EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY – REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Request for Proposals for Digital Marketing Services – Regional Media Buys & Full-Funnel Recruitment Marketing, RFP 2026-27-03
Request for Proposals for Digital Marketing

Eastern Oregon University (EOU) requests proposals from qualified digital marketing and media-buying agencies to plan and execute a full-funnel, multi-channel digital marketing campaign anchored by paid search (SEM) boosts in EOU's target recruitment areas — including Eastern Oregon, Western Idaho, Southeast Washington, and the Portland Metro area — to grow prospective student inquiries and applications, including dedicated outreach to veteran and military-connected students. **The total budget for this initiative shall not exceed $100,000 for the duration of the contract beginning December 2026 and be completed by May 2027. Final invoices must be received by EOU by June 13, 2027.**

INTRODUCTION

Oregon's Rural University

Eastern Oregon University, designated by the Oregon legislature as Oregon's Rural University, is a regional public university with a strong sense of mission and service. Our faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees are committed to serving rural students and rural communities in all their diversity, and at all levels of need, throughout our region and the world. Located in the scenic Grande Ronde Valley in northeastern Oregon, we serve a region of rich natural resources, very low population density, relatively low income, substantial ethnic diversity, high levels of high school completion, and low levels of college enrollment. Our institution serves a population that has not traditionally connected with higher education. Sixty-one percent of our students are from traditionally underserved communities (32% first generation, 33% Pell eligible, 27% racial/ethnic minorities). We were early pioneers in distance education and have strong online enrollment.

AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

1. Use paid search (SEM), Connected TV (CTV), and paid social ads in target recruitment areas.
2. The selected agency must manage all media channels and perform these operations:
    a. Budget and Schedule Control
        i. **Cost Management:** Monitor costs daily. Keep total spend within the approved budget.
        ii. **Fund Reallocation:** Move funds to high-performing channels and areas to decrease the Cost Per Acquisition (CPA).
    b. Channel Execution and Optimization
        i. **Paid Search (SEM):**

            1. Update keywords and add negative keywords to prevent unnecessary spend.
            2. Adjust bids immediately based on device type, time, user intent, and target regions.
            3. Use responsive search ads (RSAs) and monitor headline results.
        ii. **Connected TV (CTV):**
            1. Show non-skippable videos on target household devices and limit ad frequency per household.
        iii. **Paid Social Media:**
            1. Publish native ads across platforms, adjust bidding strategies, and monitor user comments to protect brand safety.
    c. Audience Management and CRM Integration
        i. **Data Sync & Retargeting:** Sync Slate CRM data regularly to target lookalike audiences, exclude current students, and build retargeting lists in GA4.
    d. Creative Lifecycle Management
        i. **Testing and Quality:** Test ad variants continuously, update low-performing content, and send traffic to verified landing pages.
    e. Technical Maintenance and Quality Control
        i. **Compliance and Tracking:** Verify tracking tags continuously and follow all applicable privacy and accessibility laws.
    f. Account Management and Communication
        i. **Communication Schedule:** Attend status meetings every two weeks and report tracking errors immediately.
3. Target ads by Designated Market Area (DMA), prioritizing Portland, Boise, and Yakima-Pasco-Richland-Kennewick DMAs alongside key regional counties.
4. Create tailored media, text, and targeting for Hispanic/Latino students, on-campus undergraduates, and military veterans.
    a. Media Specifications:
        i. Connected TV (CTV)
            1. :30s Brand & :15s Action Video: 16:9 ratio (1920x1080), MP4/MOV format, stereo audio at -24 LKFS; include captions (SRT) and a call-to-action (CTA).
            2. Companion Banners: Static 16:9 ratio (1920x1080) or 300x250 JPG/PNG images with links.
        ii. Paid Search (SEM)
            1. Responsive Search Ads (RSAs): 10 to 15 headlines (max 30 characters) and 4 descriptions (max 90 characters) per ad group.
            2. Ad Assets: Sitelinks, callouts, structured snippets, and horizontal/square image assets without text overlay.
        iii. Paid Social Media
            1. Vertical Video (Meta/TikTok/Shorts): 9:16 ratio (1080x1920), :09 to :60s duration with margin safety for app controls.
            2. Meta Carousels & Lead Units: 1:1 or 4:5 image formats combined with direct CRM forms or image series.

