

Grassroots Policy Capacity Building Design

Farming Policy Network, California

 PORTFOLIO WORK SAMPLE

Liz Sahadi Smith

Collection

Enterprise Strategy & Systems Design

Engagement Type

Research Design, Strategic Consulting Proposal,
Competitive Bid

Client

Farming Policy Network, California

Submitted

October 2025

Proposed Timeline

10 weeks

Proposed Investment

\$27,500 – \$30,200 fixed fee

How to Read This Piece

Work Submission

This is an original work submission: a competitive RFP response designed for organizations serving BIPOC and farmworker communities operating in a volatile federal policy environment. It demonstrates research design, stakeholder engagement methodology, comparative model analysis and strategic infrastructure planning.

What This Shows

- Anti-extraction research design
- Capacity-building strategy for historically marginalized communities
- Policy communications fluency under federal scrutiny
- Stakeholder engagement methodology
- Four fully-scoped implementation models ready for immediate pilot launch

The Moment This Proposal Was Written For

It's a Tuesday afternoon in Fresno. A farmworker organizer opens an email from a member family. The father went to renew CalFresh and was asked for documents he'd never needed before. The mother is afraid to take their toddler to the WIC office. A neighbor warned them that any county visit could trigger an immigration check.

Three families. One rumor. The organizer spent the rest of the day doing crisis triage instead of coalition work.

Federal enforcement expanded in January 2025. In July, HHS widened what counts as a federal public benefit and reinforced verification requirements. For BIPOC grassroots organizations, that became more paperwork, more questions at the front desk, more confusion – without new funding, training or language access.

- ① This proposal delivers exactly what was asked: grounded in the realities of California's farmworker and food justice communities, informed by organizations already doing this work and designed to respect the capacity constraints of the groups it serves.

Core Principle — Anti-Extraction by Design

Grassroots organizations are already over-capacity. This process is designed around that reality.

Interview Protocols

- **Consent and anonymity options** — pseudonyms welcome
- **48-hour feedback loop** — here's what we heard, here's what we'll change
- **Off-the-record zones** — anything can be removed from notes
- **Compensation** — \$75 – \$100 per interview OR donation to the organization
- **Trauma-informed pacing** — no rapid-fire questions, built-in pauses

Recommendations Center Three Principles

Principle	What It Means
Pay people properly	Stipends with clear time caps; micro-grants for participation barriers
Protect people legally	MOUs, consent protocols, data agreements, warm handoffs to vetted partners
Handle the paperwork	Named legal/benefits collaborators, language access budgeted, no unfunded administrative burden

Scope of Work

I. Stakeholder Engagement — Weeks 1 – 4

Who Will Be Interviewed — 25 to 35 Interviews

- Grassroots organizers in farmworker, food justice and immigrant rights spaces – 15 to 20 interviews
- Tribal leaders and Native-led food sovereignty organizations – three to five interviews, protocol co-designed with tribal partners
- Client members and coalition partners – five to eight interviews
- Legal/benefits navigation providers – two to three interviews
- State agency staff who interact with grassroots groups – two to three interviews, if client approves

Core Interview Questions

- What stops you from engaging in state policy work – time, money, knowledge, safety, language access?
- What support would make the difference – stipends, training, childcare, translation, legal backup?
- What have you seen work elsewhere?
- What are your non-negotiables – what protections do you need before you'd recommend this to another organization?

🕒 **Deliverable:** Stakeholder Engagement Summary (8 – 12 pages) – themes, direct quotes (anonymized), saturation analysis, contradictions and tensions, recommendations from the field.

II. Comparative Model Scan — Weeks 2 – 5

Models Examined

- Fellowship models – national domestic worker policy leadership programs, grassroots policy fellowships
- Cohort-based learning – movement strategy and leadership development programs
- Embedded support – equitable development capacity-building frameworks
- Rapid-response infrastructure – immigrant defense networks integrating legal and organizing
- Benefits navigation models – civic technology organizations, legal aid programs, public interest law providers

What Will Be Extracted from Each Model

Element	Detail
Structure	Fellowship vs. cohort vs. embedded vs. on-call
Duration and time commitment	Full scope
Stipend and compensation models	Full scope
Curriculum or training components	Full scope
Evaluation frameworks	Full scope
Sustainability strategies	Full scope
Lessons learned and failure points	Full scope

🕒 **Deliverable:** Comparative Model Scan (12 – 18 pages) – model summaries, replicability matrix for California context, cost ranges, case study deep-dives on two to three standout programs.

III. Gap and Saturation Analysis — Weeks 4 – 6

Category	Scope
Training and TA providers	Currently serving grassroots food and farm groups
Legal services and benefits navigation	Available to target organizations
Translation and interpretation capacity	Language justice organizations and vendors
Policy coaching and legislative tracking tools	Accessible to under-resourced orgs
Funding streams	Available for grassroots participation

🕒 **Deliverable:** Gap and Saturation Analysis (6 – 10 pages) – landscape map, unmet need clusters, saturation zones, duplication risks, partnership opportunities.

IV. Strategic Recommendations — Weeks 7 – 8

Four fully-scoped models – each with enough detail for immediate pilot launch if approved by the Steering Council:

Model A — Intensive Fellowship Six to eight organizations, nine to 12 months, deep engagement	Model B — Cohort-Based Training 12 to 15 organizations, quarterly convenings, lighter touch
Model C — Embedded Mentorship Two to three organizations paired with policy mentors, 18 to 24 months	Model D — Hybrid Approach Combines elements of A, B and C

Each model includes: target participants and selection criteria, time commitment and compensation structure, training and support components, legal and benefits navigation integration, language access plan, evaluation metrics, Year 1 budget estimate and sustainability pathway.

