Appalachian Sustainable Development
Marketing Request for Proposals

Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) is inviting proposals for marketing services as detailed below. ASD will make a final selection based on the proposal which best meets the specifications and our needs, price and other factors. We are not limited, unless otherwise noted, to making our selection based only on the lowest-priced proposal. Please review these criteria carefully and include information in your proposal as appropriate. ASD reserves the right to ask for revised proposals from any or all companies submitting proposals if major revisions in the basic specifications become mandatory.

Services Description

ASD and its partners on the Appalachian Regional Commission-funded Central Appalachian Food Corridor (Corridor) project are seeking the services of a professional marketing consultant to develop messaging platforms and recommendations for materials and website content to promote the opportunities available through the Corridor. As a requirement of this funding, we will be procuring these services through competitive negotiation.

Background: Corridor Project Summary
In 2000, ASD started the Appalachian Harvest food hub, located in rural Scott County, VA. This social enterprise was originally created to support tobacco farmers when the government eliminated the tobacco subsidy program, resulting in the loss of millions of dollars of revenue and devastating impacts on rural communities in Central Appalachia. The Appalachian Harvest food hub provided former tobacco farmers with an alternative: growing organic vegetables for wholesale markets. Since that time, Appalachian Harvest has generated over $21MM in revenue and each year works with scores of organic and conventional family farmers of varying scales – from as small as 1 acre of production to as large as 150 acres. The opportunities provided by Appalachian Harvest enable current farmers to stay on their land while also creating the economic environment, technical support and distribution services necessary to allow new farmers to take advantage of the access Appalachian Harvest provides to large east coast markets.

The Appalachian Harvest business model is built on utilizing efficient distribution systems to gain access to large urban markets that pay a premium for locally and regionally sourced produce. In addition to bringing much needed urban dollars into rural communities, it also uses food and agriculture as an economic and health driver to build food systems within Central Appalachia – food systems that enable Central Appalachians to feed Central Appalachians, and not just those in more affluent urban areas.

ASD has worked with numerous emerging food hubs, farmers, and entrepreneurs to assist them in their efforts to support their communities’ food-based economic development strategies and is widely acknowledged as an expert in the field – one that generously shares lessons learned and best practices. Consistent in the last 20 years has been the challenges that rural food hubs face in becoming financially viable due to their small scale, distance to
markets of scale and the remote nature of their suppliers. Equally consistent has been the significantly negative impacts to the local food economy that arise from local food system actors unintentionally competing with each other for markets, resulting in fractured supply and reduced pricing, along with a lack of negotiating power with large buyers. Additionally, a lack of coordination and “coopetition” has resulted in a lost opportunity, wherein healthy value chains could be developed that increase profitability for all partners.

To address these challenges, ASD led the development of the Central Appalachian Food Corridor in 2016. The purpose of this project is to connect farmers and food entrepreneurs with access to large wholesale markets. The Corridor includes multiple nonprofit and private industry partners, including ACEnet, Unlimited Future Inc., Sprouting Farms, Refresh Appalachia, and many others. Through this multi-state, multi-stakeholder effort, we believe that rural agricultural communities will be able to compete successfully in markets that are often dominated by larger producers and suppliers that are located close to urban markets. It will also enable lower resource value chain participants to have a voice and access to markets that would otherwise be unattainable. Furthermore, it has long been understood by those who operate in Appalachia that distribution is a severely limiting factor and, in fact, has been identified as the number one obstacle by ASD partners. We believe that the successful implementation of this model will not only change the way remote rural food systems are built, it will be adopted by those operating in other sectors that struggle to connect profitably to markets.

Over the last 4 years, project partners have worked together to build markets, increase farmer capacity to compete successfully in these markets, and have coordinated aggregation and distribution in cost effective ways that leverage non-profit and private industry partnerships.

The project team sees a need to communicate this opportunity in ways that provide sufficient details to potential partners to encourage their participation in this project. The selected contractor will be provided with supporting documentation that provides additional details on this project and will also have access to project leadership to provide additional context for this work.

Marketing Needs
The project team has identified a need to communicate the Corridor project opportunity to a variety of target audiences:

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<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Message Need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>• Opportunities available for marketing their products and assistance with planning for expansion of their farms.</td>
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<td>• Training and technical assistance support</td>
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<td>• Clarify that the Corridor is not a physical space. It is about identifying clusters of producers and finding a way to connect those clusters to each other and to markets vs. a specific locale. The Corridor includes multiple</td>
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| Government entities | • Make clear the purpose and nature of the project and how their investments can help propel this effort forward and ensure its long term sustainability to the benefit of their constituents. |
| Other food hubs | • Clarify opportunities for collaboration and the connection to a regional effort that is focused on “coopetition” and increasing the viability of the entire Central Appalachian food system.  
  • This messaging will also support regional planning efforts. |
| Private industry distributors, aggregators and wholesale buyers | • Increase awareness of this project  
  • Paint bigger picture of the entire food system so that they see how being a part of this effort can benefit their businesses. (e.g. how distributors can find and ultimately partner with us) |
| Funders and Investors | • Enable funders to see how their investment in this project can lead to transformative, system change in rural communities. National funders have a hard time figuring out how to invest in rural places, especially in Appalachia, and the marketing goal for this effort is to help them understand how, where, and why to invest.  
  • Enable investors to see how this project’s impact, connections, and approach are investable. |

Ultimately, the project team sees a need for communication tools that are the most effective at reaching the intended audiences. Our intent for this project is that the consultant will translate our work and goals and create messaging platforms and recommendations on how that messaging is best delivered. The maximum budget for this project is $8,000, not including the printing of materials. In recognition of this limited funding, respondents may choose to exclude the actual development of a website and the materials, but may choose instead to provide mockups or other means of conveying how the messaging platform and recommendations would be executed.

**Deliverables**
- Discovery using documentation* that will be provided and discussions with project leaders
- Messaging and written copy to support outcomes of marketing research and inquiry; tailored to audience type.
- Strategic marketing plan identifying core development components (website, written materials, etc)
- Website and printed materials (either mockups or actuals)

*The consultant will be provided with previous proposals and reports that can be used to build an understanding of the history and accomplishments of the Corridor project.

**Project Timeframe:** ASD will make a vendor selection no later than March 27, 2020. We request that this scope of work be completed in approximately 2 months. Vendors should include a timeframe for providing deliverables in their proposals.
Proposal Submission

**Proposal Delivery:** Proposals should be sent via email to asd@asdevelop.org and should include the subject line “Corridor Marketing Proposal” in the email message.

**Due Date:** Proposals are due no later than 5:00 PM on March 20, 2020

**Questions:** Questions about this RFP should be addressed to asd@asdevelop.org and should include the subject line “Corridor Marketing Proposal Question” in the email message.

**Additional Materials:** Respondents should provide a list of previous clients and may also provide a modest number of examples of previous work.