



Imperial Community
College District

Office of the
Superintendent/President

Lennor M. Johnson, Ed.D.

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Board of Trustees

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Area 3 Peter Martinez

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
FOR EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRM
IMPERIAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT SEARCH

July 7, 2026

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

The Imperial Community College District ("District" or "IVC") invites qualified executive search firms to submit proposals for the purpose of awarding a contract to conduct a comprehensive search for the position of Superintendent/President of the District. The District, upon selection of the search firm, will prepare a contract for the duration of the search.

Proposals must be delivered electronically no later than the date and time specified below. Submissions received after the deadline will not be accepted. The subject line of the email should read: "Proposal—[Name of Search Firm] – IVC Superintendent/President Search" and directed to:

Mabel Vargas
Chief of Staff, Office of the Superintendent/President
Imperial Community College District
380 E. Aten Road
Imperial, California 92251
mabel.vargas@imperial.edu

The District does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, national origin, color, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender, or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law.

All proposals must be submitted no later than July 31, 2026, at 5 p.m. The firm selected, if any, will be chosen based upon the written proposal, an oral presentation to be arranged at a mutually convenient time following receipt of proposals, and any other relevant information available to the District. The contract award will go to the applicant that best serves the interests of the District and the Imperial Valley community. The District reserves the right to modify and/or suspend any and all aspects of this procurement, to obtain further information from any applicant, to waive any informality or irregularity as to form or content of this RFP or any related response, to be the sole judge of the merits of proposals received, and to reject any or all proposals.





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SECTION II – BACKGROUND

Imperial Community College District serves the Imperial County region of Southern California, providing high-quality educational programs and services to a diverse student population. Nationally recognized with the 2023 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and the 2025 Carnegie “Opportunity College and University” designation, IVC stands among the top colleges in the nation. With more than 90 degree and certificate programs, strong university partnerships, and innovative workforce initiatives, we prepare students to succeed while strengthening the Imperial Valley.

The District is governed by a Board of Trustees (Board) consisting of seven elected members representing trustee areas within the District's service area. The Board appoints a Superintendent/President who serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the District and is responsible for the overall administration and operation of the institution.

The Board is seeking an experienced executive search firm to assist in recruiting, evaluating, and recommending candidates for the position of Superintendent/President. The search process will be conducted in a manner that is transparent, inclusive of community input, and designed to attract a diverse and highly qualified pool of candidates.

SECTION III – SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Board requires executive search services to support the identification and selection of a Superintendent/President. At the direction of the Board and District Legal Counsel, the qualified search firm should address how it will engage in the following activities:

Work and Communicate with the Board and Staff

Work with the Board of Trustees and District Legal Counsel through all phases of the Superintendent/President search and selection process. Provide regular status updates to the Board. Attend Board meetings, study sessions, and other meetings as requested during the recruitment and selection process.

Develop a Position Profile and Outreach Plan

Assist with the development of a comprehensive position profile for the Superintendent/President, and support the development, advertisement, and distribution of the position announcement. This includes developing a specific outreach plan that identifies activities designed to recruit a diverse pool of candidates, with specific benchmark activities to be utilized throughout the recruitment process.

Develop Selection Criteria

Support the Board in the development of selection criteria based on the position profile, job description, and the Superintendent/President's organizational role within the District.





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Identify a Diverse Group of Applicants

Identify a diverse pool of qualified candidates, including national, regional, statewide, and local candidates, from those actively pursuing a position change as well as those who may not currently be in the job market, to ensure a broad and diverse pool of innovative educational leaders.

Targeted Outreach

Engage in targeted outreach to higher education administrators and administrators in related fields using appropriate technology, professional networks, firm contacts, and candidate questionnaires to identify candidates aligned with the selection criteria. Particular attention should be given to candidates with experience serving diverse, rural, and border communities.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Develop and implement a plan for engaging a broad range of District stakeholders, including students, faculty, classified staff, administrators, community members, and local government representatives. This may include in-person forums, virtual meetings, surveys, a project website, and social media outreach to gather community input on desired qualities and qualifications of the next Superintendent/President. IVC is seeking a leader who exemplifies a deep commitment to community engagement by building meaningful relationships with our students, faculty, staff, local organizations, local business and industry partners, and the broader community. This leader should foster an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative environment where every voice is valued, and diverse perspectives are welcomed in the decision-making process. If given the opportunity, how would you create a plan to engage stakeholders in the process.

