

Request for Proposal: Integrated Anti-Stigma

Campaign for Los Angeles County

ABOUT VITAL STRATEGIES

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. Our team uses innovative, evidence-based strategies to develop and support sound public health policies and programs, including strategic communication campaigns for policy and behavior change.

Our programs include tobacco control, road safety, maternal and child health, food policy, RESET alcohol, and overdose prevention. We work with governments and civil society in 80 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle the most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale and as rapidly as possible. We use policy advocacy and strategic communication to urge governments to adopt proven strategies and partner with them to build the systems to implement this lifesaving public health "best buys."

Our overdose prevention program works to strengthen and scale evidence-based, data-driven policies and interventions to create equitable and sustainable reductions in overdose deaths. Underpinning this lifesaving work is a harm-reduction philosophy that emphasizes support over punishment and respect and dignity for people who use drugs.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Vital Strategies is partnering with the LA County Departments of Public Health and Health Services as the implementing agent for a four-year integrated marketing campaign to promote the expansion of health-oriented and supportive services for people who use drugs.

The main goal of this campaign is to destigmatize harm reduction services and strategies as an effective, non-punitive, health-based response to drug use. The campaign also seeks to reduce the stigma against PWUD (People Who Use Drugs) to help ease barriers to the expansion and utilization of services that are proven to be effective in reducing drug overdoses and saving lives.

LA County has experienced an unprecedented crisis where drug overdose, mental health, and homelessness collide, causing preventable deaths and disease. This complex and sensitive subject has generated negative narratives in the media and among various communities due to a lack of understanding of and support for harm reduction, including opposition to lifesaving community health services.

The encouraging news is that 2023 saw the first plateau of climbing death rates, and preliminary data from 2024 suggests this trend is also happening nationally. However, overdose rates in Black, Latine, and Indigenous communities continue to climb.

In response, LA County has invested in a multimillion-dollar expansion of community-based services for people at risk of overdose, including drop-in health hubs, syringe services, drug-



checking resources, and street teams (services often referred to under the umbrella term "harm reduction"). Some of these initiatives started in 2023 and will continue as new funding from various opioid settlements continues to roll in.

For decades, cities have responded to these problems primarily through arrests and incarceration, but that approach has failed. We believe that a public health approach that invests in people and families and prevents problems before they occur is the most effective and compassionate strategy.

RELEVANT FACTS

- LA County is scaling up investments in prevention, treatment, and harm reduction services. They have increased prevention services by 260%, treatment by 275%, and harm reduction services by 500%.
- People engaged through harm reduction services are 5x more likely to enter treatment.
- People engaged through harm reduction services are 3x more likely to reduce or stop injecting drugs.
- Over the past three years, Los Angeles harm reduction programs and services have reversed close to 35,000 overdoses. That is 35,000 lives saved!

PRE-LAUNCH CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

To create immediate awareness about LA County's current plans to end the overdose crisis we are developing a website under the name "ByLAforLA." which we are planning to launch at the end of March 2025. This is the first major public outreach effort that the LA County has mounted to communicate clearly about their cohesive overdose prevention efforts being led by both Departments.

ByLAforLA represents a people-powered movement where social workers, doctors, community health advocates and outreach workers are working together with one goal in mind: to save lives.

The winning agency for this RFP will use "ByLAforLA" as the starting platform, evolving and growing it with their own creative campaign and/or provide alternatives/subbrands as part of the comprehensive campaign.

HARM REDUCTION SAVES LIVES

Harm Reduction / Overdose Prevention Programs Are Born in the Community for the Community

The Los Angeles County Departments of Public Health and Health Services collaborate to support community-based organizations and implement programs that ensure equitable access to harm reduction tools and strategies. They have also expanded harm reduction services substantially throughout the last three years.



Today, more than 20 community partners/service providers, eight drop-in centers, six drug-checking sites, and hundreds of staff members are dedicated to executing harm reduction programs with cultural humility and dedication, with one goal: to save lives.

