

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE PROVISION OF PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES IN BRAND STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S ONCOLOGY GROUP**

### **Invitation**

[The Children's Oncology Group \(COG\)](#) seeks a consultant (firm or individual) who will assist our Group leadership and staff in strengthening and refining COG's brand identity. In order to secure long-term commitment from philanthropic and industry sources, COG seeks to create a brand strategy that is cohesive and informative to foster awareness and trust, with both existing and potential new partners. The consultant will develop a stakeholder-informed, multi-approach brand strategy to inform, attract, and maintain supporters which will assist in advancing COG's mission to cure and prevent childhood and adolescent cancer through scientific discovery and compassionate care and COG's vision of a future where no child or adolescent dies of cancer and where survivors live healthy, fulfilling lives.

COG has invested significant resources into optimizing our trial development and management to fulfill the terms of our federal grants. In addition, the scientific leaders of COG recently published research blueprints outlining their vision to move the science forward. To complement these efforts to strengthen our research agenda, and to create actionable initiatives in the areas of brand identity, philanthropic support, and industry partnerships, the 2025-2029 COG Strategic Plan for Business was recently approved by the COG Executive Committee. This RFP is seeking a brand strategy consultant to help COG reach one of our strategic plan's three overarching goals: *Define and elevate COG's brand with key funding partners*.

We invite consultants experienced in brand strategy development, facilitation, and implementation to submit their proposals in accordance with this Request for Proposals (RFP) to support the development of our brand strategy over a 7-month period from August 15, 2025 – March 15, 2026.

All applicants must be able to demonstrate awareness and respect for individual and group differences and actively promote an inclusive process across COG stakeholders.

### **Organizational Profile**

COG, a National Cancer Institute (NCI) supported clinical trials cooperative group, is the world's largest organization devoted exclusively to childhood and adolescent cancer research. COG unites more than 12,000 experts in childhood cancer at more than 225 leading children's hospitals, universities, and cancer centers across North America, Australia, and New Zealand in the fight against childhood cancer.

Today, 80-90% of the 15,000 children and adolescents diagnosed with cancer each year in the United States are cared for at COG member institutions. COG's unparalleled collaborative efforts, including global collaborations, provide the information, data, and support needed to answer important clinical and research questions in the fight against cancer.

COG has approximately 100 active clinical trials open at any given time. These trials include front-line treatment for many types of childhood cancers, studies aimed at determining the underlying biology of these diseases, and trials involving new and emerging treatments, supportive care, and survivorship.

COG's research has turned children's cancer from a virtually incurable disease 50 years ago to one with a

combined 5-year survival rate of 85% today. Our goal is to cure all children and adolescents with cancer, reduce the short and long-term complications of cancer treatments, and determine the causes of and find ways to prevent childhood cancer.

COG is a membership organization comprising about 12,000 members spanning multiple diseases, domains, disciplines, and administrative roles and responsibilities. COG is a remote organization with approximately 140 staff members in primary Group Operations roles. The remaining members are employed throughout its more than 225 sites participating in COG clinical trials or conducting COG research.

Five pillars (values) that form the foundation upon which COG conducts its research:

- **Science** - COG's clinical-translational research must integrate the *best science* to drive studies that have high impact, with particular focus on studies that bridge key gaps in scientific knowledge.
- **Ethics** - As advances in science enable the study of a spectrum of novel therapeutic approaches for children with cancer, COG must be ever-vigilant in assuring that the research it conducts is done to the *highest ethical standards*, including compliance with federal standards for the special protections afforded to children who participate in research.
- **Collaboration** - The transformation of childhood cancer from diseases that were almost uniformly fatal to ones in which the overall 5-year survival rate now exceeds 80% has only occurred through *collaboration of successive generations of experts* committed to improving the outcome for children with cancer.
- **Participation** - Improvements in outcome can only be achieved through the *active participation of children and families, patient advocates, frontline clinical investigators, the NCI, and industry partners*. COG has a long-established culture of engaging the entire research community in the development and conduct of its research.
- **Responsibility** - Childhood cancer remains the leading cause of disease-related death in children older than one year of age. As North America's only NCI-funded cooperative group within the [National Clinical Trials Network \(NCTN\)](#), COG leadership and its more than 12,000 members recognize the responsibility we have to our patients and families, to the scientific community, and to our funding organizations.

COG conducts most of its work through approximately 115 committees comprised of COG members. Per the NCTN guidelines, COG hosts two scientific meetings each year to facilitate this research beyond the day-to-day communications. These meetings are held approximately six months apart from each other. COG offers meetings open to all members, both in-person and virtually, which include representation from all committees and site staff, including clinical research associates, pharmacists, and nurses. These larger meetings are focused on scientific updates and role-specific education. The open, virtual meeting, held every other Spring, ensures a biennial opportunity for all COG members to participate. The open, in-person meeting, held every Fall, is hosted at various locations given the need to travel from numerous locations. The Fall meetings also include educational sessions with a livestream component to further accommodate those members unable to attend in person. The other meeting type, held every other Spring, is an invitation only, dedicated scientific retreat format restricted to disease and domain committees that design the clinical trials.

