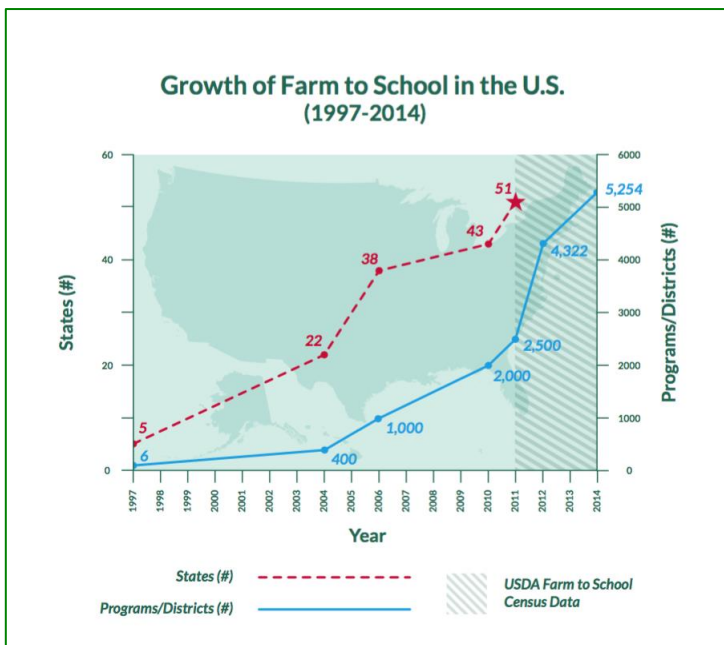




Request for Proposals: Strategic Planning Consultant

Background

The [National Farm to School Network](#) (NFSN) is an information, advocacy, and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and ECE settings. Farm to school and ECE empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. NFSN has led growth and innovation in the farm to school movement since its establishment in 2007. The first decade of NFSN's efforts have focused on developing a strong network of partnerships across sectors, building awareness about farm to school, and increasing activities at the state and regional levels through training, capacity building, and policy advocacy. This approach resulted in the unprecedented growth of farm to school from a handful of sites in the late 1990s to more than 42,000 schools in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. Territories – or 42% of all schools – benefiting more than 23.6 million children.¹ Since 2011, NFSN has prioritized early care and education settings (ECE) and Native communities as touch points for expanding our network and activities. A 2015 Survey of Early Care and Education Providers conducted by NFSN indicates farm to ECE activity in 850 sites covering 48 states and Washington, D.C.² In 2017, NFSN expanded its reach through engagement with more than 200 Core and Supporting Partners in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. Territories. NFSN's tagline "Growing Stronger Together" reinforces an organizational approach and belief that robust movement building is possible only when we work collaboratively across sectors and locations.



NFSN has a record of extraordinary accomplishment, pioneering a national and budding international farm to school movement and placing farm to school and ECE as a ubiquitous part of food systems change work, federal and state policy, and cross-sectoral connections. NFSN was instrumental in passing a Congressional Resolution in 2010 to establish October as National Farm to School Month, and in that same year in establishing the USDA Farm to School Grant program that has disbursed \$25 million in federal grants in the last five years, and has institutionalized national and regional farm to school staffing within USDA. The USDA Office of Community Food Systems now conducts a biennial National Farm to School Census to track movement growth and provides training and technical assistance to support sustainable farm to school program development. In 2018, NFSN's advocacy efforts results in an additional \$5 million allocation through appropriations for the grant program. As of 2017, [46 states have farm to school supportive policies](#), and there are more than 150 part- and full-time coordinator

positions dedicated to expanding farm to school efforts within State Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health and university Extension programs.

¹ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farm to School Census, 2015.

² National Farm to School Network, Results from the 2015 National Survey of Early Care and Education Providers, 2016.



[NFSN's current Strategic Plan](#) spans 2017-2019, and is guided by the organizational [mission and vision](#), [core values](#), and [theory of change](#). During this phase, advancing racial and social equity was identified as a strategic priority, resulting in several initiatives to address equity in our programs, policies and operations, adoption of an [equity commitment statement](#) in early 2018, and development of a [Programs & Policy Racial & Social Equity Assessment Tool](#).

NFSN 2020 and Beyond

NFSN seeks a skilled and experienced professional to facilitate a strategic planning process for the organization that will set the direction of NFSN beyond 2020. The process aims to review gains made during the 2017-2019 phase, retool strategies as needed, create space for innovation to meet the emerging needs of the movement, and plan for organizational stability and sustainability. NFSN's internal stakeholders include Core and Supporting Partners, Advisory Board, staff, and more than 20,000 members. External stakeholders include relevant federal and state agencies; current and potential organizational partners focused on ECE, Native communities, farmers, youth, policy advocacy, and racial and social equity; and current and potential funders.

