CGIAR System Organization

**CGIAR Strategic Communications Advisory**

Request for ProposaL

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## Introduction and Background:

CGIAR is seeking proposals from qualified firms or consultant/firms to develop and, if needed, implement a comprehensive institutional strategic communications plan. This plan will provide an assessment of institutional readiness, as well as an implementation framework for effectively managing strategic communications across CGIAR’s distributed partnership.

[CGIAR](https://www.cgiar.org/how-we-work/governance/system-council/sc-composition/) is a global research partnership whose mission is to deliver science and innovation that advance the transformation of food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. CGIAR envisions a world with sustainable and resilient food, land, and water systems that deliver diverse, healthy, safe, sufficient, and affordable diets, and ensure improved livelihoods and greater social equality, within planetary and regional environmental boundaries. Its research is carried out by independent CGIAR Centers in close collaboration with hundreds of partners, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, development organizations, and the private sector.

## In response to the pressing challenges of food security, climate change, and sustainable development, [CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstreams/6125b92c-01b6-480c-9d69-881cea4579b1/download), adopts a systems-based approach. This urgency drives our focus on achieving multiple benefits across Sustainable Development Goals through three Action Areas: transforming food systems as a whole, building resilience in agriculture, and advancing genetic innovation in crops.

## Scope of Work

The selected consultant/firm will be responsible for the development and as needed, implementation of a strategic communication plan in support of CGIAR’s key stakeholders, including (a) executive leadership, (b) network of CGIAR Centers, (b) System Board, and (c) System Council:

1. **Planning and Research:**
   1. Conduct an assessment to identify potential scenarios relevant to CGIAR’s reputation and operations.
   2. Develop stakeholder mapping, including prioritization and tools needed to reach specific stakeholders.
   3. Conduct interviews with key stakeholders to understand their information needs.
2. **Plan Development:**
   1. Develop a strategic communications plan that outlines strategies for engaging stakeholder groups in various scenarios.
   2. Define clear roles and responsibilities for internal and external communication.
   3. Develop key messages for different audiences (e.g., media, staff, leadership, donors) based on potential scenarios.
   4. Identify and prioritize communication channels for reaching stakeholders (e.g., website, social media, press releases, internal communications).
   5. Develop media relations strategies for effective communication with the media.
   6. Support spokespeople as needed.
3. **Communication Support:**
   1. Communication plan activation, as needed
   2. On call leadership support
   3. Development of bespoke materials for internal and external stakeholders as needed

## Deliverables

The selected consultant/firm will deliver:

1. A comprehensive strategic communications plan document – including stakeholder engagement analysis and planning.
2. Support for leadership, spokespersons and key staff.
3. Templates for key communication materials including as needed, letters, media releases, social media posts, op-eds etc.
4. Development of a core message set and detailed Q&A document.
5. Prepare a rate card for activation of communications plan and institutional support as needed.

## Qualifications and Experience

The selected firm/consultant/firm will demonstrate:

* Proven experience in developing and implementing strategic communications plans for publicly funded institutions, UN Agencies, or related organizations.
* A strong understanding of best practices.
* Experience working with a variety of stakeholders, including the media, staff, donors, and the public. Excellent writing and communication skills.
* The ability to work effectively under pressure and meet deadlines.
* Knowledge of CGIAR would be beneficial.

Additional qualifications include knowledge of the complex political and diplomatic landscape within CGIAR operations, experience working in diverse cultural contexts with international audiences, and ability to tailor communications strategies to different languages and media environments. This also includes strong relationships with international media outlets, the ability to effectively pitch stories and manage media inquiries, and the understanding of online campaigns.

## Performance Measurement and Review:

In this section of the Request for Proposal (RFP), we delineate the framework for performance measurement and review for the prospective consultant/firm. It is imperative that prospective consultants/firms meticulously review the outlined performance structure and KPIs, as adherence to these will be mandatory in the execution of the project.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Quality of Work: The consultant/firm's work will be assessed based on the submitted deliverables' accuracy, completeness, and quality.

Timeliness: The consultant/firm will be evaluated on their ability to meet deadlines and milestones as outlined in the timeline.

Client Satisfaction: Feedback from project stakeholders and team members regarding the consultant/firm's professionalism and effectiveness.

