



FRIENDS of WAGNER FARM

A Heritage Association

RFP for Communications & Messaging Strategy Consultant

Issued by: The Board of the Friends of Wagner Farm (FWF)

Date Issued: December 5, 2025

Proposal Submission Deadline: December 29, 2025

Point of Contact: Jennifer Czerwinski, President FWF

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Anticipated Start Date: January 26, 2026

Budget: not to exceed \$25,000. Budget is a consideration in selection.

1. Background & Context

The Friends of Wagner Farm (FWF) is the separate, 501 c3 advocacy and fundraising organization supporting the mission of the Glenview Park District's Historic Wagner Farm (HWF) in Glenview, Illinois. FWF's mission is to provide stewardship and fundraising support to HWF to expand programming, create educational experiences, and enhance the farm property. friendsofwagnerfarm+1

HWF sits on 18.6 acres and is the last working dairy farms remaining on Chicago's North Shore, operated by the Glenview Park District (GPD). glenviewparkdistrict.org+1 Since 2001, HWF provides hands-on agricultural education, livestock, gardens, and historic exhibits to connect community members, especially children and families to the relevant story of local agriculture, past and present. HWF draws over 140K visitors a year and recently surpassed 2M total visitation. HWF is managed by professional staff employed through the GPD. Funding for the site is derived from a combination of program fees, grants and tax support.

FWF was created in 2003 by HWF volunteers to be a locally based support group with the aims to financially support major capital efforts and mission goals of HWF as well as to increase the visibility, understanding, and positive perception of HWF and agriculture- In doing so, FWF recognizes several current challenges:

- There is a need to **clarify and amplify the value proposition** of HWF to multiple stakeholders (GPD board members, constituents, external leadership) so that the narrative is consistent, compelling, and tailored to each audience.
- There is a **negative narrative** emerging (or already present) around livestock, animal uses, perceived mistreatment, anti-agriculture sentiment, or misunderstanding of farm operations. The strategy must include ways to **counteract negative stereotypes** and proactively build trust and positive awareness around modern, responsible farming, education, and heritage.
- Engagement across internal and external audiences must be strengthened: from the Park District board and staff to volunteers, donors, community partners, and the general public.
- FWF needs a cohesive messaging and communications roadmap (not just ad-hoc tactics) to align with strategic goals, to support fundraising, visitor engagement, educational outreach, brand identity, and crisis or reputation management.

Given the above, FWF seeks a communications and marketing firm (or consultant team) to partner in developing a holistic messaging strategy, stakeholder engagement plan, audience segmentation, and a practical implementation roadmap, including measurable objectives and timeline.

2. Project Objectives

The selected firm will help FWF achieve the following objectives:

1. Conduct a communications audit and stakeholder discovery to understand current perceptions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) for HWF and FWF.
2. Develop and refine key messaging and brand narrative for FWF that resonates with the distinct audiences (GPD board, staff, Glenview constituents, volunteers, donors, agriculture-supporters, and critics of agricultural operations).
3. Design an engagement plan (including channels, frequency, content strategy, digital/social media, community events, internal communications, reputation management) that increases positive awareness, builds trust, and boosts visitor and donor engagement.
4. Create tactics to address and mitigate negative narratives around livestock operations, farm uses, animal welfare, and agricultural misunderstandings—

transforming potential issues into positive stories about education, transparency, heritage, and community benefit.

5. Establish measurable metrics of success (KPIs) and recommend a modest budget and timeline for implementation of the communication strategy by FWF.
6. Deliver final strategy documentation, messaging framework (including key audience profiles, talking points, content calendar), and a prioritized implementation roadmap for the next 12 – 24 months.

3. Scope of Work & Deliverables

The scope encompasses research, strategy development, messaging, and planning.

Specific deliverables:

Phase 1 – Discovery & Audit

- Review existing communications assets (website, email newsletters, social media, signage, brochures, internal communications, donor materials).
- Conduct stakeholder interviews/focus-groups (HWF leadership/staff, FWF board, volunteers, donors, visitors, community partners, critics/concerned groups) to assess perceptions, strengths/weaknesses, and message gaps.
- Perform a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) specifically oriented toward HWF's operations, public perceptions of agriculture/livestock, and FWF's role.
- Deliver an audit report summarizing findings and recommendations for strategy design.

Phase 2 – Strategy & Messaging Framework

- Based on discovery, develop a comprehensive communications and engagement strategy document.
- Define target audiences and segments with tailored messaging, value propositions, and tone. Audiences to include:
 - Glenview Park District Board and leadership
 - Glenview constituents/residents
 - Internal staff/volunteers at HWF

- Local businesses and agricultural community
- Donors and potential funders
- Concerned or critical stakeholder groups
- Create a messaging framework: core narrative, key messages, verbal and written pitches per audience, FAQ/responses for potential negative narratives.
- Incorporate reputational communications guidance: how to respond to livestock/animal welfare concerns, how to proactively communicate programmatic and educational benefits, how to manage potential misinformation. Means of supporting the work being done in ag ed with the Glenview Clovers 4-H club.
- Identify optimal, realistic channels and content strategy (digital, social, print, events, partnerships) aligned with each audience.
- Provide a content calendar/timeline with recommended tactics for the next 12 – 24 months, prioritizing highest-impact activities aligned with modest budget.
- Create KPIs (e.g., increased website traffic, social media engagement, visitor numbers, donor retention/growth, positive sentiment metrics, board/staff awareness).

