

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR VCCF
Summary/Background

The Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF) is seeking proposals from seasoned and experienced communications specialists to assist in developing a strategic communications plan to strengthen its outreach to donors, stakeholders and the wider community it serves.

As a community foundation established nearly 25 years ago, VCCF plays a unique role in Ventura County, both as an investor of long term endowments to protect donor intent and to benefit local charities and as a partner to local donors pursuing philanthropic strategies to further their legacies, charitable giving and desire to assist local nonprofits. VCCF has demonstrated tremendous growth in asset size and program growth over the past decade, a growth that has complicated messaging about its mission, scope and purpose. Its mission is to “promote and enable philanthropy to improve the community for good for ever.”

With assets in the range of \$105 million, and annual grants exceeding \$5 million, including close to \$1 million in college scholarships and training for those in the local workforce, VCCF is a prominent player in the region, and a highly respected leader in the community. Its core responsibilities include managing long term endowments for local nonprofit agencies, donor designated and donor advised funds, field of interest funds (including its own Women’s Legacy, Destino:The Hispanic Legacy Fund and Heritage funds), scholarship funds and other funds, as well as managing funds for the Martin V. and Martha K. Smith Foundation (a supporting organization) and the Swift Memorial Health Care Foundation. Its investment performance is excellent, and VCCF was recently ranked #11 in the US among community foundations for its long term record. More information is available at www.vccf.org

VCCF also invests in nonprofit leadership through its Center for Nonprofit Leadership, which provides over 100 workshops annually to staff and board leaders of the region’s 2500 nonprofits, access to its library and online data bases, as well as a dedicated technology center, the Board Leadership Institute, the Planned Giving Institute and a wide variety of classes on fundraising, operations, budgeting, strategic planning and program support. Its signature CareerTrak and BoardTrak online tools help staff and board members plan future training.

VCCF also support the Ventura County Civic Alliance, an initiative focused on expanding civic leadership through its signature 3E perspective (economy, equity and the environment), working through projects on sustainability (The Compact for a Sustainable Ventura County), livable communities, strengthening workforce education and research about the county (State of the Region Report).

VCCF also acts as host for the Social Justice Fund for Ventura County, an educational and grantmaking effort by local donors committed to expanding social justice in the County.

Strategic Communications Plan

VCCF is seeking proposals to develop a strategic communications plan that will permit it to deliver critical messages to a wide variety of stakeholders through multiple forms of media. The current marketing and communications efforts reflects sizable investments in developing a web platform that not only provides basic information about the foundation's programs, services, funds, grantmaking and impact, but also the chance to highlight donor stories and the impact of the foundation's mission on families, communities and the region as a whole. Current donor communications include biannual newsletters, online emails, special publications, mailings and, in a switch in 2011, an online annual report, which replaced prior print versions.

Based in part on the results from a recent survey of stakeholders, the VCCF board believes that it is time to review strategies and plans and, in developing a strategic communications plan that will benefit the foundation's mission as a whole, it should include the following:

- messaging that captures and clearly communicates the unique and somewhat complex nature of a community foundation, and which embraces that complexity
- identifies specific constituencies (market segments) among VCCF's stakeholder population and matches them to specific messages and tactics for the delivery of such messages to each constituency.
- help VCCF develop priorities among these market segments, messages, tactics and tools, in order to best use available resources and technologies.
- while the foundation will continue to use print materials, an increasing focus on digital, video and social media is encouraged and should be part of the overall strategy
- specifically address the acquisition of new donors (of multiple size gifts)
- specifically address outreach to, and recruitment, of young people – as volunteers, donors and philanthropic partners
- specifically embrace VCCF's proposed ten year agenda to expand opportunities for youth.

Each response to this RFP should include references to the following:

- prior experience with community foundations, and the complexity of mission, is helpful
- experience in developing communications plans for clients who have complex operations and/or programs
- experience in working with nonprofit sector
- experience in working with both current and prospective stakeholders
- experience in developing multiple forms of message delivery, including newer technology platforms and social media

- given the growth of social media, experience in creating social networks that have been successful
- demonstrated ability to reach to financial advisors and estate attorneys about VCCF's investment expertise and protection of donor intent long term.
- timeline proposed for completing the tasks
- requirements for completion of the project
- detailed budget
- options for implementing the plan

We expect the completed project be presented to VCCF for review by January 15th, 2012.

All proposals are due by October 15th and should be submitted to the attention of

Hugh J. Ralston, President & CEO
Ventura County Community Foundation
1317 Del Norte Road, Suite 150
Camarillo, CA 93010

Or via email at hralston@vccf.org.

No extensions beyond the deadline will be permitted. Decisions will be made by November 15th at the latest. For more information, please contact the foundation at the above address and/or email.