



Request for Proposals

National Philanthropy and Fundraising Strategy Consultant

RFP Release Date: September 1, 2026 | Proposal Due Date: September 18, 2026

The Chamber seeks a consultant to identify aligned national philanthropic prospects, facilitate strategic funder introductions, and strengthen funder-facing collateral that positions TalentEd for sustainable philanthropic investment from a national audience.

1. Project Summary

The Detroit Regional Chamber Foundation (Chamber) is accepting proposals from qualified consultants or consulting firms to support the growth, sustainability, and national philanthropic positioning of the Chamber's TalentEd portfolio through strategic fundraising, funder engagement, and case-making support.

TalentEd is the Chamber's education and talent strategy platform, focused on strengthening talent pipelines, increasing postsecondary attainment, expanding economic mobility, aligning education and workforce systems, and supporting employer-led talent development across Southeast Michigan.

The selected consultant will help the Chamber identify new funding opportunities, build and strengthen relationships with national philanthropic foundations, improve funder-facing materials, and support a coordinated fundraising strategy that advances TalentEd's long-term goals.

1.1 About the Chamber

The Detroit Regional Chamber is a well-connected and influential force powering the economy of Southeast Michigan. Serving the business community for more than 100 years, the Chamber is one of the oldest, largest, and most respected chambers of commerce in the country.

Chamber activities and initiatives are centered on four strategic pillars: economic development, regional collaboration, education and talent development, and member value. The Chamber Foundation's TalentEd initiative serves as a primary platform for advancing regional education and workforce strategies that connect students, employers, educators, and policymakers.

2. Scope of Work

The Chamber seeks a consultant or consulting team that can provide strategic fundraising and philanthropic engagement support, with particular emphasis on national philanthropic foundations whose priorities align with TalentEd's body of work, especially as it relates to college access and success and data infrastructure.

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of TalentEd's existing fundraising assets, partnerships, funding history, metrics, and strategic priorities.
- Develop a national philanthropic funding strategy aligned with the Chamber's talent and education initiatives.
- Identify and cultivate relationships with prospective national foundations, corporate philanthropy programs, and other mission-aligned funders.
- Assist Chamber leadership in developing compelling cases for investment and funder engagement strategies.
- Support grant pursuit strategies, including identifying appropriate funding opportunities and aligning proposal concepts with funder priorities.
- Provide strategic counsel on positioning TalentEd within national conversations around workforce development, economic mobility, education reform, employer engagement, regional competitiveness, and systems change.
- Coordinate with Chamber leadership to prepare for funder meetings, presentations, and relationship-building opportunities.

2.1 Audience

The intended audience for this RFP includes fundraising consultants, philanthropy advisors, grant strategists, nonprofit development consultants, and firms with demonstrated experience helping intermediary

organizations secure national philanthropic support for education, workforce, economic mobility, or systems-change initiatives.

3. Deliverables

Major deliverables should include, but are not limited to, the following:

3.1 Foundation Prospecting and Landscape Analysis

Deliverable 1: National Foundation Prospect List

Develop a comprehensive prospect list of national philanthropic foundations and funding organizations whose priorities align with TalentEd's work. The prospect list should include:

- Foundation name, website, and giving focus areas.
- Mission, funding priorities, and stated areas of interest.
- Alignment with TalentEd initiatives and the Chamber's strategic priorities.
- Historical grantmaking trends and examples of relevant grants, where available.
- Typical grant sizes and funding cycles, where available.
- Geographic funding preferences and eligibility considerations.
- Relevant program officers, leadership contacts, or relationship pathways, when publicly available.
- Existing Chamber relationships or warm connections, if known.
- Recommended cultivation strategy, including suggested next steps.
- Opportunity ranking based on strategic alignment, funding potential, and likelihood of engagement.

Deliverable 2: Funding Landscape Assessment

Produce a written assessment summarizing national philanthropic trends and opportunities that may affect TalentEd fundraising, including:

- Key national funding trends related to workforce development, postsecondary attainment, education-to-career pathways, economic mobility, employer engagement, and regional systems change.
- Emerging philanthropic priorities that may create opportunities for TalentEd.
- Competitive positioning of TalentEd relative to comparable intermediary, chamber, regional partnership, or collective impact efforts.
- Funding gaps, opportunity areas, and risks.
- Recommendations for short-, medium-, and long-term fundraising strategies.

