

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) Strategic and Organizational Planning and Development Consultant

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PART I: OVERVIEW INFORMATION

Issuing Organization: Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) at www.cste.org

Participating Organizations: CSTE and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Cooperative Agreement number **1 NU38OT000297**

PART II: FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this request for funding proposal (RFP) is to seek proposals from consultants/organizations to guide the Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR, <https://cifor.us>) with the development of a renewed comprehensive strategic plan that includes 1) recommendations to improve organizational effectiveness, 2) revised organizational bylaws, and 3) guidance for a five-year implementation period and ongoing evaluation.

Background

CIFOR is a multidisciplinary collaboration of national associations and federal agencies working together since 2006 to improve methods at the local, state, and federal levels for detecting, investigating, controlling, and preventing foodborne disease outbreaks. CIFOR member organizations represent epidemiology programs, environmental health programs, public health laboratories, and regulatory agencies at the local, state and federal levels involved in foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response. CIFOR is co-chaired by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and is governed by a set of bylaws, last updated in March 2018, which are available [online](#).

CIFOR has successfully leveraged its collaborative framework and the dedication of its members to create a number of high value products. These include [guidelines](#) for foodborne disease outbreak response, a [toolkit](#) and educational programs to aid individuals and agencies responsible for outbreak response, [guidelines](#) for the retail food industry, and [guidelines](#) to address outbreaks of undetermined etiology. Through these efforts, CIFOR has achieved international recognition for its contributions to food safety and public health.

In April 2015, CIFOR crafted a new vision and five-year strategic plan, building both on its own past accomplishments and new strengths and capacities that had emerged in the field of foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response and prevention [see Attachment 1]. The plan provided a framework for CIFOR's activities and clarified and strengthened its relationship with its member agencies and associations and with other entities that were actively working to improve outbreak response. CIFOR's goal was to assess the plan's progress and monitor changes in the science and practice of outbreak response over time, with a goal of updating the plan every five years. Due to challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to update the CIFOR strategic plan have been delayed. Furthermore, we believe that pandemic-related impacts experienced during foodborne outbreak responses now warrant a re-evaluation of some CIFOR strategic and operational plans.

Objectives

The objective of this consultant-led strategic and organizational planning process for CIFOR is to develop a new strategic plan and provide recommendations to improve organizational effectiveness, including updated bylaws if appropriate, that address identified gaps, opportunities, and priority activities in support of foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response in the United States.

Deliverables

The consultant will work closely with CSTE and CIFOR members to develop a new 5-year strategic plan. The consultant will facilitate discussions and activities with CIFOR members aimed at gaining an understanding of the expectations of these stakeholders in CIFOR's strategies for the next five years.

The consultant will propose a strategy for development of the strategic plan that leverages two in-person meetings of the CIFOR council planned for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. These meetings are expected to be two days in length, some portion of which can be dedicated to strategic and organizational planning with the selected consultant. Additional virtual meeting opportunities will also be available during the project period. The consultant may propose additional methods of soliciting member feedback to complement the in-person and virtual meetings, such as key stakeholder interviews and electronic assessments. The final product should include a strategic framework with a five-year implementation and evaluation plan. The consultant is not expected to complete the evaluation, rather will ensure that CSTE will have the instruments and metrics needed to conduct an ongoing evaluation over the 5-year period of the Strategic Plan. In addition to the strategic plan, an assessment of CIFOR's organizational effectiveness is necessary to determine whether any changes should be made regarding aspects such as, but not limited to, membership, number and type of workgroups and development teams, approach to industry engagement, meeting schedules and formats, governance, etc. The consultant will provide recommendations to improve organizational effectiveness and for bylaws changes, if appropriate.

To meet the above-mentioned objectives, the selected contractor will be required to provide the following sets of deliverables:

- **Meeting Preparation:** The contractor will prepare content and develop the approach for soliciting CIFOR member input into strategic and organizational planning at all in-person and virtual meetings. It is expected that the contractor will prepare for and attend two 2-day in-person CIFOR meetings to be held in Denver, CO (location subject to change) in Fall 2022 and at a location to be determined in Spring 2023. The contractor will also prepare for and attend a minimum of four virtual conference calls with the Council during the project period. In addition to the two in-person and four virtual Council calls, the contractor may be asked to participate in planning conference calls and emails with CSTE staff in advance of meetings.
- **Meeting Facilitation:** The contractor will provide on-site facilitation for two 2-day meetings in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. The contractor will also be asked to present deliverables and facilitate discussion a minimum of four virtual conference calls with the Council during the

project period. The contractor will be responsible for developing the facilitation guide, facilitating the discussion, and documenting key discussion points/findings.

