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SUBJECT: CMP/AgIsAmerica Scope of Work

Thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal to the CMC. The following is the culmination of many internal discussions, including a “blue sky” session during which the entire kglobal team met to conduct an assessment of the current strategy and tactics of the CMP/AgIsAmerica project. As we look ahead to 2017, we believe this is an appropriate moment to reflect on what we have accomplished over the last several years, which tactics have worked and which are ready to be discarded, and where we should focus our resources going forward.

STRATEGY

When we launched the AgIsAmerica brand five years ago, our goal was to create a public, unified voice to communicate the value of the land-grant system in order to protect and grow its federal funding sources. The AgIsAmerica project is about education—sharing the value of the land-grant system and its impact on communities. When we educate the right people in great enough numbers, we have a powerful tool ready to support the system when it needs it.

Our focus for the last four years has been on building. We’ve built three incredibly successful education platforms—a website, Facebook page, and Twitter profile—from which we communicate a continuous stream of impacts. The AgIsAmerica brand is an established and trusted source of information for influencers, stakeholders, the media and the general public. We’ve built robust communities of both digital and traditional grassroots and grasstops that act as third-party validators of, and advocates for, the land-grant mission. We’ve built strong internal relationships with communicators, administrators, researchers and Extension agents throughout the system.

Now that we’ve built the foundation, what’s next?



Shifting From “Building” to “Engagement”

We have a strong, trusted brand; a steady stream of powerful stories; a robust community of advocates; and internal buy-in and support. It is time to shift our strategy from “building” to “engagement.” Engagement is the key to successfully leveraging and activating our community of supporters. While we’ve always practiced ad-hoc, organic engagement activities (such as grassroots media efforts) the focus of our strategy up until this point has been growth. For the remainder of 2016 and in 2017, we recommend focusing resources on engaging our communities.

Focusing On the BAA Initiatives

By concentrating our efforts on water, healthy food systems and people, infrastructure, and as a result, ongoing funding, we can ensure the CMC’s resources are being dedicated to priority areas, and that our education efforts are strategically mirroring the work that Cornerstone is conducting in Washington. Focusing on these initiatives allows us to target AgIsAmerica’s activities--honing and testing the power of the community on the strategic issues that matter most.

TACTICS

The current tactics for the project fall into five buckets:

- **Content Creation** (Case Studies, Impact Statements, Feature Stories)
- **Digital and Social** (Website, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube)
- **Earned Media** (Press Releases, Op-eds, LTEs, Story Placements)
- **Local Grassroots and Grasstops** (as needed)
- **Internal Communications** (Conference calls, Meetings and Presentations, Monthly Newsletter, National Impact Database Committee)

Here’s How We’ll Shift Tactics For The Remainder of 2016

Content Creation

What We’ll Keep: We’ll continue to research, solicit and categorize case studies, impact statements and feature stories from across the land-grant system to be repurposed and pushed out over AgIsAmerica platforms. This content is the basis of all of our education efforts.

What We’ll Do Differently: Instead of sourcing stories, case studies and impact statements that represent the breadth and depth of the land-grant system’s contributions, we’ll focus on highlighting stories from the BAA priority areas, with a special eye towards regional, multistate and national case studies.



Digital and Social

What We'll Keep. The website, Twitter and Facebook are all robust gathering places for the media, stakeholders, and the general public. Our brand is a trusted source of information on the land-grant system and its impacts. Our target audiences know that they can come to AgIsAmerica to find success stories, case studies and additional resources that highlight the unique services and value that universities provide. These three platforms are the foundation of the project.

What We'll Do Differently. Up until this point in the project, we have been focused on growth: bigger website traffic numbers, more Twitter followers, more Facebook page likes. While growth will continue organically (albeit at lower rates), our efforts will shift to engagement.

For instance, we'll tweak the format of our articles on the website so that people stay on the page longer and are more likely to click through to individual universities' pages. We'll make the articles shorter and adopt a consistent, predictable format so that visitors can quickly determine whether or not it's an article they're interested in learning more about.

Furthermore, instead of producing many short blog posts summarizing press releases and newsroom articles, we will focus on producing a smaller number of high-quality feature articles that kglobal will plan, research, and source using content and resources from communicators at individual universities.

On Facebook, our goal is to drive engagement with our posts: sharing them, liking them, and commenting on them. On Twitter, we'll focus not on the numbers of people following us, but making sure they are the right people from our target audiences consistently engaging with us and our content.

Additionally, we'll drop the YouTube page from the AgIsAmerica portfolio. Our audiences have never really engaged with the platform in numbers high enough to justify further investment in its maintenance and upkeep. In addition, we'll discuss a new strategy for video content in the 2017 portion of this proposal.

Media Relations

What We'll Keep. The media is a powerful ally. In addition to providing reporters with a trusted place to find information on the land-grant system, its impacts, and its available resources, AgIsAmerica provides reporters with a steady stream of proactive information via social media and through press releases and story pitches.

What We'll Do Differently. We'll focus our media relations activities on the BAA priority areas. We'll start by creating a separate media list of the national, regional, key state, and industry reporters and bloggers that cover topics related to each priority area. Then we'll work with communicators at appropriate universities to create a database of available researchers and Extension agents, projects and impact statements for each given priority area.



Grassroots and Grasstops

What We'll Keep. During the course of the project, we have leveraged the power of traditional grassroots and grasstops activists, as directed by Cornerstone, to reach new audiences and to amplify our education efforts. We'll maintain the ability to leverage this group of third-party validators.

What We'll Do Differently. As the digital landscape has changed and the tools grow more advanced, building digital communities of grassroots activists has become more efficient and cost-effective. Activating these communities with digital calls to action ensures ease of response and a quick turnaround in results. We'll focus efforts on building out and testing these communities, as directed by Cornerstone.

