



**Response to request for quote  
for**



Submitted: February 1, 2024

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[McConnell Communications](#) is excited to submit our response to the quote request to assist the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) with its outreach communications campaign to engage City of Detroit residents. Having worked with MICRC previously and with other high-profile, community-centered clients, we understand your need for effective communication and outreach strategies to connect with populations in specific demographics.

We believe our qualifications meet and exceed the scope of work you've outlined.

Our Detroit-based company, which will celebrate its 20-year anniversary in May, has helped clients large and small tell their stories in a manner that gets others to act, ranging from Arcadis International to the Michigan Center for Youth Justice.

Our expertise includes [public relations](#), community outreach, crisis management, media coaching, marketing, [advertising](#), media buying, email marketing, [digital media management](#), and relationship building; and we've served more than 300 clients.

We achieve exceptional results. We've helped get [Justice for Cornelius](#) (which prompted criminal charges of abuse in a youth home); worked with the [Fight for \\$15](#) (which helped secure a minimum wage hike in Michigan); and directed communication for the successful statewide [passage of Proposal 3](#) in the November 2022 election. We've taught more than 2,000 individuals to speak on message and created collateral materials ranging from email asks to videos to newsletters to radio and TV scripts. Our extensive [community outreach](#) ranges from implementing door-to-door campaigns to arranging events in targeted communities across the state.

We believe a partnership with McConnell Communications will have a tremendous impact on MICRC's new efforts to educate and encourage Detroiters to give their feedback on redistricting. Our team members are personally dedicated to creating opportunities that enrich Detroit and its citizens, having served the communities identified within this RFQ. We are passionate about enhancing the region where we reside.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope we get the chance to help you tell your story.

Sincerely,

/s/ Darci E. McConnell, President  
McConnell Communications, Inc.



## OVERVIEW

MICRC seeks an experienced public relations firm with intimate knowledge of the demographics of the City of Detroit — specifically districts 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 16 — and how to best reach residents for meaningful engagement to provide feedback for proposed redistricting maps. This campaign should identify influencers and civic and grassroots organizations with which to partner using traditional and nontraditional communications channels. The campaign will take place over a 21-day period and include measurable outcomes to increase feedback from Detroit residents.

McConnell Communications can readily do this. We managed targeted outreach efforts and press across southeast Michigan for MICRC's 2021 redistricting campaign, which included creating a slogan, managing social media, staffing news conferences, generating media coverage, and arranging more than 50 appearances by commissioners at community meetings.

Additionally, we've helped clients implement comprehensive campaigns in each of MICRC's target districts. For example, we helped the Department of Insurance and Financial Services in 2020 with educating Detroiters about auto insurance reform — during a pandemic — and successfully managed Honorable Kenyetta Stanford Jones' campaign for the 36th District Court (which included substantial citywide get-out-the-vote efforts); she was the [top vote getter](#) in both the primary and the general election.

## STRATEGY

Working in concert with MICRC, McConnell Communications will develop a tactical communications plan identifying what information should be communicated, who should receive the information, when the information should be delivered, where it should be shared, and how those communications will be tracked and analyzed. We will:

- Identify key influencers + organizations
- Identify key messages
- Create an outreach plan
- Establish outreach tactics
- Convert target audiences

An integrated marketing approach is essential for success, as a variety of stakeholder audiences clearly get their information from a variety of sources. We agree that based on your target demographic, video and specific digital media platforms will play an important role in engagement. Additionally, [authenticity and transparency](#) are important, which is why our creative materials will incorporate these values.

We recommend and can execute:

- Marketing
- Media relations
- Digital management (social media, online videos, electronic newsletter/email blasts)
- Message training
- Community outreach/speakers bureau
- Targeted events, including collaterals
- Paid advertising

## MEASUREMENT

Together we will agree on metrics to measure campaign success such as:

- Number of event participants
- Number of media mentions
- Number of maps submitted
- Social media growth
- Other measures as determined with client

## MEDIA RELATIONS

McConnell Communications began as a way to build on the founder's successful 14-year journalism career, and the firm's connection to and understanding of the press corps has resulted in extensive coverage for clients. The company was recognized for generating the most publicity of 22 states as part of Al Gore's Repower America campaign. We achieved similar results for the Fight for \$15 as well as Proposal 3. That included scheduling appearances on highly rated talk shows such as WDIV-TV Local 4's Flashpoint, placing [op-eds](#) in the Detroit Free Press, and scheduling guests on programs such as [The Mildred Gaddis Show](#).

