

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN BULGARIA

NOVEMBER 2023

PROJECT:

AUBG is requesting proposals from qualified marketing and advertising companies to develop a comprehensive communication strategy to improve enrollment at AUBG. The strategy should be adaptable to various international markets; it should increase awareness of and familiarity with the University, strengthen the consistency and frequency of identified key messages, establish AUBG as a leader in education, and ultimately bring in more students.

The selected partner will later have the chance to develop campaigns for the university's Executive MBA program, English Language Institute, summer programs, fundraising activities and others.

BACKGROUND:

The American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) offers excellent U.S. education at a very competitive price. AUBG is accredited both in the United States and in Europe and upon successful completion of their studies, AUBG students obtain both an American and European diploma.

AUBG currently offers 14 bachelor programs and one executive masters. The university is home to over 1,000 students from 40+ countries, and more than 80 international professors. AUBG provides the best student facilities in the region: from comfortable dorms to the award-winning building of the America for Bulgaria Student Center and the largest English-language library in Southeast Europe, students enjoy a safe, world-class residential campus.

Close to 6,000 alumni have graduated from AUBG, with 99.8% employed or enrolled in grad school within a few months of graduation. AUBG alumni score remarkable compensation results and many hold leadership positions in the corporate, NGO and government sectors.

AUBG is an undisputed education leader according to the 2022 Bulgarian University Rankings, with Business Administration, European Studies, Journalism and Mass Communication, and Political Science and International Relations rated best in the country and all evaluated programs earning top spots.

PRODUCT:

Competitive advantages and key messages:

- **High-quality American liberal arts education** in English, focused on delivering skills and knowledge for a successful career now and in the future;
- **Outstanding alumni success worldwide** with 99.8% of graduates finding work or continuing their education within months after graduation;
- **Great value for money** with tuition and living expenses only a fraction of what it would cost at a similar institution in the U.S. or Western Europe.

Context:

- Increasing enrollment at AUBG in the past few years – record numbers due to increased promotional activities;
- Increase in Bulgarian students – locals choose to stay due to various factors, including awareness of AUBG, high fees in the UK after Brexit and growing expenses in the Netherlands;
- Decrease in international students poses a risk to the diverse environment at AUBG, a key benefit for the university;
- Bulgaria in the EU – students still have easier access to good education in Western Europe and are drawn by opportunities beyond Bulgaria;
- Students and parents first choose an occupation, then major(s) and then university which challenges the basis of AUBG’s liberal arts education system;
- Unawareness of the advantages of a liberal arts education;
- Lack of awareness for Bulgaria as a destination, particularly for education;
- Perception of high tuition fees;
- Perception of inconvenient location;
- Price-sensitive market;
- Reluctance to take loans for education.

Competitors:

- Universities in the Netherlands, UK and other European countries;
- Universities in the U.S.;
- Other universities in students’ home countries.

Student Journey



TARGET:

Target Groups

1. **Primary** – prospective students
 - Ages 17-19
 - Study in grades 10-12
 - Good academic performance and level of English
2. **Secondary** – parents
 - Ages 38-58
 - Average or higher monthly household income
 - Urban

Buyer Persona

MARIA DIMITROVA

BACKGROUND	DEMOGRAPHICS	INFLUENCERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school student B+ grades or higher Intensive English studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 16-19 Middle class family Bulgarian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Teachers Friends (incl. AUBG alumni and current students)
INFO CHANNELS	GOALS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instagram TikTok 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance at a good university Successful career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing a university Financing education
INTERESTS	WHY AUBG	WHY NOT AUBG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering Sports Music Debates and other school extracurriculars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of education International environment Scholarship opportunities Out-of-class activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too expensive Staying in Bulgaria Employment after graduation concerns Out of her comfort zone

Target Markets:

BULGARIA	ALBANIA	SERBIA	KOSOVO
NORTH MACEDONIA	KAZAKHSTAN	USA	GEORGIA
MONGOLIA	RUSSIA	UKRAINE	

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY REQUIREMENTS

Objectives:

The American University in Bulgaria is looking to partner with a recognized company to enhance the university's image and to popularize the bachelor degree programs of the university in accordance with the following plan:

- A long-term communication strategy
- Recommendation of communication channels
- Execution of the plan
- Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

The scope of the project includes:

- Key message development and its adaptation across a variety of media
- Development of visuals in support of the strategy
- Recommendation of action plan and communication channels
- Communication tools development
- PR Support

Expected Deliverables:

1. Financial proposal – in BGN, VAT inclusive (including a break-down of the offer in terms of strategy development, design/creative of communication tools to be utilized, and communication tools production costs respectively).
2. Communication strategy
3. PR services offer
4. Overview of recommended approach(es) to achieving objectives and goals
5. Visual materials samples
6. Implementation timeline

APPLICATION PACKAGE

Administrative documents, company portfolio and creative proposals (described in the table below) must be sent electronically.

ADMINISTRATIVE PAPERWORK

- Current legal status certificate
- VAT registration
- Financial statement for the previous year
- Conflict of Interest statement
- CVs of people expected to work on the project

PORTFOLIO

- Client list
- Product list
- Samples
- Client recommendations

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY PROPOSAL

- Strategy proposal
- Visual concept
- Channels recommendation

FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

A break-down of the offer in terms of:

- strategy development
- communication campaign development
- design/creative of communication tools to be utilized
- communication tools production costs
- PR services

TIMELINE

Announcement of RFP

November 10, 2023

Question submissions deadline

Please send to marketing@aubg.edu.

November 20, 2023

Responses to questions

November 24, 2023

Application package submission deadline

Submit all documents electronically to purchasing@aubg.edu.

December 20, 2023

Announcement of finalists

January 8, 2024

Finalists' presentations

In-person at AUBG's Skaptopara Campus in Blagoevgrad.

January 2024

Deadline for announcement of winner

February 15, 2024

Contract execution

March 15, 2024

AUBG BRAND MATERIALS

- [AUBG brand book](#);
- [AUBG logo pack](#);

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Committee:

Proposals will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee composed of members of respective departments.

Evaluation criteria:

**COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY (70%)**

- Points will be awarded based on the Proponent's demonstration of innovative and creative thinking and design, demonstrated understanding of the purpose, scope and objective of the scope of the project and overall approach.
- Ability to provide services as required with innovation and creativity
- Ability to provide customized templates that serve campaign communication at any number of levels

**BACKGROUND &
QUALIFICATIONS (15%)**

- Points will be awarded based on the proponent's experience with comparable projects as well as outcomes as provided by references. Points will also be assigned based on the previous experience and qualifications of personnel assigned to this project.
- Proponent's experience and client reference
- Personnel experience

**BUDGET & UNIVERSITY
SUPPORT (15%)**

Points will be awarded based on the price proposed for the scope of work required as well as any in-kind services and/or discounts.

Based on these criteria, the selection committee will invite finalists to present their proposals on the AUBG campus. Specific dates and times will be discussed further with the finalists.

SELECTION

The submissions of all bidders will be compared and evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP. The American University in Bulgaria reserves the right to accept or reject one or all offers, partially or as a whole. This RFP does not commit AUBG to select any organization, award any work order, pay any cost incurred in preparing a response, or procure any services or supplies. AUBG reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, cancel or modify the RFP in part or in its entirety, or change the RFP guidelines, when it is in the best interest of AUBG to do so and entirely at its sole discretion.

A three-year work agreement will be signed with the winner.

TERMS

AUBG will acquire the copyrights for the proposed concepts and other design elements of the winner(s).

All documents that are submitted will remain property of the American University in Bulgaria. They will be deemed confidential and will not be under any circumstances disclosed to third parties unless required by law.

Bidders must specify if they intend to use subcontractors for any part of the services and/or deliverables under this potential engagement. AUBG reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to approve any subcontractor, which bidders propose prior to the project kick-off.

CONTACTS

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