Stakeholder Surveys: Structured and documented surveys indicating the stakeholders' feedback on the quality of the services received. This is required when the services include training, workshops, or similar deliverables.

Adherence to Budget: The consultant/firm's ability to stay within the allocated budget for the project.

### Performance Evaluation and Review

### Performance evaluation is a fundamental aspect of ensuring this project's success and timely completion. The outlined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will serve as the backbone for this continuous evaluation process, ensuring the consultant/firm’s alignment with the project’s goals and expectations. The comprehensive and structured performance evaluation process, built on stakeholder feedback, project progress reports, and reviews, will ensure the constant alignment of the consultant/firm’s performance with the project’s objectives.

#### Evaluation Methodology:

Stakeholder Feedback: The consultant/firm’s performance will be subject to evaluation by pertinent project stakeholders. Their insights and perspectives will offer a comprehensive view of the consultant/firm’s adherence to the defined KPIs, contributing to a well-rounded assessment.

Project Progress Reports: Regular project progress reports will be an essential tool for assessing the KPIs. These reports should detail the consultant/firm’s accomplishments, challenges, and adherence to the project schedule and budget.

#### Review Process:

CGIAR Executive Management Director, Deputy Executive Managing Director and Communications & Outreach Managing Director, will provide ongoing project management and feedback on performance in regular meetings with the contracted agency. Additional feedback will be sought from any external stakeholders engaged with the agency. Feedback will be provided following the kick-off meeting, and after each agreed milestone deliverable.

All feedback and assessments provided during the review meetings will be formally documented. This documentation will serve as a record for performance assessment and will be referenced in future evaluations and reviews.

The Firm will have the opportunity to respond to the feedback, offering insights into their performance, challenges faced, and the strategies employed for issue resolution and project advancement. A collaborative approach will be adopted to identify areas of improvement and the necessary steps to enhance performance in subsequent processes/phases.

## Legal Considerations

### Confidentiality

To ensure information security throughout this RFP process, all information disclosed by CGIAR ("Discloser") and all information submitted by the consultant/firm in response (including technical details, pricing information, and business plans) will be considered confidential. This information can only be used for proposal preparation and cannot be disclosed to any external party without our prior written consent. Exceptions include the consultant/firm’s employees or advisors needing the information for proposal development, provided they are bound by confidentiality obligations at least as strict as those outlined here. The consultant/firm must ensure any subcontractors, or third parties involved in the engagement are bound by similar confidentiality obligations. The consultant/firm is responsible for protecting this information with the same care given to their own confidential data and remains liable for any breaches by subcontractors or third parties. CGIAR acknowledges the information's value and the potential harm from a breach, so the consultant/firm’s confidentiality obligations extend beyond the proposal deadline and remain in effect for ten years from the RFP date.

By submitting a proposal, the firm/individual commits to the following:

1. All information obtained during the engagement with CGIAR will be stored only on CGIAR servers/systems.
2. None of the information obtained during the engagement with CGIAR shall be shared with any other party for any reason.
3. The provided access by CGIAR shall only be used for this project only, and to communicate with CGIAR.
4. Access to Confidential Information will be limited to those of its employees or contractors who have a legitimate need to know such information for the project and who have agreed in writing to be bound by the terms of this NDA.
5. All reasonable precautions will be taken to prevent the unauthorized disclosure or use of Confidential Information, including but not limited to implementing and maintaining adequate security measures.
6. Access to CGIAR systems shall only be made from trusted machines with current protection standards.
7. Access to CGIAR systems shall not be made from any sanctioned country by US laws applicable to MS products.

### Ownership and Intellectual Property

To ensure clarity and protect CGIAR interests, the selected consultant/firm must acknowledge that all deliverables (reports, analysis, recommendations) become our intellectual property upon full payment. We reserve ownership of any new intellectual property developed during the study, with exceptions for pre-existing, consultant/firm-owned IP requiring a separate licensing agreement. The consultant/firm is responsible for complying with all applicable laws and regulations in the countries where project work occurs, including data privacy, export controls, and labor laws. Additionally, the consultant/firm must implement appropriate data security measures and comply with standard clauses regarding termination, dispute resolution, and data security.

### Other considerations

The consultant/firm is responsible for complying with all applicable laws and regulations in the countries where project work occurs, including data privacy, export controls, and labor laws. Additionally, the consultant/firm must implement appropriate data security measures and comply with standard clauses regarding termination, dispute resolution, and data security.

