



Request for Proposals

Statement of Purpose

A coalition of California agricultural organizations is seeking a public relations firm to assist in developing and coordinating the industry-wide implementation of an inclusive, proactive, and positive communication plan. The specific elements of the communication plan will be based on the positioning strategy, message concepts, and communication tools identified in consumer research funded by the California Agricultural Communications Coalition. The purpose of the communication plan will be to communicate the value of the agricultural industry to the state of California and reconnect consumers to the source of their food supply. Additionally, the communication plan will aim to improve consumer perceptions of California agriculture and facilitate greater collaboration within the industry.

Background Information

The California Agricultural Communications Coalition is a coalition of more than 90 agricultural organizations representing the broad spectrum of agricultural commodities in California. The coalition began as an effort of the Agricultural Advisory Committee to the Commission for Economic Development, which provides expertise regarding agricultural business in the state, identifies key challenges to the industry's growth, and offers recommendations for solutions. In early 2008, the AAC identified the lack of consistent and unified messages, and an effective mechanism for delivering those messages, as a major impediment to California agriculture. In an effort to create a solution to this problem, the AAC organized an inaugural summit in November 2008 to provide the industry with a forum to discuss greater collaboration in developing common messaging points, as well as opportunities to enhance the overall communications efforts of the agricultural sector. Since this summit, a steering committee has directed the development of specific message concepts that can be incorporated across all sectors of California agriculture, which have been tested and refined through both qualitative and quantitative consumer research (funded by the coalition). The steering committee has also secured block grant funding for the development and coordination of an inclusive, proactive, and positive communication plan based on these message concepts.

Scope of Work

Among the tasks to be completed are:

- Develop an inclusive, proactive, and positive communication plan based on the positioning strategy and message concepts identified in the consumer research.
- Coordinate the implementation of the communication plan among coalition organizations.
- Develop an interactive website to engage consumers and educate them on the benefits of the California agricultural industry.



- Evaluate and refine communication plan based on performance monitoring surveys.
- Conduct follow-up outreach to coalition organizations as necessary.
- Conduct follow-up quantitative consumer research to assess the effectiveness of the communication plan (based on benchmarks determined through the initial consumer research).
- Provide a summary report on the effectiveness of the communication plan and offer recommendations for future coalition activities.

Outcome and Performance Standards

Objective #1: Facilitate greater collaboration in communication and public outreach among California agricultural organizations.

Benchmark: There is no formal coordination of communications and public outreach efforts among California agricultural organizations.

Target and Performance Measure: Present the communication plan to representatives of 100 California agricultural organizations with 25 of them agreeing to incorporate the plan within their own individual communication activities.

Performance Monitoring Plan: January 2010: The contracted public relations firm will present the communications plan to the agricultural industry for review and adoption. The number of representatives from California agricultural organizations will be documented along with the number of interested parties to determine if the target and performance measure have initially been met.

July 2010 to September 2010: The contracted public relations firm will conduct a series of meetings with participating organizations to evaluate how the communications plan is being implemented. The implementation activities of each participating organization will be documented and reported at the end of the year to determine if the performance measure continues to be met.

October 2010: The effectiveness of collaborative activities will be determined through market research.

July 2011 to September 2011: The contracted public relations firm will conduct follow-up meetings with participating organizations to evaluate how the communications plan is being implemented. The implementation activities of each participating organization will be documented and reported at the end of the year to determine if the performance measure continues to be met.



October 2011: The effectiveness of collaborative activities will be determined through market research.

June 2012: The contracted public relations firm will provide a summary report of implementation activities, overall effectiveness, and recommendations for future communications efforts.

Objective #2: Improve consumers' perceptions of the industry, which will increase their understanding of the benefits California agricultural producers provide the state.

Benchmark: Consumers' baseline perceptions of the industry and understanding of the benefits California agricultural producers provide the state are currently being established through industry-funded market research. The market research will be completed in November 2009.

Target and Performance Measure: Improve consumers' perceptions of the industry and increase their understanding of the benefits California agricultural producers provide the state (compared to the baseline established in the November 2009 market research).

Performance Monitoring Plan: March 2012: The contracted public relations firm will conduct follow-up market research to measure the change in consumers' perception of the industry and their understanding of the benefits California agricultural producers provide the state.

June 2012: The contracted public relations firm will provide a summary report of implementation activities, overall effectiveness, and recommendations for future communications efforts.

Survey: The follow-up quantitative market research will mirror the survey currently being funded by the industry. The population surveyed will be consumers. 900 total telephone interviews will be conducted covering consumers who reside or work in Southern, Central and Northern California. The data gathered from the quantitative survey will be compared to the results of the initial consumer research. The contracted public relations firm will develop an analysis of the results and present their recommendations for future coalition communications efforts.



Deliverables

Project Activity	Timeline
Develop a California Agricultural Communication Plan (CACP) based on refined positioning statement and message concepts.	Dec. 2009
Present CACP to coalition for review and adoption or implementation within each organization's own individual communication plans.	Jan. 2010
Develop an interactive Web site to engage consumers and educate them on the benefits of the California specialty crop industry	Jan. 2010 (maintenance ongoing)
Conduct series of statewide seminars and individual association trainings to implement CACP.	Jan. 2010 – Mar.2010
Performance Monitoring (OBJ 1): Conduct series of meetings with participating organizations to evaluate how CACP is being implemented.	July 2010 – Sept. 2010
Performance Monitoring (OBJ 1): Conduct survey to determine how the communication tools are being implemented by participating organizations and how effective they are in implementing the CACP.	Oct. 2010
Conduct follow-up outreach to participating organizations as necessary.	Nov. 2010 – Jan. 2011
Performance Monitoring (OBJ 1): Conduct series of meetings with participating organizations to evaluate how CACP is being implemented.	July 2011– Sept. 2011
Performance Monitoring (OBJ 1): Conduct survey to determine how the communication tools are being implemented by participating organizations and how effective they are in implementing the CACP.	Oct. 2011
Conduct follow-up outreach to participating organizations as necessary.	Nov.2011 – Jan. 2012
Performance Monitoring (OBJ 2): Conduct follow-up assessment on effectiveness of CACP.	Mar.2012
Refine CACP as necessary and conduct follow-up outreach to participating organizations.	Apr. 2012 – June 2012
Provide summary report of CACP and recommendations for future coalition activities.	June 2012



Expected Qualifications

The following will be expected of qualified applicants:

- Must have a successful history of working with diverse coalitions, preferably within in the California agricultural industry.
- Must demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the unique issues facing the California agricultural industry.
- Must demonstrate an understanding of the current trends that impact the California agricultural industry.
- Must demonstrate a firm grasp on the current opinions and attitudes of California consumers, preferably toward the California agricultural industry.
- Must demonstrate expertise in the areas of consumer research, strategic planning, crisis management and both traditional and new media relations (including website development and management).

Process Schedule

Please submit a proposal outlining your approach and cost estimate for the services described above by Friday, January 15th, 2010. Please include in your proposal a response to the following two questions:

- 1) What is your general philosophy on communication outreach?
- 2) How do you plan on working with a diverse group of coalition stakeholders to develop the California Agricultural Communication Plan?

All questions regarding this RFP should be submitted no later than Friday, January 8th, 2010. Selection of a contractor is expected by February 1st, 2010, with work beginning immediately.

Term of Contract

The project will begin in February 2010 and will extend through June 2012. The three-year contract will be for an estimated \$357,500.

Point of Contact

Proposals can be sent to the following address:

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