- Meeting Debrief: The contractor will participate in debriefing meetings with the CSTE team and other stakeholders as appropriate to review progress and plan next steps.
- Strategic Plan/Map: The contractor will produce a comprehensive written strategic plan including a “roadmap” for implementation and benchmarks to evaluate progress.
- Organizational Effectiveness Recommendations: The contractor will develop a discussion guide and facilitate conversations with CIFOR members at in-person and virtual meetings aimed at evaluating organizational effectiveness. The contractor will then generate recommendations to improve council operations and effectiveness in support of the Council’s strategic plan. The contractor will produce a report with written recommendations for presentation to the CIFOR Governance Committee for feedback prior to finalization of the report.
- Updated Bylaws: Based on the strategic and operational planning process and facilitated discussions with Council members, the contractor will suggest specific edits to the CIFOR Bylaws in support of the Strategic Plan and the recommendations made to improve organizational effectiveness. The contractor will draft the specific written changes to the bylaws for presentation to the CIFOR Governance Committee for feedback prior to completion of the project. Given the nature of the bylaws approval process, the contractor need only deliver draft proposed bylaws changes and present them to the Governance Committee in order to satisfy this deliverable and is not required to see the entire bylaws approval process through to finalization and acceptance.

Timeline

RFP distribution	June 29, 2022
Response to RFP due	Aug 1, 2022 at 11:59pm Eastern Time
Award notification	August 22-26, 2022
Contract initiation	September 1, 2022
In-person meeting facilitation	September – November 2022
Draft strategic plan	December 31, 2022
In-person meeting facilitation	March – May 2023
Draft organizational effectiveness recommendations & draft updated bylaws	June 30, 2023
Finalized strategic plan with implementation/evaluation guidance, finalized organizational effectiveness recommendations, draft updated bylaws	July 31, 2023

*Please note that the timeline is subject to change

Section II. Contract Mechanism

Mechanism of Support

CSTE will manage matters related to financial support for this project. CSTE intends to commit up to \$20,000 through a contract mechanism. The final contract amount is contingent upon submission of a detailed and reasonable budget proposal to be approved by CSTE and the availability of funds. Successful applicants are expected to return a signed contract within 30 days of receiving it. Contact rsinger@cste.org for a copy of CSTE's standard terms and conditions.

Section III. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Applicants should be non-federal public health professionals (including, but not limited to, those from institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, communication firms, public health agencies, or private consultants) with advanced knowledge and experience with nonprofit organizations, organizational management, public health organizations, evaluation, and strategic planning processes. The consultant must also have strong writing and technical editing skills and experience with strategic plans for nonprofit organizations. Knowledge of public health, epidemiology, and surveillance is preferred.

Applicants who are employed or work on behalf of state, tribal, local, or territorial (STLT) health agencies are required to submit an outside activity form or secondary employment request (actual form may vary) that has been approved by their employer with their application.

Current CSTE policy states that contracts should not be made with former CSTE staff unless approved by the CSTE Executive Director for extenuating circumstances. Please contact Rachael Singer at rsinger@cste.org if you have any questions about this policy or to request an exemption.

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Content and Form of Application Submission

The application should be no longer than 8 pages, and should be written using a 12-point, double-spaced, un-reduced, Times New Roman font, on 8.5x11 inch paged paper with one-inch margins. Additional pages or appendices that are not required may not be reviewed. Please include the headings below in the order listed and address all the issues included under each heading.

1. Contact Information (1-page limit)
 - a. Provide applicant contact information including email address, phone number, and mailing address.
 - b. Indicate if your organization is a minority- or women-owned business
2. Experience (2-page limit)
 - a. Describe prior experience as it relates to this proposal.
 - b. Include all relevant experience of team members who would be assigned to this project.

3. Work Plan (3-page limit)
 - a. Describe the implementation plan to complete the outlined deliverables.
 - b. Please include a timeline for key activities and milestones.
4. Budget and Justification (2-page limit)
 - a. Provide detailed budget and budget justification.
5. Other required documentation
 - a. Outside activity form/secondary employment request (if applicable)
 - b. Resumes of team members.

For further assistance, technical questions, or inquiries about the application, contact Rachael Singer at rsinger@cste.org. Representatives from CSTE will be available to speak to potential applicants to discuss technical or administrative questions. All questions and answers will be made available to all potential applicants upon request.

