **must not exceed \$7,000 monthly**.

The winning proposal will provide a monthly invoice outlining that month's costs.

**NOTE: All costs and fees must be clearly described in each proposal.**

## **7. BIDDER QUALIFICATIONS**

Bidders should provide the following items as part of their proposal for consideration:

- *Description of experience in planning and executing government relations and media strategies*
- *Examples and references from 3 or more past clients or projects that demonstrate the bidder's expertise in joint government relations and media strategies.*
- *Anticipated resources you will assign to this project.*
- *Project management methodology*

## **8. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

OASIS will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria. To ensure consideration for this Request for Proposal, your proposal should be complete and include all the following criteria:

- Overall proposal suitability: proposals must meet the scope and needs included herein and be presented in a clear and organised manner.



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- Organisational Experience: Bidders will be evaluated on their experience as it pertains to the scope of this project.
- Previous work: Bidders will be evaluated on examples of their work pertaining to government relations and communications as well as client testimonials and references.
- Value and cost: Bidders will be evaluated on the cost of their proposal based on the work to be performed in accordance with the scope of this project.

OASIS reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal and will review all applications submitted by the deadline. The awarding of the contract will be based on a review of the proposal against the evaluation criteria and will not necessarily be awarded to the lowest price offer.

Additional written materials, to ascertain the qualifications of the applicant may be requested.

- The successful applicant will be required to enter a Service Contract with OASIS.
- Provide invoices to OASIS; accordingly, and
- Provide OASIS with an HST number for their business.

**Each bidder must submit their proposal to the below email address below by 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 5pm**

**Contact:**

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact: Jonathan Bradshaw, Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Strategy at: [jonathanbradshaw@contact.oasionline.ca](mailto:jonathanbradshaw@contact.oasionline.ca)