[The Children's Oncology Group Foundation \(Foundation\), a 501c3 organization](#), enables COG's leadership the ability to direct resources raised for childhood cancer research to the areas of greatest need and opportunity. The Foundation allows philanthropic funds from individual supporters and organizations to go directly to COG to fund its much-needed research. In an era of rapid scientific discovery, this direct link allows COG researchers to respond quickly to new discoveries with the greatest potential to benefit children with cancer.

The COG Research Foundation (Research Foundation) is a nonprofit limited liability company (LLC) existing under the laws of the State of California. The Research Foundation will be COG's grantee organization and legal and fiscal sponsor. The transition is taking place in stages across 2025-2026.

The formation of COG is a result of 3 significant points in the history of childhood cancer treatment:

- The cooperative group system for clinical research in the United States began in 1955 with a consortium focused on childhood cancer research.
- By the end of the 1990s, there were nine groups funded by the NCI to conduct research in adults with cancer and four cooperative groups focused on childhood cancer research.
- In 2000, the four cooperative pediatric groups voluntarily merged efforts to create COG.

COG is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.

## Scope of Work

### Introduction

COG has determined that its mission, vision, purpose, and core values do not need to be updated, as they continue to clearly represent COG's purpose and goals. To fortify the organization that works to fulfill this mission, COG's Executive Committee approved the 2025-2029 COG Strategic Plan for Business in February 2025. One of the strategic plan's three overarching goals is to define and elevate COG's brand with key funding partners. Several approaches with milestone measures were approved in the plan and can be the guiding tenets on which to craft the brand strategy. COG considers efforts to create a cohesive brand strategy to also include an evaluation and re-launch of COG's public website. Stakeholder feedback from the strategic planning process pointed to an appetite for increased public awareness from among our current funding partners to solidify our position as the premier organization in childhood cancer research. In addition, COG's unique organizational structure outlined above: COG, the NCI-supported clinical trials cooperative group; the Foundation, COG's 501c3 philanthropic organization; and the Research Foundation, the nonprofit LLC, future grantee organization and legal and fiscal sponsor, offers a unique and challenging opportunity to create a cohesive brand foundation on which targeted messaging approaches and strong digital engagement can be built. Brand strategy planning efforts should focus on understanding the current communication strategies, reviewing existing brand guidance, and producing an enhanced and comprehensive brand strategy which includes a public website re-launch and both short- and long-term communication and outreach recommendations. The brand strategy will clearly articulate how COG can best position itself to resonate with funding audiences and showcase its impact. The successful response to this RFP will clearly outline the steps

towards achieving the deliverables outlined below.

## Required Experience

For complete consideration, the consultant proposal must demonstrate:

- possess a solid understanding of brand positioning, brand architecture, and market research;
- experience working in this field with non-profit or membership organizations;
- knowledge and experience related to a distributed leadership model;
- highly developed project management skills;
- ability to leverage technology to facilitate process for a remote organization;
- possess a collective creative mindset with a results-driven approach; and
- familiarity with a research-based organization.

## Expected Activities

The consultant is expected to manage the entire project, facilitate a consensus-driven planning process, and provide expert advice throughout the project and toward the delivery of the activities and deliverables listed below.

### 1. Overall project management and meeting facilitation

- a. Planning, coordinating, and documenting all meetings, including stakeholder consultation sessions and meetings.
- b. Development, implementation, and presentation of tools and instruments used for gathering input (e.g., surveys, questionnaires, polls, etc.) and reporting of results and outcomes of such measures.
- c. Ensure all stakeholder groups are represented throughout the process. These stakeholder groups include institutional principal investigators and members, COG staff, philanthropic community members, industry partners, and key committee leadership.
- d. Provide regular project status reports and updates, including written reports.

#### ***Deliverable(s):***

- *Clear, easily operationalized, measurable, brand strategy project workplan that includes a clear timeline that ensures completion of the project by May 15, 2026.*

### 2. Diagnostics/environmental scan

- a. Analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) within the existing environment.
  - i. Assess current brand visibility, perception and satisfaction around communication, content, and engagement.
  - ii. Attend the COG Fall Group Meeting 2025 in New Orleans, LA, September 15-19, 2025 (*recommended*).
    1. The Fall Group Meeting is an opportunity to gain a better understanding of

COG's work and engage with stakeholders while their focus is on COG. Stakeholders will be attending sessions, connecting with one another, taking part in related events, as well as interacting with our meeting app.