Submission Dates and Times

Submission, Review, and Anticipated Start Dates:

- Application Submission Receipt Date: **Submissions due by 11:59 PM EST August 1, 2022**
- Award Notification Date: August 22-26, 2022
- Anticipated Start Date: September 1, 2022

Submitting an Application:

Application materials should be sent to Rachael Singer at rsinger@cste.org by **11:59 PM EST on August 1, 2022**. Applications submitted after this deadline may not be reviewed. Notification of successful receipt of the application will be sent to the applicant upon request.

Section V. Application Review Information

Criteria

The following criteria will be used to review all submitted applications:

1. Experience
 - a. Description of individual or organizational history leading non-profit organizational management and/or governmental public health practice strategic planning processes (25 points)
2. Project Plan
 - a. Applicant's understanding of the project and deliverables (10 points)
 - b. Detailed work plan, method, and timeline for completing work in timeframes listed above (40 points)
 - c. Feasibility of proposed work plan (15 points)
3. Budget and Justifications (10 points)

Review and Selection Process

Eligible applications that are complete will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit by CSTE in accordance with the review criteria stated above. Submissions that do not comply with the technical requirements set in the RFP are considered nonresponsive and will be rejected. A review panel of CSTE

National Office staff, CSTE Steering Committee members, and subject matter experts may score the applications. Funding awards will be made based upon the quality of the submitted proposal and the ability of the applicant to meet the criteria stated above.

Section VI. Additional Information

Award Notices

All applicants will be notified via email no later than August 26, 2022.

Contractor Responsibilities

The award recipient will have primary responsibility for the following:

- 1) Accomplishing the objectives and completing the deliverables listed in this announcement
- 2) Providing written progress reports and invoices to CSTE as required in the contract agreement
- 3) Communicating through multiple avenues on a regular basis for feedback and discussion (e.g., conference calls, emails, etc.)
- 4) Actively engaging partners and stakeholders

CSTE Responsibilities

CSTE will have the primary responsibility for the following:

- 1) Serving as the awardee's principal point of contact between participants, CDC, and other stakeholders
- 2) Facilitating work and providing avenues for communication between awardee and stakeholders
- 3) Monitoring the terms of the agreement
- 4) Funding according to the terms of the contract agreement

For More Information

For more information, contact:

Rachael Singer, PhD, MSPH
Senior Program Analyst
770-458-3811
rsinger@cste.org

CSTE Request For Proposals
CIFOR Strategic and Organizational Planning and Development Consultant

ATTACHMENT 1

**COUNCIL TO IMPROVE FOODBORNE
OUTBREAK RESPONSE (CIFOR)
STRATEGIC PLAN**



Introduction

The Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) is a multidisciplinary collaboration of national associations and federal agencies working together since 2006 to improve methods at the local, state, and federal levels for detecting, investigating, controlling, and preventing foodborne disease outbreaks. CIFOR member organizations represent epidemiology programs, environmental health programs, public health laboratories, and regulatory agencies at the local, state and federal levels involved in foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response. The food industry is represented on the Industry Workgroup. CIFOR identifies barriers that hinder rapid detection of and response to foodborne disease outbreaks and develops projects that address these barriers.

CIFOR has successfully leveraged its collaborative framework and the dedication of its members to create a number of high value products. These include guidelines for foodborne disease outbreak response, a toolkit and educational programs to aid individuals and agencies responsible for outbreak response, guidelines for the retail food industry, and performance measures for foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response programs. Through these efforts, CIFOR has become internationally recognized for its contributions to food safety and public health.

In April 2015, CIFOR began crafting a new vision and five-year strategic plan (“the plan”) for going forward, building both on its own past accomplishments and new strengths and capacities which have emerged in the field of foodborne disease surveillance and outbreak response and prevention (“outbreak response”). The plan provides a framework for CIFOR’s activities and clarifies and strengthens its relationship with its member agencies and associations and with other entities that are actively working to improve outbreak response. CIFOR will assess the plan’s progress and monitor changes in the science and practice of outbreak response over time, with a goal of updating the plan every five years.

Building on the Mission and Vision

From inception CIFOR has focused on partnership and collaboration, a philosophy captured in its vision statement:

Local, state and federal partners collaborating effectively to reduce the burden of foodborne illness in the United States.

CIFOR is one of the only entities with representation across the entire spectrum of organizations, jurisdictions, geographies, and professions that focuses on outbreak response. This provides a unique perspective and unmatched opportunity for identifying needs in outbreak response and developing recommendations to address those needs.

