

Agency Proposal Sample 2

Organization: Northwest Environment Watch

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Please provide some background information about your agency:

Northwest Environment Watch (NEW) is the Pacific Northwest's premier research center on regional sustainability. Our mission is to create an environmentally sound economy and way of life in the Pacific Northwest. Our function is to monitor the region's sustainability and identify paths toward a more sustainable future. Founded in 1993, NEW has published 10 short books on critical sustainability issues ranging from sprawl to consumption to tax policy. It has distributed approximately 73,000 copies of its various books. It has also generated coverage in media outlets, with combined audiences measured in the tens of millions, thus moving its findings to much larger audiences.

In crafting a new strategic plan, the organization's board and staff have concluded that NEW's proxy measures of impact—number of books sold and media hits generated—are worth supplementing with additional evaluation tools. We have anecdotal evidence that readers of our books and articles are moved to think and act differently. When those readers are leaders of large institutions, decision changes can have large implications for the region. What we have never had, and now want, is much more authoritative, reliable information about what our target audiences take from our work.

Please describe the problem, challenge, or opportunity that the consultant team will address.

Who actually reads what? What changes does it cause them to make in their actions? What are different audiences' perceptions of NEW and its works? Most importantly, what are the yardsticks we can use, in addition to number of books sold and media hits generated, to monitor our effectiveness?

Having better answers to these questions will allow us to track the impacts of our different efforts and to continuously improve them.

What would you like to find out or have accomplished; what is the desired deliverable?

Our desired outcome is a set of reusable tools for monitoring our effectiveness. These tools—perhaps focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, or other means—should be both cost-effective and reliable. NEW routinely spends \$150,000 on creating and distributing each book. It therefore makes sense to spend as much as \$15,000 on learning how to make the next book a more effective means of advancing our mission. It doesn't make sense, however, to spend \$500,000 on comprehensive "before and after" opinion surveys to monitor the influence of a \$150,000 book. The yardsticks need to be reliable so we can use them to plan our next efforts.

This project will be challenging and will require close interaction with a faculty member knowledgeable in such matters, plus NEW's executive director and other staff members. If possible, conclusions should be presented both in writing and in person to NEW's entire staff and board for consideration and review.

What are some key tasks the students will perform to complete the project?

- Design reusable tools—perhaps focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, or other means—that will be both cost-effective and reliable
- Create a guide for using these tools

- Present the tools and guide to the NEW staff and board

What resources are available to complete the project?

- Oversight from NEW's Director of Operations and staff
- We will provide access to our books