Internal Communications

What We'll Keep. Everything. As we begin to shift other tactics, we believe it is more important than ever that we keep close communication with the CMC, internal stakeholders and individual communicators to assess the progress and impact as we begin to shift our tactics and execution.

Here's What We'll Plan to Add In 2017

Audience Identification Planning Session

The new year will bring with it many changes that could impact our target audiences. An election will usher in a new administration and a new Congress, along with a changed media landscape. These changes will influence the makeup, concerns and priorities of our target audiences. In addition shifting our focus to the BAA priority areas will add new players to the mix. We'll begin the year by conducting a strategic planning session with Cornerstone in order to ensure we have the right targets (geographic and priority-area specific) for our education efforts throughout the year.

Content Creation

We'll continue the strategy laid out for the end of 2016: a focus on creating content centered on the BAA priority areas.

In addition, the way that people consume content has changed significantly from when we began this project. Now rather than text, visually appealing content like infographics, evocative photography, and videos is the standard. So in 2017, in addition to regular articles and traditional text formatted content, we'll add original infographics, memes, gifs and photos to AgIsAmerica. This will allow us to offer content to our audience that is more easily consumed off of mobile technology, and is more accessible for social media.

A strong arm of our content creation service will be an emphasis on user-generated content. This is material that will be provided by current students and alumni through social media



outreach. This will offer greater opportunities to include those already invested in the land-grant mission in the AgIsAmerica community.

Finally, we'll launch an external newsletter. As originally conceived, the AgIsAmerica newsletter was meant to inform internal audiences and to encourage their participation in the project. We have that buy-in and engagement from the land-grant community; therefore we propose that we shift those resources to an external audience. Email marketing is a powerful tool, particularly with those members of our target audience who are not regularly on social media. A monthly newsletter allows us to stay top-of-mind with our impact stories and serves as a constant reminder of the wealth of information and resources the land-grant system has to offer media, legislators and the general public. We'll work in close coordination with Cornerstone to curate and build an external email-marketing list.

Deliverables:

- Regular (at least 1 per month) visual content production including infographics, memes, gifs, photos
- Daily website posts
- Daily Facebook and Twitter posts
- Monthly email newsletter

Digital and Social

We'll continue our 2016 engagement-focused strategy for Facebook and Twitter. In addition, we'll begin a more robust targeting strategy for each platform. We'll analyze which types of content resonate the most and where that content is coming from.

When we launched the Facebook page, our goal was to target land-grant alumni. The idea behind this strategy is that there is no more powerful advocate for the system, its contributions to communities and its overall impact on America than the very students that graduated from land-grant universities. Over the last several years, we've grown the Facebook page organically and have lost some of this focus. We'll shift our efforts back to organizing and engaging with those alumni and alumni groups.

Any sound engagement strategy includes tests of the responsiveness of its members. In 2017, working in close coordination with Cornerstone, we'll launch regular calls-to-action focused on our digital communities to better understand what content motivates them, and what activation vehicles are most effective.

Deliverables:

- Daily Facebook and Twitter engagement
- At least one call-to-action per quarter (4 per year)

Media Relations

We'll begin by building an editorial calendar for each priority area that tracks events and newshooks to be leveraged for media outreach and pitches in 2017. At least once a month, we'll conduct media outreach in the form of press releases, individual pitches, op-eds or letters-to-editor. We'll work directly with the appropriate communicator(s) at the represented university(s) to draft all content.

Using the priority area database created in 2016, we'll work with the appropriate administrators and communicators to conduct a media roundtable and accompanying digital event for each priority area (for a total of four throughout the course of 2017). We'll work with the CMC to determine the most appropriate process for execution.

Deliverables:

- Editorial Calendar for each priority area (4 total)
- At least one media outreach activity per month (to include press releases, pitches, op-eds/LTEs)
- 4 media roundtables

Internal Communications

As we shift the focus of our efforts, our hope is to put as many resources as possible into our engagement activities. We'll look to the CMC to decide which meetings, presentations, conference calls and travel expenses are a necessary use of those resources and which can be eliminated moving forward.

Deliverables:

- Quarterly Activities Reports
- Call-to-Action Reports
- Quarterly CMC Calls
- Meetings and Presentations per CMC's request.

Here's What We Can Do With Additional Budget in 2017

New Website. The current AgIsAmerica website is built on an outdated platform. As a result, it doesn't translate well to mobile technology, nor does it allow us to capture the latest updates on things like search and SEO. The user experience is clunky and not optimized using the latest available technology. We would completely overhaul the website, right down to its underlying infrastructure. For example, the current website built 5 years ago – a lifetime on the internet – does not emphasize the research specific universities do in an easy-to-use or informative way. The new website would make a land-grant university easily clickable with key information emphasized, such as milestone research, state and federal Congressmen it's represented by, and contact information. If we do nothing else in 2017, we strongly recommend redoing the current AgIsAmerica website.



Priority Area Message Testing. We'll build a message platform for each priority area. Then, using a combination of in-person focus groups and national polling, we'll test which messages and in which format resonate best with our target audiences.

Video Campaign. We'll produce branded high value AgIsAmerica videos, one for each BAA priority area. The videos would be geared towards informing the general public about each priority issue, current research projects and Extension programs, and existing impacts and success stories. We'll include interviews with land-grant experts and will repurpose the videos for distribution across AgIsAmerica channels and as aids in media outreach.

Digital Advertising Campaign. The way people get and consume content is increasingly digital. Digital advertising is a powerful tool to get our stories out to the widest segment of our target audience. We can put in place digital ads that are geo-targeted to Washington, DC or to people who visit certain websites or buy certain products.