We know how quickly news and social media communications move in today's 24-hour news cycles. Organizations must adapt accordingly. Our firm can help MICRC:

- Create and secure media opportunities
- Craft media pitches
- Distribute content (press releases, articles, op-eds, etc.) to appropriate outlets and community newsletters
- Train staff and influencers to communicate effectively with media and stakeholders
- Serve as spokesperson upon request

Outlets and programs that will be targeted include but will not be limited to:

- Axios
- Associated Press
- Authentically Detroit Podcast
- Bridge Magazine
- Crain's Detroit Magazine
- Detroit Free Press
- Detroit News
- Detroit Today (talk show)
- Flashpoint
- Michigan Chronicle
- Michigan Matters (talk show)
- Metro Times
- Model D Media
- Outlier Media
- WDET
- WHPR
- WWJ
- WJR
- KISS-FM
- The Mix
- On the Line w/Rev. Sheffield
- Detroit in Black and White (Deadline Detroit)
- WDIV TV-4
- WXYZ TV-7
- Fox-2 Detroit
- CBS Local Detroit
- PBS/American Black Journal
- Soul of Detroit
- Spotlight on the News
- Tellusdetroit.com

## **COMMUNITY ADVOCACY/SPEAKERS BUREAU**

We actively engage, inform and include our community and have helped clients get in front of key stakeholders, including grassroots leaders, neighborhood groups, clergy, and business organizations, among others. We will help MICRC and your allies reach stakeholders using any of the following tactics:

- A virtual town hall meeting
- Social media livestreams/video chats to educate others about redistricting feedback opportunities
- Visits to virtual or in-person youth groups, churches, block club meetings, and business and labor organizations to raise awareness and recruit partners
- Partnerships/events with like-minded influencers and organizations
- Development and distribution of marketing materials and event promotional materials in a targeted fashion (at high traffic areas such as Eastern Market)

## **TRAINING**

McConnell Communications has assisted countless organizations refine their messages, craft slogans, and prepare for media interviews, including concerted efforts in Detroit. For the last two years, our company partnered with [Michigan Community Resources](#) and the Detroit Free Press to provide training to more than 40 nonprofit organizations. Similarly, we will train, as needed, organization surrogates to speak effectively, with one voice, for community outreach engagements and when engaging with traditional and new media.

## **PAID ADVERTISING**

McConnell Communications has scripted, produced and placed advertising for nonprofits, [political hopefuls](#), government agencies, and small businesses. To help grow MICRC's visibility and notability — particularly within such a condensed time frame — it's important to use an integrated marketing campaign that includes paid advertising. Given the short turnaround of this project, we strongly recommend allocating at least \$30,000 on digital, print, and broadcast advertising to help generate participation and feedback on proposed maps. A more detailed advertising proposal and budget will be submitted upon contract signing.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

McConnell Communications has crafted and managed the social media presence for numerous political campaigns, government entities, and community-based organizations. Our company will create a custom social media campaign focused on growing MICRC's [online audience and engagement](#) during the 21-day contract. This process will include working with MICRC to get accurate and timely information, producing and publishing original posts and graphics, and monitoring growth and engagement to encourage direct traffic to your platforms.

We have a proven track record of leveraging social media to inform and engage the public. Through our past work with MICRC designing a social media [graphic campaign](#), we were able to mobilize communities of interest while ensuring that messages were both informative and resonated with diverse audiences. Our work with the 36th District Court and the Wayne County Treasurer's Office focused on [educating and engaging](#) their target audiences, while [increasing their reach and profile visits by thousands of clicks](#).

Our team has devised questions and conducted interviews as part of video creation and directed video shorts of events provided to media outlets for broadcasts. That work, married with our team's journalism background and ad production experience, qualifies us to manage video-based social media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube. Our goal is to achieve an average view rate of 15% per video on Facebook and improve your view rate by 10% per video on YouTube by the end of the campaign.

Given the short nature of this campaign, McConnell Communications recommends an aggressive social media advertising strategy to ensure that MICRC's message reaches a target audience. With the assistance of Facebook advertising, our goal is to increase the MICRC's page reach by 200%. Through targeted YouTube advertising, MICRC could reach over 3,000 new viewers. \*Please note that if MICRC has not utilized social media advertising in the past, the process to get certified to run digital advertising can take two or more weeks.

