



Request for Proposals Communications Firm for Values-Aligned Universal School Meals Strategic Communications Campaign

National Farm to School Network is seeking a communications firm to assist with the development and implementation of a strategic messaging and public awareness building campaign to shift the narrative about opportunities for universal meals in school meal and child nutrition programs. Through this campaign, we aim to build support for a vision of universal meals that prioritizes and centers the voices and perspectives of those who have been most impacted by inequities in our current food system, as well as build policymaker and grassroots support for universal school meals, embedded with the six key values of farm to school.

Who We Are

National Farm to School Network (NFSN) is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education (including school gardens) into schools and early care and education settings. Farm to school (F2S) activities, when firmly centered in equity, can create opportunities for children and families to make their own food choices, while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. NFSN provides vision, leadership and support at the state, regional and national levels to connect and expand the farm to school movement. Our network includes national staff, partners from states, Washington D.C., U.S. Territories and Native nations, an advisory board and thousands of farm to school supporters.

For more information, please visit www.farmtoschool.org. NFSN is a project of Tides Center, the nation's largest fiscal sponsor. Tides Center is a nonprofit organization based in San Francisco, CA that works with individuals, groups and funders to implement and accelerate positive social change in the nonprofit sector. For more information, please visit www.tides.org.

Background

A values-aligned universal meals program – which would ensure that every child in our country is guaranteed nourishing meals in both schools and early childhood (ECE) settings, without the requirement of proof of financial need – has the potential to benefit everyone throughout the school food ecosystem, including farmers and food producers, harvesters, processors, school nutrition professionals, educators, children and families. Through values-aligned universal meals, we can shift both the amount of money our nation spends in feeding our children and supporting our food producers, and articulate how that money should be spent to reflect our community values. Universal school and ECE meals, embedded with the core values of farm to school, have the potential to radically transform our food system. NFSN's six key values are:

- Economic justice,
- Environmental justice,
- Health impact,
- Racial justice,
- Respect for workers and educators
- Animal welfare.



Further definitions of these values in the context of this campaign can be found here: [Values Aligned Universal School Meals](#). NFSN's goal is to build an effective communications and public awareness campaign for values-aligned universal meals that mobilizes support among the most impacted grassroots stakeholders and public policy decision-makers.

Opportunity

NFSN has been awarded a grant to execute a Strategic Communications Campaign for Values-Aligned Universal Meals. This is an 18-month project that seeks to increase knowledge, positively shift public perception, and build grassroots support for values-aligned universal meals. The strategy should encompass at least two phases of work: (1) a national launch phase, and (2) a strategic grassroots engagement phase that will target to-be-identified geographical locations. NFSN is seeking a communications firm to help align the campaign strategy with our six key values and in support of NFSN's [Call to Action](#). Specifically:

- Ensure the entire campaign, from concept through evaluation, is unwaveringly rooted in racial equity;
- Ensure the campaign strategy and content will center the voices and perspectives of those who have been most impacted by inequities in our current food system; and
- Ensure the approach to campaign content generation respects participants' agency over their own stories, including recommendations to NFSN for an equitable method of campaign material ownership

The communications firm will work closely with NFSN's network partners and Values-Aligned Working Group organizations to take direction on messaging strategy and content creation. The communications firm will report to the NFSN Policy Director for approval of the strategic direction and campaign messaging, assisted by the Communications Director and project team staff. NFSN Executive Director, Helen Dombalis, will serve as the spokesperson for the organization and will promote the campaign via organizational outreach and interviews.

As identified in the grant award process, NFSN anticipates the following activities for each stage of the campaign. These stages are included here as guidelines and are intended to provide clarity for your proposal approach.

Planning stage

- Develop metrics and measurable outcomes to be achieved through the communications campaign, including outlining timelines, milestones, and roles for accomplishing these.
- Develop strategy for messaging that addresses both broad national dissemination goals, and the inclusion of grassroots communities. Build on existing messaging resources in the child nutrition space, where applicable.
- With stakeholder input, create an equity-centered narrative framework and messaging tools to bolster public support for values-aligned universal school meals. This may include rebranding the "values-aligned universal school meals" name, for example to align with "Healthy School Meals for All" language.



