



Communications Campaign and Neighborhood Engagement Plan

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Issued by the Cleveland Tree Coalition

Released on: Friday, September, 20, 2024

Submission Deadline: Friday, November 1, 2024



Introduction and Background

The Cleveland Tree Coalition Communications Campaign and Neighborhood Engagement Project described in this Request for Proposal is an **important step towards equitable growth of the City of Cleveland's urban tree canopy**. Trees are an essential component of redevelopment, economic prosperity, climate resiliency, and public health, yet the city is losing significant tree canopy annually - an average of 75 acres per year.

The Cleveland Tree Coalition (CTC) is a collaborative group of public, private, and community stakeholders partnered with the City of Cleveland to rebuild our urban forest. The Coalition strives to create a healthy, vibrant, sustainable, and equitable urban forest by collaboratively implementing the Cleveland Tree Plan. Together, we're making Cleveland the Forest City once again. The core functions of the CTC include:

- Grow tree canopy in low canopy Cleveland neighborhoods
- Convene and support member organizations
- Provide grant funding to CTC member organizations to support their tree canopy initiatives and projects
- Advocate for improved urban forestry policy
- Shift public sentiment around the value and importance of urban trees

The Coalition has grown to include more than 40 organizations and is a nationally recognized model for engaging the community, including all residents, in reforestation. In addition to the membership group, the CTC Executive Committee of the Cleveland Tree Coalition is comprised of executive-level leadership from Holden Forests and Gardens, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Black Environmental Leaders, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Cleveland Metroparks, City of Cleveland, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Environmental Health Watch, Trust for Public Land, and Cuyahoga County.

In 2024, the CTC adopted a new strategic plan, emphasizing the need for culturally competent and equitable communication and engagement at the neighborhood level. The Engaged and Informed Communities Pillar identifies the need to:

1. Conduct a broad regional awareness campaign promoting the benefits of a healthy tree canopy with shared messaging among member organizations.
2. Create neighborhood-level engagement plans specific to each community that convey how and why to plant trees.
3. Engagement to influence public policy and decision makers.

The communications campaign and engagement plan should support findings and recommendations in both the Cleveland Tree Plan and the CTC Strategic plan. We look forward to working towards restoring Cleveland as the Forest City.

Scope of Services

The CTC seeks to engage a consultant team based upon the following desired goals and deliverables.

Deliverables and Tasks

Deliverable 1: Public Awareness Campaign

Design a public awareness campaign to increase the understanding of the benefits of urban forests while promoting proper stewardship to mitigate the challenges and risks of urban trees. Campaign messages will also address misperceptions of urban trees and the importance of planting and maintaining trees on private property. Messages will be designed to reach residents living in low canopy neighborhoods.

Task 1. Research and create campaign messages

- Identify key messages for low canopy neighborhoods that are linguistically appropriate and culturally competent.
- Test messages and incorporate feedback with groups from the target audience.

Task 2. Develop and test a campaign strategy

- Identify effective communication methods specific to low canopy neighborhoods.
- Develop a campaign plan that includes messages, mediums, and timelines.

Task 3. Create a package of campaign assets, which at a minimum includes a style guide, core messages, and concepts

- Develop engaging and informative content for the campaign.
- Content should be evidence-based and may include press releases, slide decks, presentations, radio ads, blog posts, social media posts, newsletters, educational materials, infographics, flyers, brochures, long and short form videos, web content, etc.

Deliverable 2: Neighborhood Engagement Project

Design neighborhood level engagement plans in at least three neighborhoods with low tree canopy. The goal of each neighborhood engagement plan is to establish relationships with local stakeholders, identify key voices, and identify new or existing strategies to build grassroots support for trees.

Task 1. Facilitate and/or attend community engagement opportunities in each neighborhood.

- Identify and establish relationships with key neighborhood stakeholders.
- Conduct listening and education sessions at community-based sites.
- Identify and connect with existing coalitions, collaboratives, and efforts that align with the CTC.

Task 2. Develop a plan for each neighborhood outlining potential strategies to build capacity for growing the urban tree canopy and advocating for policy change.

- Plans should include at least two storytelling opportunities in each neighborhood.

Project Schedule and Budget

The entire project is expected to take approximately 6 to 8 months to complete. The project budget is approximately \$80,000. If a different period of time is proposed, the proposal should explicitly show why more or less time is needed.