### Contracting

The consultant/firm should accept the CGIAR System Organization standard terms and conditions of contract in Appendix 1.

If the consultant/firm requires amendment of specific clauses, the consultant/firm must submit those contract clauses or the consultant/firm’s template for our review and consideration. **Please submit it in Word format as a separate document (along with the consultant/firm’s confirmation of intent to submit a proposal).**

CGIAR reserves the right to request additional information or clarification regarding the contract clauses or templates during the evaluation process. Submitting suggested clauses or templates does not guarantee that the firm will be awarded the contract. Final contract negotiations will be conducted with the selected firm based on the evaluation results.

### Conflicts of Interest

To ensure a fair and objective selection process, the consultant/firm guarantees they have no conflicts of interest (financial or otherwise) that could influence their work on this project. They must disclose any potential conflicts immediately, with details and proposed mitigation strategies (like staff recusal or information firewalls). CGIAR has the right to reject proposals with unmanageable conflicts and terminate the agreement for breaches. The consultant/firm is also responsible for ongoing monitoring and disclosure of new conflicts. Any confidential information they share about potential conflicts will be kept confidential by us, except for evaluation or breach-related actions.

### Payment Terms

Standard payment terms will be Net 30 days from the date of invoice receipt. The invoicing schedule may vary based on the approach outlined in the prospective consultant/firm’s commercial proposal. Firms have the option to invoice either on the basis of measurable progress throughout the project or upon the submission and subsequent acceptance of final deliverables by CGIAR. This flexibility allows for alignment with the consultant/firm’s preferred billing structure while ensuring that payments are made in a timely manner following the standard Net 30-day policy.

## Required Proposal Content:

This RFP document is not intended to limit the consultant/firm’s submission content but rather to provide a framework for CGIAR to evaluate each proposal and determine which submission most closely addresses the needs. Firms are encouraged to provide any additional information or innovative approaches not specifically outlined in this RFP. Firms will provide any reasonable additional information upon request by the CGIAR.

### Technical Proposal

1. Consultant/firm profile

* Name: Clearly state the name of the Consultant/firm (lead consultant/firm for consortium).
* Primary Contact: Provide the name and title of the contact person.
* Contact Information: Include the full mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number for direct communication.
* Overview: A brief summary of the consultant/firm’s business operations / CVs for individuals

1. Experience and Team Composition

1. Project Methodology and Timelines

### Financial Proposal

Proposed fees should be presented in US$ excluding taxes. Provide a breakdown of the deliverables/milestones in US$(excluding taxes) including any budgetary assumptions made, contingency and mitigation actions.

Identification of any project element to be subcontracted (if any), showing number of subcontractor hours and their hourly rates.

The table below is an example showing the level of effort

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Resource/Role** | **Day rate (US$)** | **Total Days/Input** | **Sub-total fees (US$)** |
| Team Leader |  |  |  |
| Expert 1 |  |  |  |
| Expert 2 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |

## Proposal Evaluation

The purpose of this section is to outline the evaluation criteria and process that will be used to assess and select the most qualified consultant/firm.

### Evaluation Criteria:

In the selection of the ideal Firm for this project, a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted. As a global organization, CGIAR is agnostic to the location of the consultants/firms that participate in delivering the scope of work outlined in this RFP; however, flexibility in consideration of CGIAR’s global stakeholders and constituents is necessary, and any challenges should be addressed in the proposal.

#### Proposal Alignment:

Expectation: The consultant/firm’s proposal should be clear, concise, and directly aligned with our specific requirements, demonstrating a thorough understanding and thoughtful approach to the CGIAR’s objectives and outlined deliverables.

#### Experience:

Expectation: The submission of relevant case studies that highlight the consultant/firm’s experience and success in similar projects. The showcased experience should resonate significantly with the needs and requirements of CGIAR.

#### Reputation and References:

Expectation: Provision of contact information for at least two previous clients or references who can attest to the consultant/firm’s competence, professionalism, and reliability in delivering high-quality service.

#### Project Management and Communication:

Expectation: Evidence of the consultant/firm’s proven strategies and tools for effective project management and communication, ensuring smooth collaboration, timely updates, and the efficient resolution of any issues or concerns.

#### Contractual and Legal Compliance:

Expectation: Assurance that the Firm comprehensively complies with all legal requirements and offers a transparent, fair contract that safeguards our interests.

