

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Executive Search Services — President Advancing Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (AISES)

Issued by the AISES Board of Directors, President Search Committee — September 2026

Note from AISES regarding Terminology: Throughout this RFP, the term “Indigenous” is used as an inclusive, collective term encompassing Native, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, First Nations, and other Indigenous peoples and communities of North America, as well as Tribal governments, Tribal enterprises, and Native-led and Native-serving organizations. This terminology is used for clarity and readability and is intended to recognize, rather than conflate, the distinct identities, cultures, histories, sovereignty, legal status, and self-determination of the peoples, communities, governments, enterprises, and organizations represented.

Organization Overview

Parameter	Details
Organization	Advancing Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
Office Locations	Albuquerque, New Mexico and Boulder, Colorado
Founded	1977
Mission	To substantially increase the representation of Indigenous peoples of North America and the Pacific Islands in STEM studies and careers
Reach	National network of pre-college, college/university, professional, and Tribal chapters
Position	President
Issued by	AISES Board of Directors, President Search Committee
Proposals Due	October 16, 2026, 12:00 PM MT

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Advancing Indigenous Science and Engineering Society (AISES) is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1977 and dedicated to substantially increasing the representation of Native, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, First Nations, and other Indigenous peoples of North America in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) studies and careers. AISES serves individual members, pre-college schools, colleges and universities, and AISES professional, and Tribal chapters across the United States and Canada, and provides scholarships, internships, professional development, leadership programs, and an annual National Conference that is among the largest gatherings of Indigenous STEM students and professionals in North America.

The AISES Board of Directors (the “Board”) is leading a national search to identify AISES’s next **President** and is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP) to engage a qualified executive search firm to design and manage that search in close partnership with the Board and its President Search Committee (the “Search Committee”).

The Board will retain ultimate responsibility for the search, candidate evaluation, and final hiring decision. The selected firm will serve as a strategic partner and project manager to the Search Committee — developing the position profile, building and evaluating a strong national candidate pool, conducting due diligence, and supporting the Committee through offer and onboarding.

2. Organizational Background

AISES’s vision is for the next seven generations of Indigenous people to be successful, respected, influential, and contributing members of a vast and ever-changing global community. The organization operates two office locations in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Boulder, Colorado, and works in service of Indigenous communities, Tribal Nations, and Tribal enterprises across the country, in partnership with universities, corporations, government agencies, and philanthropic funders. AISES serves Indigenous peoples on the basis of their political status as citizens of sovereign Tribal Nations, consistent with the political classification doctrine affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Morton v. Mancari* (1974) and *Haaland v. Brackeen* (2023), rather than as a racial or ethnic diversity initiative.

The organization’s programs and funding relationships — including scholarships, corporate and foundation partnerships, and government grants — depend on strong relationships with Tribal Nations, Indigenous-led organizations, corporate and philanthropic partners, and the broader Indigenous STEM community. The next President will be expected to build on this foundation and lead AISES through its next chapter of growth and impact.

3. President Position Overview

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President is AISES’s most senior executive and the organization’s primary external representative, responsible for organizational leadership, fundraising, financial stewardship, staff management, and cultivation of relationships with Tribal Nations, members, chapters, funders, and partners. While the final position profile will be developed collaboratively with the selected search firm, the Board anticipates the President search will prioritize candidates with demonstrated experience and expertise in:

- Strategic and organizational leadership of a nonprofit, membership-based, Tribal, or mission-driven organization of comparable scale and complexity.
- Philanthropic and development leadership, including annual giving, major gifts, planned/legacy giving, and institutional (corporate, foundation, and government) fundraising.
- Building and sustaining relationships with Tribal Nations, Tribal enterprises, and Indigenous-led or Indigenous-serving organizations.
- Financial oversight, board governance, and staff and volunteer leadership.