Preparations for NFSN 2020 and Beyond were initiated at the April 2018 Annual Meeting gathering feedback from Core and Supporting Partners and Advisory Board. A series of follow-up discussions are slated to be conducted from September to December 2018, and notes will be available. Additionally, an Annual Core Partner Survey will be conducted in September 2018, which will provide opportunities for addressing some key questions relevant to Core Partners. Priority topics emerging from internal discussions that provide potential for further exploration during the Strategic Planning process include:

- Review and consider updates to guiding organizational documents and approaches:
 - Organizational name: Is NFSN's name inclusive of ECE and other priorities?
 - Mission, vision, core values, theory of change and equity statements
 - NFSN core functions (information, networking, and policy advocacy) and niche role for a national network
- Network Structure:
 - Sustaining an affiliate structure in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. Territories - with and without financial support to affiliates
 - Lessons learned and challenges related to engagement with Level 2 Partners (2017 onwards)
- National Farm to Cafeteria Conference:
 - Scope (K-12 + ECE or broader Farm to Cafeteria)
 - Location and frequency
 - Coordination with other national events
- Coordination and partnership with USDA Office of Community Food Systems:
 - Leveraging and not overlapping
 - Review existing Memorandum of Understanding and explore next steps
- Organizational Sustainability and Stability:
 - Future network funding options
 - Paid organizational membership
 - Review and expansion of fee for service options



Scope of Work and Deliverables

- Conduct stakeholder interviews / surveys / discussions to gather input on priority topics
- Conduct any secondary research or data analysis to inform discussions and recommended plan
- Participate in monthly check-ins with NFSN leadership staff to provide updates on progress, and flag any items that need further exploration or discussion
- Draft Strategic Plan for presentation and discussion at NFSN's 2019 Annual Meeting and Advisory Board meeting. The consultant is required to spend 2 nights in Tampa (April 28 and 29) for participation in meetings on April 29 and 30, with a departure on April 30, 2019.
- Finalize all Strategic Plan documents (including a timeline, dashboard to track progress, and a public facing summary) for dissemination

Timeline:

- September 4, 2018: Request for Proposals released
- No later than October 1, 2018, 11:59 pm ET: Proposals Due
- Late October to early November 2018: Phone interviews with finalists
- End of November 2018: Strategic Planning consultant hired
- December 2018 to September 2019: Consultant Period of Performance (10 months)
 - End of December 2018: Consultant reviews internal stakeholder discussion notes and outlines final plan of engagement for approval by NFSN
 - January-April 2019: External stakeholder interviews/surveys/data collection; any additional discussions with internal stakeholders conducted (virtual)
 - April 29-May 2, 2019: In-person discussions with Partners at Annual Meeting
 - June 2019: Preliminary draft plan for review by Advisory Board
 - July-August 2019: Revise plan based on input from Core and Supporting Partners and Advisory Board
 - September 2019: Approval by Advisory Board

Compensation:

- The selected consultant will be paid up to a maximum \$20,000 for services plus expenses for travel to the 2019 Annual Meeting. Expenses will be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$1,500 for airfare, local transportation, meals and lodging
- Applications must submit estimated hours per task listed in the Scope of Work, total estimated hours for the project, hourly rate and total estimated cost for services

Application process:

To be considered for this contract, please click [here](#) to submit a brief proposal before the submission deadline, 11:59 pm ET on October 1, 2018. You will be asked to respond to the following questions:

- Respondent name and contact information
- Describe your approach to strategic planning
- Proposed methodology to achieve the deliverables outlined above



- Budget: Provide total estimated hours for the project, hourly rate and total estimated amount requested. Attach total budget not to exceed \$20,000. Please elaborate on total estimated hours for the project and per task listed in the Scope of Work and other expenses as needed. Travel expenses to NFSN Annual Meeting, April 2019 in Tampa, FL will be reimbursed separately up to \$1,500 and should not be included in your budget.
- Commitment to attend and present at NFSN Annual Meeting on April 29 and 30, 2019 in Tampa, FL
- Experience and qualifications relevant for this contract
- Please indicate if you are or have worked closely with an NFSN Core and/or Supporting Partner
- At least three references from organizations you have worked with recently (preferably leading a strategic planning process).

Questions about this Request for Proposals should be directed to Anupama Joshi, Executive Director & Co-Founder at anupama@farmtoschool.org.