

STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

RFP 25-07

ELECTION MESSAGING CAMPAIGN

AMENDMENT NO. 1

(May 30, 2025)

SUMMARY

Amendment No. 1 to RFP 25-07 includes all questions submitted by vendors during the Pre-Proposal Conference held on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, along with responses provided by representatives from the Office of the Secretary of State. These questions and answers are now incorporated into the solicitation as an official addendum.

LIST OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question 1: Is media included within the contract or would that be external as well?

Answer 1: It is included.

Question 2: How did the campaign perform within our specified audiences, specifically rural and younger voters?

Answer 2: OSOS can provide specific numbers after a contract is awarded.

Question 3: Challenges OSOS faced in the previous campaign?

Answer 3: The greatest internal challenge OSOS faced was building adequate time for cross-team and partner review of messaging assets. Since some messages may require multiple rounds of review, including with county election offices, ensuring enough time is built into work-back schedules to allow for additional review will be essential. Additionally, as the 2024 election cycle progressed, our need to be responsive to emerging threats and initiatives evolved. The 2026 campaign must be flexible to address emerging challenges.

Question 4A: Were there translated materials in the initial development?

Answer 4A: The 2024 "Mark the Ballot" campaign did include translated materials for a few of the assets. We had audio/video in Spanish, and audio/video that was captioned in Chinese and Vietnamese. Social media graphics included visuals and captions in the three languages mentioned. In the Yakima market, specifically, we also translated local print and out-of-home ads to Spanish.

Question 4B: How do you envision expanding this [campaign] into multicultural communities?

Answer 4B: Though the 2026 campaign will be statewide, we are seeking additional focus on rural, historically marginalized, and young voters. Building on the success of the 2024 campaign, we would like to establish more connections with communities around the state. Ideally, we would like assets to be transcreated versus directly translated, but the final would depend on the time constraints and overall budget. We welcome proposals from contractors that provide recommendations to expand into multicultural communities

Question 5: Why are you looking for another contract?

Answer 5: The Information Response (IR) team of the Information Security and Response Division was only funded until through state fiscal year 2025, so our previous contract terms had to align with this timeline. As such, a contract term beyond June 2025 would not have been feasible without an additional appropriation from the state Legislature.

Question 6: Are there any other known partners and agencies that we can foresee working with again?

Answer 6: OSOS has a long-standing relationship with county election offices, federal and state agencies, several professional sports teams, and community-based organizations. Some of our primary partners include the Seattle Seahawks, Seattle Storm, League of Women Voters, and several colleges and universities. We work with our internal Communications team that manages OSOS media relations, so we are not seeking proposals that include PR.

Question 7: In terms of assets, are we sharing any Mark the Ballot assets? Do we have any specifics in mind on how many assets we would like?

Answer 7: A few of Mark the Ballot assets are available on the public site at <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/MarkTheBallot>. We would share all existing assets with the successful bidder. We're looking for contractors to include recommendations for new assets in their proposal to expand the Mark the Ballot brand. We don't have a set number of assets in mind, since the assets will depend on the messaging

needs, platforms, and the overall media mix. Some messaging topics can have multiple assets whereas another would only have one. We would like to expand the shortform video assets that we currently have.

Question 8: Can we share the research and foundational knowledge?

Answer 8: The successful bidder will be provided all previous campaign materials, research, and relevant documents upon contract award.

Question 9: Always on media and building trust – being nimbler in the next phase and expanding more messages. Do we foresee where messages might be coming from? Is that coming from counties or somewhere else?

Answer 9: OSOS relies on several informational inputs to track emerging needs and determine messaging priorities. County election offices are vital partners in sharing what questions and concerns are gaining traction at the local level. We also leverage internal resources and social listening tools to stay apprised of public discourse concerning elections and voting in Washington state.

Question 10: What social listening tools are we using and how we're measuring the effectiveness of the messages we're sending out?

Answer 10: We partnered previously with Logically AI to analyze social media content. Now we have a more robust team including a media analyst who is going to be using social listening tools. We're continuing to use Mark quite a bit and can share the statistics of our most recent campaigns.

Question 11: Which of the media channels and media types did we find the most successful from the previous campaign?

Answer 11: Social media was the most successful in terms of exposure to Mark the Ballot brand, followed by newspaper and radio. We received feedback from county partners that local print and radio ads contributed to more engagements with voters. We would be interested in different media channels that would allow for more meaningful engagements between the brand and the audiences mentioned above.

Question 12: Is there a preferred media mix?

Answer 12: In the previous campaign we did community events and tabling at events such as a Seattle Seahawks game. We're interested in doing more community events as we move into 2026. We don't have a preferred mix in mind, and we're interested in seeing what contractors will propose.

Question 13: What are the top three lessons learned from the first campaign (and perhaps what would you do differently with what you know today)?

Answer 13: 1. Most critically, having ample time built into the campaign timeline for OSOS to review campaign assets and materials. We are likely to have multiple reviewers for initial assets and that could take over 2 weeks for approval. 2. Expand our reach with rural communities around the state with the current brand. 3. Ensuring OSOS is involved in the planning of all surveys, including recommending and reviewing survey questions.

Question 14: Will the incumbent agency that previously supported the 'Mark the Ballot' campaign be eligible for or are currently being considered for contract renewal outside of this competitive RFP process?

