

Request for Proposals- Communications and Website Development

Marketing, Communications, [and/or] Website Development Consultant for Lake Michigan School Food Systems Innovation Hub

Introduction: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) School Food System Transformation Challenge seeks to transform school food systems through innovative practices that increase student access to healthy meals. Led by the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI), the Lake Michigan School Food Systems Innovation Hub (Innovation Hub) will implement the USDA Challenge to spark innovation and strengthen the Lake Michigan K-12 food system to improve schools' access to nutritious, local, and culturally relevant products in Illinois, Michigan, Northern Indiana, and Wisconsin. As part of this initiative, IPHI is seeking proposals from qualified consultants/companies to support the development and dissemination of communications and marketing materials to key audiences that promote sub-grant opportunities and share resources and success stories. Additionally, IPHI is seeking proposals from qualified consultants/companies to help develop and launch an Innovation Hub website that meets USDA and federal law compliance requirements and is accessible, user-friendly, and well-designed. As many communications and marketing firms also provide website development services, IPHI is open to having one contractor fulfill both scopes of work or having two contractors work to address each scope of work (communications/ marketing as one, and website development/launch as the other), with IPHI working with each to align efforts. See more details below about the scopes of work and how to apply to fulfill one or both of them.

Proposals for the Marketing/Communications/Website Consultant(s) are due by May 25th, 2023, 5:00pm CT, and should be submitted to janna.simon@iphionline.org with the subject "Innovation Hub Marketing/Comms/Website Consultant Proposal."

Project Background: The partners leading the Lake Michigan School Food Systems Innovation Hub will collectively identify and make awards to local and regional collaboratives to strengthen and adapt the food system to enable schools to serve their students culturally relevant, delicious foods that align with current USDA Transitional Standards, as well as future meal pattern iterations. Collaboratives of schools/school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and their community partners will receive tailored training and technical assistance from Innovation Hub partners to support innovations, especially around food production and supply chains, to create a more resilient and equitable food system from which schools and students can benefit. With IPHI leading the grant administration and sub-granting process, a State Lead organization from each state will support training and technical assistance to innovative collaboratives in their states to implement these programs. The project prioritizes inclusion of socially and economically disadvantaged farmers, food producers, and food industry partners and on advancing innovation in communities with lower incomes, communities of color, rural communities, Tribal communities and other historically disadvantaged communities.

Scopes of Work:

1) The **Marketing and Communications** scope of work is as follows:

- Develop initial brand guidelines and logo for the Innovation Hub.
- Create easily accessible media tools (e.g., infographics, flyers, videos, social media posts) to support Innovation Hub partners to promote the Innovation Hub and upcoming grant opportunities to farmers, producers, suppliers, distributors, K-12 schools, and their community partners. Initial materials requested by partners include email/newsletter template language, a flyer, a palm card, and a short promotional video. Initial materials completed by July 31st, 2023, with ongoing development through December 2023. [Note- IPHI will work to translate all materials into Spanish, and possibly other languages, and would request assistance from the consultant to integrate translated text back into designed materials.]
- Develop and implement a media outreach plan to raise awareness of available sub-grants when they are launched in the fall of 2023.
- Support Innovation Hub partners to share and disseminate Innovation Hub materials through various earned, digital and/or social media channels. Ongoing through December 2023.
- [If separate contractor] Advise the Website Development Firm on content and design that matches the brand and design features of the media tools. Ongoing through August 31st, 2023.
- Participate in a bimonthly check-in call with IPHI to report on progress, etc. Ongoing through December 2023.
- Submit quarterly written report on workplan progress and communications reach/outcomes. Ongoing through December 2023.