        3. YouTube In-Stream Video: 16:9 ratio (1920x1080), :15s non-skippable or :30s skippable formats with a 300x60 banner.
    iv. Programmatic Display
        1. Banners & Native Ads: Static, HTML5 animated (max 15s loop, <150 KB), or native display images with concise headlines and body text.
5. Achieve target goals for these Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
    a. Year-over-year increases in student applications, RFIs, and campus visit page clicks.
    b. Total delivered streaming/CTV ad impressions and click volume in target regions.
6. Measure and report campaign results using Google Analytics 4 (GA4) and Slate CRM.
7. Provide monthly performance reports and collaborate with the EOU team on ad approvals, landing page designs, and CRM integration.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND VENDOR EXPECTATIONS

The selected agency must send clear reports. These reports must show progress toward EOU enrollment goals and connect top-of-funnel ad performance with student enrollment data from GA4 and Slate CRM.

Reporting Schedule

- **Real-Time BI Dashboard:** Provide a secure online dashboard (Looker Studio or Tableau). Update spend, delivery metrics, channel performance, and conversion data daily.
- **Bi-Weekly Updates:** Send summary updates every two weeks to verify budget pacing, media schedules, and campaign changes.
- **Monthly and Annual Reviews:** Provide written reports and presentations monthly and annually to show performance, channel efficiency, growth benchmarks, and future budget plans.

Measurement (GA4 & Slate CRM)

Use standard data collection rules across both systems to measure the full admissions process:

Google Analytics 4 (Web Activity & Conversions)

- **User Activity:** Track user sessions, interaction duration, and clicks on campus visit pages, virtual tours, and scheduling tools.
- **Conversions:** Track form starts, form submissions, abandoned forms, and clicks to the application portal.

Slate CRM (Admissions & Enrollment)

- **Leads and Applications:** Track new RFI submissions, application starts, and completed applications using UTM parameters and source codes.

- **Cost Metrics:** Calculate Cost Per Lead (CPL), Cost Per Application Start (CPAS), and Cost Per Completed Application (CPCA) by student type.
- **Attribution:** Track users who view ads in GA4 and apply in Slate without sending an RFI form.

Primary KPI Benchmarks
The vendor must format dashboards and reports around five main KPIs:

KPI Category	Metric Definition	Minimum Attribution Standard
1. YoY Application Growth	Percentage change in total application starts and completed applications compared to the previous year.	Multi-touch attribution in Slate CRM; separate reports for freshman, transfer, and online student categories.
2. YoY RFI Growth	Percentage change in new domestic and international student inquiries.	Slate form completions linked to campaign UTM tags, with duplicate records removed.
3. Visit-Page Engagement	YoY change in clicks, unique visitors, and interaction rates on visit landing pages.	GA4 event tags that track CTA button clicks (such as "Schedule a Visit" or "Virtual Tour").
4. Streaming/OTT In-Market Delivery	Total verified ad impressions delivered inside target geographical regions.	100% geo-fenced delivery, monthly pacing verification, minimum 95% Video Completion Rate (VCR), and Frequency Cap compliance.

5. Cross-Channel Click-Throughs	Total link clicks across programmatic search and paid social media channels.	Click-Through Rate (CTR) compared with higher education standards; click data filtered to remove automated bot traffic.

Technical Tracking and Data Rules

- **Standard Rules:** The agency must supply a standard UTM framework compatible with EOU Slate naming rules before campaign launch.
- **Tag Management and Pixel Audits:** The agency must audit tracking tags in Google Tag Manager (GTM) to follow privacy laws (FERPA, GDPR, state laws) and ensure tags fire correctly on all websites.
- **Data Ownership:** Eastern Oregon University keeps full ownership of all ad accounts, tracking pixels, analytics setups, raw data, media assets, and performance records. The agency must grant administrative or viewer access for all platforms.

SOLICITATION PROCEDURES

General RFP provisions and EOU's General Terms and Conditions at Eastern Oregon University are available at: **https://www.eou.edu/busserv/purchasing/** It is the proposer's responsibility to review the provisions and terms & conditions before providing a response.

It will be the responsibility of potential proposers to refer daily to the Oregon Public Universities Shared Resources website (www.orpu.org) or the Oregon Buys website https://oregonbuys.gov/bso/ to check for any available addenda, responses to clarifying questions, cancellations, or other information pertaining to this Request for Proposals ("RFP")

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

All proposals must be received on or before noon Pacific Time on ~~November 7, 2026~~ November 22, 2026.

