



**Response to request for quote
for**



Submitted: April 4, 2024

[McConnell Communications](#) Inc. had the privilege to work with the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) on community outreach campaigns in 2021 and [most recently in February 2024](#). We're pleased to respond to this request to engage residents for feedback on maps to reconfigure the Michigan Senate in districts 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, and 11.

In our previous work together, we've outlined the challenges and addressed the need to [effectively connect with the populations](#) within your targeted demographics. The following proposal reflects our successes and capabilities at executing a comprehensive multimedia public relations plan. Within it, you'll find detailed confirmation of our knowledge and proficiency to again help meet your goals.

Our firm boasts 20 years of experience providing [organizations like yours with positive outcomes in public outreach campaigns](#), including within the metro Detroit districts targeted in this RFQ. Our expertise includes serving more than 300 clients with exceptional results in [public relations](#), community outreach, crisis management, media coaching, marketing, [advertising](#), media buying, email marketing, [digital media management](#), and relationship building.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit a response to this RFQ, and hope to partner with MICRC again to help [inform and educate metro Detroit citizens](#) about its very important contributions to democracy.

Sincerely,

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



OVERVIEW

MICRC seeks an experienced public relations firm with intimate knowledge of the demographics of metro Detroit—specifically Senate districts 1,3, 6, 8, 10, and 11 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 3-month period and include measurable outcomes to increase feedback from residents on the proposed maps.

McConnell Communications can readily do this. We managed targeted outreach efforts and press across southeast Michigan for MICRC's February 2024 and its 2021 redistricting campaigns, which included [creating a slogan](#), managing [social media](#), staffing news conferences, generating media coverage, and arranging more than 80 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 Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services in 2020 with educating Detroiters about auto insurance reform—during a pandemic. We successfully managed the Honorable Kenyetta Stanford Jones' campaign for the 36th District Court, which included substantial citywide get-out-the-vote efforts. The judge 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 social media 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
- Text blasts
- Community outreach/speakers bureau
- Targeted events, including collaterals
- Paid advertising (cable TV, print, online, radio)

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, including MICRC](#). We were recognized for generating the most publicity of 22 states as part of Al Gore's Repower America campaign and achieved similar results for the Fight for \$15 and Proposal 3 campaigns. We count the MICRC among our client success stories, which includes arranging appearances on highly-rated talk shows like [WDIV-TV's "Flashpoint,"](#) placing [op-eds like this one for Commissioner Brittni Kellom](#) in the Detroit Free Press, and scheduling guests like MICRC [Executive Director Edward Woods III on this episode](#) of the well-received weekly radio stalwart, "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 has helped 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

We engage our vast network of news outlets and programs, including, but not limited to:

- Axios
- Arab American News
- Associated Press
- Authentically Detroit Podcast
- Bridge Magazine
- Crain's Detroit Magazine
- Detroit Free Press



- Detroit News
- Detroit Today (talk show)
- Flashpoint
- Gongwer
- Hamtramck Review
- Michigan Chronicle
- Michigan Matters (talk show)
- Metro Times
- Model D Media
- Mildred Gaddis Show
- MIRS
- 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
- Podcasts (Soul of Detroit, Authentically Detroit)
- Pride Source
- Spotlight on the News
- Tellusdetroit.com
- Yemeni American News

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 3-month 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 TikTok and YouTube. Our goal is to achieve an average view rate of 15% per video on TikTok and improve your view rate by 10% per video on YouTube by the end of the campaign.



McConnell Communications recommends an aggressive social media advertising strategy to ensure that MICRC's message reaches its 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 online content creators and social media influencers to further increase the campaign's reach and online engagement. We will identify influential metro Detroit-based accounts that would be most beneficial for MICRC to collaborate with based on their following and engagement metrics, niche, and ability to explain and educate residents. We will then manage outreach with the identified influencers and oversee the content they produce for the campaign. For example, during our work in February 2024, our message was [distributed at least 3 times by Detroit City Council President](#) Mary Sheffield, who is considered one of the top 10 social media influencers in Detroit. Another partner, the Detroit Area Agency on Aging, distributed our message to its 8,000-member base and also [shared the information on social media](#).

SMS AND EMAIL MARKETING

McConnell Communications will identify firms on behalf of MICRC that specialize in mass email and text marketing services to reach the target audience more directly. In partnership with these firms, we will draft language meant to further inform and encourage personal engagement from metro Detroit residents. McConnell Communications will also ensure that these firms report on the engagement metrics from their outreach to confirm that MICRC is receiving the best value.

