



Request for Information
Government Relations and Lobbying Services
Submissions Due: February 25, 2024

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Introduction and Company Background

The Marjaree Mason Center (MMC) is a 501(c)(3) organization that, for over 40 years, has offered safe housing and support services to adults and their children affected by domestic violence in Fresno County, California. Our organizational origins date back to 1904 when the charter members of the YWCA Fresno formed.

In 1978, Marjaree Mason was 36 years old and was a volunteer of the YWCA at the time. She had her entire life ahead of her. She was a native of Easton, a graduate of Washington High School and Reedley College, and was well known in the community.

In November of that year, Marjaree's joy was overshadowed by the return of her ex-boyfriend – a Fresno County sheriff's deputy named Robert Tillman. Tillman was an imposing presence who refused to go away despite Marjaree's insistence that he leave her alone. Her continued rejection fueled Tillman's rage, which exploded in violence one night as he kidnapped, beat and raped Marjaree before releasing her the next day.

Frightened and confused, Marjaree feared retaliation if she were to report the crime. Convinced by friends to seek medical treatment, Marjaree shared details of her ordeal with hospital personnel, who reported the incident to the Sheriff's Department. Before an investigation was launched, Tillman once again kidnapped and assaulted Marjaree, ultimately fatally shooting her before turning the gun on himself.

Marjaree Mason's tragic death gained national attention, shining a spotlight on domestic violence and galvanizing the Fresno community into taking action to ensure that no one would suffer the same fate.

In 1979, the YWCA Fresno transitioned to being recognized as the Marjaree Mason Center, and has since worked tirelessly to provide a safe, supportive environment for those exposed to domestic violence. The 501(c)(3) status was officially changed when the organization formally ended ties with the YWCA in 1998.

Mission

The Marjaree Mason Center supports and empowers adults and their children who have been impacted by domestic violence, while striving to prevent and end the cycle of abuse through education and advocacy.

Vision

A community free of domestic violence.

Core Values

- **Integrity** – We are committed to high ethical standards of confidentiality, honesty, transparency and accountability.
- **Empowerment** – We respect and nurture the resiliency of individuals to achieve recovery, healing and growth.
- **Dedication** – We value the history and longevity of our organization, commitment to sustainability and work towards a community free of intimate partner violence.
- **Collaboration** – We believe in fostering community partnerships in order to contribute to inclusivity and equality.

As the only comprehensive domestic violence services agency in Fresno County, the Marjaree Mason Center provides 24/7 crisis response, housing, legal advocacy, counseling and education to survivors, youth and those who have caused harm. MMC currently operates out of 8 locations in Fresno County with 100 employees. The Center has a total of 168 beds in two safe houses that are consistently at or above capacity. Last year, MMC served nearly 8,000 adults and children from Fresno County and provided more than 74,000 nights of safe shelter. The Center serves all victims of domestic violence (including all genders, family design, sexual orientation, etc) through a variety of services including:

- 24/7 hotline
- Mobile crisis response
- Victim advocacy
- Assistance with restraining orders
- Court accompaniment
- Individual and group mental health services
- Emergency shelter
- Transitional shelter
- Rapid Rehousing
- Case Management
- Employment search support
- Children's services and case management
- Peer counseling
- Education and training (for youth, teens, adults)
- Domestic Violence 40-hour Certification Program

In addition, we provide services to individuals who have caused harm, such as:

- Batterers' Intervention
- Anger Management
- Child Abuse
- Parenting

The Marjaree Mason Center has a Board of Directors consisting of 19 volunteer members who have oversight of the organization.

According to the California Department of Justice, among the ten most populated counties in the State of California, Fresno County has the largest per capita calls to law enforcement for domestic violence (11,291 in 2022), with most of those calls coming from within the City of Fresno.

In addition to the growing number of calls to law enforcement and adult homicides that have taken place, in the last 14 months, the Marjaree Mason saw three domestic violence homicides of teenagers. Teen dating violence is of great concern and education within the schools continues to be a key focus for the Marjaree Mason Center.

The Center's kNOw MORE® program provides site specific, tailored trainings to teachers and students throughout the school year to teach them about dating abuse and how best to combat teen dating violence. Overall, the program goal is to increase awareness of domestic violence while encouraging healthy relationships in teenagers and young adults through education and

advocacy. The program is now in 36 high schools and middle schools throughout Fresno County.