Proposals must be submitted using the following method: Electronic Copy Submission – A single PDF document is required. Email subject line must be "Response to RFP 2026-27-03" Proposals delayed or lost by email system filtering or failures may be considered at EOU's sole discretion. It is the responsibility of the Proposer to ensure that Proposals arrive by the closing date and time. **NO LATE PROPOSALS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

ISSUING OFFICE

All correspondence regarding proposals must be sent via email to the contact person below; they are the sole point of contact regarding this RFP:

Justin Montgomery
Director of Marketing and Communications
University Advancement
One University Blvd
La Grande, OR 97850
jmontgomery4@eou.edu
541-962-3517

SCHEDULE

Oct. 15, 2026	Issue Date
Oct. 22, 2026	Clarifying Questions Due
Nov. 22, 2026 - noon (PST)	Closing /Submission Date
Nov. 29, 2026 (est)	Solicitation Award Notification

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Include Proposer's Federal tax identification number and Secretary of State Corporation Division Business Registry number. Provide an explanation if Proposer is not required to be registered with the Business Registry in Oregon. This information can be submitted by completing EOU's Bidder/Proposer Tax Laws and Non-discrimination Certification Form (Exhibit A) and submitting a copy with your proposal.

SCOPE OF WORK

The contractor must supply strategic planning, media services, creative assets, tracking systems, and campaign management to Eastern Oregon University (EOU).

1. Strategy and Cross-Channel Media Execution

- **Full-Funnel Strategy:** Execute a full-funnel digital media plan across all channels to guide prospective students from brand awareness through application submission.
- **Paid Search (SEM):** Manage and optimize campaigns on Google and Microsoft Ads, targeting high-intent degree, transfer, affordable education, and branded keywords across priority markets using RSAs, extensions, daily bid adjustments, and negative keyword refinement.
- **Connected TV (CTV) & OTT:** Secure non-skippable video placements on streaming platforms in target regions, applying household frequency caps to avoid ad fatigue.

- **Paid Social Media:** Run targeted Meta, TikTok, and YouTube campaigns utilizing vertical video, carousels, and CRM-integrated lead generation forms.
- **Retargeting:** Build privacy-compliant GA4 retargeting lists to re-engage prospective students who have not completed RFIs, visit registrations, or applications.

2. Audience Groups and Messaging

1. **Latinx Students and Families:** Deploy bilingual (English/Spanish) ads, creative assets, and landing pages highlighting affordability, community, family support, and campus resources.
2. **On-Campus Undergraduate Students:** Highlight campus life, athletics, hands-on learning, small class sizes, outdoor recreation, and Preview Days.
3. **Military and Veteran Students:** Promote military tuition benefits, VA education programs, Yellow Ribbon options, transfer credits, and online degrees.
4. **First-Party CRM Data:** Import Slate CRM lead lists for custom, lookalike, and yield targeting while suppressing current students and applicants from awareness campaigns.

3. Geographic Boundaries

Deliver targeted media within approved Designated Market Areas (DMAs) and counties:

- **Portland DMA:** Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington, Yamhill, Marion, Polk, Linn, Lincoln, Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia, Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler, Jefferson, Crook, Grant, Baker, Union, and Harney counties in Oregon; Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania, and Wahkiakum counties in Washington.
- **Boise DMA:** Ada, Adams, Boise, Camas, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, Valley, and Washington counties in Idaho; Malheur County in Oregon.
- **Yakima-Pasco-Richland-Kennewick DMA:** Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties in Washington.
- **Rural In-Region Communities:** Deliver local search boosts in communities across Eastern Oregon, Western Idaho, and Southeast Washington.

4. Creative Production and Management

- **Asset Production:** Develop brand-compliant digital assets including 15s/30s videos, static and HTML5 display banners, carousels, and search copy.
- **Testing and Optimization:** Conduct continuous A/B testing on headlines, visuals, and CTAs, refreshing creative content when engagement declines or costs rise.
- **Traffic Control:** Direct ad traffic exclusively to high-speed, mobile-optimized landing pages designed for conversions.

5. Tracking, Attribution, and CRM Integration

- **GA4 & GTM Configuration:** Maintain custom event triggers in Google Tag Manager and GA4 to track form starts, submissions, visit clicks, and downloads.
- **Slate CRM Integration:** Pass campaign data and multi-touch lead source attribution into Slate CRM using a standardized UTM taxonomy.
- **Compliance:** Adhere strictly to FERPA, state privacy regulations, and digital accessibility standards (ADA / Section 508).