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 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.

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 social media influencers and organizations
- Development and distribution of marketing materials and event promotional materials in a targeted fashion (for example, at high traffic areas such as Eastern Market)

TRAINING

McConnell Communications has helped 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. We strongly recommend allocating at least \$121,500 on digital, print, and broadcast advertising to help generate participation and feedback on proposed maps.

ABOUT US

As you know, 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 statewide 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](#).

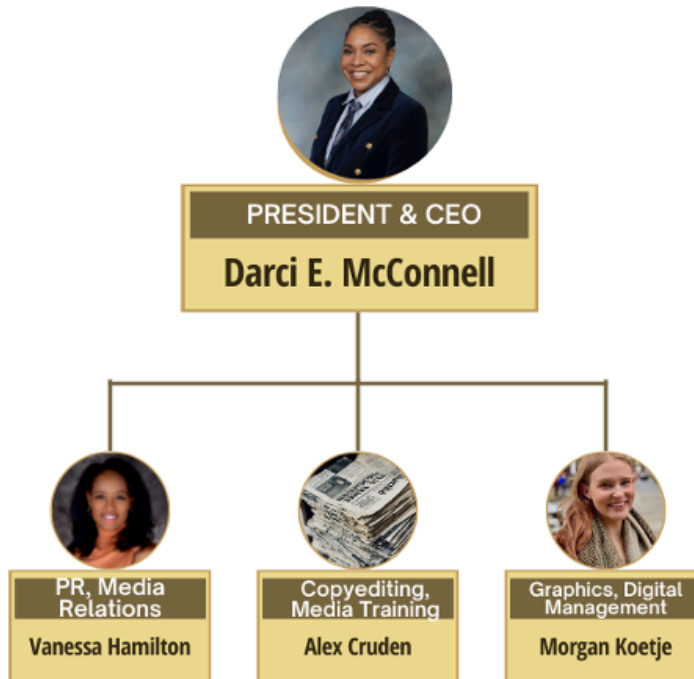
Vanessa Hamilton has worked with McConnell Communications since 2020. She is an accomplished media and public relations professional who, for more than 30 years, has spearheaded and contributed to successful PR campaigns, special events and projects for private sector and government clients nationwide. 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



Client: Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission

Overview: Over a 3-week period in February 2024, McConnell Communications [generated repeated media coverage](#) in 27 outlets, [placed an op-ed](#) in The Detroit Free Press, [held a news conference](#), and arranged appearances at various community meetings. We also reviewed and edited radio scripts, designed a flyer, and placed a paid media buy on cable television.

Additionally, 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.



Project: African American 490 Challenge

Following an initial 3-year campaign by Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy to process thousands of untested rape test kits, McConnell Communications donated its services beginning in 2015 to the [AA490 Challenge](#) to raise funds to process the remaining 1,341 kits. In addition to helping create the campaign name, slogan, and messaging, McConnell Communications secured local, state, and national press; helped with the design of collateral materials; created a social media campaign; secured speaking engagements; and devised events and themes to grow participation.

Outcome: The campaign raised more than \$675,000 to complete testing of the unprocessed kits, earned the AA490 Challenge team recognition by the Michigan Chronicle as newsmaker of the year, and secured an honor of Fierce Black Feminist for the company's principal.

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



MICRC Communications Outreach Budget

April 22 - August 2, 2024

*STAFFING EXPENSES		(10 weeks)	Total cost
TEAM	Hourly rate	# of hours	
Public relations, marketing	180	280	50,400
Public relations, marketing	180	280	50,400
Digital management, graphic design	45	135	6,075
Editor	85	20	1,700
Photographer	500	4	2,000
TOTAL STAFFING			110,575

*ADVERTISING EXPENSES (10 weeks)	Total cost
Video/radio production (<i>five 30-second spots</i>)	10,000
Video/radio translation (<i>Spanish, Bengali</i>)	3,500
Television (<i>to be negotiated</i>)	40,000
Radio (<i>to be negotiated</i>)	40,000
Print	7,500
Online, social media	5,000
E-blasts	7,500
Text messaging	5,000
Influencer stipends	3,000
TOTAL ADVERTISING	121,500

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

