



Request for Proposals: Assistance in Facilitating the Development of a New Five-Year Strategic Communications Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Program Communications Office

Deadline: Friday, January 27, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. EST

Introduction:

The [Chesapeake Bay Program](#) (CBP) is a partnership guided by the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#), which sets goals and outcomes for restoring the Bay and provides a framework to hold us accountable for our work. We are conveners, bringing together experts in all areas of Bay restoration to collaborate, educate and guide, while making available the most up-to-date policy, science, data and resources.

Partners include the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the federal government; and advisory groups of stakeholders, scientists and local government officials.

The CBP Communications Office is staffed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay through a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cooperative agreement. As the voice of the partnership, we communicate the science, policy and data of the CBP through media outreach, web-and-print-based products, multimedia, and outreach and engagement with stakeholders around the watershed.

The CBP Communications Office is seeking qualified communications and/or marketing firms/professionals to assist in the development of a new five-year strategic communications plan. This strategic communications plan will provide a framework for the CBP Communications Office to inform, engage and educate a diverse set of stakeholders and the over 18 million residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Objectives:

The Alliance is seeking assistance in developing and executing an approach for gathering feedback and other necessary information to guide the formation of a new five-year strategic communications plan. The strategic communications plan should support both the priorities of the CBP partnership and the goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* by (1) interviewing key stakeholders and conducting specific audience focus groups, (2) synthesizing the collected information into a digestible report and (3) assisting the CBP Communications Office in developing short-and-long term recommendations that will inform the structure of the strategic communications plan.

- 1) Convene a kick-off meeting with the CBP Communications Office to determine project schedule and confirm deliverables. The selected contractor is expected to maintain regular contact with project leads and schedule update meetings as needed.
- 2) With guidance from the CBP Communications Office, the contractor will conduct individual and/or group interviews, focus groups or other means to incorporate the views of target stakeholders, including but not limited to:
 - Key stakeholders internal to the CBP partnership, such as:
 - Representatives from CBP Goal Implementation Teams, workgroups and advisory committees.
 - CBP leadership, including members of the Management Board.
 - Federal, state and local government members of the partnership.
 - Key stakeholders outside of the CBP partnership, such as:
 - Members of the media.

- Communications professionals from around the watershed.
- Members of often-targeted audiences (e.g., farmers, underserved communities).

Feedback gathered from these interviews or focus groups may include, but is not limited to:

- Current view of CBP communications efforts.
 - Future vision for CBP communications efforts.
 - Challenges or barriers to the effectiveness of CBP communications efforts.
 - What opportunities exist to enhance the effectiveness of communications and the work of the CBP Communications Office.
 - Audiences that should be better targeted by CBP communications efforts.
- 3) The contractor will compile feedback from the interviews and focus groups to produce:
- Report detailing key findings and results from stakeholder outreach, including an appendix of raw data with identifying information removed.
- 4) Using the report detailing findings and results from stakeholder outreach, in addition to a previously-completed internal communications audit, the contractor will develop the following recommendations:
- Key audiences to target and suggestions for the best ways in which to do so.
 - What communications efforts to do less of.
 - What communications efforts to focus more time and attention on.
 - Ways to better engage the partnership with communications needs and priorities.
 - What communications priorities to focus on for the short-term (now through the next 18 months), as well as over the next five years.
- 5) Assist the Communications Office in terms of facilitating internal team discussions and providing advice around developing short-and-long-term recommendations that will inform the development of the final strategic communications strategy.

The Communications Office will make available any past and current communications products and efforts, including the internal communications audit completed in the summer of 2022. Additionally, they will assist in arranging and organizing stakeholder interviews and meetings, and will be the primary point of contact with the contractor to guide the process.

Deliverables:

The contractor will be expected to provide:

- Project schedule and workplan.
- Regular progress updates to the CBP Communications Office, including meeting agendas and notes when required.
- Draft interview questions for focus groups and online survey (*Note: Chesapeake Bay Program has survey software available for use.*)
- Final interview questions for focus groups and online survey.
- A written plan for collecting feedback from internal and external stakeholders.
- Written report detailing key findings and results from stakeholder outreach, that includes appendix of raw data with identifying information removed.
- Final recommendations report that recommends key audiences to target and the best ways in which to do so, what communications efforts to start, stop or continue, ways in which to better engage the partnership, and what communications priorities should be focused on over the next five years.



- Assistance to the CBP Communications Office in the form of facilitation and guidance as they draft the final communications strategy.

Evaluation Criteria:

The Alliance is looking for organizations that are a match with our organizational culture, adhering to our core 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.
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](#).

In addition, we are seeking the following:

- Responsiveness of the written proposal to the purpose and scope of the project.
- Knowledge and experience in communications, outreach and engagement.
- Knowledge and experience in research methods and surveying.
- Knowledge and experience in facilitation.
- Familiarity with the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Ability to complete all work by July 31, 2023 and operate within budget.

Deadline for submission:

Proposals must be received on or before 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, January 27, 2023, and should be emailed to Rachel Felver, CBP Communications Director, at rfelver@chesapeakebay.net. No phone calls, please.

About the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay:

For over 50 years, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay has brought together communities, companies and conservationists to improve our lands and waters. We strive for clean stream and rivers flowing through resilient landscapes, cared for by the people who live, work and play in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We value collaboration, inclusivity and driving with results for collective, equitable and measurable impact. We have offices in Annapolis, Md., Lancaster, Pa., Richmond, Va. and Washington, D.C. Our organization focuses on encouraging the health and quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries through on-the-ground restoration efforts, and just as our name suggests, we build relationships with organizations and communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Our initiatives fall under four main programmatic areas: agriculture, forestry, green infrastructure and stewardship and engagement. Learn more about the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay at www.allianceforthebay.org.

About the Chesapeake Bay Program:

The [Chesapeake Bay Program](#) is a diverse federal/state/non-government partnership established in 1983. It works to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay and the thousands of streams, creeks and rivers in the watershed through collaborative policy making, scientific assessment and public communication. The Communications Office is managed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay under grant funding provided by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Budget: Not to exceed \$30,000.