Harm reduction is a people-centered approach to combat the overdose crisis. It is rooted in compassion and understanding for people who use drugs. It's about keeping people who use drugs as alive and healthy as possible by protecting them from overdose or illnesses such as Hepatitis C or HIV.

Harm reduction means policies and practices backed by evidence that help people who use drugs stay alive and protect their health, ultimately saving lives. Harm reduction is a crucial pillar in the continuum of health responses to overdose. These strategies are also proven to have positive impacts on communities, bringing better health outcomes, reducing transmission of illness, and creating safer public spaces

These supportive services are offered regardless of anyone's readiness to stop using drugs. They include:

1. Naloxone distribution: Narcan (naloxone) is a safe emergency rescue medication for opioid overdose designed to reverse a life-threatening opioid emergency rapidly.
2. Drop-in centers are an important first point of contact for people who want to regain stable, independent, productive lives. They are safe spaces for people who use drugs to have access to supplies and overdose prevention and to connect them with other health, housing, and mental support services. Currently, there are eight drop-in centers located in East LA, Skid Row, West Hollywood, Pomona, South LA, and Lancaster. A brand new 36,000 sq. center is opening soon and will also offer medical services.
3. Fentanyl and xylazine test strips: Simple-to-use strips to check if there is fentanyl or xylazine in drugs.
4. Drug-checking centers: Locations where drugs are chemically analyzed to avoid harmful contaminants, such as fentanyl and xylazine.
5. Medications for addiction treatment: Methadone and buprenorphine are the safest and most common medications used to treat opioid use disorder to short-acting opioids such as heroin, morphine, and codeine, as well as oxycodone and hydrocodone.
6. Safer and certified sterile syringes and drug supplies. These are critical to protect people who use drugs from infections such as HIV and hepatitis.
7. Infectious disease testing: Testing for HIV and hepatitis, and linkage to medical treatment.
8. Mobile services: Harm reduction outreach members meet participants where they are. This can include parks and encampments throughout Los Angeles where there is a higher need for services. such as Long Beach, Compton, and other communities.
9. Linkage to housing and mental health services: We are the community triage for people who seek help and treatment.
10. Pharmacy access: Linkage to pharmacies for needed medications
11. Wound care services for people who need this medical care



THE CAMPAIGN

Vital Strategies seeks proposals from qualified agencies to develop an integrated anti-stigma creative and media campaign to reach our target audiences in LA County: persuadable public, community influencers and people who use drugs. While the campaign and its launch will reach to LA Angeles County residents, it is of particular interest to build awareness and support in LA communities where harm reduction services are being offered, including MacArthur Park, Skid Row, Pomona, South LA, Lancaster, East LA, etc.

The campaign also will include posters, collateral and tool kit materials in English and Spanish to reach audiences via digital and grassroots efforts, such as healthcare organizations, partner community groups, harm reduction workforce, law enforcement, and other relevant audiences.

In partnership with local communities, LA County is undergoing one of the country's most ambitious and thoughtful extensions of health and harm reduction services. The goal of the campaign is to build public support for LA County's expansion of harm reduction and overdose prevention services that positions harm reduction as a key element in the continuum of care for people who use drugs that includes prevention, treatment, and harm reduction services. The campaign's ultimate goal is to shift narratives, promote empathy and understanding, and challenge misconceptions through impactful storytelling and media engagement.

One source of negative public attention is that public attitudes around harm reduction are built on stigma and negative stereotypes around people who use drugs, including what they see and understand "on the streets," in the media, and their own lived experiences. What the public never sees is the thousands of success stories – people lifted from harmful drug use into healthier lifestyles, homeless people transitioning to housing, unemployed people transitioning to stable employment, etc. LA County is proving that, given the proper support and compassionate care, everyone has the power to change their lives. By highlighting these success stories and the local champions and heroes who enable this work, we believe that we can build support for local interventions, decrease stigma against people who use drugs, and increase the utilization of these lifesaving services.