3.2 Relationship Development and Funder Engagement

Deliverable 3: Funder Introduction Strategy

Develop and support execution of a strategy to facilitate introductions to targeted national foundations, including:

- Identification of warm introduction pathways through Chamber leadership, board members, member companies, partners, peer organizations, or consultant relationships.
- Outreach recommendations and sample language for initial engagement.
- Engagement plans for priority prospects.
- Meeting briefing materials for Chamber leadership and TalentEd staff.

Deliverable 4: Foundation Relationship Management Support

Support relationship development with priority funders through strategic advising and tactical support, which may include:

- Preparation for introductory funder meetings.
- Participation in select funder conversations, as appropriate.
- Development of follow-up materials and next-step recommendations.
- Guidance on long-term cultivation of national philanthropic relationships.

3.3 Fundraising and Communications Materials

Deliverable 5: Case for Investment

Develop or refine an overarching case-for-investment document that clearly articulates TalentEd's value proposition for national philanthropic audiences, including:

- TalentEd's mission, vision, goals, and role in the region.
- Regional need and supporting data.
- Current initiatives, outcomes, and evidence of impact.
- Strategic priorities and future growth opportunities.
- Investment opportunities and potential funding packages.
- Value proposition for national funders seeking scalable, employer-informed, systems-oriented impact.

Deliverable 6: Funder-Facing Collateral

Create new and/or refine existing collateral to support case-making and messaging to funders. Materials may include:

- One-page initiative summaries.
- Concept notes and funding opportunity briefs.
- Program overview documents.
- Capability statements.
- PowerPoint presentations and investment decks.
- Executive talking points for Chamber leadership and board members.
- Frequently asked questions for funders.
- Standard boilerplate language that can be adapted for future proposals and outreach.

Deliverable 7: Messaging Framework

Create a sustainable messaging framework that can be used across future grant proposals, funder outreach, meeting preparation, and partner communications. The framework should include core messages, audience-specific framing, proof points, outcomes language, and recommended language for describing TalentEd's role as a regional intermediary.

3.4 Grant Development and Fundraising Strategy Support

Deliverable 8: Grant Readiness Assessment

Review existing TalentEd materials, metrics, outcomes, partner commitments, budgets, and program descriptions and provide recommendations to improve grant competitiveness.

Deliverable 9: Opportunity Prioritization Framework

Develop criteria to help Chamber staff evaluate future funding opportunities based on strategic alignment, funding potential, probability of success, capacity requirements, partnership needs, and timing.

Deliverable 10: Proposal Development Support

Provide strategic support for selected grant opportunities, which may include proposal strategy, concept development, narrative review, budget review, partner coordination, and funder-specific positioning.

Deliverable 11: Leadership and Board Fundraising Briefings

Prepare concise briefing materials to equip Chamber leadership, Foundation board members, and other designated champions to participate in funder conversations and make strategic introductions.

Deliverable 12: Knowledge Transfer and Sustainability Plan

At the conclusion of the engagement, provide final documentation, recommendations, and a knowledge-transfer session so Chamber staff can continue managing the prospect pipeline, relationship cultivation, funder messaging, and grant pursuit strategy beyond the consultant engagement.

3.5 Additional Deliverables

- Regular check-ins with the Chamber's TalentEd team and other designated Chamber leaders throughout the engagement.
- Review and feedback cycles for all major deliverables prior to finalization.
- A final summary report outlining completed activities, active prospects, recommended next steps, and priority opportunities for continued cultivation.
- Optional renewal or extension opportunities may be considered pending performance, available funding, and ongoing Chamber needs.

4. Consultant Qualifications

The Chamber seeks consultants with demonstrated experience in:

- National philanthropy and foundation fundraising.
- Workforce development, education, postsecondary attainment, talent pipeline, or economic mobility initiatives.
- Grant development, proposal strategy, and funder cultivation.
- Relationship management with national foundations and philanthropic program officers.
- Messaging and case-making for philanthropic audiences.
- Supporting intermediary organizations, chambers of commerce, regional partnerships, or collective impact initiatives.
- Developing materials that translate complex systems-change work into compelling, funder-ready narratives.