The Marjaree Mason Center is an active member of the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care and runs the Coordinated Entry System for Domestic Violence. The organization has been the principal provider of domestic violence services in Fresno County for 43 years. As of October 31, 2023, there were over 600 active households on a by-name list (DV only) awaiting housing.

Currently, about 75% of our annual budget comes from government grants. Although we have significantly increased our philanthropic fundraising, resources have not kept up with demand for services and increases in costs of labor, facilities and program supplies.

Overview

Request for Information

The Marjaree Mason Center is considering retaining the services of an experienced and qualified Government Relations professional or Lobbyist to work with its Board of Directors (Board), Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Director of Philanthropy and Communication to address matters that will appear before the California State Legislature, the California State Governor, local and county legislators, federal legislators and other state and federal agencies as applicable.

We believe building a public affairs and government relations program is a multi-year process. The Marjaree Mason Center seeks a program rooted in approaches that center our values and communities. We know this is a process that requires intentionality and clear interest in building the infrastructure of the Center's relationships and knowledge of our region. We are interested in submissions grounded in who we are today and that move us toward a vision of where we need to be for effective and powerful advocacy alongside our grantees.

A successful legislative consultant professional will be able to take the scope of work as a non-concurrent portfolio, which should be designed as a 1- to 3-year engagement where some elements will be heavily emphasized at different times. We recognize that our needs are not simultaneously executed efforts, but a process in need of skilled relationship builders, creative government relations professionals, and people who seek to make the resources of the Center accountable to the communities it serves. We invite your creativity to demonstrate to us how you can build a program that accomplishes all elements of the scope of services to set a solid foundation for our work in the years to follow.

Legislative consultant services will include (and not be limited to) the following:

Strategy

- Assist the Marjaree Mason Center in the development of relationships and landscape of the state, local and federal legislature, political officials, influencers, policies, and future issues of interest related to our mission.
- Propose a strategic advocacy and political engagement plan designed to achieve legislative goals.
- Develop a plan for off-session activities and coordinate with the Marjaree Mason Center staff.

- Communicate the goals, aspirations, and work of the Marjaree Mason Center to key influencers in the legislative policymaking space.

Tracking and Reporting

- Identify, track, and report on legislation and legislative proposals that may have an impact on issues related to the Marjaree Mason Center’s legislative agenda.
- Report the activities at a minimum through the following:
 - Weekly updates via conference or video calls, on pending issues as they arise;
 - A weekly written status report during legislative session on key actions, movement, and legislation; and
 - A final written report and in-person presentation at the end of legislative session for the Marjaree Mason Center management team and Board of Directors.
- Organize registration, compliance, and reporting for lobbying, if applicable.

Advocacy

- Support Marjaree Mason Center by working on behalf of, and alongside partners, and management by being the day-to-day contact in Sacramento for legislators, other lobbyists, and interest groups on behalf of the Center.
- Work to pass and achieve the Marjaree Mason Center’s legislative agenda by lobbying members of the Legislature, their staff, and other state government officials, including the executive’s small agency cabinet and its commissioners.
- Track and attend committee and rulemaking hearings, coordinate and assist in the preparation of testimony (if needed), submissions, and in-person testimony.
- Attend and participate in interim hearings and meetings regarding issues related to the Marjaree Mason Center’s mission and grantee priorities.
- Work with the Marjaree Mason Center Marketing and Communications team and needed collateral that supports communication efforts.

Relationship Building

- Create a robust plan of introductory meetings with key legislators, regulatory agencies, local governments, and related policy organizations that are consistent with the mission and scope of work of the Marjaree Mason Center.
- Develop strong connections with other institutions, agencies, local state and national membership organizations to support the mutual goals of the Marjaree Mason Center.
- Assist in positioning the Marjaree Mason Center in the legislative ecosystem as an authentic advocate on matters related to domestic violence

Current Areas of Focus

While the Marjaree Mason Center does not have a definitive list of issues or funding needs, the list below is most pressing:

- Construction of new Community Resource Center (planned completion date of December 2024).
- Construction of a new Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter.
- Unsustainable impact the increase of minimum wage in California is having on non-revenue generating nonprofit organizations. Grants from the government have not increased with the increase of minimum wage and cost of living.
- Increase in funding from CalOES Domestic Violence Assistance Program due to inequitable volume for large service providers.

