



201 North Braddock Ave, #230 • Pittsburgh, PA 15208
Phone: 412 727 6936 • E-Mail: info@landforcepgh.org

Landforce Request for Proposals: *Strategic Communications Plan*

Landforce Background

Vision

Landforce is committed to building a just world, where everyone belongs, lives in a healthy environment and surpasses their greatest dreams.

Mission

We nourish a culture of self-empowerment for people aspiring towards meaningful and stable employment as we protect and improve the environment.

Our Values

Landforce believes in a just and equitable world where our environment and all people are respected and nurtured. We understand that creating a just and equitable world begins with intentionally establishing an organizational culture that respects people in our fullest diversity. We believe that everyone brings pre-existing skills and experience to the table, that we all can learn from each other, and that if we fully embody these beliefs, we can lead the way to create a brighter tomorrow for people and the planet.

About Us

Landforce is an employment social enterprise nonprofit that provides opportunities for people who have been historically excluded from the workforce (individuals reentering society, who may have substance abuse disorders and/or mental health diagnoses, who are homeless, or some living in poverty) as they move towards economic mobility. We combine workforce development training with land stewardship employment and transitional support to new employment.

In the past 7 years we have hired over 132 people and completed 57,000 hours of land stewardship on nearly 150 projects. Our crew members have participated in more than 18,000 hours of training and were provided 2,100 hours of job coaching. Our average completion rate for training is 82% and for transitional employment is 72%. Of our finishers, 94% applied for jobs, 92% had at least one job interview, and 84% were offered jobs or went into industry training within two weeks of the season's end. 100% of our 2020 & 2021 respondents were still employed 12 months out.

Crew Members



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Landforce serves people living in Pittsburgh and the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the city within Allegheny County. Crew demographics largely reflect underserved neighborhoods in our region: 100% of our participants are under- or unemployed, 64% have a mark on their criminal record, 56% have a mental health diagnosis, 37% have a history of addiction, and 24% have been homeless at some point in their life. Ethnic/racial minorities are overrepresented within our program as 84% of the people we have served identify as non-white (the vast majority are Black, with a few people who are Hispanic or Native American).

Project Overview

Landforce is proud of the work we do and is well known in Pittsburgh's environmental and workforce development sectors. We have established ourselves not only as a reliable, consistent project partner, but also as an experienced workforce development provider. Although our reputation is well known within our community, we are ready to grow and would like to engage experts in craftful messaging to expand our reach further.

As a small nonprofit with 9, soon to be 10 full time, permanent employees, Landforce's primary focus is programmatic in nature. Since the organization's inception, communications related tasks such as social media engagement, donor engagement, advocacy, website, and print/ digital program materials have been shared across staff roles. With the addition of two predominantly administrative roles (Director of Strategic Partnerships and Communications Manager), we now have the capacity to move beyond baseline engagement, to a well thought out, communications strategy.

The primary deliverable of this project will be to create a strategic communications plan. As a part of this plan we want to improve and expand outreach to our established target audiences, streamline communications, attract long term, annual donors to expand our capacity to grow our program from a financial standpoint, increase the number of folks that hear about our program to ensure that more people that have been displaced from the workforce have access to our programming, connect and interact with a larger number of employers to ensure that our program completers are engaged by high paying, family sustaining jobs.

Lastly, we want to share the work we do through a people first, strengths based lens. At the end of the day the individuals we work with forge their own paths, we are just here at a place and time in their life to offer connections, and access to skills and resources. In order to best fulfill the needs of the strategic communications plan we seek help creating templates for digital and print materials, as well as advice on best practices for marketing, social media, and mass mailing tools. We have the staff capacity to make and maintain these relationships but a more targeted, intentional approach to the way we tell the Landforce story is at the center of this expansion.



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Landforce's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

In December 2021, the Landforce Board of Directors approved our 2022 to 2025 Strategic Plan. There are several goals and initiatives that support the need for a structured, organization wide, communications plan.

- Develop and implement a marketing and communications strategy that aligns with and supports the strategic goals of the organization. The Strategic Communications Plan will lead to expanded outreach and communication with our key audiences, as well as promote our new business line.
- Promote, in a public forum, Landforce culture & how we have created and maintained it. As a part of sharing our culture, Landforce wants to increase its storytelling capacity. This also includes ensuring that our staff, board, and crew members are trained in strengths based storytelling.
- Increase social media presence and return on investment. This includes earned media, and fundraising outreach.
- Ensure Landforce has the right talent and resources to accomplish the strategic plan. As a part of this strategic goal, Landforce hired the Director of Strategic Partnerships. Landforce is working to hire a Communications Manager simultaneously with the posting of this RFP.
- Become a model of financial sustainability. As a part of this goal, Landforce will raise 2% in revenues from individual giving. A part of a successful fundraiser is the ability to reach the appropriate audiences and share the organizational mission efficiently. New tools and materials would support this goal.
- Evaluate and promote environmental regulations, policies and trends for new Landforce business opportunities that will contribute to a more healthy environment and promote workforce development, social service, incarceration, reentry policies, and trends for opportunities to improve lives of crew members. While our advocacy and communications plan are not one in the same, it is important to ensure that the way we advocate is through the same lens as all other communications.

All of the above objectives lead to greater engagement across our target audiences. We believe that a dedicated communications plan will aid us in reaching them all. Concerted, coordinated social media engagement will lead to increased storytelling whether that be our crew members sharing their experience, nonprofit partners sharing the work we do, or potential funders and donors picking us out of the crowd. A greater, more concerted effort to engage these audiences will also influence the types of advocacy we take on and how we promote initiatives.

Additionally, that shared language and storytelling approach means that whether or not we are fundraising, advocating, recruiting, or teaching we all share our unified pride in the organization.