Candidate Landing Page

Develop a secure, password-protected landing page to host candidate questionnaires and application materials, accessible to designated Board members and District staff.

Execute Candidate Search

Execute a thorough search for candidates with qualifications meeting the position profile. Work with the Board and District staff to compile a list of suitable candidates, including direct outreach to identified candidates.

Screen Candidates and Provide Profiles

Screen and interview candidates to assess their suitability for the position. Provide the Board with candidate profiles, including written materials submitted by the candidates, preliminary references, background reports, potential conflicts of interest, and other relevant available information.

Candidate Interviews and Assessments

Support and assist the Board during all phases of candidate interviews. Arrange candidate interviews, develop interview questions tailored to District priorities, prepare the Board for candidate interviews, facilitate the interview process, and assist in candidate assessment.





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Reference and Background Checks

Conduct thorough reference checks and background investigations for finalist candidates, including litigation history and publicly available information.

Final Selection and Negotiation

Support and assist the Board with the final selection of a candidate and negotiations regarding employment terms. Assist in the development of strategies for successful candidate retention and onboarding.

Transition Activities

Assist the successful candidate with transition activities into the role of Superintendent/President, including introductions to key community stakeholders and District leadership.

Failed Search

Provide a plan for addressing and mitigating a failed search, including provisions for a repeat search at reduced or no additional cost.

Other Activities

Identify any additional activities relevant to the Superintendent/President search that would contribute to building a diverse and innovative candidate pool.

SECTION IV – SEARCH FIRM QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants will be evaluated with an emphasis on the following qualifications and attributes:

- Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to the California Community Colleges mission, the Vision for Success framework, and the educational and workforce development needs of rural and border region communities.
- Demonstrated expertise conducting senior and executive-level searches, with particular experience in higher education searches and in identifying candidates from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.
- Evidence of conducting at least five (5) successful CEO/president-level searches of a similar nature within the last five (5) years, with preference given to firms with experience in California community college searches.
- Recognition as a leader in executive searches that reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a demonstrated track record of placing successful candidates in higher education or comparable institutional settings.
- Sufficient staffing, expertise, and resources to sustain and complete the search within the District's desired timeline, and to mitigate a failed search.
- Demonstrated track record of client success in executive-level searches, particularly within community colleges or comparable public sector educational institutions.





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- Familiarity with the Imperial Valley region, or demonstrated capacity to effectively conduct searches serving diverse, Spanish-speaking, and rural communities.

SECTION V – PROPOSED SEARCH TIMELINE

The District anticipates completing selection of an executive search consultant by August 2026. The complete search timeline with key deliverables should be described in the proposal and will be finalized in conjunction with the Board and District staff. The proposal should include a recommended timeline from contract execution through final candidate selection.

The following are the anticipated milestone dates for the procurement process:

- RFP Issued: Early July 2026
- Deadline for Proposals: July 31, 2026, at 5 p.m.
- Firm Interviews/Oral Presentations: Early August 2026
- Selection of Search Firm: Mid-August 2026
- Contract Execution: August 2026
- Commencement of Search: August 2026
- Target Appointment of Superintendent/President: January/February 2027

SECTION VI – PROPOSAL CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Proposals should be of professional caliber in content and appearance. All descriptions and information should be clear, concise, and provide sufficient information to minimize questions and assumptions. The District accepts no financial responsibility for costs incurred in the preparation of proposals. Upon receipt, all proposals submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the District and are subject to public disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Cover Letter

The proposal cover letter must be signed by an officer authorized to bind the firm contractually, state that the proposal is firm for a 60-day period from the submission deadline, and provide the name, title, address, telephone number, and email address of the individual to whom correspondence and inquiries should be directed during the selection process.

Proposer Information

This section should provide the firm's name, address, and telephone number; identify the individuals who will be involved in representing the firm; and include a brief discussion demonstrating the proposer's understanding of the services requested and the nature of the District and region served.





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Capabilities and Experience

It is the intent of the District to award a contract to the best-qualified firm that demonstrates substantial experience providing executive search services of the kind required by the Board for the Superintendent/President search. The proposal should provide an overview of the breadth and depth of the firm's professional resources, particularly as they relate to the scope of work described in Section III and the qualifications described in Section IV. Include a description of similar assignments for which the firm has provided services in recent years. Resumes and/or biographies for all key team members should be included.

