



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Chesapeake Bay Program - Communications Office

Deadline for proposals: February 16, 2016

Date: January 29, 2016

Project Description: Design and facilitate a process of outreach, information gathering, research, and synthesis to support the creation of a Strategic Communications Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Program

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay invites communications, and/or marketing firms or professionals to submit proposals to assist the [Chesapeake Bay Program \(CBP\)](#) Communications Office in its outreach, information gathering, research, and synthesis efforts in support the creation of a five-year strategic communications plan for the work of the CBP partnership. The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay manages the CBP Communications Office and will lead the development and implementation of the strategic communications plan in order to better support the communications needs and priorities of the CBP partnership.

Background: The CBP is an extensive regional partnership guiding the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. It is the largest collaborative, science-based initiative in the region. Partners include multiple federal agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (who often serves as lead representative for the federal government); the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission; and advisory groups of citizens, scientists and local government officials. Governance is accomplished through an extensive set of Committees and task forces with broad stakeholder representation. For more information on how CBP is structured, please visit our [About the Bay Program](#) webpage.

The CBP is guided by the goals and outcomes of the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#), and communications is a key tool through which these goals will be achieved. Communications related to the Watershed Agreement are aligned with five "themes" that mirror the agreement's vision: abundant life, clean water, conserved lands, engaged communities and climate resiliency.

Objective: The Alliance is seeking a facilitator to support the CBP Communications Office in its effort to create a strategic communications plan that supports 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) creating an overarching vision and objectives for the Communications Office, and (3) determining short- and long-term priorities and tools needed for achieving that vision.

Scope of Work: The facilitator will be expected to assist the CBP Communications Office in performance of the following duties:

1. Stakeholder research:

Use 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 of CBP Advisory Committees, Action Teams, and Workgroups
 - Chairs, vice chairs, Coordinators and staffers of CBP Goal Implementation Teams
 - CBP Leadership and the CBP Management Board
 - Members of state and local governments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Key Stakeholders outside the CBP partnership, such as:
 - Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

- Business leaders
 - Members of the media
 - Other key user groups or community leaders
- Feedback gathered from these interviews or focus groups may include, but is not limited to:
 - Participants' current view of CBP communications efforts
 - Participants' future vision for CBP communications efforts
 - Obstacles or barriers to effective CBP communications efforts
 - Opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of communications and the work of the CBP Communications Office
 - Audiences that participants feel should be better engaged by the CBP Communications Office or are currently underserved

2. Information synthesis and consolidation: Compile results to produce:

- Key Findings from outreach
- A draft vision statement for the Bay Program Communications Office
- Key objectives for achieving that vision (3-5)
- Key audiences to target and key messages for those audiences
- Suggestions for tools & activities to eliminate, enhance or initiate through which the Bay Program can achieve these key objectives

The CBP Communications Office is currently conducting an audit of existing communications products, the results of which will be made available to the facilitator to assist in their work. The Communications Office will also provide assistance in arranging and organizing stakeholder interviews and meetings, and will be the primary point of contact with the facilitator to guide the process.

Deliverables: The facilitator will be expected to provide:

- Report on key findings and results from stakeholder outreach
- A draft vision and objectives to guide CBP Communications
- Recommendations of audiences to target and key messages to reach those audiences
- Recommendation of feasible and appropriate tools and activities through which CBP can best achieve its communication objectives
- Suggested process and metrics for future evaluation of the strategic plan's effectiveness and implementation
- A presentation of findings to CBP leadership

Interested firms should reply with a proposal by February 16, 2016, to:

Stephanie Smith, Interim CBP Communications Director – ssmith@chesapeakebay.net

Timeframe for work: March 1, 2016 to July 1, 2016

Budget: Please provide hourly rate and estimated total cost.

Proposals should include: statement of qualifications, how you would approach the design and facilitation of the project, a project timeline, and any unique suggestions for achieving success. Itemizing costs by primary phases, activities, or deliverables in the proposal will help the Alliance in its review and selection of a contractor.

Questions: Submit no later than Wednesday, February 10 via email to Stephanie Smith at ssmith@chesapeakebay.net or call 410-267-9881

Please visit our website – www.chesapeakebay.net – to better understand our work.