🕒 **Deliverable:** Strategic Recommendations (15 – 20 pages) – four fully-scoped models, implementation trade-offs, risk assessment, decision framework for the Steering Council.

V. Preliminary 120-Day Pilot Roadmap — Weeks 7 – 8

Days	Activities
1 – 30	Partner selection, MOU development, stipend structure finalized, legal/benefits partners contracted, translation vendors onboarded
31 – 60	Orientation and baseline assessment, policy landscape training begins, first cohort convenings
61 – 90	Active participation in coalition meetings or legislative engagement, troubleshooting and adjustment
91 – 120	Debrief and evaluation, lessons learned documentation, sustainability planning

Includes: roles and responsibilities, decision gates (when to pause, pivot or proceed), MOU templates and consent protocols, light evaluation framework and risk mitigation strategies.

🕒 **Deliverable:** Preliminary Pilot Roadmap (10 – 15 pages) – 120-day calendar, decision gates, role definitions, MOU templates, evaluation framework.

VI. Partner Landscape Map — Weeks 6 – 8

Category	Scope
Potential pilot participants	Grassroots organizations ready and interested in state policy engagement
Training/TA providers	Organizations that could deliver curriculum components
Legal partners	Immigrant rights legal services, farmworker justice organizations
Benefits navigation providers	Community-based orgs with CalFresh/Medi-Cal expertise
Translation/interpretation	Language justice organizations and vendors

🕒 **Deliverable:** Partner Landscape Map (8 – 12 pages) – organization profiles, service areas, capacity assessment, partnership readiness.

VII. Funding and Sustainability Plan — Weeks 7 – 8

Year 1 Budget Estimates by Model

Model	Year 1 Estimate
Fellowship (six orgs, nine months)	\$55,000 – \$75,000
Embedded Mentorship (two orgs, 24 months)	\$25,600 – \$28,600 over two years
Tribal Co-Design	Budget co-determined with tribal partners

Funding Lanes — Public Sources

- USDA Community Food Projects (capacity-building eligible)
- State Department of Food and Agriculture Farmer Equity Program
- State Environmental Justice grants (if framed as EJ capacity)
- CalFresh Healthy Living/SNAP-Ed (if benefits navigation component included)
- State Office of Farm to Fork (food system resilience framing)

Funding Lanes — Philanthropic Sources

- Food and agriculture funders – environmental and food systems foundations
- Grassroots capacity funders – progressive capacity and just-transition funder networks
- Immigrant rights funders – national immigrant rights philanthropies
- California-specific health, wellness and regional foundations

Funder Messaging by Lane

Audience	Message
Food/agriculture funders	Building the next generation of farmworker and food justice leaders shaping California policy
Capacity funders	Anti-extraction infrastructure that pays people, protects them and handles compliance
Immigrant rights funders	Keeping families connected to food benefits while federal rules shift
State agencies	Grassroots implementation partners who can carry policy into communities

🕒 **Deliverable:** Funding and Sustainability Plan (10 – 12 pages) – funding source database, launch and maintenance budgets, three-year financial model, funder messaging by lane, sample LOI and proposal excerpts.

Timeline

Total project duration: **10 weeks (approximately 2.5 months)**



Week	Activity
Weeks 1 – 4	Stakeholder interviews; model scan begins
Weeks 2 – 5	Model scan continues; gap analysis begins
Weeks 4 – 6	Gap analysis; partner landscape mapping
Weeks 6 – 8	Strategic recommendations, funding plan, pilot roadmap
Week 8	Draft report delivered
Week 9	Working session with staff and Steering Council – virtual, 90 minutes
Weeks 9 – 10	Final report revisions, Steering Council decision doc, funder-facing report
Week 10	Final deliverables package submitted

Investment

Fixed Project Fee

**\$27,500 –
\$30,200**

Covers all consultant labor for the complete scope of work.

Payment Structure

- **30%** upon contract execution
- **40%** upon draft report delivery
- **30%** upon final deliverables package submission

Additional Pass-Through Costs *(separate from consultant fee)*

- **Interview compensation** – 25 to 35 interviews at \$75 – \$100: \$1,875 – \$3,500, budgeted as pass-through or client-administered
- **California collaborator costs** – \$1,700 – \$3,000 for bilingual interviewers, translation services and tribal consultation

Why Fixed Pricing



Budget Certainty

No scope creep or hour tracking



Deliverable Focus

Compensation tied to completed work products



Simplified Invoicing

Three milestone payments

Liz Sahadi Smith

Strategic communications executive with 25 years of experience architecting institutional narrative, governing AI-era brand reputation and building resilience infrastructure for organizations operating under high public scrutiny.

Narrative Arbitrage — Category Engineering

Engineered the climate-adaptive healthcare category to bypass political friction and generate \$18M in earned media value. The category was adopted by partner organizations statewide.

Algorithmic Brand Governance

Architects organizational Share of Model strategy, ensuring authoritative citation status in AI-generated outputs and governing how institutional reputation is synthesized across media and information platforms.

Resilience Architecture — Reputational De-risking

Designs crisis communications infrastructure that outlasts staff transitions and survives narrative hijacking. Built systems that achieved 143% positive sentiment across 113 consecutive days of record heat and contributed to the first heat death decline in a decade.

Relational Capital Stewardship

Manages high-value media and institutional relationships as balance-sheet assets — PBS/WETA documentary feature, coverage in The New York Times, Reuters, AP, NPR, BBC and Politico. 91% award win rate — 20 wins from 22 submissions.

Growth Operations — Narrative ROI

7x donation increase in one week: \$15,000 annually to more than \$100,000 in seven days. Verified by Chief Development Officer. 544 national media placements generating \$18M in earned media value, verified by Cision.

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