McConnell Communications will also assist MICRC in partnering with trusted Michigan-based online content creators and influencers to further increase the campaign's reach and online engagement.

## **WEBSITE SERVICES**

McConnell Communications offers professional custom website design services focused on clean, simple, and easy-to-use formatting. We recommend enhancing your website to make it more user-friendly, and can provide MICRC with updated website assets that highlight important information while being aesthetically pleasing for your online audience. We also offer feedback and coaching services in order to elevate your website's content and design.

Through aggressive SEO campaigns, we will thoroughly monitor the content of your website and develop language that boosts your presence on major search engines.

## **ABOUT US**

We help individuals and companies tell their stories in a manner that gets others to act. [McConnell Communications](#) has established itself as a [leading agency](#) in Southeast Michigan that provides effective media/public relations, media training, advertising, branding, media buying, marketing, new media, relationship building, political consulting and crisis management services. The company's principal was [recognized in](#) 2016 by NABJ as PR professional of the year.



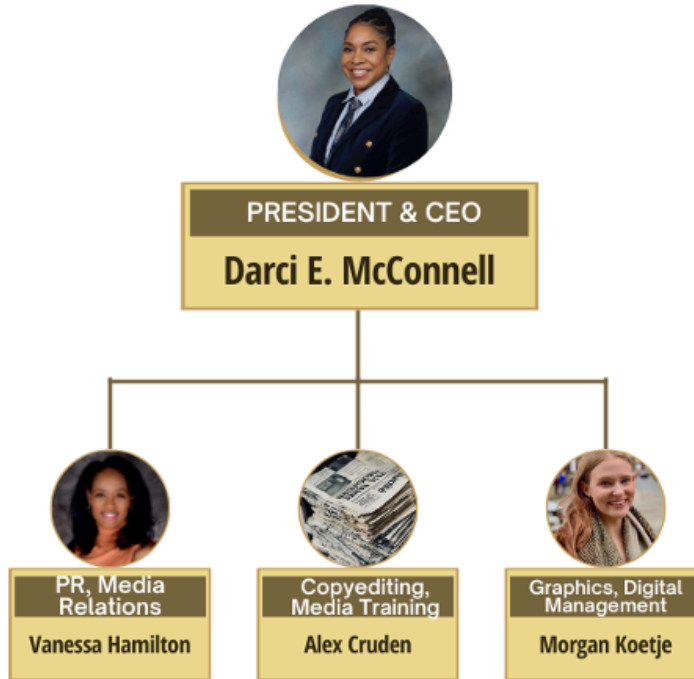
**Darci E. McConnell** has 34 years of experience in communications strategy, crisis management, media relations, marketing, advertising, and political consulting. She spent 14 years as a reporter for newspaper outlets across the state as well as in Washington, DC. In 2022, she served as the communications director for the Reproductive Freedom for All's successful Proposal 3 campaign. In addition, McConnell has led more than two dozen successful political campaigns at the local, county, state, and national level. Her executive education includes completion of Harvard's Program on Negotiation, and a New Media Boot Camp offered by the National Organizing Institute for community organizers. Her personal passion is mentoring and making a difference in the lives of young people. McConnell will be the authorized contact and lead point person for this contract. Her résumé can be located [here](#).

**Vanessa Hamilton** has worked with McConnell Communications since 2020. She is an accomplished media and public relations professional who, for more than 30 years, has spearheaded and contributed to successful PR campaigns, special events and projects for private sector and government clients nationwide. Hamilton developed her crisis management acumen as media relations manager at the only facility in the U.S. that assembles and disassembles nuclear weapons. She was recognized by the Department of Energy for her exceptional ability to write and deliver compelling messages for stakeholders. For the duration of this contract, Hamilton will execute media and public relations activities, as well as marketing and message training. Her résumé can be found [here](#).

**Morgan Koetje** has served as the digital media manager for McConnell Communications since 2020. Since graduating from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in political science, Koetje has worked for several political campaigns and nonprofit organizations implementing fundraising and digital strategies, including growing Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy's campaign page from 0 to 3,000 followers; managing digital content for Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, which increased Nessel's email open rate by thousands of clicks; and designing a social media graphic and email campaign for Reproductive Freedom for All's successful Proposal 3 campaign. Koetje will be the lead for any online/social media/email marketing/graphic design/web design assistance for this contract. Her résumé can be found [here](#).