6. Performance Standards and Contractual KPIs

- **Funnel Growth:** Achieve at least 20% year-over-year (YoY) growth in completed applications, RFI submissions, and visit page engagements.
- **OTT Regional Delivery:** Deliver 70%+ of streaming/OTT impressions within target DMAs and counties, verified via regular ZIP/county reports.

7. Governance, Communication, and Reporting

- **Reporting & Governance:** Maintain a live dashboard updated daily, participate in bi-weekly status and quarterly leadership reviews, and submit monthly conversion and cost reports.
- **Asset Ownership:** Provide EOU full administrative ownership and access to all ad accounts, creative assets, tracking configurations, and performance data.

<u>Instructions to Vendors</u>

Proposals should be organized as follows and should not exceed 20 pages:

1. **Section 1: Executive Summary (1–2 pages):** High-level agency vision, understanding of EOU goals, and timeline confirmation (Unscored).
2. **Section 2: Agency Overview & Higher Education Experience (3–4 pages):** Agency profile and three higher education case study summaries (Scored: 20 points).
3. **Section 3: Full-Funnel Strategy & DMA Targeting Plan (4–5 pages):** Core paid search plans, OTT/CTV tactics, paid social mix, and regional DMA allocation (Scored: 25 points).
4. **Section 4: Veteran & Military-Connected Strategy (2 pages):** Audience targeting, messaging pillars, and media tactics for military-connected students (Scored: 10 points).
5. **Section 5: Creative Approach (2–3 pages):** Creative concept samples, messaging frameworks, and platform-specific asset plans (Scored: 10 points).
6. **Section 6: Measurement, Reporting & KPI Methodology (2–3 pages):** Attribution strategy, GA4 event tracking, Slate CRM lead pass-through, and 20% YoY KPI plans (Scored: 15 points).
7. **Section 7: Team Qualifications (1–2 pages):** Short biographies and project roles for key account leaders (Scored: 5 points combined with Section 8).
8. **Section 8: References (1 page):** Contact list and contract values for three higher education references.
9. **Section 9: Cost Summary (1 page):** High-level budget summary by media channel and DMA (Scored: 15 points).
10. **Appendices (Excluded From 20-Page Limit)**
    - **Itemized Cost Worksheets:** Detailed media rate cards, technology platform fees, agency retainers, and production schedules.
    - **Staff Resumes / CVs:** Full professional histories, certifications, and technical credentials for all proposed team members.
    - **Extended Creative Samples:** Full-page creative tearsheets, storyboards, brand guidelines, and links to sample video reels.

- **Reporting Samples:** Sample Looker Studio dashboard layouts and sample monthly client report packages.
- **Technical Architecture:** Detailed data flow diagrams, sample UTM taxonomies, and FERPA/data-security compliance policies.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

The proposal must address the following specific requests or questions to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of how they will meet the requirements for the Eastern Oregon University digital marketing initiative:

- Provide three case studies or examples of past projects where you helped higher education institutions achieve their marketing, communication, and enrollment goals.
- Describe your approach to designing and managing a full-funnel regional digital media strategy anchored by paid search (SEM), including how OTT and paid social media fit into the funnel.
- How would you structure and prioritize geographic (DMA-level) targeting across the Portland DMA, Boise DMA, Yakima-Pasco-Richland-Kennewick DMA, and the broader Eastern Oregon, Western Idaho, and Southeast Washington region?
- What is your strategy for reaching veteran and military-connected prospective students within these markets?
- How would you measure, attribute, and report progress toward a 20% year-over-year growth target in applications, RFIs, and visit-page clicks, and toward delivering at least 70% of streaming/OTT impressions within contracted priority markets?
- Can you work within the following timeline:
    - Contract award: Dec. 7, 2026 (est.);
    - Onboarding, creative development, and DMA media planning: December 2026–January 2027;
    - Campaign launch: February 2027;
    - First optimization/performance review: 90 days post-launch
    - Ongoing reporting through June 30, 2027.

<u>EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA – TOTAL POINTS 100</u>

Evaluation Criteria	**Points**
Full-Funnel Media Strategy & Geographic (DMA) Targeting Plan	25
Veteran & Military-Connected Audience Strategy	10
Relevant Higher Education Experience & Case Studies	20
Measurement, Reporting & KPI Methodology	15
Creative Capabilities	10
Cost Proposal & Value	15
Team Qualifications & References	5
Total	**100**