REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Documenting How High Schools Can Implement Texting to Reduce Summer Melt

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<th>RFP Issue Date</th>
<th>January 25, 2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposals Due Date and Time</td>
<td>February 12, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Week of February 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Decision</td>
<td>Week of February 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal Submission Guidelines</td>
<td>Proposals should be submitted electronically to Elizabeth Morgan (<a href="mailto:morgane@ncan.org">morgane@ncan.org</a>).</td>
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<td>NCAN Point of Contact</td>
<td>Elizabeth Morgan (<a href="mailto:morgane@ncan.org">morgane@ncan.org</a>).</td>
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I. Introduction

The National College Attainment Network (NCAN) is an independent non-profit organization based in Washington, DC. NCAN’s mission is to close persistent and inequitable college access and attainment gaps on the basis of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and first-generation status.

For this opportunity, which is anticipated for approval in February 2021, NCAN seeks proposals from experienced writers, reporters, and storytellers (“the author”) who can partner with us to produce high-quality content related to a state-based project to combat summer melt.

The approximately six-month engagement will culminate in a 3,000 to 4,000-word report, which would also be released as a series of shorter blogs and in a webinar to share the report’s findings with NCAN members and the broader college access and attainment field.

Over the course of the project, the author will:

- Review responses to a grantee questionnaire and seek clarification as needed via email
- Schedule and conduct 10-15 follow-up interviews
- Prepare draft report synthesizing responses/interviews by challenge and including an introduction, conclusion, and blog-length summary.

II. Eligibility and Selection Criteria

To be eligible for this contract, applicants must meet all of the eligibility requirements:

- The author will have experience writing about in education-related topics, particularly postsecondary access (e.g., FAFSA completion, post-secondary match).
• Applicants must be based in the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.
• Applicants must demonstrate (through writing samples or portfolios of past publications) experience producing reports of this size and nature.
• NCAN seeks to do business with a diverse range of contractors that reflects the full spectrum of students and families we serve. We encourage proposals from all interested persons, especially people of color, people from low-income backgrounds, and first-generation college graduates.

Total contract award: up to $12,000

III. Project Overview

As many as 40% of high school graduates from low-income households who have been accepted into college fail to enroll in the fall. The reason? Students must complete a series of crucial tasks over the summer, from finalizing financial aid to arranging campus housing. These tasks can be overwhelming, especially without the support of the school counselors who helped them get that far. This phenomenon, known as “summer melt,” is most prevalent among students who are first in their family to go to college.

In 2018 and 2019, a national education philanthropy launched an initiative aimed at helping 13 Wisconsin public school districts combat summer melt using a tool most students are very familiar with: text messaging. The project provided start-up funding and other support the districts need to launch text “nudging” programs designed to help students meet critical deadlines and complete final steps on the path to college.

After spending several months preparing for launch, learning the texting platform and recruiting students, districts started sending messages in June 2019. Counselors in each district sent participating students about one text per week. The project concluded in September 2020 after two summers of operation.

IV. Proposal Content

a. Author information, expertise, and past professional experience (can substitute resume or CV)
b. Statement describing interest in the project and detailing familiarity with topics related to college access, summer melt, or related topics (no more than 500 words)
c. Writing samples/portfolio (please provide up to three relevant samples of your previous work). We are particularly interested in the possibility of adding narrative voice and/or extensive quotations directly from sources to the project’s final product.

V. Deadlines and Deliverables

a. February 22 – Contract period begins
b. March 31 – Interviews conducted, update to NCAN
c. April 9 – First draft to NCAN
d. April 30 – Final draft to NCAN
e. Mid-May to mid-June – Report release and NCAN webinar
f. June 15 – Contract period ends