***Deliverable(s):***

- *A strong core organizational narrative that unifies perceptions, actions, and messaging.*
- *Baseline engagement metrics*
  - *These metrics will provide insight into the current brand perception and be used to determine success rates of communication and outreach strategies.*

**3. Visual Brand Identity Review**

- a. Review the existing brand identity.
  - i. COG has an established brand style (organization name, logo, colors, etc.) however there is room for enhancements and additions.

***Deliverable(s):***

- *Organization tag line*
- *Updated Brand and Style Guidelines*

**4. Digital Content Development/Strategy:**

- a. Identify the most valuable social media platforms and audience- specific content that aligns with our brand identity.
- b. Develop standard operating procedures for press releases.

***Deliverable(s):***

- *Cohesive digital content strategy with realistic publishing schedules.*

**5. Public- Facing Website Development and Roll Out**

- a. The current COG public-facing website is out of date, problematic to update, and can be confusing to visitors due to the amount of content and current navigation architecture. We would like a clean, modern website that makes it easy for all our stakeholders to find information, promote upcoming events, is easily modified by non-technical users and clearly explains who we are and what we do. The current website was developed in-house and utilizes Sitefinity; we are open to other content management systems if practical. COG does not have a library of digital imagery/video and will need professional assistance to obtain.

***Deliverable(s):***

- *COG Website (public-facing), website training, and training materials*
- *Website Implementation/Roll-Out Strategy*

## **6. Brand Strategy - Short and Long Term Roadmap**

- a. Develop three-to-five year vision on how to evolve COG communication and engagement strategies.
- b. Identify resource needs.
  - i. Identify any new roles or modifications to existing roles, staff training or other staffing-related action items that will enable continued progress and success of communication and engagement strategies.
  - ii. Identify any subscriptions, software, etc. that will enable continued progress and success of communication and engagement strategies.

### ***Deliverable(s):***

- *Clear, expandable, long-term communication and outreach plan that includes defined measurement systems to track and optimize engagement and outreach.*
- *Staffing plan related to engagement and outreach.*

## **Communication**

The process/performance of the consultant will be monitored by the COG Group Administration leadership team. The COG Group Administration leadership team will serve as a conduit between the consultant and the Brand Strategy Consultant Selection Taskforce and facilitate outreach to stakeholders.

The selected consultant is expected to communicate professionally and deliver high-quality deliverables, on time and within budget.

## **Proposal Requirements**

The following components must be included for full consideration:

1. Consultant/Organization Profile:
  - a. primary contact name, title, and contact information;
  - b. description of general background;
  - c. description of services offered.
2. Qualifications and Experience:
  - a. an outline how the consultant/organization meets the required experience;
  - b. identification of team members to be involved with the project, their role, and their experience.
3. Planning Process:

- a. clear explanation of the methods/philosophy that will be used to facilitate the brand strategy process;
  - b. description of the approach to planning, facilitating, and developing the brand strategy;
  - c. description of how the planning results will be captured and reported.
4. References & Sample Work
  - a. provide three client references;
  - b. provide three sample brand strategy projects for which the consultant/organization provided similar services.
5. Budget – Detailed total cost with an itemized breakdown of fees, taxes, expenses associated with the four deliverables outlined above.
6. Expected timelines - Provide expected delivery dates for the four deliverables outlined above.
7. Page Limit – 8 pages not including appendices for references and sample products.

### **Review of Proposals**

1. The COG Group Administration leadership team will evaluate and score the proposals on the following:
  - a. proposed approach to the scope of work;
  - b. level of experience of the individual(s) identified to fulfill the project;
  - c. consultant's/organization's experience with similar projects;
  - d. total proposed cost.
2. The Brand Strategy Consultant Selection Taskforce will review and assess the three top-scored proposals, which may include interviewing the consultant/organization.

Selection will be made based on the best overall value for the product and “fit” with COG and its needs.

### **Conflict of Interest and Contractual Disclaimer**

Applicants agree that they or their employees do not currently have, nor will they have, any conflict of interest between themselves and COG during the conduct of this process. Any perceived or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in the proposal.

Nothing in this RFP mandates that COG is obliged to award a contract under this RFP. COG reserves the right not to accept any or all proposals without stating reasons.

Should COG, in its sole discretion, decide not to award a contract under this RFP, COG may create a new RFP on the same subject as this RFP.

COG will issue a contract/letter of agreement with the selected applicant, wherein the manner and schedule of payment will be addressed.

### **Proposal Submission**

**Timeline for Selection of Consultant – all deadlines are 5:00 pm ET**

1. May 16, 2025 - Call for proposals to be announced.
2. June 6, 2025 - Clarifying questions to be submitted to COG.
3. June 20, 2025 - Response to questions to consultant/organization.
4. July 4, 2025 - Proposal submission deadline.
5. August 1, 2025 - Successful candidate decision.
6. August 15, 2025 - Contract awarded.

Please submit both clarifying questions and proposals to [comm@childrensoncologygroup.org](mailto:comm@childrensoncologygroup.org) by the deadline indicated above.