Vital Strategies has been a leading organization in developing and supporting research-driven, anti-stigma and pro-harm reduction campaigns in the country. A hallmark of our creative approach – and one that has been evaluated as being effective over numerous campaigns – is real-world testimonials and storytelling by people with lived experience and showing people who use drugs in the community and in ways that underscore their agency for positive change. Learn more about Vital's campaign work, including two of our media campaigns on overdose, at MediaBeacon.org.

The eighteen-month campaign (through 2026) has two components – creative development and media buying. Firms may bid for one or both components of the RFP. This RFP is for the initial campaign period through 2026; Vital may extend the contract to cover a second budgeted two-year period of the campaign.

RESEARCH

Vital Strategies has contracted a research firm to conduct qualitative and quantitative research in LA County. Qualitative insights gained from individual interviews and experiences from Vital's prior campaigns will provide the basis for the initial creative approach. Quantitative results from a



representative sample of LA residents and stakeholders will be available in May. A baseline evaluation will be provided to assess the impact and guide future creative efforts. Early topline results may be used by the creative agency when available.

Another important outcome that this research will unveil is the demographic characteristics of the "persuadable public" – those who may be inclined to support harm reduction services with the addition of more knowledge and a greater understanding of the positive impact of these strategies. In the meantime, we are including [relevant materials developed with the Big Cities Health Coalition](#) to provide more background on how to position harm reduction to build public support, including the latest statistics.

Vital also has dedicated resources for message and creative testing with our research partner. We expect the creative agency selected from the RFP to incorporate the additional findings from the research with target audiences responding to the content developed for this campaign and to revise, improve, and optimize the content they have developed accordingly.

The selected agency will support our marketing and communication efforts by delivering innovative, strategic, and results-driven solutions through 2026, with Vital retaining the option for further extension through 2028.

BUDGET

The total budget for the campaign is US \$800,000. We expect that the creative development component of this budget will be up to \$300,000, and the remaining \$500,000 will be dedicated to strategic media buying services (digital and/or traditional media, video production, spot advertising, etc).

Vital will have a dedicated social media lead to head organic social for ByLAforLA social channels. Our creative agency should prepare a complete social toolkit to support content creation within the campaign brand.

KPIs: WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE? Knowledge, attitude, and behavioral changes in "persuadable public": Vital has contracted a research agency for baseline, midline, and endline public surveys with a representative sample of English- and Spanish-speaking populations in LA County. We will look for changes in attitudes towards people who use drugs and support for local harm reduction and health services.

Shifting public narratives around drug use: Vital sees this marketing campaign as complementary to public relations efforts to advance new narratives about the success of public health strategies in addressing drug use. Using tools such as meltwater and media monitoring, we will look for the emergence and weight of positive stories around harm reduction.

Local Champions and Support: In its community engagement work, LA County will look for the uptake of local champions' campaign messages, including community leaders, health professionals (e.g. doctors and EMTs), and the public.



SCOPE OF WORK

The Scope of Work for the proposal covers the following elements:

Campaign creative

This RFP outlines the expected campaign creative and content development work – your agency may ideate or propose additional solutions. Agencies should have campaign concept materials ready for testing in June. You will be expected to revise and finalize the campaign assets based on research feedback in August/September. Key elements include:

1. Campaign concept and design
2. Graphic design (print and digital)
3. Copywriting and content creation
4. Video and multimedia production
5. Website and digital asset design. We will have a preliminary website and we will look to the agency to build on existing website if needed.

Media Buying Services

1. Media planning and strategy
2. Digital advertising (social media, SEO, display, search, programmatic, etc.)
3. Traditional advertising (TV, radio, print, outdoor, etc.)
4. Performance tracking and optimization

Please include any value-added opportunities that can be secured through a strategic media plan.

Collateral Materials

1. Brochures, flyers, promotional materials, tool kits, posters, etc.

Proposal Requirements and Submission Instructions

Responses to this RFP should be submitted by email to overdose@vitalstrategies.org by 6:00PM PST on March 28th. Please include “*RFP response – Los Angeles County Anti-Stigma Campaign*” in the subject line of the email.