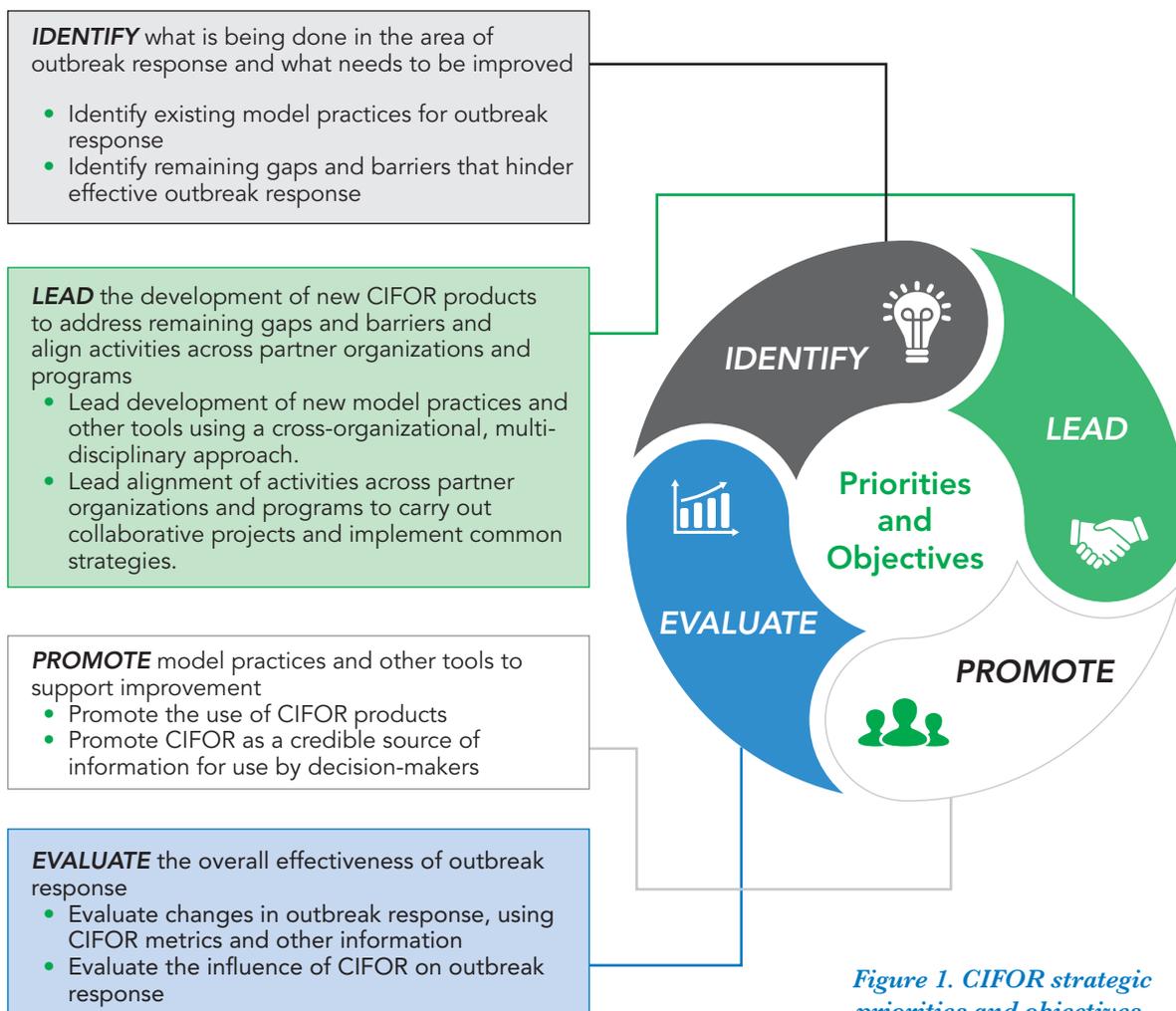
A unique CIFOR perspective informs and facilitates its mission:

To improve methods and processes at the local, state, and federal levels to detect, investigate, control and prevent foodborne disease outbreaks.

CIFOR has identified **four key priorities** and **eight objectives** to achieve its mission and guide actions in coming years. These priorities and objectives are summarized in Figure 1 and discussed in the following section.

CIFOR's process is cyclical, with knowledge obtained in each priority area used to inform and influence decisions and actions in other priority areas.

