



**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
No. I-2026-021005-JK**

**National Public Relations Campaign:
The Land Grant Difference**

I. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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Issue Date.....February 6, 2026

Due Date and Time.....February 13, 2026 (5:00 pm, PT)

II. ISSUING OFFICE AND CONTACT

ISSUING OFFICE:

Office of Procurement, Payment and Travel at Oregon State University (OSU) is the issuing office and is the sole point of contact for this Request for Information. All concerns or questions pertaining to this Request for Information should be appropriately addressed to the individual identified below:

CONTACT PERSON:

Name: Jennifer Koehne
Title: Purchasing Contract Officer
Telephone: 541-737-7353
Fax: 541-737-2160
E-Mail: jennifer.koehne@oregonstate.edu

III. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION:

This is a Request for Information (RFI), issued by OSU's Office of Procurement, Payment and Travel (OPPT). The purpose of this RFI is to solicit input from potential contractors for information pertaining to a national public relations (PR) campaign around land grant institutions in the higher education space.

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY:

Founded in 1868, Oregon State University is a comprehensive, research-extensive, public university located in Corvallis. Oregon State is one of only three American universities to hold the Land Grant, Sea Grant, Space Grant and Sun Grant designations. Oregon State is also the only Oregon institution to have earned the Carnegie Foundation classifications for Highest Research Activity and Community Engagement, a recognition of the depth and quality of its graduate education and research programs.

Through its centers, institutes, Extension offices and Experiment Stations, Oregon State has a presence in all of Oregon's 36 counties, including its main campus in Corvallis, the Hatfield Marine Sciences Center in Newport and OSU-Cascades Campus in Bend. Oregon State offers undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees through 11 academic colleges enrolling more than 38,000 students from every county in Oregon, every state in the country and more than 110 nations.

BACKGROUND:

In an era when Americans' confidence in higher education is in troubling decline, land-grant universities stand as an overlooked outlier.

According to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, nearly 70 percent of Americans said that the United States' (U.S.) higher-education system is generally heading in the wrong direction, an increase from 56 percent of respondents who felt this way in 2020. But land-grant universities are often among the most trusted civic institutions in their states and regions. Born from the idea that institutions of higher education should serve people of their states where they live and work, land-grants are driven by a three-part mission: to provide rigorous, accessible and relevant education; engage in research that supports agriculture, manufacturing, businesses and consumers; and be rooted in communities, delivering programs that are responsive to local needs and values. Across our country, land-grants are in every state and serve everyone — spanning demographics and political viewpoints— with new knowledge that addresses local challenges, education that's accessible to all qualified students, and programs that bring expertise directly where it's most needed.

Amid an evolving landscape of higher education, ranging from community colleges to elite private universities, land-grant universities are measured by tangible impact, designed to serve, and built to bridge differences. In short, land-grant universities operate from a fundamentally different playbook than most other public or private universities and offer a unique value proposition.

Supporting the Success of Every State Resident

From youth engagement, including 4-H, Outdoor School and engineering camps, to intensive graduate studies and mid-career re-skilling and development programs, land-grants provide highly relevant and often immediately useful education and research supporting a robust state economy and creating opportunity for individuals that lasts a lifetime.

Civic Engagement and Civic Infrastructure

Land-grants build trust by working across the entire state, rural to urban, to overcome shared challenges and realize shared goals. Land-grants and counties reciprocally invest in programs bolstering local health, food and business resiliency, economic development, innovation and needed resources.

Solutions that Improve Lives

With a focus on impactful applied research, land-grants provide solutions to real challenges for real people where they live and work. From farming and ranching to disaster preparedness and climate resiliency, land-grants focus on discoveries that improve lives.

The Urgent Need for a Public Affairs Campaign

In addition to the aforementioned erosion in public trust, federal and state funding is in decline, priorities are shifting and demographics are changing, with a steep decrease in the number of college-age students starting in 2026 and projected for years to come. These elements combine

to drive a sense of urgency to convincingly illustrate for the American public a story of how land-grant universities have long driven tangible, relevant discovery and have created transformative opportunity, playing a key role in the U.S. economy and workforce.