Interested agencies must submit a proposal that includes:

1. **Company Overview** – Background, experience, and key personnel
2. **Relevant Experience** – Case studies or examples of similar projects
3. **Approach & Methodology** – How your agency will execute the scope of work, especially regarding **sensitive anti-stigma messaging**
4. **Creative Samples** – Portfolio of past work
5. **Project Team**—Short bios of the team responsible for implementing the project, including the resume of the day-to-day client manager or lead and a brief description of how each team member will contribute to the project.
6. **Budget & Pricing** – Cost breakdown and pricing structure



7. **Project Timeline** – Estimated timelines for deliverables
8. **Client References** – Contact information for previous clients

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated experience in creative and media buying
2. Ability to craft **compassionate, stigma-reducing messaging**
3. Quality of previous work and portfolio
4. Strategic approach and methodology
5. Cost-effectiveness and value for money
6. References and client feedback

Additional Considerations

1. Create an engaging and distinctive campaign identity, including visual and messaging identity and a full suite of creative assets and content.
2. Conceptualize and design creative assets (print, digital, video, and audio) aligned with the campaign objectives.
3. Ensure creative materials are culturally sensitive, destigmatizing, and accessible to all audiences in LA County.
4. Develop a comprehensive media plan to strategically place advertisements across various channels (TV, radio, online, print, social media, etc.).
5. Negotiate and secure advertising space to maximize reach and impact.
6. Monitor and optimize campaign performance based on predefined key performance indicators (KPIs).
7. Develop a system for tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of the campaign.
8. Provide regular reports on campaign performance, including reach, engagement, and impact.

We look forward to reviewing your proposal and partnering with an agency that can help us **shift public perceptions and foster understanding through impactful media and storytelling.**

Timeline

- RFP Announcement **Wednesday, March 5th.**
- Zoom Webinar **March 12th, 11 am PST** – [Register here](#) to attend the webinar, or contact us for a recording of the webinar if you are not able to attend.
- RFP Responses received by **Friday, March 28th, 6PM PST.**
- The top two agencies will be invited to give presentations (Zoom) about their proposals during the **first or second week in April.**

Conflicts of Interest: To be eligible for this work, the selected vendor **must** be able to attest and agree to the following contract provisions.

Tobacco affiliation: *The Service Provider, in the past two years, has not had any business relationship with or knowingly received payment or other support from any tobacco product manufacturer or wholesaler or any e-cigarette or vaping manufacturer or wholesaler ("These Industries") or any parent,*



affiliate, subsidiary, organization, or foundation with majority support from These Industries, or any person, interest group, advocacy organization, or other business or organization (other than a law firm or accounting firm) that represents the interests of These Industries (collectively, "These Affiliates"). The Service Provider currently does not accept and shall not accept financial or other support from These Industries or These Affiliates until at least one year after the end of this agreement.

Alcohol affiliation: *The Service Provider confirms that no person performing services under the agreement has an affiliation with the alcohol industry, its agents, or associates ("These Industries") and currently does not accept and shall not accept financial or other support from any alcohol product manufacturer or the parent, subsidiary, or affiliate (collectively, "These Affiliates") of an alcohol product manufacturer or distributor until at least six (6) months after the termination or expiration of this agreement. The Service Provider shall promptly disclose to Vital Strategies any services provided to, support received from, or affiliation with These Industries or These Affiliates in the past six (6) months.*

Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated capability to fulfill the brief (40 points)
2. Clearly defined design and development process (20 points)
3. Demonstrated alignment with our global public health mission (15 points)
4. Cost (25 points)

Submission of proposals

Submissions should be sent no later than March 28th at 6pm PST by email to overdose@vitalstrategies.org and labeled ' RFP response – Los Angeles County Anti-Stigma Campaign ' in the email subject line.

We are holding an optional virtual Q&A for interested applicants on Wednesday March 12 at 11 am PST. Please follow this [link for registration](#)