

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
Communications (Marketing and PR) Support for Launch of New Brand and Show in the Levant

Summary

Sesame Workshop is collecting submissions for communications agencies or consultants to develop a comprehensive communications strategy to launch and sustain our new brand in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and drive viewership of a new children’s television show and digital content.

Program Overview

In Fall 2019, **Sesame Workshop**, the educational non-profit behind *Sesame Street*, will launch a new local version of *Sesame Street* in Arabic and Kurdish, aimed at children ages 3-8 and their parents/caregivers in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria and available on pan-Arab satellite and digital platforms. The new show is part of a groundbreaking partnership with the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**, the humanitarian organization at work in more than 40 countries, to provide critically needed early education to help children and families affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. In December 2017, our program, *Ahlan Simsim* (“Welcome Sesame” in Arabic), was awarded a landmark \$100 million grant by the MacArthur Foundation, which will enable us to reach millions of children and their families in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria over the course of five years.

Our program will be the largest early childhood intervention in the history of humanitarian response. In addition to our new local version of *Sesame Street*, we will also work in partnership with the IRC to provide direct services in homes and centers for over one million of the most vulnerable displaced children, offered in IRC centers and through home visit programs. The direct services will use Sesame materials, such as storybooks and other educational resources.

Additional background on the new television show: A new, locally produced children’s television series, *Ahlan Simsim*, will target refugee and non-refugee children ages 3 to 8 in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The series will introduce children to the Sesame Muppets—furry, loveable friends who will model behaviors supporting inclusion, respect, and gender equity, and provide engaging educational messages, always from a child’s perspective. The series will focus on social-emotional skills, like identifying and managing emotions, which all children—especially those who’ve experienced trauma—need to develop in order to thrive. The series will be distributed through traditional television broadcast on pan-Arab satellite and local channels and will also be made available on digital and social media platforms.

Sesame Workshop’s signature approach is to create content that engages both children and their caregivers, as this is critical for establishing caregiver-child engagement and also helps to reinforce the messages from the show.

Sesame Workshop has had a presence in the Middle East for nearly 40 years, working in Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Turkey, and the Gulf region. There is some existing Sesame brand awareness in our four target countries, particularly with our *Iftah Ya Simsim* series in the United Arab Emirates and *Hikayat Simsim* in Jordan.

For more information, please visit www.sesameworkshop.org/refugees.

Overall Objectives

Sesame Workshop will enlist an agency to support the launch of the new *Ahlan Simsim* TV show and brand in September 2019, and managing our PR and Marketing efforts in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, with the following goals:

- Launch and build awareness of the Ahlan Simsim brand in our four target countries
- Position the Ahlan Simsim brand as trusted and relevant
- Drive viewership of the new educational broadcast
- Drive viewership of and engagement with digital content
- Leverage PR and Marketing to disseminate key educational messages and themes that align with the new broadcast and digital content
- Sustain and grow the brand following the 2019 launch

Target Audiences

1. Children and parents/caregivers of children ages 3 to 8 in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, who are not displaced
2. Children and parents/caregivers of children ages 3 to 8 in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, who are displaced

Required Services

- **Media & PR strategy**
 - Develop a comprehensive communications strategy, including Marketing, PR, and events/activations to launch and sustain the new brand in all four target countries for multiple target audiences, in Arabic and Kurdish
 - Develop positioning for the new brand and messaging for each target audience, refined by in-region testing
 - Segment and tailor the strategy for each of our core target audiences
 - Provide local insight and perspective on what drives awareness and generates engagement
 - Sustain awareness and buzz by coordinating strategic in-season beats
 - Develop a corresponding media plan to build brand awareness and promote the new series, and drive traffic to website/YouTube channel
 - Identify channels that will reach our target audiences in impactful and cost-efficient ways, and recommend media spending levels needed to achieve our objectives
- **Creative Development**
 - Develop overarching creative concept and key art to launch brand, refined by in-region testing
 - Develop creative for ads and social media needs based on approved style guide, in close coordination with Sesame Workshop (*note that Sesame Workshop will handle the scripting, filming, and post-production for any video assets featuring our new characters*)
 - Deliver campaign creative in required formats and languages, based on approved media plan
- **Execution**
 - **Media plan execution**

- Execute approved media plan, including buying media placements and delivering ads
- Optimize online media plan throughout campaign period, informed by analytics and other means of evaluation
- Develop social media calendar and draft social media posts
- **Local PR and event execution**
 - PR support, including assistance with drafting, translating, and pitching press releases in all four target countries; coordinating press junkets at the studio in Amman; pitching and coordinating interviews with key Ahlan Simsim staff and characters; responding to media inquiries as needed; seeking out opportunities to highlight the new show through earned media and character appearances.
 - Execution of season launch events and activations in Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq to include event/activation concepts, securing venues and vendors, managing guest lists and RSVPs, pitching and facilitating press coverage *(note that hard costs associated with events/activations, such as venue fees and A/V, do not need to be included in the proposed agency budget)*
- **Overall Project Management**
 - Monthly check-ins with Sesame Workshop senior management and agency senior management
 - Monthly progress reports for aforementioned deliverables and services, including budget spends
 - Monthly reports on effectiveness of the strategy and subsequent iteration through analytics and testing
 - Comprehensive post-campaign wrap-up report
 - Serving as a resource for communications and marketing throughout the duration of the engagement

