



Messaging/Communications for Campaign Promoting New Jersey's New Universal Newborn Home Visiting Program

Background

The United States has among the highest maternal mortality rates in the developed world. Only three states have a higher rate of maternal deaths than New Jersey and the state has some of the widest racial disparities for both maternal and infant mortality ([Nurture New Jersey 2021 Strategic Plan](#)).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 40% of deaths from pregnancy-related complications are potentially preventable through improved quality of medical care. Efforts to address maternal mortality in New Jersey include an aggressive statewide awareness campaign committed to reducing maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. Recent measures signed into law are aimed at helping to support the state's goal of becoming the safest and most equitable place in the nation to give birth and raise a baby.

The Opportunity

[The Burke Foundation](#) is launching a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to work for the Foundation in helping to support strategic communications for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' implementation of a groundbreaking universal newborn home visiting program. The consultant (either an individual or agency) will be hired for a three-to-six-month period to lead research and messaging efforts on behalf of the **first phase of a strategic communications campaign** in support of the launch and scaling of the **universal newborn home visitation program** in New Jersey. Due to the immediacy of launching the first phase, the selected candidate will be expected to start shortly after securing the contract.

Proposals must be submitted online by January 31, 2022.

- **Advertised:** Tuesday, January 11, 2022
- **Deadline for candidates to submit questions:** Friday, January 28, 2022
- **Deadline to apply to the advertised role:** Monday, January 31, 2022
- **Contract Award / Notification to unsuccessful candidates:** Monday, February 14, 2022

The Program

On July 29, 2021, Gov. Phil Murphy signed landmark legislation to establish a statewide universal newborn home visitation program intended to improve New Jersey's maternal and infant health outcomes. Under the new law, all parents of a newborn infant residing in the community in which the program operates are entitled to at least one home nurse visit

within two weeks after the birth of an infant. This program is a core recommendation in the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan.

During the visit, a nurse will conduct physical assessments on the birthing parent and newborn (including a screening for maternal depression), determine whether the family members have a primary care provider, complete a household environmental and social needs assessment, and facilitate referrals (i.e., contacting another provider on the family's behalf) to address identified needs (i.e., food security, transportation access, childcare planning), and provide education and guidance on such universal health and wellness topics as breastfeeding and safe sleeping practices.

Since universal newborn home visiting will be available to all families with newborns on a voluntary basis, it is critical for the service to be perceived as a valuable resource for all families, not only those who fall in a certain risk or income category. Some individuals associate “home visiting” with child protective services and/or a service only for those living in poverty. To avoid any stigma associated with the term “home visiting” or a program that will be managed by a state social service agency — and to effectively educate families about this new initiative —, the Burke Foundation, in partnership with NJDCF, will launch a strategic communications campaign (“the Campaign”).

Prior to the launch, the consultant selected for the first phase of this project — to which this RFP pertains— will gather input from various audiences in order to design messaging that will resonate with relevant audiences across New Jersey to maximize program participation. The second phase of the project, which might entail another RFP, will focus on operationalizing the Campaign over a period of years. The selected agency/consultant will have the opportunity to compete for the second phase of the campaign.

Project Goals

The overarching goal of the first phase of the project is to develop a Campaign that will generate universal receptivity for newborn nurse home visits across all New Jersey communities and boost participation rates. Specific objectives and the project scope are outlined in the next section.

Scope of Services

The communications consultant will be charged with the following objectives and tasks:

- Identify, recruit, convene, and facilitate focus groups with diverse constituents across New Jersey (either virtual or in person, at consultant's discretion) to better find out how various stakeholders perceive and understand New Jersey's new home visitation program and what would be the most effective ways to educate the public about the program. These focus groups will involve three broad groups:
 - **Pregnant women, birthing individuals, parents/caregivers** that reflect a cross-section of current and potential parents, not only by geography, urbanicity, race/ethnicity, household income, and level of citizenry, but also categories of birthing individuals (e.g., adoptive parents, teen parents, women who deliver babies who subsequently require treatment in the NICU, etc.).

- **Healthcare providers**, such as midwives, nurses, obstetricians, and pediatricians
- **Trusted community partners**, such as doulas, community health workers, faith-based leaders, Family Success Centers
- Synthesize feedback from focus groups and compile findings into a slide deck presentation as well as a succinct report.
- Create an outreach strategy for messaging efforts across New Jersey, including the most effective channels for marketing and outreach during the launch and ongoing sustained Campaign (e.g., posters in healthcare settings, etc.).
- Lead project management efforts so that all workstreams are aligned with overall project goals and that the project is completed on time.
- Attend virtual meetings to inform stakeholders convened by NJDCF about the project's progress; all stakeholders convened by NJDCF will provide planning and operational support to launch the statewide program.

Payment schedule

The consultant will be paid 35% of the agreed upon fees upon completion of interviews and focus groups; 35% after receipt of analysis and draft reports; and the remaining 30% at the conclusion of the project and final presentation of findings.

Anticipated Selection Process and Schedule

After receiving required application materials, the Burke Foundation and the NJ DCF staff will lead interviews with the top 2-3 finalists. Selection of the winning candidate and notification to unsuccessful candidates will occur on or by Monday, February 14, 2022.

Process for Submitting Proposals

To apply, please send corresponding elements of the proposal (listed below) to info@pinktrumpet.co. This recruitment process is being managed by a third-party company, Pink Trumpet.

Elements of Proposal

All submissions must, at a minimum, contain the following elements:

- Description of the candidate's understanding of the new state law.
- 1-2-page narrative explaining the individual consultant's or firm's strengths and distinguishing skills or capabilities.
- Description of the firm that includes a general overview, names and credentials of the proposed creative team, and the number of full-time employees.
- Abbreviated project scope that contains:
 - Preliminary description of how the candidate might approach initiating and completing the project
 - Project timeline
 - Project budget
- Portfolio displaying a representative selection of collateral created for current and/or past clients, especially those focused on work at the community level.

Evaluation Criteria

The successful candidate will:

- Have a proven record of high-quality strategic work developed and implemented in the nonprofit and/or private sector.
- Possess knowledge of the New Jersey landscape and be based in New Jersey or the tri-state region (New York City or Pennsylvania).
- Either have multi-lingual staff (Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Dari, and Pashto at a minimum) and/or have the ability to work with translators (simultaneous interpreters) who can facilitate conversations during focus groups and/or interviews with non-English speakers.
- Be able to develop messaging that is clear, compelling, and persuasive to all families and embodies an engaging tone.
- Have experience creating and pretesting culturally-tailored messages in partnership with community-based organizations (e.g., using local nonprofits to assist with recruiting focus group participants).
- Employ a collaborative and transparent working style, with high receptiveness to feedback.
- Have expertise in working with state agencies, funders, and/or nonprofits.
- Possess demonstrated experience building trust and working as a strategic consulting partner with diverse communities and being engaged in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice work in the community and/or in the nonprofit sector.
- Have leadership/ownership that is reflective of diverse and inclusive populations, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and leadership/ownership comprised of individuals who identify as woman and/or LGBTQ+.

While not required, familiarity with the maternal and child health sector is optimal.

Please direct questions and proposals to:

Hawwa Muhammad
info@pinktrumpet.co

For additional background on universal newborn home visiting along with New Jersey's law and plans for statewide scaling:

1. <https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/20210729a.shtml>
2. <https://earlysuccess.org/new-jersey-universal-home-visiting>
3. <https://familyconnects.org/>
4. <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillView.asp?BillNumber=S690>