Phase 3 – Implementation Roadmap & Budget Guidance

- Provide implementation plan with timeline (e.g., immediate-term 0-6 months, mid-term 6-12 months, longer term 12-24 months).
- Provide budget estimate (modest budget), broken down by major task or campaign, and recommended staffing/partner roles/resources.
- Provide guidance for FWF on internal roles/responsibilities and vendor management (if further outsourced).
- Provide final deliverable package: strategy document, messaging framework document, content calendar, sample content in each area of focus, implementation checklist, budget summary.

Phase 4 – Optional Support (if within budget)

- Provide up to follow-up sessions/workshops with FWF board to review strategy and train on implementation.
- Provide a draft of a “crisis communications” playbook or response template addressing animal welfare or farm operations controversies.

- Produce detailed content templates (social media posts, newsletter copy, talking-points sheet, signage/blurb material for the farm grounds) — depending on budget availability.

4. Audiences

The work should meaningfully address the following audiences (and others as proposed by the vendor):

- Glenview Park District Board & leadership (decision-makers)
- Glenview constituents/residents (local community)
- Internal staff/volunteers of HWF
- Donors, prospective funders and sponsors
- Local businesses and agriculture community
- Concerned or critical stakeholder groups
- Visitors (families, school groups, 4-H clubs)
- Media and public relations (local press, agriculture press)

5. Timeline

Below is a suggested timeline; vendors may propose adjustments.

- RFP issued: December 5, 2025
- Proposal deadline: December 29, 2025
- Selection of firm: January 12, 2026
- Project kickoff: January 26, 2026
- Phase 1 complete (Discovery & Audit): March 9, 2026
- Phase 2 complete (Strategy & Messaging): April 30, 2026
- Phase 3 complete (Implementation Roadmap & Budget): May 29, 2026
- Optional Phase 4 support: Per MarCom vendor

Total project span approx. 4-5 months from kickoff to strategy delivery, with optional training/roll-out support thereafter.

6. Budget

FWF has a **modest budget** for this project. Vendors should propose a cost-effective solution aligned with the scope described above. Include in your proposal:

- Detailed cost breakdown by phase and deliverable
- Any assumptions or exclusions (vendor hours, travel, third-party costs)
- Optional line-items for additional tasks (e.g., content template creation, training sessions)
- Payment schedule (e.g., 30% on kickoff, 40% on delivery of Phase 2, 30% on final deliverables).

7. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include the following components:

1. Cover letter summarizing firm's understanding of FWF's mission, the broader context around HWF's issues in engaging in animal agriculture in the public setting and project objectives.
2. Firm profile: Company overview, key personnel who will work on the project, relevant experience (particularly with nonprofits, agriculture organizations, reputation management, multi-audience communications).
3. Case studies or client examples of similar work (strategy development, messaging frameworks, stakeholder engagement) including outcomes.
4. Proposed approach and methodology: how your firm proposes to conduct discovery, develop the strategy, engage stakeholders, design messaging, and produce deliverables. Include timelines and phases as above.
5. Detailed project team and roles, proposed staffing/hours.
6. Work plan and timeline aligned with the Scope of Work.
7. Budget: cost breakdown, billing terms, assumptions.

8. References: at least two relevant clients (with contact details) for whom you have done similar work.
9. Any other value-added services or creative ideas your firm proposes to further FWF's goals.
10. Statement of any constraints, what FWF must provide (e.g., access to stakeholders, internal documents, staff time) for success.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by the FWF Board based on:

- Demonstrated understanding of FWF's mission and the multi-audience communications challenge.
- Quality, clarity and creativity of proposed approach and methodology.
- Relevant experience and proven results (especially in agriculture/heritage/education/nonprofit settings).
- Fit of the project team and proposed staffing.
- Realistic, transparent and cost-effective budget aligned with modest funding.
- Ability to meet timeline and deliverables.
- Cultural fit: a partner comfortable with the agricultural/heritage context, willing to work collaboratively with volunteers, staff, board and community.
- Added value: any proposed innovative ideas beyond the basics.

9. Submission Instructions

- Format: PDF preferred.
- Submit by email to Ms. Czerwinski by 9:00 AM CT, December 29, 2025.
- Late submissions will not be considered.
- Please include "RFP – Communications & Messaging Strategy – FWF" in the subject line.

- Questions may be submitted in writing to Ms. Czerwinski. Answers will be shared with all respondents.
- Anticipated date for notification of selected firm: January 13, 2026
- FWF reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, negotiate with one or more respondents, or modify the scope prior to contract award.

10. Terms and Conditions

- FWF is not responsible for any costs incurred by firms in preparing or submitting proposals.
- All submitted materials become the property of FWF.
- Confidentiality: Firms interviewed will be required to sign a nondisclosure agreement given potential access to internal documents and stakeholder.
- Contract: A separate professional services agreement will be executed with the selected vendor, outlining scope, terms, deliverables, payment schedule, and project governance.
