



**College of Alberta
Dental Assistants**

Request for Proposal Communications Review

Issued: August 3, 2023

Deadline for Submission: August 31, 2023, 11:59 PM

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1 Project Summary and Background

1.1 Project Summary

The College of Alberta Dental Assistants (the College) is currently accepting proposals for a *Communications Review*. This project will include comprehensive research, review, assessment, and analysis of the existing Communications Program. It will also include research of communications in regulatory organizations, progression and trends in communications, and recommendations for improvement to College communications.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from various candidate organizations, conduct a fair and extensive evaluation based on criteria included in this RFP, and select a candidate who best meets the College's requirements for this project.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 College Authority

The College serves and protects the public interest by overseeing and directing the practice of dental assistants to ensure Albertans receive safe, competent, and ethical oral health care.

The Alberta Government and the *Health Professions Act* (HPA)ⁱ give the College the authority and mandate to act as the regulator for dental assisting. The HPA provides a legislative framework, delegating self-governance to health profession regulatory colleges in partnership with government. This framework outlines accountability mechanisms with standard processes for registration, continuing competence, complaints and discipline, and processes for maintaining professional standards of practice and codes of ethics. The College sets and maintains expectations for dental assistants through regulation,ⁱⁱ policies,ⁱⁱⁱ Bylaws,^{iv} Standards of Practice,^v Code of Ethics,^{vi} Continuing Competence Program,^{vii} and guidelines.^{viii}

The HPA requires that all activities the College performs fit within the regulatory mandate. Association activities like advocacy, recruitment, benefits and services are not part of that mandate. Therefore, the things the College does must focus on:

- ensuring that Albertans receive safe, high-quality oral health care from dental assistants
- ensuring that dental assistants adhere to the highest standards and ethical conduct
- protecting the public from unsafe practice
- holding dental assistants accountable for the care they provide

Effective communications are integral to an applicant's or registrant's ability to obtain and maintain a practice permit, which gives a dental assistant authority to practice in the profession. They are also integral to dental assistants' ability to meet College expectations and provide safe, competent, and ethical oral health care. In addition, the public needs to know who the College is and what our role is in regulating dental assistants in the public interest.

1.2.2 College Mission, Vision, Values

The College's mission, vision and values^{ix} reflect the regulatory focus of the organization.

Our Mission The College of Alberta Dental Assistants regulates its members in the public interest, promoting the delivery of safe, quality oral health care.

Our Vision We champion regulatory excellence, innovation, and trust among our communities.

Our Values **Accountable** – taking responsibility for the work we do
We deliver an effective regulatory framework and answer to Albertans.

Ethical – acting with personal and professional integrity
We do the right things for the right reasons.

Inclusive – honouring human diversity
We embrace equality in the delivery of our mandate and encourage differing perspectives in decision-making.

Innovative – leading by learning
We pursue opportunities to collaborate, grow and improve our systems and processes.

1.2.3 Current Communications Program

The College employs a full-time Communications Manager and recently hired an administrative assistant who will be providing part-time support to the Communications Program.

The College's current communication tools are primarily digital, with minimal printed materials and use of mail. They include (but are not limited to):

- College Website
- Registrant Portal
- Public Registry
- Professional Practice Learning Centre
- mass emails including:
 - College Highlights e-newsletter
 - Chair's Message
 - Registrar Updates
 - notices for annual renewal and competence audit
 - workshop invitations
 - proposed change consultations and outcome updates
- College Connect town hall sessions
- Planting Seeds, Growing Leaders leadership workshop
- workshops to help registrants understand registration, renewal and competence requirements
- Annual Report
- exhibit booth at dental conferences
- student welcome and pre-registration presentations

- ads in College of Dental Surgeons of Alberta newsletter
- articles in allied dental college newsletters

1.2.4 Trends in Health Regulation

Regulators have trends to manage that reach beyond mere licensure. In 2010 Harry Cayton introduced “Right-touch regulation”^x and described “eight steps to effective regulatory decision-making,” which focus on balancing risk through understanding, along with allowing professionals a framework where they can be flexible to make good decisions within their professional roles.^x Regulators providing effective communication and resources is key to supporting professionals’ ability to make those decisions.

Government oversight in health regulation is stronger today than ever before in HPA history. After two decades of little change, the last few years have seen significant and complex regulatory reform. Government has been ramping up expectations, expecting more transparency, public input, higher and more unified expectations on all regulated health professions.^{xi} These changes impact communications, demanding frequent clear, concise messages to registrants, applicants, the public, employers, allied health professions and government.

Many regulators, including the College, balance these and other regulatory trends by refreshing regulatory guidance documents and updating Strategic Plans.^{xii} However, it is not enough for the College to keep up with the changes, expectations and trends. Dental assistants must also be made aware of the appropriate information in a timely manner to ensure they can continue to provide safe, quality oral health care.

