

A Strategic Marketing and Communications Plan for VegFund

An Invitation and Request for Proposal

January 30, 2017

An Overview of VegFund

VegFund, a U.S.-based non-profit organization, empowers vegan activists worldwide by funding and supporting effective outreach activities that inspire people to choose and maintain a vegan lifestyle. Now in its seventh year of operations, VegFund has historically supported vegan activists with small grants for grassroots programs and activities that focus primarily on the exploitation of animals used for food as these animals make up the overwhelming majority of animal cruelty, suffering and deaths.

Owing to the dedication of its activists around the world, VegFund is able to help reach and inform hundreds of thousands of people per year with its direct programs in food sampling, documentary screening and pay-per-view outreach. Web-based video outreach programs provide another exponential source of messaging and outreach.

In addition to working with vegan groups, VegFund has begun to collaborate with other experts including, as key examples, impact investors, environmentalists and the health industry to educate them on the implications of animal agriculture and use. The goal of reaching out now to a more diverse group of actors is to help broaden the network and range of organizations and activists.

Seeking A Strategic Communications and Marketing Process

The path leading to one's dietary change and knowing how to make the choice of humane and ethical products is complex. From anecdotal evidence, people ultimately choosing a vegan lifestyle generally gain the knowledge, skills and, most importantly, the attitude to commit to a vegan lifestyle over the course of a longer-term personal journey. Community support is vital for many vegans and VegFund's activists are the best placed resources to serve as an enduring and inspiring form of motivation for local communities. In that regard, VegFund and its vision are best served by a global group of activists who are efficient, effective and well prepared to engage with communities for a prolonged period of time.

VegFund is initiating a strategic communications process to better understand, define, retain and expand its activist base, to confirm that most effective ways for VegFund to communicate with its activists and in turn, for activists to engage meaningfully with the audiences they reach. VegFund recently conducted focus groups with a relative handful of activists to better understand their needs, the inputs from which will be made available to the selected communication strategy team.

Ways for activist collaboration and knowledge sharing were among the top desires expressed among our activist network. As a result, VegFund will undertake a redesign to its website, integrate an electronic portal for activist exchange and resource building and create a seamless way for activists to communicate with VegFund, both for grant application and grant reporting. The successful firm or individual chosen for this RFP will interface with another external firm hired by VegFund for the website development.

VegFund appreciates that a clearly defined communications strategy and clarification of its activist audience is a necessary first step to ensuring the new content aligns with our goals, objectives and strategic messaging.

Input Leading to a 2017 Strategic Marketing and Communications Plan

VegFund seeks to develop a comprehensive marketing and communications strategy that builds on the above objectives and includes:

- Overall examination of and recommendations on current brand identity
- Landscape analysis of other similar organizations in the field, notably in grant making to vegan activists
- Clearly defined positioning and elevator statements, including persona analysis
- Goals and objectives mapped to vision, mission and programs
- In-depth analysis of our primary (activist) and secondary audiences (general community), including the preparedness of our primary audience to know their respective audience(s), the ability of activists to design and deliver engaging programs and messages and their ability to measure the effectiveness of their tactics for audience behavior change
- Key messages and channels targeted to these audiences, including barrier-breaking messages and their frequency of delivery and content quality and appropriateness
- Assessment of current engagement tactics and channels
- Confirmation of the ways and methods of how activists seek to engage with VegFund and with each other for network building
- Talking points for staff, board and activists
- Work plan to put the strategy into action
- Metrics and evaluations to measure overall strategy

Additionally, the strategic marketing and communications process should provide ideas and insight on:

- Pathways to convert interest among activists external to the animal rights and vegan movement
- Ways to retain and expand the activist base

- Bridge-building opportunities with environmental orgs, sustainable development, food justice, etc.
- Tools, training or workshops to help existing activists become better activists
- Best use current organizational resources and staff
- Recommendations on future staffing
- Ways to engage new donors

The ideal candidates will have:

- Prior experience developing comprehensive communication strategies and work plans for nonprofits, grant-making organizations and foundations
- Deep understanding of best practices for nonprofit capacity building
- Strong team approach and desire to work with a range of stakeholders
- Excellent written and verbal communications, including presentations
- Ability to travel to Washington, DC as needed for training or meeting

Proposal Due: February 28, 2017; Decisions will be made in early March and work should begin immediately.

Completion Date: Timeline should include expected milestones, and completed plan should be presented to VegFund by August 2017. Competitive proposals will describe the intended methodology, approach and process for completed the desired deliverables.

Submission Information: Please submit proposals including timeline, budget and bios of all team members via email to Leslie Barcus, Executive Director, at leslie@vegfund.org.