Timeline (estimated):

- **March 1:** RFP sent
- **March 7:** Intent to bid due
- **March 18:** Proposal due
- **Late March:** Begin engagement. Sesame Workshop will provide updated information on the project and work closely with the agency to inform the development of a comprehensive strategy
- **September:** *Ahlan Simsim* TV series launch
- **September - December:** Ongoing PR and marketing support/execution throughout Season One

Proposal Requirements

Sesame Workshop invites agencies with experience in our target region (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) to submit a Proposal for consideration. Proposals must follow all provided instructions and meet all terms and requirements in this RFP, as outlined in the Proposal Submission Information and Disclaimers section of this document.

Each initial offer should contain the offeror's best terms from a price and technical standpoint.

Proposal Submission Information:

Your written Proposal, no more than 8 pages, must include the following:

- Your approach to developing a communications strategy for Ahlan Simsim
- Your approach to providing insight on what drives awareness and engagement
- Agency information, including:
 - Scope of services your agency provides beyond the needs outlined above (including market research capability)
 - Client references, and additional samples of prior similar and/or relevant work (including summaries of work in our four target countries and with our target audiences, as outlined above)
 - Key staff members and their biographies
- Metrics that show your success in growing brands and successfully executing campaigns
- An itemized cost estimate and timeline for the engagement, broken out into the categories of requested services outlined above
- Proposed senior management oversight of project
- Proposed metrics of success
- A completed Contractor Information Form (attached to this RFP)

Evaluation Criteria

Sesame Workshop intends to accept the Proposal that offers the “best value” in terms of creative and technical requirements, such as quality of sample works, cost, and past performance.

Therefore, the following criteria will be taken into consideration:

- Quality of the proposed concept, as it aligns with the program’s objectives outlined in the Program Overview
- Capacity, range, and depth of experience in launching brands and developing and executing marketing and PR plans in the target countries and for the target audiences
- Motivation and ability to manage a complex communications project in association with an international team
- Financial stability of organization (as evidenced by number of years in business, third-party relationships, etc.)

Submission and Contact

All proposals must be in English and submitted via email by **March 18, 2019**. Please submit your proposal to Cailey Cron at cailey.cron@sesame.org.

Disclaimers and Terms of this RFP

1. Sesame Workshop will not compensate offerors for preparation of their response to this RFP. All expenses incurred in the preparation of the Proposal in response to this RFP is at your sole cost and responsibility.
2. This RFP does not guarantee a resulting contract and Sesame Workshop is under no obligation to offerors unless and until a written agreement is signed by Sesame Workshop and offeror.
3. Sesame Workshop may withdraw or amend this RFP at any time.

4. This RFP may result in one or more contracts for parts of activities.
5. Sesame Workshop may request additional rounds of responses based on more detailed instructions or requirements.
6. Information provided by Sesame Workshop in connection with the RFP process, including this document, is confidential to Sesame Workshop. Proposals produced under this RFP belong to Sesame Workshop. Any distribution of such Proposals must first have written authorization from Sesame Workshop.
7. Offerors are not entitled to any compensation or payment for any submission to Sesame Workshop or Sesame Workshop's use of such submission for any purpose. Offerors acknowledge that Sesame Workshop in good faith will have the sole discretion to determine whether any compensation is due to offerors for use of any submitted materials. Offerors recognize that any creative materials, concepts, ideas and techniques that are disclosed to Sesame Workshop may be similar or identical to, in whole or in part, to creative materials, concepts, ideas and techniques already developed, in development, or to be developed in the future by Sesame Workshop.
8. Offeror will retain a copy of its Proposal and hereby releases Sesame Workshop from any liability for loss of, or damage to the copy of the Proposal that is submitted to Sesame Workshop.
9. All intellectual property and related materials provided to offeror by Sesame Workshop shall remain the sole and exclusive property of Sesame Workshop and no license is granted to offeror other than as may be necessary for offeror to prepare and submit its Proposal hereunder. Offeror understands and agrees that Sesame Workshop is entitled to use any part of the Proposal which is not concrete or does not itself constitute protectable and/or copyrightable property without compensation to offeror.
10. No work may be subcontracted out on this proposal, unless otherwise agreed to by Sesame Workshop.
11. Any contract to be entered into between Sesame Workshop and an offeror will be for work provided solely as work-made-for-hire, with ownership and all rights belonging to Sesame Workshop.
12. The cost estimate and proposed timeline and all other terms and conditions stated in your Proposal must remain valid for 180 days from the date of delivery of the Proposal to Sesame Workshop.

About Sesame Workshop

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind *Sesame Street*, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We're present in more than 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through a wide range of media, formal education, and philanthropically-funded social impact programs, each grounded in rigorous research and tailored to the needs and cultures of the communities we serve.