



**Louisiana Department of Health  
Office of Public Health**

**Request for Information (“RFI”)**

**For**

**Through this RFI the Louisiana Department of Health (“LDH”) is seeking information on vendors and organizations that can assist the State in effectively reaching residents through the use of communications and community engagement about COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccines.**

**RFI #: LDH-RFI-COVID COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**RFI Response due date/time:  
Monday, March 15, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. (CDT)**

*NOTE: This Request for Information (“RFI”) is intended solely for informational and planning purposes and DOES NOT constitute a solicitation. Any and all information received may be reviewed and discussed, as appropriate, and may result in an emergency Cooperative Endeavor Agreement(s) or any other processes resulting in award of a contract or agreement of any type or form, for any or all of the services included in the RFI.*

*Only information that is in the nature of legitimate trade secrets or non-published financial data may be deemed proprietary or confidential by a proposer. Any material within a response to this RFI identified as such must be clearly marked and will be handled in accordance with the Louisiana Public Records Law, R.S. 44:1 et seq. and all applicable rules, regulations, and policies. Any response marked as confidential or proprietary in its entirety may be rejected without further consideration or recourse.*

**RFI Release Date: March 5, 2021**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<i>1</i>	GENERAL INFORMATION.....	3
1.1	Background .....	3
1.2	Purpose of RFI .....	4
1.3	Project Overview.....	4
<i>2</i>	ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION .....	5
2.1	RFI Coordinator. ....	5
2.2	Schedule of Events.....	5
2.3	Response Content.....	6
2.3.1	Executive Summary .....	6
2.3.2	Background and Experience .....	6
2.3.3	Approach and Methodology .....	6
2.4	Response Instructions.....	6
2.4.1	Response Submittal.....	6
2.4.2	RFI Addendum(a)/Cancellation.....	7
2.4.3	Ownership of Response .....	7
2.4.4	Cost of Preparation .....	7

# **1 GENERAL INFORMATION**

## **1.1 Background**

The mission of the Louisiana Department of Health (“LDH” or “Department”) is to protect and promote health and to ensure access to medical, preventive, and rehabilitative services for all citizens of the State of Louisiana. LDH is dedicated to fulfilling its mission through direct provision of quality services, the development and stimulation of services of others, and the utilization of available resources in the most effective manner.

The State finds itself at a critical juncture in the COVID-19 response. Nearly a year has passed since Louisiana identified its first case of COVID-19 and reported its first death. Since March 9, 2020, at least 431,271 cases of COVID-19 and 9,647 deaths have been reported. These numbers are both staggering and sobering.

As of March 2, 2021, there also are now 18 confirmed cases of the B.1.1.7 variant of the coronavirus (called UK variant) and 58 suspected cases across 7 of the 9 regions of our state. The Department believes that this may be just the tip of the iceberg. This is important and of concern to the Department of Health as it likely means the UK variant is widely circulating throughout our state.

Data indicate the UK variant is more contagious, and early data show it could be deadlier. That is why until vaccines are more widely available to the general public, we all must continue to lean on those public health measures we know work. Wearing our masks, social distancing, avoiding crowds, and getting tested when we believe we have been exposed are even more important tools in our toolbox to end this pandemic.

Recent studies have indicated that COVID-19 has hit our communities of color especially hard, exacerbating health inequities. National and local data show some populations, in particular Black communities, still have concerns and questions with regard to the COVID vaccines.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to resolve any extant barriers to the vaccines, the Department of Health is seeking help from the public in reaching these communities “where they are”.

Overall demand for the COVID vaccines is high and Louisiana is over performing other states in getting these shots in arms, which is good news – the vaccines are our best hope at ultimately putting this pandemic behind us and getting back to the people and places we love. However, early data show that without focused attention many of our communities and networks are left out of the vaccine rollout. Only 23.27%<sup>2</sup> of those residents who have gotten the vaccine to date are Black, as of March 2, 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> September Pew Research nationwide study showed that while about 51% of all adults surveyed said they would “definitely” or “probably” get the vaccine if it were available today, only 32% of Black respondents responded in the affirmative. (“U.S Public Now Divided Over Whether To Get COVID-19 Vaccine,” Pew Research, September 17, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/09/17/u-s-public-now-divided-over-whether-to-get-covid-19-vaccine/>)

<sup>2</sup> Louisiana Department of Health.

We at the Department of Health are committed to being transparent and giving the facts – about vaccine safety, effectiveness, side effects, access – so that residents can make informed decisions about what is best for them and their families.

We believe that we need to meet our residents where they are and do whatever we can to demystify the process by doing such things as normalizing the asking of relevant questions.

This RFI is part of an effort by the Department of Health to help build partnerships to break down traditional barriers to access.

We believe that intentional, nimble, culturally relevant, evidence-based communications and community engagement are paramount to the success of the COVID vaccine rollout in Louisiana.

As a best effort of the State, LDH is seeking information through this RFI from vendors with expertise and experience in communications and community engagement in Louisiana for its current and future work on COVID-19, including the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines. Such vendors include, but are not limited to, the following:

Photographers, videographers, artists/illustrators, storytellers, website design specialists, marketing/PR firms, community organizations and firms with canvassing and phone/text banking experience/expertise, and organizations/firms with experience/expertise in conducting rapid research especially in underserved communities.

