

Communications and Marketing Committee Proposal Overview – September 2019

The Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC) was established to assist the Land-grant University (LGU) System in communicating the value and impacts of its research and extension/outreach activities. Along with representatives from AHS, ECOP, and ESCOP, the CMC now includes representatives of the LGU academic mission, university government affairs, LGU communications experts, and CARET delegates, who provide additional insights on how to accomplish the CMC's goals. In April 2019, the CMC was designated an ad hoc committee of the BAA and its Policy Board of Directors.

In April 2019, the CMC recommended terminating the contract with kglobal, the primary consultant for the communications and marketing project and the Cornerstone component of this contract. This would allow the project to pivot and undergo an evolutionary step to address the question: "What is the plan for best promoting awareness of the LGU System?" The CMC noted that individual universities had been successful in communicating their locally-focused stories that promoted awareness and value of the institution. The LGU System did not have a similar coordinated effort with associated collateral promotional materials.

The CMC recommends a three-step proposal to move forward a system-wide marketing and communications effort. With the approval of the Sections, the CMC proposes that residual monies (~\$230,000) from the terminated kglobal and Cornerstone contract be used to develop a strategic plan for effectively communicating the impacts and value of the LGU system to target audiences; a plan that is anchored by clearly defined messages, indicators of success and intended outcomes.

The first step of the proposed process is to ask AHS, ECOP and ESCOP if a strategic plan for education and awareness is desirable. The attached draft scope of work for a Marketing and Communications Strategist describes a proposed effort to prepare, in consultation and collaboration with the various sections of the LGU system, and in coordination with the CMC, strategies outlining options for education and awareness campaigns for consideration by the LGU system. These options will include defined messages, desired outcomes, target audiences, evaluation metrics, and other indicators of marketing/communication success.

The second step of the process, if approved, is the hiring of a temporary employee ("Strategist") on a fixed-term basis, to prepare a strategic plan for education and awareness with specified deliverable dates. A draft position description for this Strategist is attached, along with a budget. Since this effort will be on behalf of the entire LGU System, the APLU Division of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources will employ the individual, although the duty location could be elsewhere

In the third step of the proposed process, the CMC will share the completed strategic plan with the LGU system for review and input. The CMC will consider the input, revise as needed and provide the strategic plan options for review and approval by each of the sections. After revision and approval, the CMC will implement the selected strategic plan option.

The CMC asks for your review and consideration of this proposed three-step process in advance of discussion and a required vote at the National ESS/CES-NEDA Meeting in Nashville, TN.

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Title: APLU BAA Marketing and Communication Strategist

Reports to: Office of the Vice President for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources

Primary Function: Create a strategic marketing and communication plan to promote awareness of the impact, importance, and brand value of the Land-Grant University (LGU) System.

Responsibilities:

- Engage members of the Board on Agricultural Assembly (BAA) members to gather necessary information to inform a strategic marketing and communications plan designed to convey priorities and impacts of the LGUs to appropriate audiences to increase visibility and support for the LGU System.
- Identify strategies to effectively influence target audiences.
- Identify strategies that ensure consistency in messaging and promotion of brand value.
- Collaborate with LGU communications units, APLU's Office of Public Affairs, and Council on Government Relations to identify opportunities for consistent external messaging.
- Review past efforts in social media (website content and social media presence) and make recommendations on development of social media campaigns within the strategic plan.
- Identify opportunities and propose strategies for improved messaging that will engage agricultural allies, strengthen relationships and expand partnerships.

Minimum Requirements:

Education – Bachelor's degree in communications or marketing or an equivalent combination of educational experience. Master's degree preferred.

Experience – Minimum of five years of public affairs, public relations, strategic planning, marketing and/or communication experience with demonstrated success in the portfolio of accomplishments. Experience in executive coaching, higher education or agriculture/natural resources preferred.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – Excellent research, data analytics, verbal and written communication skills required. Ability to efficiently manage multiple projects and work effectively in complex systems. Proficiency with word processing, analytic and database programs. Ability to work cooperatively with others.

Salary Range: \$115,00 - \$130,000 with benefits. Salary commensurate with skill and experience.

Location: Washington, D.C., at APLU (1307 New York Ave NW #400, Washington, DC 20005.) Employer would consider a hybrid location arrangement.

Initial contract term: November 1, 2019 – October 31, 2020.

Principal outputs – dates: first draft strategic plan due – April 1, 2020; second draft strategic plan due - June 15, 2020; final strategic plan due – September 1, 2020.

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MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN: SCOPE OF WORK

I. **Create and develop a strategic plan that promotes the impact, importance, and brand value of the Land-Grant University System.**

A Marketing and Communications Strategist, hired for a fixed term, will provide leadership for developing a Land-Grant University (LGU) System marketing and communications strategic plan. This plan will be based on identified and updated marketing and communications needs, priorities and expectations from each of the Sections (Administrative Heads Section [AHS], the Cooperative Extension Section [CES], and the Experiment Station Section [ESS].) In developing the plan, the strategist will:

- Identify and assess existing messaging materials from individual institutions, the National Impacts Database, Multistate Research Fund Impact Statements, and NIMSS that highlight the unique services, value, and impacts provided by the Land-Grant System.
- Engage with representatives from 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions to generate consensus strategic directions and options.
- Seek input from AHS, CES, and ESS.
- Seek advice from the Council on Government Affairs to identify strategies that may be achievable and successful.
- Create a plan that promotes the value of a unified LGU System.
- Submit the plan to the LGU System for review, revision, and approval, prior to implementation.

II. **Essential and Potential Activities.**

The strategic plan must identify and prioritize activities, audiences, and collateral materials necessary to support plan implementation. The strategic plan must also include a blueprint for analyzing activities associated with building, enhancing, and improving messages aimed at target audiences. These analyses must include data and a clear plan for assessing efficacy and success of activities undertaken in the strategic plan options.

Potential activities may include:

- Working in collaboration with LGU communicators and other resources (e.g., the National Impacts Database, Multistate Research Fund Impact Statements, and NIMSS) to identify compelling stories from individual Land-Grant institutions to be highlighted in messaging materials.
- Developing such materials as infographics that further the ability of the LGUs to connect and engage with target audiences.
- Creating a digital outreach strategy for identified audiences.

- Maintaining and improving digital assets including website and social media platforms.

The strategic plan, with identified options, will be delivered to the Communication and Marketing Committee (CMC), which will share the plan with LGU System for subsequent review. After receiving comments from the LGU System, and appropriate revisions, the CMC will work with the LGU System and BAA to implement approved recommendations.

III. Meetings and Conference Calls

The Strategist will work closely with the Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC), and should include

- CMC conference calls
- BAA conference calls and face-to-face meetings
- CARET-AHS Meeting
- Joint COPS Annual Meeting
- CES/ESS/ARD Annual Meetings
- APLU Annual Meeting

IV. Accountability, Coordination and Decision Making

The strategist will deliver iterations of the strategic plan as designated by the CMC and the APLU Vice President for Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources. In addition to the development of the strategic plan, the Strategist will prepare quarterly written reports to the CMC and the APLU Vice President for Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources. Throughout the performance of activities described herein, the Strategist will ensure that institutions and appropriate personnel are engaged as partners, seeking counsel and suggestions for coordinating and reporting on progress against the scope of work. The Communications and Marketing Committee will provide regular electronic updates to the LGU System about progress on the development of the strategic plan, notifying the system when input and decisions are needed. The strategic plan will be approved, in whole or in part, before implementation.