Preference will be given to consultants or firms that demonstrate existing relationships with national foundations, experience securing multi-year or systems-change grants, familiarity with Midwest or Southeast Michigan education and workforce ecosystems, and an ability to work collaboratively with executive leadership and program staff.

5. Build-Out Team

5.1 Chamber Staff Roles

The core project team will include representatives from the Chamber's TalentEd team and other Chamber leadership as appropriate. The Chamber will be responsible for providing strategic direction, supplying relevant background materials, identifying internal stakeholders, coordinating meetings, reviewing deliverables, and participating in funder cultivation activities.

The consultant will be responsible for project management, research, strategy development, collateral development, funder engagement support, and timely completion of agreed-upon deliverables.

6. Anticipated Timeline

The timeline below is the Chamber's anticipated work plan. Dates are subject to change. The Chamber will negotiate contract terms upon selection, and all contracts are subject to review before execution.

Milestone	Anticipated Timing
RFP distributed	September 1, 2026
Questions due	September 11, 2026
Proposals due	September 18, 2026
Consultant selected	October 2, 2026
Contract executed	October 9, 2026
Project kickoff	October 12, 2026
Initial prospect list delivered	Within first 60 days of kickoff
Funding strategy completed	Within first 90 days of kickoff
Funder engagement activities	Ongoing throughout contract term
Final deliverables and recommendations submitted	End of contract term

7. Budget

Please provide a cost proposal to accomplish the scope outlined in this RFP. Proposals should include:

- Detailed project budget and itemized pricing.
- Hourly rates, if applicable.
- Estimated level of effort by project phase or deliverable.
- Description of services included in the proposed fee.
- Optional services and associated costs.
- Travel expenses, if applicable.
- Any assumptions, exclusions, or anticipated additional costs.

Consultants should clearly indicate whether pricing is fixed fee, retainer-based, milestone-based, hourly, or a hybrid model.

7.1 Method of Payment

The Chamber will negotiate payment terms upon selection. Proposed payment structures should be tied to clearly defined project milestones and deliverables. The Chamber reserves the right to adjust payment terms during contract negotiation.

8. Submission Requirements

Proposals should be emailed to the contact listed in Section 10 by the proposal deadline. Proposals should include the following components:

1. Executive summary: Present a high-level synopsis of the consultant's understanding of the engagement, proposed approach, and qualifications.
2. Relevant experience: Describe prior engagements related to national philanthropic fundraising, foundation cultivation, grant strategy, education, workforce development, economic mobility, or intermediary organizations.
3. Project approach and methodology: Explain how the consultant will complete the scope of work and deliverables, including project management, research process, meeting cadence, and review cycles.
4. Project deliverables with proposed timeline: Provide a proposed work plan and timeline for completing each major deliverable.
5. Project team: Include biographies or resumes for key personnel who would work directly on the engagement.
6. Sample work products: Provide examples of comparable prospect lists, fundraising strategies, case statements, concept papers, one-pagers, presentations, or other funder-facing materials.
7. References: Provide at least three references from comparable engagements.
8. Budget: Provide a detailed budget and pricing structure.

9. Evaluation Criteria

An evaluation team from the Chamber will review proposals. Any award made pursuant to this RFP will be based on the proposal that best meets the Chamber's needs, with appropriate consideration given to qualifications, approach, cost, and value.

Criteria	Points
Relevant experience and qualifications including demonstrated success with awarded grants	25
National philanthropic relationships and network	25
Proposed approach and methodology	25
Quality of prior work products	15
Cost and overall value	10
Maximum total points	100

The Chamber reserves the right to reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability, accept other than the lowest-priced offer, award a contract based on initial offers received without discussions, request additional information, negotiate scope and budget, and award more than one contract if determined to be in the Chamber's best interest.

10. Contact

Please submit proposals and any questions via email to:

Name	Christi Taylor
Title	Senior Director, Employer Engagement
Email	ctaylor@detroitchamber.com