Priorities and Objectives



Priorities and Objectives

PRIORITY 1:

IDENTIFY what is being done in the area of outbreak response and what needs to be improved

- **Objective 1** - Identify existing model practices and tools for outbreak response
- **Objective 2** - Identify remaining gaps and barriers that hinder effective outbreak response

CIFOR member organizations and programs that specialize in foodborne disease outbreaks are generating knowledge about what works and what is needed to improve outbreak response. However, distribution of knowledge tends to be limited to members and close networks of the organizations and programs. Further, information and recommendations gleaned from actual outbreak responses can be difficult to collect and disseminate. CIFOR is well positioned to serve as a convener and collector of information from a variety of sources in order to identify existing model practices and tools and to identify remaining gaps and barriers.

PRIORITY 2:

LEAD the development of new CIFOR products to address remaining gaps and barriers and align activities across partner organizations and programs

- **Objective 1** - Lead development of new model practices and other tools to address remaining gaps and barriers using a cross-organizational, multi-disciplinary approach.
- **Objective 2** - Lead alignment of activities across partner organizations and programs to carry out collaborative projects and implement common strategies.

Through its work to identify needs and measure effectiveness in outbreak response, CIFOR has become a central point for tracking progress and priorities necessary for overall system improvement.

While many efforts to improve outbreak response will most effectively be carried out by individual organizations or programs, there are issues that require a multidisciplinary, cross-organizational perspective. Because of participation by all key outbreak response organizations, associations and programs at the local, state and federal level, CIFOR is uniquely qualified to lead new product development efforts by distilling information about gaps and barriers and information gained from previous outbreaks into model practices and other tools. CIFOR is also well positioned to identify opportunities for alignment across partner organizations and programs and lead collaborations focused on process improvement.

PRIORITY 3:

PROMOTE model practices and other tools to support improvement

- **Objective 1** - Promote the use of CIFOR products
- **Objective 2** - Promote CIFOR as a credible source of information for use by decision-makers

A key role for CIFOR is promotion of its model practices and implementation tools for outbreak response. CIFOR has created valuable products capturing model practices including the *Guidelines* and associated *Toolkit*, metrics for measuring effective outbreak response, *Outbreaks of Undetermined Etiology Guidelines*, *Lab-Epi Reporting Software*, and *Industry Guidelines*. All of these products have been well received, but there is a need for effective promotion and training to increase adoption at all levels of government. Adoption of CIFOR's model practices and tools will be increased if decision makers recognize the value of CIFOR's multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary composition in creating high quality products. Active promotion of CIFOR and its products is the key to making this happen.

Priorities and Objectives

PRIORITY 4:

EVALUATE the overall effectiveness of outbreak response

- **Objective 1** - Evaluate changes in outbreak response, using CIFOR metrics and other key statistics
- **Objective 2** - Evaluate the influence of CIFOR on outbreak response

With its ability to bring together organizations and interests associated with outbreak response,

CIFOR is well positioned to assess the effectiveness of these activities. The CIFOR Guidelines, Toolkit and associated metrics were developed to enable continuous quality improvement efforts targeted at outbreak response. CIFOR is also uniquely positioned to address issues related to evaluation such as standardizing approaches to surveillance and data collection. Finally, it is imperative that CIFOR conduct periodic self-evaluation to assure accountability.

Operationalizing the Strategic Plan

To operationalize this plan, CIFOR will create four Development Teams, one per priority, with content experts representing organizations and associations involved in outbreak response. These teams will identify the best course of action to pursue through strong technical expertise, extensive knowledge of any work currently underway, and creative thinking.

Development Teams will serve as think tanks that use objectives under each priority as a framework for identifying needs and generating ideas to address needs. CIFOR will create a charter for each Development Team, describing its purpose, roles of team members, expectations for the team and operating parameters. To facilitate this framework, CIFOR will revise its By-Laws to reflect roles and expectations for the Development Teams.

Development Teams will be responsible for defining project ideas to help meet objectives for each priority and address identified needs. This process will include creating project ideas within the Development Teams, soliciting project ideas from experts and on occasion, reviewing project proposals from outside organizations. While each Team will have a specific focus, Teams will work together to plan and package projects across priority areas. This will be critical to avoid silos between Teams and to streamline the process for project submission and review by CIFOR and potential funding agencies. In addition to new Development Team charters and By-Laws revisions, CIFOR will create guidelines for developing, submitting and approving project proposals that reinforce the new framework and assure any products fully support CIFOR's mission, vision, priorities and objectives.