Submission Instructions and Schedule

Proposals should be submitted electronically to Sara Tillie, Director of the Cleveland Tree Coalition, at STillie@WRLandConservancy.org no later than **Friday November 1 at 5:00 p.m. EST**. If the file is too large for email, a link to the file should be provided. Late arrivals will not be accepted. Mail submissions will not be accepted. Written questions may be submitted to Sara Tillie via emails through **Friday, October 25 with the subject line "CTC Communications Questions."**

Following written proposal review, the CTC anticipates hosting short-listed candidates for an interview and oral presentation of their approach. These interviews will be hosted in person, virtually, or in a hybrid setting depending on the locations of consultant team members and will tentatively be scheduled for the week of November 11, 2024.

The CTC anticipates the following submission and evaluation schedule. It is subject to change at the CTCs discretion.

Date	Benchmark
Friday, September 20, 2024	RFP publicly posted and distributed
Friday, November 1, 2024	Proposal deadline
Week of November 11, 2024	Interviews for short-listed candidates
Friday, November 15, 2024	Final selection

Qualifications

The proposal must describe the consultant's qualifications to conduct the scope of work and highlight expertise, knowledge, and experience, including examples of similar/related work and experience working in urban communities. Successful consultant team applicants will need to possess the following qualifications:

- Experience working with diverse communities.
- Experience developing public relations and communication campaigns.
- Knowledge of urban forestry and environmental issues.
- Experience in inclusive community engagement, especially in urban neighborhoods.
- Strong facilitation and project management skills.

- Proficiency in media relations and social media management.
- Demonstrated ability to create engaging content across multiple platforms.

Proposal Contents

Proposal submissions should consist of the following content and utilize the suggested page allocations outlined below. Proposals should be submitted as PDF files.

Cover Letter (1 page) should identify the firm and other general information regarding the consultant's business organization. At a minimum, the cover letter must include the name, form of business entity, address, federal tax identification number, telephone number, primary contact, e-mail address, and the names of any sub-consultant firms included in the proposal.

Executive Summary (3 pages) should provide a clear and concise summary of the consultant's background, level of expertise, relevant experience, ability, and project approach. The executive summary should include:

- a. A statement discussing your understanding of the CTC Communications Campaign and Community Engagement Plan.
- b. *Firm Qualifications/Experience:* Consultants should discuss their industry experience, including previous relevant work, and what defines them as a leader in their industry. Please include the following information:
 - Identify how you meet or exceed the minimum qualifications.
 - List relevant recent experience and role (e.g. prime, subconsultant) for each firm on the consultant team as it relates to providing the desired scope of services.
 - Highlight project experience and/or links to similar completed projects should reflect the abilities of consultant team members in roles like those proposed for this project.
- c. *Key Staff and Capacity:* Consultants should indicate the key staff proposed for this contract, identifying specific project responsibilities and availability of each proposed key staff person. This section should also include any subcontractors. Provide for each proposed key staff person a resume detailing experience related to the services as defined in this RFP.
- d. Any proposed scope changes and justification.

Project Approach (5 pages) should provide detailed discussion of how your team will approach this opportunity to ensure that the CTC's goals and objectives are met, including a description of evaluation measures that will describe the impact of the project. Include a proposed schedule of work to complete the Scope of Services within 6 to 8 months following contract execution.

Management Approach (2 pages) should provide an explanation of how and where the management of this contract will fall within the consultant team, and what resources will be available to support this contract in both primary and secondary or back-up roles.

Timeline should outline a clear timeline for the completion of the project, including key milestones.

Budget should detail costs for each stage of work and include proposed payment schedule tied to project milestones and deliverables.

Applicants may attach any previous work products that demonstrate their ability to successfully execute the deliverables outlined in this RFP.

Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria

The CTC Director and a steering committee of CTC members will comprise a Selection Committee to evaluate each proposal submission. The Selection Committee will invite short-listed candidates to a presentation and interview. The Selection Committee will present its recommendations to CTC Executive Committee for final approval. The CTC will only consider proposals that are received on or before the submission deadline, and which meet all the requirements of this RFP. The CTC reserves the right to request a “best and final offer” from consultants meeting the minimum requirements.

Each submission will be rated using the following set of factors. The rating system reflects the CTC’s best attempt to quantify each consultant’s ability to provide the services set forth in the project scope and to meet the specific conditions and criteria included in this RFP.

- Experience and previous work product (20 points)
- Project approach (20 points)
- Capacity. Key staff and personnel are qualified and demonstrate excellence in work products and deliverables (20 points)
- Experience working within diverse communities on projects focused on equity; cultural competency (25 points)
- Budget is complete and reasonable (15 points)