



## **Implementing Communications Strategies Request for Proposals**

**Deadline: Friday, December 13th, 2019**

**A. Introduction:** For the last 48 years, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay has been bringing together communities, companies, and conservationists to restore the lands and waters of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In 2018, the Alliance hired a third-party consultant to complete a Growth Capacity Assessment for the organization. Their analysis determined that the Alliance has grown rapidly in the last three years, and that we have outgrown our current communication structure and systems. In order for us to increase our visibility, impact, and reach, the Alliance needs to create and operationalize a new set of internal and external communication standards and processes, and improve and expand our use of current communications technology.

Currently, the Alliance is wrapping up the implementation of our [2019 Strategic Communications Plan](#). We are seeking assistance in creating a new set of internal and external communication processes that can be implemented throughout our regional organization. It should be noted that this process is funded at a not-to-exceed amount of \$10,000. We are seeking estimates of the work proposed through this RFP. The Alliance would like to see proposals that provide an overall project budget.

**B. Background:** This project is the second phase of a strategic planning effort the Alliance began in 2018, focused on re-aligning our organizational structure, programs, and organizational priorities. The Alliance is preparing to celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2021 and is looking ahead at moving toward our vision of clean streams and rivers flowing through resilient landscapes, cared for by the people who live, work, and play in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The work at the Alliance over the last 18 months focused on determining organizational priorities, and we are now beginning to implement those priorities. This includes creating processes and procedures to best support and improve the communication capacity at the Alliance. In 2019, the Alliance created and executed our first strategic communications plan. This plan included creating an internal communications structure comprised of liaisons in each of our four regions and representation from our program areas. We implemented weekly communications check-in calls and instituted quarterly communications retreats. We have doubled the names in our email marketing system, and seek to continue to improve communications that better convey the “story” of the Alliance and our important programming.

This contract is for a not-to-exceed amount of \$10,000. The period of performance will be from the date of contract signature through 10/31/2020.



### **C. Objectives:**

The Alliance's objectives for this process are to improve our communications capabilities in order to:

- Increase our reach with priority constituencies, as determined in our newly approved [Strategic Plan \(2019-2022\)](#).
- Leverage and broaden our impact by scaling successful programs and continuing to build cross-sector partnerships, which help bridge capacity gaps to support the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Increase brand visibility in our four regions, including Lancaster, PA, Washington, DC, Richmond, VA, and our headquarters in Annapolis, MD.
- Increase unrestricted and flexible funding for the organization in order to continue to invest in our internal capacity that, in turn, enables our ability to implement successful external programs.

### **D. Outcomes:**

We expect this work to create a new set of internal and external communication processes. This will be accomplished through engagement of external expertise to develop protocols, standards, and other communications processes. Our intended outcomes include:

#### **Internal outcomes:**

- Increased and improved coordination between programs and regional offices when conducting external stakeholder events, including Watershed Forum and ForumPlus events, Wild & Scenic Film Festival, and Taste of the Chesapeake.
- Increased number of email addresses in email marketing platform, and linking our email marketing platform to our Customer Relationship Management (Salesforce).
- With the support of headquarters, Communication Liaison Team (five staff) takes ownership of regional communications, including major events such as Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week, ForumPlus events, and Chesapeake Watershed Forum.
- All campaigns/projects/events will have clear project owners, managers, helpers, etc. by utilizing the [MOCHA Tool hosted by The Management Center](#).

#### **External outcomes:**

- Ability to communicate what the Alliance does in a clear, concise, and consistent manner.
- Expand organizational visibility to current and prioritized constituencies.
- Improved storytelling in order to increase unrestricted funding.

## **E. Deliverables:**

### **External outcome metrics:**

- Increased traffic to DIY pages (such as [Native Plant Center](#) and [Reduce Your Stormwater](#)), volunteer page, email sign-up page, and [ChesapeakeNetwork.org](#).
- Increased conversion of site visitors from social media channels to email sign-up on our website (moving constituency through the engagement funnel, toward sustaining support).
- Increased donation response to funding appeals (number of respondents, funds raised).
- Social Media engagement metrics (Facebook page likes and post engagement).
- Increased clarity of brand and understanding of the Alliance's mission.

### **Internal outcome metrics:**

- Improved processes to address end-to-end messaging output (i.e. timeliness of communications responses, message generation and re-writes).
- Increased creation and re-use of original content and material.
- Improved ability of staff to promote and discuss the mission and vision of the Alliance.
- Clear understanding of roles and expectations between headquarters and regional communication liaison staff.

## **F. Proposal Content Requirements:**

1. A cover letter providing a brief description of the firm or individual, name, address, telephone number, and email of principal contact person.
2. Executive summary of the highlights of the proposal, not to exceed one page in length, and conveying the consultant's understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of the project.
3. A list of key personnel who would be involved in the process and their expertise/experience.
4. A summary of the consulting firm's qualifications and relevant experience. The successful firm and their subcontractors will have demonstrated expertise in strategic communications planning for nonprofits.
5. A work plan that includes a description of the methodology, tasks, timeline, and estimated total amount of time that would be spent on the project.
6. A schedule of costs that includes consulting, supplies, travel, and other costs associated with the planning process.
7. References and contact information from two organizations for which the facilitator(s) has provided communication services.



## G. Evaluation Criteria:

The Alliance is seeking to enter into a contractual agreement with an outside company that will become a partner, working alongside the Communications Manager to achieve the outcomes laid out in this RFP. We are looking for organizations that are a match with our organizational culture, adhering to our core organizational values: 1. We believe in partnering across sectors and regions to achieve a larger collective impact, 2. We are partners who demonstrate integrity and amplify diverse voices for equitable impact, and 3. We drive with data, promote informed action, and hold ourselves and our partners accountable for measurable impact. Our commitment to an inclusive, equitable, and diverse process can be viewed on our website: [Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay Resolution on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

1. Responsiveness of the written proposal to the purpose and scope of the project.
2. Demonstrated knowledge, skills, and experience in conducting strategic communication planning projects.
3. Methodology and timeline for carrying out tasks in the scope of work.
4. Ability to meet deadlines and operate within budget.
5. Positive experience and success in communication planning.

**Deadline for Submission:** Proposals must be received via email before **5pm on Friday December 13th**. The subject line should read “Communications Planning RFQ response” and should be emailed to Marissa Spratley at [mspratley@allianceforthebay.org](mailto:mspratley@allianceforthebay.org). Please no phone calls.

**About the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay:** For over 48 years, the Alliance has been committed to improving water quality throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed through partnerships across sectors, bringing a diversity of voices to the table, and helping build capacity for action on the ground for cleaner water. With almost five decades of experience, we still believe that the best results come from bringing people together to find common ground, and working to put “boots on the ground” in order to bring clean water projects to life. Building partnerships is in our DNA. The Alliance remains highly effective in forming collaborative efforts that successfully support local governments, watershed and conservation groups, community organizations, residents, and businesses in their efforts to improve water quality in local rivers and streams of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Learn more about the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay at [www.allianceforthebay.org](http://www.allianceforthebay.org)

Facebook: [Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay](#)

Twitter: [AllianceForBay](#)

Instagram: [Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay](#)