

Call for Proposals

Co-operative Social Media Platform

I. Objective

The Youth Network of the International Co-operative Alliance seeks an expert consultant to do a feasibility study for a co-operative social media platform. The objective of the co-operative social media platform is to support the aims in the Blueprint.

In 2012, the International Co-operative Alliance launched the Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade. In the face of growing social unrest, economic stagnation, and the insecurity that future generations face in terms of jobs, essential social services, and even just meeting their basic needs, the 2020 Vision of the Blueprint identifies the following key issues facing society; issues which co-operatives can help to address:

- Environmental degradation and resource depletion
- An unstable financial sector and increasing income inequality
- A growing global governance gap
- A seemingly disenfranchised younger generation

The future of the co-operative movement, not to mention the achievement of the goals delimited in the Blueprint, lies in the hands of youth. To this end, the Youth Network proposes a co-operative social media platform that would connect, energise and grow the co-operative movement together, using the tools of social media.

In order to examine the feasibility of such an undertaking, the Alliance has identified the need for an expert Consultant.

II. Background

The International Co-operative Alliance

The International Co-operative Alliance is a non-profit international association established in 1895 to advance the co-operative social enterprise model. It is the global voice for and of the co-operative movement uniting, representing, and serving its members (which are national level federations of co-operatives and individual co-operative organisations).

To accomplish its purposes, the Alliance is organised with a Global Office, four Regional Offices (Europe, Africa, Americas, and Asia-Pacific), and eight Sectoral Organisations (Banking, Agriculture, Fisheries, Insurance, Health, Housing, Consumer Co-operatives, and Worker Co-operatives).

The Youth Network

The International Co-operative Alliance, hereinafter the "Alliance", formed the Youth Network as an advisory, assistance and representation body for the co-operative youth movement with the purpose of organizing to address its singularity and complexity; promoting education and co-operative principles, encouraging the participation and development of youth from all nationalities within the co-operative movement; and undertaking actions to build more just and equitable societies. The aims and description of activities of the youth network can be found in its constitution: <http://ica.coop/sites/default/files/attachments/GVC%20-%202014%2006%2005%20-%20Youth%20Network%20Constitution%20FINAL.pdf>

III. Description of the Proposed Platform

This section includes thinking already done on this platform, but is open to amendment following the findings in this and future feasibility studies.

Proposed Targets

- Executive Committee of the Youth Network
- Members of Youth Network
- Young co-operative members
- Co-operative entrepreneurs
- General public

Proposed Features

- Social Networking (messages, posts, comments)
- Event Streaming
- Virtual classrooms / forums
- Facilitate Internships
- Couch Surfing (accommodation sharing)
- Online democracy (debates and voting)
- Team Challenges
- Crowdfunding for co-operatives
- Participative development of the platform

Public View (to work in sync with www.ica.coop)

- News
- Agenda
- Multimedia Resources
- Library
- Documents

Minimum Implementation Team

- Editor
- Webmaster
- Regional youth committees / YOUTH network
- Director of Communication of the Alliance
- Collaborators
- Voluntary administrators
- Sponsors

Challenges

- Development of the platform
- Participation
- Suitable Funding

IV. Duties & Responsibilities

The Consultant will be responsible for the delivery of a feasibility study for the proposed co-operative social media platform, which will include providing recommendations to and engaging experts to answer the following questions:

- Will people actually use a co-operative social media platform?
- Is there a need for a co-operative social media platform?
- Are there similar existing platforms that may exist for a particular audience such as associations, NGOs and networks? Do people use them? What makes them successful?
- Are there any social media platforms that were created for specific users that have failed? Why did they fail?
- What are the positives and negatives to building our own social media platform?
- Is it better for us to use existing social media platforms instead of building one ourselves?

We would also need to create a survey for our members and the co-operative youth network to find out if there is demand for such a platform. Of course, we also need to know if they will use it because many times people will say something is a great idea but then never use it. So, we could see asking them if they already regularly use any social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter or others.

We need to ensure we are very critical in examining the need and demand for this before a model is proposed. The organisation who does the feasibility study will not automatically be chosen to do the platform, if it is decided to build one.

If the answers to questions in Phase 1 are positive, and the Alliance approves, then a second Phase would start to explore exactly how / what the tool should look like (what it can or should offer as distinctive than existing social media platform and what is the critical mass required in users in order to ensure it stays alive and grows for years to come)? How can we market the platform and get people to use it?

The proposal should contain a cost quote along with the time it would take to complete it.

V. Process

Once the proposal has been received, the consultant will be asked to meet electronically with the Executive Committee of the Youth Network to present the proposal. The Executive Committee will then decide on which proposal to accept.

The Alliance Global Office can facilitate or arrange discussions with key informants that might be able to provide input and feedback for the draft, but the Consultant should have familiarity with the subject and access to key thinkers in this field. The Alliance will send all communications to its stakeholders, including the survey.

VI. Submission

The Feasibility Study and any questions should be submitted to Gretchen Hacquard, hacquard@ica.coop