This opportunity has emerged at a pivotal moment as we look towards the future of higher education in the U.S. Land-grant universities are a uniquely American innovation that embody and amplify the best of our shared values. Employing tactics and strategies across owned, earned, social and paid media, a proposed PR campaign would articulate and amplify the distinctive importance of land-grant universities and highlight their enduring value for an increasingly skeptical public.

IV. REQUIREMENTS

OBJECTIVE:

Responses to this RFI will be used to achieve the following objective: Provide OSU with insights and guidance on the feasibility, strategic design, and cost of a statewide public affairs and trust-building campaign. A campaign should be scalable and customizable for adoption and adaptation by other land-grant universities in their own states. With select placements in national media and in aggregate across participating states, a campaign would articulate and amplify the role of land-grant universities in creating opportunity and prosperity for individuals, families and businesses.

In addition to traditional public relations considerations, OSU seeks guidance on how a campaign could:

- Rebuild public trust in higher education, particularly among audiences that may be skeptical of or disengaged from higher education generally.
- Operate effectively across politically and demographically diverse environments, emphasizing credibility, relevance and nonpartisan public value.
- Leverage trusted community voices (like alumni, employers, community-based and industry partners) as messengers of land-grant impact.
- Balance a shared national narrative with local authenticity and state-specific adaptation.

REQUIREMENTS:

OSU is seeking input from national firms with public affairs, strategic communications and trust-building campaigns, preferably with higher education experience or with specialized expertise on approach, structure, budget, timelines and feasibility for a national campaign across owned, earned, social and paid media, while extending beyond media execution to include strategic narrative development, audience engagement and innovative storytelling.

A proposed campaign is intended to function not just as a single-institution public relations effort, but as a modular, multi-institutional public affairs framework, which:

- Articulates the distinct public value of land-grant universities as engines of opportunity, applied research and community partnership established over decades.
- Supports state-level customization while reinforcing a shared national story about the land-grant mission.
- Enables participating institutions to activate trusted stakeholders and community relationships as part of a broader trust-building effort.
- Evolves over time as additional institutions opt in and as public and political contexts shift.

At its core, a campaign seeks to rebuild trust in higher education among the voting public by showcasing the unique role land-grant universities have historically played — and continue to play — in our country's prosperity.

OSU is particularly interested in learning how experienced firms would approach:

- Defining and measuring public trust as distinct from awareness or favorability.
- Identifying and prioritizing key audiences most critical to trust-building at the state level.
- Navigating political polarization and public skepticism while maintaining credibility and nonpartisan positioning.
- Designing campaign frameworks that support long-term durability, not solely short-term visibility.

A campaign budget should include creative deliverables, such as a website, video and graphic assets, as well as paid means of distribution, encompassing traditional and digital/social media. Campaign budgets should scale to support up to seven, 15 and 35 participating land-grant universities in their respective states.

V. SUBMITTALS

Respondents are requested to submit the following:

- Submit one (1) electronic copy of your response via email to the contact person
- Narrative describing the respondent's approach to fulfilling OSU's requirements
- Marketing material or brochures of goods or services referenced in the narrative
- Examples of work and materials from similar projects
- Estimated pricing including any options that may be available

To be considered, responses to this RFI, proposals must be received no later than the due date and time indicated in the Schedule of Events. Responses must be sent to the contact person identified in Section II of this RFI.

Information gathered in this process could potentially be incorporated in an Invitation to Bid (ITB) or Request for Proposal (RFP). Any resulting RFP or ITB will be openly competitive and therefore responses should not be exclusive or restrict competition. This RFI does not obligate OSU to issue an RFP or ITB nor to include information submitted by respondents.

A contract will not be issued directly from this RFI, nor will issuance or acceptance of submittals or subsequent conversations bind OSU into any type of contractual obligation or relationship.