



Research, Communications, and Media Relations Request for Proposals (RFP) February 2021

Background

On March 18, 2020, shortly after the first confirmed novel coronavirus infections in Northeast Ohio were detected, the Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund (RRF) was established to complement the work of public health officials and expand local capacity to address all aspects of the coronavirus outbreak as efficiently as possible. In the Fund's first phase, partners granted more than \$8.6 million to 160 nonprofit groups and organizations in Cuyahoga, Lake and Geauga counties. On Sept. 1, 2020, a coalition of partners announced the creation of Phase II of the RRF, which expands the Phase I focus to include partners working to provide basic needs, family support, and the acquisition of PPE, testing, and contact tracing services. Since the launch of Phase II, the RRF has awarded \$2.1 million in support, with more than \$3.5 million committed by 16 local philanthropic and public sector partners.

Now, with the availability of effective vaccines for COVID-19, the RRF has convened a **COVID-19 Communications Task Force** to drive the RRF's vaccine uptake campaign. This group is comprised of leaders from the faith-based community, health care, government, and community organizing groups as well as resident leaders.

Statement of Work

More than 1,000 people in Cuyahoga County have already died from COVID-19, and 70% to 85% of our community will need to be vaccinated to reach herd immunity.

The RRF is seeking one or more firm(s) to assist in delivering a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine communications and marketing plan that will catalyze vaccine uptake, especially among Black people, immigrants, and other people of color—populations historically skeptical of vaccination due to well-known injustices like the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiments or personal experience with mistreatment while navigating the health care system. Because it is expected that messaging from several other sources will be ongoing concurrently, the purpose of the communications are to be additive and not duplicative.

The Task Force will solicit proposals, per to this request, for professional services focusing on three pillars of work.

I. Research and Learning | Gathering and evaluating the questions, concerns, and other sentiments that exist across geographic and demographic lines within the community. This research would center on Black people, immigrants, and other people of color—populations that not only comprise the majority of Cleveland residents, but are also disproportionately burdened by COVID-19 and the historical events that may contribute to mistrust of vaccines and the institutions that promote them. This category of work must be relationship-based, instilling trust through meaningful engagement with communities of color and should not be done in a way that merely extracts data without building connection and fostering ongoing dialogue.

- (a) Data collection as relayed by trusted community leaders, including community organizers, residents, faith-based organizations, and direct social service organizations
- (b) Sustained, meaningful engagement with a number of unique communities of color
- (c) Analysis of public opinion polls and other measures of vaccine favorability
- (d) Analysis, as necessary, of potential vaccine misinformation in each community
- (e) Analysis of vaccine uptake trends in Cleveland communities via national, state, and local data sources



II. **Communications** | Crafting messages and identifying the most effective messengers based on research on public sentiment.

- (a) In collaboration with the Task Force, identification and activation of the most effective community messengers, or ambassadors, that represent the specific messaging needs of unique communities of color
- (b) Coordination with ongoing messaging from government, health care, and other sectors to avoid duplication of efforts, in partnership with Task Force staff
- (c) Creation of persuasive, high-level messaging themes and storylines that can be adapted for specific populations
- (d) Professional message drafting, keeping in mind several factors such as reading level, preferred language, and, most importantly, cultural competency
- (e) Development of digital and hardcopy collateral
- (f) Development of easily accessible toolkit that government, health care, and nonprofit partners could use to redistribute content.

III. **Media Relations** | Meaningfully engaging with the many diverse channels that can effectively and repeatedly reach Black people, immigrants, and other communities of color across all ages, races, ethnicities, and languages across Greater Cleveland. This should result in a full multi-media campaign which may consist of video production, digital content creation, as well as printed materials. The campaign could also include, but might not be limited to, other traditional paid media, earned media, social media, and direct resident outreach and resultant output from, the various, diverse channels needed to effectively and repeatedly reach Black people, immigrants, and other communities of color across inclusive of all ages, ethnicities, and languages across Greater Cleveland. The most effective media type and the languages used will vary from community to community. Data developed in the Research and Communications phases of this work should guide those decisions.

- (a) Traditional paid media
- (b) Earned media
- (c) Social media
- (d) Direct consumer outreach

Firms with expertise in **one or more** of these areas are encouraged to submit proposals. Should a firm only have competency in only one or two of the three pillars, proposals for that scope of work will be accepted. Multiple firms may be selected based on their competencies, with additional firms selected with complementary skill sets to round out the entirety of the proposed scope of work.