- Increased funding for Crisis Response services (likely through cities, the County, State CalOES or Federal VOCA).
- Increased funding for Emergency Shelter (likely through City, County or State homeless funds, State CalOES or homeless funds or Federal VOCA).
- Funding for prevention and education.
- Funding for legal services.
- Funding for multilingual, multichannel marketing materials to increase access to services.
- Funding for Batterers Intervention and Anger Management programs.

Limitations

The Marjaree Mason Center is a 501(c)(3) corporation and makes a 501h election on our 990s. Therefore, the Center has limitations on expenditures and activities related to lobbying that are calculated by the IRS. The selected vendor will be familiar with these IRS limitations and expected to track and report any and all expenditures and activities to comply with IRS reporting requirements.

Submission Guidelines and Requirements

Timeline

Date	RFI Process Component
February 5, 2024	RFI Issued
February 25, 2024 at 11:59 PM PST	Submissions Due

Since this is a new engagement for the Marjaree Mason Center, the RFI is to help us better understand the type of engagement we are seeking and also anticipated costs so that we can appropriately budget for them. MMC may at any time choose to discontinue this RFI process without obligation to any firm.

Submission Components/Deliverables

Please be sure to include the following in your submission:

- Letter of Interest
- Describe your firm and its experience with government relations/lobbying services. If your firm is teaming up with another firm to cover all components requested, please specifically call out which services will be covered by which firm.
- Names of the individual(s) who will be working on this engagement and their areas of responsibility, including the individual(s) responsible for managing the Marjaree Mason Center relationship and communication, administering a potential contract, and lobbying on the Center’s behalf.
- Experience of the individuals named above, highlighting their previous work, areas of expertise, and capacity to fully execute the functions outlined in the submission.
- Census of the lobby firm or individuals involved that includes, but not limited to:
 - a) Race
 - b) Ethnicity
 - c) Age
 - d) Disability

- e) Gender
- f) Sexual Orientation
- g) Tribal Affiliation
- h) Lived Experience with Domestic Violence and/or Homelessness (if tracked)
- Describe your strategic process and approach to the work, including a detailed timeline of strategy, planning, research, design/development, and execution/launch.
- Define your pricing structure (including third party costs), itemize where possible, and include all deliverables associated with each itemization. Define estimates for all variable costs and billing structure.
- A list of at least three clients for whom you have lobbied within the past five years and an example of successful efforts managed on their behalf.
 - a) Include the client name, contact name, email, and phone number and project description.
- A comprehensive list of all current clients and those served within the preceding 24 months of the submission date.
- Please demonstrate how your company cultivates and maintains a culture of inclusion and belonging, and how its principles and workforce are diverse. It will be vital for the consulting firm to share MMC's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, as well as diverse sourcing of suppliers.
- Short narrative (1 page or less) of how your work has or has not advanced legislation to protect victims and/or provide increased services to victims of crime and your experience working with new organizations beginning an advocacy program in California.
- A synopsis (1 page maximum) of how you see Marjaree Mason Center's advocacy work growing into the future.
- Include a sample contract and expected contract inclusions.

Submission of Responses

Please submit an electronic version to: Nicole Linder, CEO

Email Address: communications@mmcenter.org

Email Subject: Response to RFI for Government Relations and Lobbying Services

Evaluation Guidelines

Submissions received after the deadline will be immediately rejected. All submissions will be evaluated by a committee made of members of the Marjaree Mason Center Board of Directors, Leadership and Development and Communications Staff. The factors that will be taken into consideration are:

- Completeness of submission
- Experience in government relations with similar corporations/organizations
- Past success in securing budgetary asks
- Costs and associated value
- Communication skills and ability to train MMC employees and Board members on successful advocacy.

The RFI process will guide the Board on next steps for a future Request for Proposal and does not reflect a commitment to proceed with an RFP or RFQ.

MMC may choose not to disclose reasons for the rejection of any given submission.

Pricing

Submissions should include a breakdown of the applied pricing system(s) such as whether jobs are priced per project, by the hour, or a combination. Include a detailed description of the process and all revision rounds allowed in the pricing structure. All prices for consultancy, custom design, and development should include a binding “not to exceed” price option. If optional components are proposed, these should be clearly marked, listed, and priced separately.

Contact Information

All questions must be directed to:
Nicole Linder
Chief Executive Officer
Nicole@mmcenter.org
(559) 487-1319

The preferred method of communication is email.