Our Audiences



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Currently, Landforce works with five, soon to be six target audiences. Since our program's inception, Landforce has focused primarily on projects and training related to land stewardship. In the fall of 2022, the Landforce team underwent a feasibility study to open a new businessline. The goal being to expand the variety and number of training available to crew members and to take our 8 month program and expand it to a year long, paid opportunity. A wood reuse business is what came out of that study. Landforce is fundraising to build and equip a kiln to be a leader in southwestern PA to dry and produce board footage from felled trees (either naturally or by parks and homeowners). Not only will this program support expanded training needs but will also help reduce the amount of tree waste that ends up in regional landfills. Keeping this background in mind, Wood Reuse must be taken into consideration as a part of this procurement as it ties into our overarching communications. However, there will be a need at a later time for a dedicated Wood Reuse Plan and roll out.

1. **Join Us** - Recruitment of future crew members and referral partners.
2. **Employ Us** - Expansion of our employer network to ensure that Landforce can place crew members in meaningful, family sustaining jobs.
3. **Hire Us** - Connections to contractors and project partners that would like to hire the Landforce crew to complete green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens, trail restoration, vacant lot redevelopment, and habitat restoration.
4. **Partner With Us** - Introductions to training providers, workforce partners, other local nonprofits and companies that share our passion for workforce development and the environment and are interested in sharing expertise or opportunities with our crews.
5. **Donate** - Relationships with both private and individual donors interested in supporting and further expanding the work we do through monetary contributions.
6. **Wood Reuse** - All relationships needed to not only hire for and establish the Landforce Wood Reuse facility and kiln but also those needed to sell our product once finished.

Summary of Procurement

Comprehensive Organizational Communications Strategy

- Evaluate the current state of Landforce's communications efforts and develop recommendations and a strategy to further expand and optimize those efforts.
- Aid the Landforce team in setting their communications goals and determining the best manner to reach their desired audiences, in order to create a strong, strengths based communications plan.
- Based on an understanding of our goals, needs, and additional evaluations, draft a plan that enables Landforce to communicate clearly across all platforms, above all helping Landforce operate from a strengths- based communications lens.
- Review, provide feedback, enhance, and verify Landforce's 5, soon to be 6 target audiences.



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- Propose new ways of engaging our target audiences.
- Develop a series of strong, finely honed messages, including general program/organizational information and advocacy messages, aimed at raising awareness of Landforce's work.
- Advance and build on current social media strategy to tie into overall organizational strategy.
- Help identify new social media outlets.

Tools and Materials

- Create baseline templates needed to aid the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Communications Manager in their day to day work. This will include but is not limited to, social media content, design templates/style guidelines, digital materials such as the annual report, and newsletter, donor requests, and print materials.
- Create metrics we can use to measure our communications & marketing progress.
- Assess Landforce's current social media platforms and tools. If the existing tools do not meet our needs, propose alternative options.

Website Management

- Review and propose updates and improvements to the Landforce website.
- Improvements will be minimal and in line with the overall communications strategy.
- Provide advice regarding more user friendly web platforms besides Wordpress.

Landforce Staff Training

- Provide interactive training for Landforce staff. The focus will be on helping staff understand the strategy, frames, and message and to build consistent communications and teach how to adapt it to suit specific projects
- Help identify additional staff training and professional development that would support and strengthen communications efforts.
- Provide built in support/training hours for the duration of the project for staff training and questions.

Budget



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The maximum amount payable under this contract is USD \$20,000.00. The expected duration of this project is October 2023-January 2023. Proposed costs will be an important consideration during review of RFP submissions.

Landforce plans to implement the plan with existing staff and has limited funds for engaging outside of plan creation and initial implementation. Day-to-day communications needs will be carried out by Landforce's incoming Communications Manager. This will include but is not limited to social content creation and publishing, basic graphic design, group mailings, and any print media creation. Implementation and the strategic goals of the Strategic Communications Plan will be led by the Director of Strategic Partnerships with the oversight and expertise of the Executive Director.

Agency Selection Criteria

The successful applicant will provide input on methods, content, and implementation strategy as well as direct assistance in carrying out the strategy for at least three months. The strategy must include the use of online tools and new media outlets, including Landforce's existing social media accounts. Additionally, they will have the following skills and expertise:

- Represent and/or have a depth of experience working with the diversity of the people and communities that Landforce serves and demonstrate experience recognizing as well as designing strategies that build towards equity and justice and use an asset-based voice;
- Bring experience with the creation and implementation of full scale marketing and communications plans;
- Be familiar with marketing and communications best practices;
- Be adept at navigating the ever changing social media landscape;
- Have experience consulting for small to mid-sized nonprofits;
- Display capacity to prioritize this work;
- Show experience successfully responding to similar RFPs and working with small organizations with a similar staffing capacity.
- Lead a collaborative and team oriented approach that will be utilized in the creation of Landforce's communications plan.

Timeline



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Applications are due Friday, September 22nd, 2023 by 5:00 PM. We anticipate that interviews will occur Thursday and Friday, September 25th and 27th, 2023, and work will begin in October 2023.

September 1: RFP announced

September 14-20: Period of Questions

September 22: Completed proposals due to submission and inquiry page by 5:00 p.m. EST

September 25-29: Interviews, Review, and Selection

October 2: Awardee Notified

October 16: Kick Off Meeting

Submission Information/Evaluation Process/Selection Criteria

Date Due: Friday, September 22nd, 2023 by 5:00 PM

Required Information:

- A brief description of relevant experience
- Capacity and experience to complete work in a timely manner
- Outline of methodology
- A clear understanding of Landforce, what we do, what our values are, and how this proposal will help us meet our needs.
- Timetable
- Anticipated monthly time allocation and cost

Project Contact

All questions and proposals should be directed to:

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