#### Data Security and Privacy:

Expectation: Confirmation that the Firm adheres to industry best practices for data security and privacy, ensuring the utmost protection of sensitive information.

#### Cost and Budget:

Expectation: A clear, detailed breakdown of the consultant/firm’s proposed fees including details of any assumptions.

#### Timeline and Deliverables:

Project Timeline:

Expectation: Presentation of a realistic yet flexible project timeline, ensuring the timely completion of deliverables without compromising quality.

Deliverables:

Expectation: Explicit definition of the scope of work and anticipated deliverables, ensuring they robustly align with CGIAR’s requirements.

CGIAR reserves the right to progress with all, one, or multiple activities of a bidder’s response based on its performance against the evaluation criteria.

### Evaluation Process

The evaluation will be conducted based on the criteria outlined in this RFP. The RFP timeline may be modified if needed to benefit the RFP results while keeping interested parties well informed.

**Evaluation Panel:** An evaluation panel will be established to review and evaluate all proposals received. The panel will consist of representatives from CGIAR's relevant departments. The panel members will be selected based on their expertise and experience relevant to the RFP.

**Evaluation Criteria:** The panel will evaluate each consultant/firm’s technical capabilities, including team composition, proposed approach and methodology, references, and cost.

**Evaluation Process:** The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

**Proposal review:** The panel will review all qualified proposals, assessing them against the evaluation criteria outlined in this RFP.

**Evaluation and Scoring:** The evaluation panel will evaluate each shortlisted consultant/firm’s proposal and presentation based on evaluation criteria. The scoring system listed below will be used to ensure consistency and objectivity in the evaluation process.

**Firm Selection:** After completing the evaluation scoring, the panel will recommend the selection of the Firm that best meets the RFP requirements and evaluation criteria.

**Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest:** All evaluation panel members will be required to sign a Conflict-of-Interest statement and treat all information submitted by participating firms as confidential and used solely for the purpose of Firm selection.

### Weighting System

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Technical Criteria** | **Weight (100)** |
| **Technical Expertise**  Understanding of CGIAR’s research mission and operations structure: Extent of technical expertise in the fields of climate change adaptation and mitigation in agrifood systems, climate-smart agriculture and agricultural economics | 35% |
| **Experience and references**  Extent of experience in delivering strategic communication strategies for complex organizations demonstrated by track record of successful projects with specific description of role, contribution and client satisfaction from engagements through references from past clients. | 30% |
| **Other Considerations** – *e.g. ability to tailor communications strategies to different languages and media environments.* | 05% |
| **Cost competitiveness** – Value for price  Comparison of consultant's proposed fees to other proposals to ensure they represent fair market value for the services offered | 30% |

## Bid Schedule and Dates:

The following schedule includes key milestones and their associated completion dates and is provided primarily for planning purposes. CGIAR System Organization may modify the project timeline at its discretion.

| **Dates** | **Milestones** |
| --- | --- |
| 21-Aug-24 | Issuance of Request for Proposals |
| 27-Aug-24 | Confirmation of intent to submit a proposal (Template Provided as Annex 1) |
| 27-Aug-24 | Submit RFP questions or requests for clarification by this date |
| 30-Aug-24 | Responses to questions provided by CGIAR |
| 06-Sep-24 | Deadline for submission of proposal. |
| 12-Sep-24 | Notification of Award to the successful firm |
| 16-Sep-24 | Contract signed |
| 17-Sep-24 | Contract start date – Kickoff induction program |

## Communication during RFP period

CGIAR intends to run a fair bidding process where all respondents are given equal opportunity to put forward their best proposal. As such, any material questions asked by bidders will be collated, answered, and shared with all bidders before the RFP closes.

**Submit your questions through the email** [**smo-bidding@cgiar.org**](mailto:smo-bidding@cgiar.org)

## How to submit a proposal:

Please submit a narrative proposal and a fee proposal as two separate documents to [smo-bidding@cgiar.org](mailto:smo-bidding@cgiar.org). Both documents can be attached to the same email.

All proposals must be received by 06 September 2024, 11:59 pm, Paris time. Only electronically submitted proposals will be considered.

## Annexes

Annex 1: Letter of Intent Template

Annex 2: CGIAR standard terms and conditions of contract