- Familiarity and extensive experience working with Indigenous cultures and Tribal communities, including a working understanding of Tribal sovereignty, the federal trust responsibility, and the political status of Tribal Nations and their citizens.
- Public representation and advocacy on behalf of Indigenous students and professionals in STEM.

4. Scope of Services Requested

The Board seeks a firm to provide comprehensive retained executive search services, including but not limited to:

- Consult with the Search Committee to finalize the President position profile, leadership competencies, and compensation strategy.
- Develop and execute a proactive, national sourcing and outreach strategy that builds a robust candidate pool, with deliberate outreach into Indigenous and Tribal professional networks.
- Screen, interview, and evaluate candidates, including assessment of fundraising and philanthropic leadership experience.
- Conduct reference checks, background checks (or coordinate a qualified vendor), and other due diligence on finalist candidates.
- Present a qualified slate of finalists to the Search Committee with written candidate summaries.
- Support the Search Committee through finalist interviews, deliberations, offer negotiation, and candidate communications.
- Provide market compensation data and advise on offer structure.
- Support onboarding and transition planning, and provide a replacement/guarantee period if the placed candidate departs within an agreed timeframe.
- Maintain confidentiality of all candidates and search-related information throughout the engagement.

5. Firm Qualifications

AISES seeks a search firm (or lead consultant) that can demonstrate:

- A strong understanding of President and senior executive success metrics for nonprofit, membership, or mission-driven organizations.
- Direct experience conducting searches for, or working closely with, Indigenous organizations, Tribal governments, Tribal enterprises, or other Indigenous-serving nonprofits — including experience and established relationships within Indigenous professional and philanthropic networks.
- Demonstrated understanding of organizational and philanthropic leadership requirements, including: mission clarity and alignment; fundraising and financial stewardship; board relationship management; adaptive, resource-conscious decision-making; and talent development and retention.
- National sourcing capacity and reach.
- Sufficient capacity and availability to complete the search within the Board's desired timeline.

Firms are encouraged to describe any additional relevant experience, community relationships, or organizational characteristics that speak to their ability to conduct this search in a manner respectful of and responsive to Indigenous communities and organizational culture.

6. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be detailed yet concise (**12 pages or fewer**, excluding cover page, back page, and attachments/resumes) and organized into the three sections below: Experience, Process, and Price.

6.1 Firm Experience & Qualifications

- Firm overview: history, structure, and areas of specialization.
- Summary of relevant search experience, with emphasis on nonprofit President/executive searches and any searches for or work with Indigenous-serving organizations.
- Summary of experience with philanthropy and fundraising (annual, major gift, planned giving).
- Biographies of the lead consultant(s) and any support team who would be assigned to this search, including their relevant experience and, if applicable, ties to or experience with Indigenous communities.
- The firm's approach to sourcing and evaluating candidates from Tribal and Indigenous professional networks, and its understanding of AISES's grounding in tribal sovereignty and the political status of Tribal Nations rather than in general diversity initiatives.
- Three to five references from comparable searches within the last 5 years, ideally including at least one nonprofit or Tribal/ Indigenous-serving organization client, with contact information.

6.2 Search Process & Methodology

- Proposed search methodology and process, from position profile development through candidate placement.
- Sourcing and outreach strategy, including how the firm will reach and engage candidates from Indigenous and Tribal professional and philanthropic networks.
- Candidate evaluation and assessment approach, including how philanthropic/fundraising competency will be assessed.
- Proposed project timeline, with key milestones, aligned to the Board's goal of securing a new President within approximately 5–6 months.
- Communication plan and cadence with the Search Committee throughout the engagement.
- Approach to confidentiality and candidate/client communications.
- Guarantee or replacement policy should the placed candidate leave within an agreed upon period.