2 Project Purpose and Description

2.1 Project Purpose

The Problem We are unsure of the impact of our communications program for each of our stakeholder groups. We need to establish a baseline and ongoing measurement tools, and develop a plan to improve engagement with registrants, applicants, the public, and the rest of our stakeholders, both external and internal. We also need to evaluate the tools we are using and receive recommendations to enhance existing tools or identify more effective tools.

The Main Goal of this Review is to establish a clear baseline and improve our communications program so that it:

- ensures regulatory oversight and protection of the public
- aligns with our Mission, Vision and Values
- includes a communications plan that is measurable and manageable for the College
- identifies our audiences and defines key considerations for reaching each audience with language, messaging, methods and timing appropriate to their needs
- ensures our messaging and information is accessible and inclusive

The Purpose of this Review is to:

- Perform a comprehensive review, assessment, and analysis of the existing College communications strategy, style, practices, policies and tools to:

- define and address gaps within the communications
 - to ensure public protection
 - to engage College registrants
- assess alignment of our communications practices with our guiding documents
- assess alignment of other College resources
- acknowledge what the current communication tools and practices do well
- Complete a review of communication practices in health profession regulatory bodies.
- Summarize perspectives gathered in discussion with registrants and stakeholders through focus groups, interviews, and surveys performed during the review.
- Recommend improvements for College communications strategy, style, guiding documents, tools and other College resources that meet the project goals.
- Provide advice and guidance on the use of new and emerging tools that may meet project goals.
- Integrate research into all components of the review, validating all recommendations.

2.2 Project Description

The College is seeking a provider to perform a comprehensive review of the Communications Program.

The provider will be expected to meet the following project goals:

1. Review all current communications strategies, tools, resources, goals and expectations.
2. Analyze demographics of Alberta dental assistants to ensure all communication resources address variations in age, gender, language, culture, education.
3. Perform various focus groups, interviews, and/or surveys gathering perspective from a representative group of dental assistants and stakeholders.
4. Recommend improvements to College communications that meet the main goals of this project.
5. Integrate current research and trends in communications into all recommendations and improvements.
6. Maintain report parameters within the mandate of the HPAⁱ and *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation* (2006).ⁱⁱ
7. Ensure recommendations and suggestions fall within the constraints of PIPA, PIPEDA and CASL.
8. Suggest potential tools for communications, keeping relevant legislation in mind.

3 Proposal Guidelines

This Request for Proposal represents the requirements for an open and competitive process.

Proposals will be accepted until **11:59 PM on Thursday, August 31, 2023**. Any proposals received after this date and time will be returned to the sender. All proposals must be signed by the official agent or representative of the organization submitting the proposal.

If the organization submitting a proposal outsources or contracts any work to meet the requirements of the RFP, they must clearly state this in the proposal, including the name and description of the organizations being contracted.

All costs must be itemized to include an explanation of all fees and costs, including associated outsourced or contract work.

Terms and conditions of an engagement contract will be negotiated upon selection of a winning bidder for this RFP.

The College of Alberta Dental Assistants reserves the right to choose any proposal or none of those received, based solely on criteria established by the College, regardless of proposed budget.

4 Project Scope

The successful organization will be responsible for planning, conducting, and finalizing the Communications Review.

The following criteria must be met to achieve a successful project:

- A clear and concise written Report that articulates review of all goals for the Communications Review and aligns with our Mission, Vision and Values.
- Evaluation of the current communications style, strategies, and tools and recommendations for enhanced communications.
- Detailed analysis and description of gaps in communications strategies and recommendations for improvement.
- Identified challenges anticipated in achieving the main goal of this project.
- Comprehensive research and trends summary that:
 - examines changes, if any, to how regulatory communication is viewed
 - describes a plan to examine current College communications data
 - validates all suggested recommendations and improvements
- Suggested evaluation tool(s) for the College to measure and monitor communications results.
- Detailed recommendations that outline improvements to the communications program.
- A map that defines sequential activities to achieve all recommendations.
- Ability to work closely with the College team assigned to oversee the Communications Program Review.
- Willingness to clarify any areas of the Report that are unclear.
- Availability to present a summary of the Report, either online or in person.

5 Request For Proposal and Project Timeline

5.1 Request for Proposal Timeline

All proposals in response to this RFP are due no later than **11:59 PM, August 31, 2023**.

Questions about this RFP can be sent directly to the College via ccollison@abrda.ca, **before August 29, 2023**.

Evaluation of proposals will be conducted between **September 1, 2023 and September 6, 2023**. If additional information or discussions are needed with any bidders during this time, the bidder(s) will be contacted directly.