Phase 1: National launch

- Lead implementation of the communications campaign strategy, with support from NFSN's communications and policy teams and in coordination with other campaign partner organizations.
- Manage the development of assets to be used as part of the communications campaign, which may include, but are not limited to: graphics and campaign visual identity, microsite, story banking, media materials, media pitches, op-eds, video content, audio content, photography, digital and/or print ads, outreach guides for partner organizations, and/or sharing toolkits for public engagement in the campaign, recommended key talking points, template outreach materials, social media hashtags, peer-to-peer texting, podcasts, etc. Additional project funding may be available to support the implementation of some of these materials (e.g., graphic design, video development).

Phase 2: Storytelling

- Create an advocacy and messaging resource guide, based on lessons learned through the communications campaign, that can be shared with grassroots stakeholders and partner organizations to continue advocacy for values-aligned universal school meals through their own efforts, in coordination with allies also working in the space. The guide may include, but is not limited to: key messages and talking points, social media copy, customizable graphics, media pitching ideas, a sample op-ed, template materials, etc.
- Support promotion of the advocacy guide and messaging resources through dissemination to stakeholder organizations, targeted media engagement, and other approaches to ensure the resources reach and are useful to the most impacted stakeholders.
- Provide technical assistance and support to grassroots partners in using and customizing the advocacy and messaging resource.
- Provide media coaching to key NFSN staff, in order to support them in being spokespersons for values-aligned universal school meals.

Evaluation: Wrap Up and Campaign Evaluation

- Contribute to overall project evaluation, including reporting on final outcomes of identified metrics of the communications campaign, drafting a comprehensive summary of work accomplished through the duration of the project, and making recommendations for additional communications opportunities to continue advancement of the values-aligned universal meals concept.

Timeline

Project period is 12 months



Estimated timeline for work to be performed:

Planning Stage: November 2021 - February 2022

Phase 1: National launch - March-May 2022

Phase 2: Storytelling - June-September 2022

Evaluation: Wrap Up and Campaign Evaluation: September - October 2022

Budget

\$240,000 total billable contract for services, estimated at \$20,000 per month over 12 months.

Additional funds up to \$25,000 are allocated for asset development and may be applied to the contract if assets are developed in-house.

Proposal Evaluation

Criteria which will be viewed favorably in evaluating applicants include:

- Proven commitment to advancing racial justice and centering impacted voices, in alignment with NFSN's values and vision.
- Experience developing equity-centered narratives and public messaging that are compelling and actionable.
- Experience with food systems content, including engaging media in food systems and/or child nutrition topics.
- Ability to gain nuanced understanding of challenging and evolving political issues quickly.
- Experience with information campaigns targeted both at grassroots audiences and policy makers.
- BIPOC-owned or -led
- Commitment to diversity and racial equity within your staff/organization
- Track record of effectively engaging with community-level stakeholders and demonstrated ability to have direct relationships and experience with the communities served by this campaign.
- Ability to work at the national level to ensure maximum reach and profile of the campaign.

To Apply

Please submit your proposal to NFSN's Interim Communications Director, Amanda Shaffer at amanda@farmtoschool.org. Early applications are encouraged as this opportunity will be open until filled. Qualified candidates will be contacted by phone or email.

Please include the following in your application:

Biographical and Contact Information

Provide the firm's name, address, website, and telephone number. Include name, title, and e-mail address of the individual who will serve as the primary contact, as well as resumes for the proposed project team.



Background and Experience

Include a description and history of your firm. Address any relevant information from the Proposal Evaluation criteria listed above, including:

- Completed projects that are similar in scale;
- Work for analogous organizations in food justice work, health equity, or racial equity campaigns; and,
- Experience centering communications and marketing in racial equity.

Project Approach

Please explain your approach to this project. Provide recommendations to align campaign strategy with NFSN's six key values and Call to Action, and recommendations for a two-phase campaign that includes a national launch and grassroots engagement phase. Include important action steps, personnel roles, and suggested metrics or a process for metrics development.

Cost

Include the estimated cost for all work related to tasks and deliverables outlined in the schedule/timeline, including hourly rates.

References

Include at least 3 references and contact information for similar projects.

National Farm to School Network, a project of Tides, is an "at-will" and equal opportunity employer. Applicants and employees shall not be discriminated against because of race, religion, sex, national origin, ethnicity, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender (including pregnancy and gender expression) identity, color, marital status, veteran status, medical condition, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law or ordinance. Applicants from groups most impacted by systemic inequities, including people of color, are strongly encouraged to apply.

Reasonable accommodation will be made so that qualified disabled applicants may participate in the application process.

Please advise in writing of special needs at the time of application.