**Alex Cruden**, since 2008, has assisted the company with editing, writing, crisis management and media training. A Detroit Free Press journalist and manager for more than 35 years, he has led more than 170 seminars and training sessions for editors, writers, and managers across the country. He will assist with the editing of all materials and training related to this contract. Cruden's résumé can be found [here](#).

# MCCONNELL COMMUNICATIONS INC. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## REFERENCES

**Honorable 36th District Judge Kenyetta Stanford Jones**  
313.965.2403

**Jason Smith, director, Michigan Center for Youth Justice**  
517.927.0448

**Laura Hall, director of communication, DIFS**  
517.290.3779

**Maureen Krasner, director of legal programs, Michigan Community Resources**  
313.283.1308



## CASE STUDIES

Here are examples of recent McConnell Communications' accomplishments..



### **Client: Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission**

**Overview:** As the MICRC implemented redistricting on the heels of the 2018 successful ballot initiative, McConnell Communications was engaged to educate and inform residents in Southeast Michigan through

earned media and community outreach to garner public comment, assist with mapping and take part in hearings in spring of 2021.

**What McConnell Communications did:** The company created a slogan, directed a social media campaign, secured more than 50 appearances for commissioners at community meetings, generated media coverage, conducted video interviews of surrogates, provided graphic design work, and drafted articles as part of its overall communication work.

**Outcome:** In addition to the branding, social media help, public appearances and media coverage, more than 30,000 public comments were provided on MICRC's process for drawing maps, in part due to McConnell's combined efforts with other agencies.



### **Client: Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services**

**Overview:** In 2019, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation providing ways for residents to reduce their auto insurance costs and to also hold insurance companies more accountable. To ensure that residents were able to tap into those savings, McConnell Communications won an RFP in

2020 to help build awareness.

#### **What McConnell Communications did:**

- Created and implemented a communication plan
- Developed collateral materials (PowerPoint + 1-pager) to simplify messaging
- Arranged and presented to more than 30 community organizations
- Secured surrogates to help distribute informational materials via email and social media platforms
- Enlisted community groups to distribute information at food banks
- Secured media interviews
- Assisted with scripts to be used for television and radio advertising

**Outcome:** State officials considered the outreach and media relations efforts very successful in helping to significantly raise awareness of the new insurance laws.

## **WHY CHOOSE US?**

McConnell Communications — through its work in public and media relations, crisis management, policy, government and other community outreach efforts — is best suited to accomplish what is necessary to help the MICRC grow its audience and visibility, quickly connect with Detroiters, and inspire others to get involved. We know the city and we have a proven track record of:

- Making complex issues plain and understandable for any audience
- Managing successful local and statewide initiatives
- Maintaining exceptional and extensive media and community relationships
- Developing creative approaches to moving a target audience, and most importantly,
- Helping clients achieve their communications goals

## ESTIMATED BUDGET

### Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission February 2024 Outreach Communications

<b>*PROJECTED EXPENSES</b>	<b>Unit cost</b>	<b>Total cost</b>
<b>SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>		
PR Newswire, online publications, clip service	\$1,500	\$1,500
<b>PRINTING</b>		
Collateral (flyers, handouts, etc.)	\$1,500	\$1,500
<b>SUBCONTRACTORS</b>		
Video editing (meetings/events)	\$1,500 (x 2)	\$3,000
Photography (meetings/events)	\$500 (x 2)	\$1,000
<b>STAFF</b>	<b>Hourly costs</b>	
Public relations, marketing	\$180 (x 60)	\$10,800
Public relations, marketing	\$180 (x 60)	\$10,800
Digital management, graphic design	\$40 (x 45)	\$ 1,800
Editor	\$85 (x 15)	\$ 1,275
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$31,675</b>

*\*Actual pricing dependent on approved expenses, strategy and actual hours worked.*

Given the short turnaround of this project, we strongly recommend utilizing paid advertising to help accomplish MICRC goals.

<b>PAID ADVERTISING (recommended)</b>		
<b>Production of video/radio spots</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Television (to be negotiated)</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Radio (to be negotiated)</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Online, social media</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>
<b>Print</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$30,000</b>