6.3 Fees & Pricing

Firms should propose the fee structure they believe best fits this engagement (e.g., a fixed/flat retained fee, a fee based on a percentage of first-year total compensation, or another structure) and should include:

- Total proposed professional fee and the basis for that fee.
- Payment schedule / milestones.
- Estimated reimbursable expenses (travel, advertising, assessment tools, background checks, etc.) and how they are billed.
- Any additional costs not included above.
- Terms of the placement guarantee, including any conditions for a complimentary replacement search.

7. Selection & Search Schedule

Phase 1: Search Firm Selection Schedule

Date / Deadline	Milestone / Action Item	Responsible Party
Sept 23, 2026	Board Meeting: Discuss leadership departure; establish & appoint President Search Committee; approve agenda/RFP framework.	Full Board
Oct 2, 2026	RFP Issued to prospective executive search firms.	Search Committee
Oct 9, 2026 (5:00 PM MT)	Deadline for Clarifying Questions from prospective search firms.	Search Consultants / Search Committee
Oct 16, 2026 (12:00 PM MT)	RFP Responses Due (noon deadline mountain time).	Search Committee
Oct 16, 2026 (5:00 PM MT)	Proposals Distributed to the Board of Directors for review.	Search Committee
Oct 21, 2026	Joint Review Meeting to evaluate proposals and establish shortlist.	Full Board & Search Committee
Oct 23, 2026	Notice of Interview issued to shortlisted firms (2–3 firms); non-select notifications sent.	Search Committee
Nov 6, 2026	Search Firm Interviews (virtual or in-person).	Board / Search Committee & Firms
Nov 11, 2026 (Veteran's Day)	BOD Decision on selected search firm.	Full Board
Nov 13, 2026	Notice of Award issued to selected firm.	Board Chair / Search Committee
Nov 27, 2026 (Day after Thanksgiving)	Contract Finalization and agreement execution.	Board Leadership & Firm
Dec 3, 2026	In-Person Working Session (Strategy session day prior to Board meeting).	Search Committee, Board & Firm
Dec 4, 2026	AISES Board Meeting: Formal search kickoff and alignment on President profile.	Full Board & Firm

Phase 2: Estimated Search & Placement Schedule (5–6 Month Goal)

Window	Action Item / Target
Dec 2026 – Jan 2027	Position profile finalized; national sourcing and recruitment launched.
Feb 2027	Candidate screening and slate presentation to Search Committee.
Early March 2027	Board & Search Committee finalist interviews; candidate selection.
Mid-Late March 2027	Offer extension, compensation negotiation, and contract execution.
April 2027	New AISES President officially seated (~5.5 months from engagement).

8. Questions & Clarifications

Firms with questions regarding this RFP should submit them in writing via email to the Point of Contact no later than **October 9, 2026, at 5:00 PM MT**. Consolidated answers to all questions received will be shared with all participating search firms who have indicated interest in submitting a proposal.

9. Proposal Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted as a single PDF via email to the point of contact below no later than **October 16, 2026, at 12:00 PM MT**.

- **Point of Contact:** Michael Laverdure – Board Chair, AISES
- **Email:** mlaverdure@dsgw.com
- **Cc:** aweinstein@aises.org; kkramer@aises.org
- **Subject Line:** *AISES President Search — RFP Response*

Proposals received after the deadline or submitted through any channel other than the designated email address, may not be considered.

10. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by the Search Committee using the factors below. The Committee may invite a shortlist of firms for interviews (virtual or in person) before a final selection is made.

Evaluation Factor	Weight
Relevant search experience & track record	25%
Extensive experience with Native American / Tribal / Indigenous-serving organizations	25%
Proposed process, methodology, and Indigenous network sourcing strategy	25%
Qualifications of assigned search consultant(s) and team	10%
Fees, value, and placement guarantee terms	15%

11. Confidentiality & Reservations

This RFP and any information exchanged during the proposal process are intended solely to facilitate evaluation of qualified firms and should be treated as confidential. AISES reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to request additional information from any firm, to negotiate terms with one or more firms, and to cancel or modify this RFP process at its discretion, without obligation or liability to any respondent.