## **1.2 Purpose of RFI**

This RFI is issued for the purpose of gathering information from marketing/PR firms, community organizations, photographers, videographers, artists/illustrators, storytellers, website design specialists, marketing/PR firms, and firms with canvassing and phone/text banking experience/expertise (including data analytics/targeting), and organizations/firms with experience/expertise in conducting rapid research especially in underserved communities to help the State (1) continue to raise awareness about COVID-19, its negative impacts and the everyday actions and residents should take to protect themselves and their loved ones, and (2) build awareness, knowledge and trust in the COVID-19 vaccines—particularly among those who have been underserved historically and affected the most by the coronavirus.

## **1.3 Project Overview**

### Priority Consideration

In order to maximize resources efficiently and effectively, the Department will give preference and/or priority consideration to submissions/responses that contain any of the following:

1. Vendor is based in Louisiana and/or has demonstrated experience engaging communities in Louisiana, especially underserved, hard-to-reach, and vulnerable populations.

2. Demonstrated experience/background in public health communications, health promotion, and health literacy.
3. Commitment to and demonstrated experience addressing inequities and/or using an equity lens in its work. Submissions/responses that include examples of equity-centered approaches, principles, and considerations will be given preference.
4. Demonstrated experience/expertise in conducting evidence-based communications and engagement. Respondents who have experience/expertise in conducting rapid research (surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.), especially in underserved communities in Louisiana, will be given preference.
5. Demonstrated experience sourcing, vetting, and sharing multi-media everyday stories.
6. Demonstrated experience in community organizing and mobilization. Respondents who include strategies, approaches and tactics that have been taken to reach vulnerable, underserved, and hard-to-reach populations/groups will be given preference.
7. Demonstrated experience in crisis communications.
8. Proof from those vendors who are registered with the State and provide evidence, such as their vendor profile, as proof thereof.

## 2 ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### 2.1 RFI Coordinator.

Requests for copies of the RFI must be directed to the RFI coordinator listed below:

Alyson “Aly” Neel  
Louisiana Department of Health  
Office of the Secretary, Bureau of Media & Communications  
628 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
[COVIDcommsRFI@la.gov](mailto:COVIDcommsRFI@la.gov)

*This RFI will also be posted to the LDH website and LaPAC and can be found by accessing the following links:*

<https://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/newsroom/category/46> and at  
<https://wwwcfprd.doa.louisiana.gov/osp/lapac/pubMain.cfm>

### 2.2 Schedule of Events

<b>Activity/Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Public notice of RFI	3/5/2021
Deadline for questions/inquiries	3/9/2021 at 4:30 pm CST
Response to questions/inquiries	3/11/2021 at 6:00 pm CST
Deadline for receipt of response to RFI	<b>3/15/2021 at 4:30 pm CDT</b>

**NOTE:** LDH reserves the right to deviate from this Schedule of Events at any time and without notice.

## **2.3 Response Content**

### **2.3.1 Executive Summary**

The summary provided should introduce the scope of the response in as much detail as possible. At a minimum, it should include administrative information including the name of the responder's point of contact, his/her phone number, email address, and any other pertinent contact information. The summary should also include a brief recitation of the responder's qualifications and ability and willingness to meet, if not exceed, LDH's requirements as included herein.

### **2.3.2 Background and Experience**

Responders should give a brief description of its history, organizational structure, and number of years in business. Responders should also specifically describe their experience with effectively engaging members of underserved communities and provide any supporting data of such.

### **2.3.3 Approach and Methodology**

Responders should provide the approach and methodology that they would use to effectively reach residents and communities regarding COVID-19 and the vaccines.

## **2.4 Response Instructions**

### **2.4.1 Response Submittal**

#### Response

Responders interested in providing information requested by this RFI must submit responses containing the information specified no later than the deadline for response to RFI as stated herein. The response to the RFI must be delivered at the responder's expense to the RFI coordinator at the email address provided in section 2.1 of the RFI.

The responses must be received by **electronic** copy only to [COVIDcommsRFI@la.gov](mailto:COVIDcommsRFI@la.gov) on or before the date and time specified herein. Email submissions are the only acceptable method of delivery. Fax, mail, and courier delivery shall not be acceptable. Responders should allow sufficient time to ensure receipt of their e-mailed proposal by the time specified herein.

Responses received after the deadline, corrupted files, and incomplete submissions (*e.g.*, Part 1 and Part 2 of 3 are received, but Part 3 is not) may not be considered.

## Questions and Inquiries regarding the RFI

LDH will consider email inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification of the content of this RFI. Any such inquiries, questions, or requests for clarification must be submitted via email only to the RFI Coordinator listed in Section 2.1 above by March 9, 2021, at 4:30 pm, CST. Any inquiries, questions, or requests for clarification not received by email, not directed to the RFI Coordinator, or not received by the deadline will not be considered or answered.

Official responses and answers to all inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification will be posted by LDH on its website by March 11, 2021, at 6:00 pm CST.

Only the RFI Coordinator has the authority to officially respond to inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification. Any communications from any other individuals shall not be binding on LDH or the State.

## Additional Instructions and Notifications to Responders

### **2.4.2 RFI Addendum(a)/Cancellation**

LDH reserves the right to revise any part of the RFI by issuing an addendum(a) to the RFI at any time. Issuance of this RFI, or subsequent addendum(a), if any, does not constitute a commitment by LDH or the State to issue an RFP or any other process resulting in award of a contract of any type or form. In addition, LDH may cancel this informal process at any time, without incurring any liability from responders or potential responders.

### **2.4.3 Ownership of Response**

Any and all materials submitted in response to this RFI shall become the property of the State.

### **2.4.4 Cost of Preparation**

LDH shall not be liable to any responders, or potential responders, for any costs incurred that are associated with developing a response, preparing for discussions, if any are held, or any other costs, that may be incurred by a responder or potential responder due to responding to this RFI.