The selection decision and awarding of winning bidder will be made by **September 6, 2023**. Notification to bidders who were not selected will be completed by **September 6, 2023**.

Upon notification, the contract negotiation with the winning bidder will begin immediately.

| Proposal Timeline | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Proposals DUE | Question Period | Evaluation by the College | Award Winning Bid | Notify Unselected Bids |
| Aug 31, 2023 11:59 PM | Before Aug 29, 2023 | Sep 1 to Sep 6, 2023 | By Sep 6, 2023 | By Sep 6, 2023 |

5.2 Project Timeline

Project initiation phase will include a face-to-face (or possibly online) meeting at the College office in Edmonton and must be completed by **September 11, 2023**.

Project planning phase will be reviewed at a meeting during the week of **September 18, 2023**, and will include additional direction and support from the College team to clarify any parameters, provide data and information, and clarify communication check points.

Project planning phase will determine the timeline/schedule for the remaining phases of the project which must be completed by **February 15, 2024**.

| Project Timeline | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Project Initiation Meeting with the College | Research and Development | Focus Groups, Surveys, Interviews | Deadline for Submission of Completed Communications Program Review |
| By Sep 11, 2023 | Sep 11, 2023 to February 15, 2024 | October - November, 2023 | February 15, 2024 at 11:59 PM |

6 Budget

All proposals must include proposed costs to complete the tasks described in the project scope.

All associated travel expenses (including hotel costs, mileage, and meals) for Focus Groups located more than 75 kms from the bidder’s location will be managed separately from the budget submitted by the bidder.

For reference, the overall budget the College has for the Communications Program Review is \$60,000.00 and must include all aspects for this project.

7 Bidder Qualifications

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

- Description of experience in communications related to regulated professions.
- Demonstrated understanding of Alberta's *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA), Canada's *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) and *Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation* (CASL).
- Examples of research related to communications best practices in a regulatory environment.
- List of how many involved full-time, part-time, and contractor staff.
- Examples of similar projects completed by bidder or by their organization.
- Testimonials from past clients/references related to past work.
- Anticipated resources you will assign to this project (total number, role, title, experience).
- Timeframe for components and completion of the project.
- Potential project management methodology.
- A statement of any potential, perceived or anticipated conflicts of interest.
- Business information including:
 - liability insurance of at least \$2,000,000
 - business and GST number
 - full contact details

8 Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The College will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria.

To ensure consideration for this Request for Proposal: proposals should be complete, no longer than 20 pages and may include additional information as appendices, and address all of the following criteria:

- Overall proposal suitability: Proposed solution(s) must meet the scope and needs included in this RFP and be presented in a clear and organized manner.
- Organizational 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 communications in a regulatory environment, communications accessibility, and research, as well as client testimonials and references.
- Value and cost: Bidders will be evaluated on the budget noted in their proposal and the scale of the work to be performed, according to the scope of this project.
- Technical expertise and experience: Staff technical expertise and experience will be examined based on the needs of this project.

Each bidder must submit their proposal to the email address below by **11:59 PM, August 31, 2023**.

9 Principal Point of Contact

Carol Collison
ccollison@abrda.ca
Communications Manager

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166-14315 118 Ave NW
Edmonton AB T5L 4S6
abrda.ca
780-486-2526 / 1-800-355-8940

10 Reference Material

ⁱ Health Professions Act. (2001). <https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/H07.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Dental Assistants Profession Regulation. (2006). https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/regs/2005_252.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2023). Policies. <https://abrda.ca/protecting-the-public/regulations-and-standards/policies/>.

^{iv} College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2022). Bylaws. <https://abrda.ca/protecting-the-public/regulations-and-standards/bylaws/>.

^v College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2023). Standards of Practice. <https://abrda.ca/protecting-the-public/regulations-and-standards/standards-of-practice/>.

^{vi} College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2023). Code of Ethics. <https://abrda.ca/protecting-the-public/regulations-and-standards/code-of-ethics/>.

^{vii} College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2023). Continuing Competence Program. <https://abrda.ca/practice-resources/continuing-competence/>.

^{viii} College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2023). Dental Assisting Guidelines and FAQs. <https://abrda.ca/practice-resources/modules-and-guides/>.

^{ix} College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2023). About our College. <https://abrda.ca/about/about-the-college/>.

^x Cayton, H. (n.d.). <https://www.harrycayton.net/righttouch-20>.

^{xi} Sims, G. (2022). <https://www.fieldlaw.com/News-Views-Events/199901/Bill-23-A-Major-Overhaul-for-Professional-Regulatory-Legislation-in-Alberta>.

^{xii} College of Alberta Dental Assistants. (2022). Strategic Plan. <https://abrda.ca/about/about-the-council/strategic-plan/>.