2) The **Website Development** scope of work is as follows:

- Work with IPHI, a Marketing and Communications Contractor, USDA FNS, and Innovation Hub partners to build the Innovation Hub website that meets federal law and policy as well as cooperative agreement requirements and specifications. The website will include integrated access to a grants management portal that houses the request for applications (RFA) information, the grant application, training resources and tools, the ability to request and book technical assistance with Innovation Hub partners, and reporting features. The website will utilize USDA FNS-approved branding and image art/graphics and will comply with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Standard Google Analytics tools will be embedded in the website, including at minimum total number of views, number of unique users, unique user scrolls, and number of events (i.e., “clicks”), along with other analytics as agreed upon with USDA FNS. Website launched by August 31st, 2023.
- Additionally, IPHI plans to work with a consulting firm led by people with visual disabilities who test website accessibility with screen readers and other assistive

technology. The consultant must be willing to implement critical changes recommended by this consulting firm to ensure accessibility of the website before it is launched.

Timeline:

- July 31st, 2023: Initial brand, logo, and key launch materials developed.
- Ongoing through December 2023: Design Innovation Hub materials, support partners to share and disseminate materials, participate in bimonthly check-in calls, and submit quarterly written reports on workplan progress and communications reach/outcomes.
- Through August 31st, 2023: Launch (or advise the Website Development Firm) the Innovation Hub website with integrated grant portal.

The Innovation Hub will work to promote sub-grant opportunities, successes, and lessons learned through December 2028. Ideally, upon satisfactory completion of the start-up communications work, the communications/marketing/website consultant(s)/company(ies) would help IPHI update materials as needed (and/or maintain the website if included in the scope) in 2024 through 2027, and support development of success stories, additional media outreach about project outcomes, and more in 2028 (with annual scopes of works and budgets).

Preference:

- Preference will be given to contractors that meet the USDA definition of economically and socially disadvantaged:
 - Small businesses owned by individuals that have faced barriers to access to the capital, markets, and networks they need to grow their businesses because of certain statuses or membership in certain groups, including membership in a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society and;
 - Small businesses in Community Development Financial Institution Investment Areas, which are generally low-income, high-poverty geographies that receive insufficient support for the needs of small businesses, including minority-owned businesses.
- Preference will be given to vendors certified as Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) or Women Business Enterprise (WBE) in the Cook County or Chicago MBE/WBE system.

Budget:

Communications/Marketing scope of work in 2023: Up to \$55,000

Website Development and Launch scope of work in 2023: Up to \$60,000

Total if proposal includes both scopes of work in 2023: Up to \$115,000 (if needed)

[Note- If the contract extends beyond 2023, there is a minimum maintenance budget of \$5,000 for communications each year and \$5,000 for the website each year, with an additional \$70,000 for communications development in 2028.]

Proposal Information:

Proposals should include the following information and should be no longer than five pages if proposal includes one scope, and seven pages if proposal covers both scopes of work:

- Whether proposal covers work for the communications and marketing scope, the website development scope, or both.
- Interest in working on this project.
- Proposed approach, methodology, and timeline for fulfilling the scope(s) of work.
- A description of relevant experience and qualifications
- A budget for the proposed work, including hourly rate and estimated number of hours for each task.
- Examples of relevant previous work and references from previous clients. The proposal should provide at least two references from previous clients.
- Certification of alignment with one or more preferences, detailed above, if applicable.

Qualifications:

- Relevant experience and qualifications of the contractor and their team in providing marketing and communications support and/or website development services to food systems or public health initiatives.
- Demonstrated ability to develop effective media tools and design compelling communications materials for a variety of audiences and in multiple languages, and/or to launch accessible, well-designed, user-friendly websites.
- Commitment to meeting the project's goals and objectives within the allocated budget and timeline.
- Preference for contractors that align with preferences, detailed above.

Submission:

Proposals and/or questions for the Communications/Marketing/Web consultant(s) are due by May 25th, 2023, 5:00pm CT, and should be submitted to janna.simon@iphionline.org with the subject "Innovation Hub Marketing/Comms/Web Proposal." IPHI may conduct interviews with selected firms prior to making a final selection. We look forward to receiving your proposal.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement and Attribution

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.