Services and Management Approach

Describe the firm's approach to the delivery of services described in Section III. In particular, the proposal should:

- Identify the search lead, their availability, relevant strengths, and tenure with the firm;
- Identify key team members and their proposed roles and responsibilities;
- Describe the approach to cost control and budget management;
- Describe the approach to client communications, ongoing coordination, and reporting to the Board; and
- Discuss workload for all key team members, including the percentage of time to be devoted to this search and any assurances as to responsive and timely service delivery.

Include information on any guarantee provided in the event of an unsuccessful search.

Conflict of Interest

This section must identify any familial or previous working relationships with the Board of Trustees and/or District staff as of the date of the proposal.

Availability for Oral Presentation

Firm interviews and oral presentations are anticipated to occur in August 2026. Proposals should indicate availability for interviews during this timeframe. Interviews will be conducted in person in Imperial, California, or remotely if necessary.

Cost Proposal

Discuss the proposed fee arrangement, including:

- A separate schedule of hourly billing rates for team members, if applicable;
- A "not-to-exceed" fixed fee, including associated costs (e.g., printing, travel, advertising, attendance at meetings); and
- Any separate cost schedule for additional services not included in the fixed fee.





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References

Provide contact information for all public sector searches conducted in the past three (3) years, and for up to five (5) private sector searches if the firm also performs private sector work. References should include clients served by the search lead and key team members, and a brief description of the scope of work and search outcome. At least one (1) reference should be from a California community college district search. For each search, provide complete contact information for the hiring institution and the successful candidate.

In addition, applicants should provide:

- A list of contracts terminated (partially or completely) by clients for convenience or default within the past three (3) years, including contract value, description of work, sponsoring organization, and the name and telephone number of the contracting entity; and
- A description of how and why the firm is uniquely qualified and differentiated from other firms of similar experience, and why selection of the firm would be in the best interest of the Imperial Community College District.

SECTION VII – RESERVED RIGHTS

The District expressly reserves the following rights:

1. To waive or reject any and/or all irregularities in the proposals submitted.
2. To waive or reject any and/or all proposals or portions thereof.
3. To reject all proposals and negotiate with any individual applicant or any other person or entity.
4. To base awards with due regard to quality of services, experience, compliance with specifications, and other factors as may be necessary under the circumstances.
5. To make the award to any applicant whose proposal is in the best interest of the District.
6. To negotiate different terms and conditions with any applicant.
7. To seek and advertise for new proposals where acceptance, rejection, waiving, or re-solicitation would be in the best interest of the District.

Oral Statements. The District shall not be bound by any oral statement or representation made by the Board, District staff, or any of their members or agents.

Ownership of Documents. All documents, reports, proposals, submittals, working papers, or other materials submitted to the District shall become the sole and exclusive property of the District, in the public domain, and subject to public disclosure under the California Public Records Act. The applicant shall not copyright any portion of materials submitted in response to this RFP. The District may utilize concepts submitted in any proposal without compensation.

Qualifications of Proposer. The District may make such investigations as deemed necessary to determine the ability of the applicant to perform the work, and the applicant shall furnish all information and data requested for this purpose.





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Informality. The District reserves the right to waive any informality, irregularity, or defect in the proposal process and to select any applicant, even if the selected proposal does not meet all requirements of this RFP. Any such waiver shall not be deemed a waiver with respect to any subsequent informality, irregularity, or defect.

Compliance with Law. By responding to this RFP, the applicant warrants that all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations, and local ordinances will be complied with in connection with the delivery of services offered.

SECTION VIII – INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

By responding to this RFP, the applicant warrants that it carries all required insurance, including:

1. Public Liability Insurance for injuries, including accidental death to any one person, in an amount not less than \$1,000,000;
2. Property Damage Insurance in an amount not less than \$500,000;
3. Workers' Compensation Insurance in an amount adequate to cover all employees; and
4. Professional Liability Insurance (errors and omissions) in an amount not less than \$1,000,000.

The District shall be named as an additional insured on all applicable policies. Certificates of insurance must be submitted prior to execution of any contract.

SECTION IX – EXECUTION OF CONTRACT

No contract shall be binding on the District until it has been reviewed and approved as to form by District legal counsel, approved by the Board of Trustees, and fully executed by the parties. The contract shall be non-assignable, either in whole or in part, without prior written consent of the District.

QUESTIONS

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to:

Joseph Sanchez
District General Counsel
Best Best & Krieger LLP
Joseph.Sanchez@bbklaw.com

All questions must be submitted in writing and submitted via email. Responses to questions of general interest will be distributed to all firms that have expressed interest in this RFP.