Proposed Schedule and Budget

- Phase 1: The initial engagement will be approximately 3-4 months, beginning as soon as possible in early March 2021. This work is immediate and urgent.
- Phase 2: There is a possibility to continue beyond the initial engagement into work on long-term deliverables, which will last through 2021. This schedule and set of deliverables are yet to be determined.



Phase 1: Initial Engagement Deliverables

- COVID-19 Vaccine communication plan
 - Strategy for COVID-19 vaccine awareness campaign based on community dialogue with members of target populations
 - Recommendations for launching each campaign, including recommendations and timelines for placement of mass marketing advertisements
 - Branding guidelines
 - Consistent, culturally competent messaging
 - Messaging on issues related but not limited to: vaccine safety, vaccine effectiveness, vaccine availability, who is protected by vaccinations, vaccine myth-busting
 - Identification of unique audiences and their specific messaging needs such as: the general public; communities who report a high level of vaccine hesitancy, especially Black communities and communities of color; vulnerable populations such as the elderly, the immunocompromised, essential workers; parents/caregivers; community health workers; and faith-based and other community organizations
 - Create tactical plans for effectively communicating with each audience
- Collateral tailored to promote vaccine uptake AND collateral tailored for grassroots, neighborhood-based education that includes door knocking scripts, brochures, and flyers. (Note: Printing and associated costs will be directly handled by the Rapid Response Fund.)
- Toolkits for various stakeholder groups
- Placement of mass marketing advertisements, possibly including radio, television, print media, and direct marketing such as billboards, bus cards, yard signs, neighborhood kiosks, postcards, posters, and community publications
- Social media content for platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, e-newsletters which may include digital content creation and graphic design

Phase 2: Long-Term Deliverables [Possible]

- Analysis of public perception of the initial campaign rollout
- Additional collateral for outreach efforts following analysis of initial messaging campaign rollout

Preferred Qualifications

The Rapid Response Fund and the COVID-19 Communications Task Force are looking to work in close collaboration with a human-centered consultant(s) to ensure that the campaign resonates with those who may be skeptical or apathetic toward getting vaccinated for COVID-19.

The preferred firm, or firms collectively, will have:

- Proven experience in development and implementation of public awareness campaigns
- Cultural competency tailored to a variety of audiences and Cleveland neighborhoods
- Content expertise in individual and community-level campaigns, particularly in Black communities, other communities of color, and hard to reach populations that may not have access to technology
- Experience in planning, developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating comprehensive communication strategies and plans including crisis communication and/or health education campaigns
- Highly skilled in graphic design, social media promotion, and website development



- An established ability to work in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, government partners and officials and community-based agencies and residents
- Experience working on highly visible, dynamic, fast-paced projects with multiple project deadlines occurring simultaneously
- A strong focus on diverse teams, diverse leadership, and diverse partners
- Previous experience implementing human-centered design practices
- Multilingual capabilities a plus

Proposal Requirements

In your response to this Request for Proposals, please include the following elements:

- Agency philosophy and approach
- Management team and organizational chart
 - Biographies of assigned team members, with specification of account lead or day-to-day contact
- Full rate card and reference to nonprofit rates or pro bono/matching programs
- Detail the organization's experience relevant to this project (e.g., public education campaigns, working with coalitions and the public sector, etc.)
 - Include at least one case study of work and outcomes that specifically address the preferred qualifications noted above.
- Proposed budget for Phase 1 and detailed plan of what agency would accomplish in that time
 - Optional: Proposed budget and detailed plan for Phase 2
- References and support detailed
 - Include two client references illustrating successful services provided within the last three years

How to Apply

Responses should be emailed to Adam Nation, Program Officer with the Mt. Sinai Foundation, at adam.nation@mtsinaifoundation.org by **Friday, March 5, 2021**.

An informational meeting (i.e., a "bidder's conference") will take place remotely during the week of March 1 via Zoom where prospective applicants can learn more about the Task Force and this RFP. For additional information, please contact Adam Nation, as noted previously.

We will ask select firms to present their proposals to the Task Force during the week of March 15, 2021. The Task Force will work collaboratively with the Rapid Response Fund to select and finalize a contract with an anticipated **start date during the week of March 22, 2021**.