Answer 14: No additional contracts are being pursued with the previous contractor. OSOS is obligated to, and will, review all responsive proposals in accordance with the provisions set forth in Section 4 of the RFP document issued as part of this Competitive Solicitation.

Question 15: Is there an award scoring consideration for firms within Washington vs. firms with a national footprint outside of the State of Washington?

Answer 15: Vendor location, whether within or outside the state of Washington, is not a factor in the award scoring process.

Question 16: Are there any compliance or regulatory considerations we need to be aware of specific to this effort?

Answer 16: Social media ads under the Mark the Ballot brand are considered election-related ads. Meta places restrictions on all election-related ad content a week before the election, this restriction will need to be factored into scheduling and messaging when planning social media flights. Another consideration to keep in mind is that as a government agency we cannot provide payment until goods and services have been received by the agency per the [Washington State Administrative and Accounting Manual](#), section 85.58.10.

Question 17: Is the storytelling focus on voter stories or visual statistics? Should the narrative prioritize combating disinformation, promoting trust, or improving voter turnout?

Answer 17: The aim of the campaign is to improve electoral trust by expanding public knowledge and understanding of Washington state's accessible and secure elections processes.

Question 18: There's mention of an additional \$600k in funding; what is this reserved for?

Answer 18: The additional \$600,000 is reserved for media placements. This additional funding is contingent on an appropriation in the supplemental operating budget to be considered by state lawmakers during the 2026 legislative session.

Question 19: The RFP is titled as a messaging campaign, but it sounds like some of the go-forward challenge is identifying the channels to reach a rural and perhaps more critical audience. Which do you feel is most critical to build on the success of the current campaign with this rural audience; an evolved message or an evolved channel strategy? Both?

Answer 19: We are interested to see what bidders recommend. An evolved channel strategy specifically focusing on this audience group could be beneficial. Audience-specific and localized messaging was leveraged in the original campaign, however, this was limited to specific media types. Expanding the volume of audience-specific messaging could also prove successful in reaching this hard-to-reach audience.

Question 20: Are there any small/diverse business participation requirements around the project?

Answer 20: No, there are no specific small or diverse business participation requirements associated with this project.

Question 21: Could you discuss with us how the 'Mark the Ballot' campaign was made ADA accessible last time? Did the animations incorporate captioning and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters?

Answer 21: Videos included captioning but did not have ASL interpreters. ALT text on social media posts were also done on in-house posts. Going forward, we expect ALT text to be included for all social media content and look forward to other recommendations made by contractors.

Question 22: You mention that media bundle should be all inclusive, is broadcast included in this or are you working with a separate vendor?

Answer 22: OSOS is not working with a separate vendor for broadcast, so contractors are encouraged to include broadcast in their proposed media mix if they believe that would be effective in reaching audiences.

Question 23: Can we see current assets so we can be better informed on what to expand on?

Answer 23: We have a public toolkit available on the website that contractors can access (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/MarkTheBallot>), though this is not an exhaustive library of all assets that exist. [Will add link to sample library before May 30]

Question 24: You mentioned post campaign polling and analytics. What is the expectation on campaign information gathering this time? Can you talk about what you did last time?

Answer 24: Pre- and post-campaign surveys were conducted during the original campaign. Our expectations for campaign polling and analytics are stated on page 16 of the RFP:

- Pre- and post-campaign public surveys to evaluate awareness, message retention, trust indicators, and other performance metrics
- Mid-campaign analysis of campaign performance to identify trends in election-related messaging and adjust strategy as needed to maximize impact.
- A final campaign report and hourlong briefing in early 2027, including data analysis and recommendations for future outreach efforts
- Follow-up engagement with OSOS for any additional questions, post-campaign PR, and campaign closeout

Question 25: Do you know if the sales tax on online ads will apply to state agencies, the 20% tax?

Answer 25: We're unaware at this stage of impact to OSOS regarding this legislation. The total contracted amount will remain \$1.6 million unless additional funds are appropriated in the next legislative session.

Question 26: Can you share the sample sizes used for the original 2024 campaigns surveys?

Answer 26: The post-campaign survey's sample size was 1,200: 800 Washingtonians from the general population + oversample of 175 rural and 225 minority respondents.

Question 27: If research shows that Mark does not resonate with rural/critical audiences, would you be open to shifting creative to better engage this audience?

Answer 27: To best answer this question, more clarification may be needed by the prospective contractor. OSOS seeks to retain the overall visual identity of the Mark the Ballot brand and are not interested in a deviation at this time.

Question 28: Have we looked at targeting in reference to people who don't really think about voting a lot?

Answer 28: We would be interested in the Contractor's proposal for targeting this group and its connection to improving electoral trust. As a statewide executive office tasked with improving confidence in Washington's elections, it's important we remain neutral and nonpartisan in our targeting approach.

Question 29: Is it okay if we submit jointly with a media agency?

Answer 29: OSOS anticipates awarding a single contract under this RFP, subject to change at the sole discretion of OSOS. Bidders may utilize subcontractors, but the apparent successful bidder, as identified by OSOS, will retain full responsibility for the performance and compliance of any subcontractors engaged.

Question 30: Would you be open for Mark having culturally diverse friends?

Answer 30: Yes, proposals may include new characters to expand the Mark the Ballot universe. Final approval of these characters must be provided by OSOS.