



U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives

Request for Proposals: Shaping USFWC's Staff Growth, 2023-2025

A. Introduction

Organizational Background

[The United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives \(USFWC\)](#) is the national grassroots membership organization for worker cooperatives. Our mission is to build a thriving cooperative movement of stable, empowering jobs through worker-ownership. We advance worker-owned, -managed, and -governed workplaces through cooperative education, advocacy and development.

USFWC is a 501(c)6 nonprofit governed by more than 385 business and organizational members. We represent the 1,000 estimated worker co-ops and their 12,000 workers across the country. We organize through local cooperative networks while building power with national and international partners to advance an agenda for economic justice rooted in community-based, shared ownership.

Context

Our membership, budget and staff size are growing quickly. With growth comes new challenges and new opportunities: a need to clarify and evolve our management structures and grow new muscles for shared decision-making. The USFWC is seeking a consultant to help us evolve and grow our internal staff structures in ways that center our values, including racial and gender justice, anti-oppressive practices, restorative justice (vs. punitive), participatory democracy and workers' rights. This contract is a first step, helping us to assess where we are currently and learn from the example of similar organizations.

Intent

Framing: We want to maintain and grow a staff processes and culture that reflects values of racial and gender justice, anti-oppressive practices, restorative justice (vs. punitive), participatory democracy and workers' rights. In what ways can staff at all levels participate more fully in the design of strategic program implementation and organizational development, while still centering our organizational members (who are not our staff)?

Key questions we want to explore as our staff grows

- How do we determine and operationalize **who** decides **what** in our day-to-day work, to avoid decision-making bottlenecks? How do we determine and clarify which decisions are up for input and thought leadership from staff at various levels?
- How do we strengthen mechanisms for ongoing feedback and accountability among staff up and down the reporting chains, to help us recognize and respond to internal challenges in loving, productive, non-punitive ways?

B. Key Information

Scope of work:

1. Help us learn from the example of values-aligned organizations that have grown in similar ways over a similar span of time, e.g. from \$500K to \$5 million budget or 5 to 30 staff in a span of a few years, in ways that:

- Scaled their mission driven impact
- Employed effective and engaging decision-making as staff grew
- Supported staff well-being and maintained a strong, positive staff community

Questions to address include regarding these organizations:

- How did their management decision making structures evolve over time, and what did they learn in the process?
- What tools do they use to guide their management and decision-making?
- How have the job descriptions or duties of the E.D. and/or top level managers changed over time?
- How do they decide on an appropriate staff size and/or when to add new positions?

- How do they prevent leadership burnout and feasibly distribute duties so folks in leadership can take breaks, sabbaticals etc.?
- How do they take racial and gender justice into account when designing and evaluating their decision making structures?
- What types of internal grievance policies, tools or protections can staff use to impact the conditions of their workplace?
- How do staff influence decisions that affect their work plans and workloads?

Sample Deliverables:

- *Written and/or presented case studies on 3 organizations;*
- *Opportunity for our staff to interview a leader and lower level staff member of each organization about their transition, if possible*
- *1 round of follow-up with staff e.g. to answer questions or clarify points.*

2. Create recommendations for the USFWC regarding how to grow our structure and culture in ways that reflect our values:

- Review recent staff retreat notes, evaluations, exit interview notes (with permission) and other meeting records to capture themes regarding current structures and decision-making
- Survey and/or interview individual staff to find out about their experience in the organization and what they would like to see evolve in the USFWC's decisionmaking structure and culture
- Facilitate at least two group sessions with staff to gather input and explore common themes and tensions
- Present a summary of challenges we are currently facing, findings and recommendations in the following areas:
 - Decision-making structures and processes
 - Leadership team job descriptions, roles and norms
 - Ongoing self-assessment and accountability structures
 - Racial and gender equity
 - Staff capacity needs and additional or modified staff roles to meet our goals for a healthy, democratic and sustainable workplace

Sample Deliverables:

- *2-3 information-gathering sessions with groups of staff*
- *Survey or information-gathering interviews with individual staff*
- *Presentation of recommendations to all staff*
- *Short written report of recommendations*

3. Aid board and staff in responding to recommendations by supporting collective and individual processing of the findings, and next steps.

- Facilitate a group session for staff to process and respond to the findings and recommendations as a group
- Discuss recommendations with the Board of Directors or Executive Committee as appropriate
- Offer an individual coaching sessions for key staff members to help process and respond to the findings
- Propose a draft action plan for near-term next steps

Sample Deliverables:

- *1 facilitated session with staff*
- *1 facilitated session with board members (as appropriate)*
- *Up to six 1:1 coaching sessions for staff members*
- *Written action steps*

Formats for Communication

USFWC is a remote workplace; all work performed through this contract is expected to be remote. While we ask that contractors respond directly to the Scope of Work above, we are open to recommendations about how best to structure time for staff discussion and feedback. The spaces in which we can engage consist of:

- Up to 4 hours of virtual all-staff meetings specifically related to the contract scope (e.g. a mini-retreat, a sequence of shorter meetings, etc.)
- Up to 3 hours of additional meetings with smaller groups of staff (e.g. directors, junior staff, etc.) specifically related to the contract scope (e.g. a mini-retreat, a sequence of shorter meetings, etc.)
- Up to 20 hours of individual staff availability for 1:1 zoom meetings or phone calls
- Individual staff reflection time
- A virtual survey or other asynchronous feedback

Preliminary Timeline

- **Deadline for proposals:** March 31, 2023

C. Submitting a Proposal

What to Include in a Response

- **Organization Overview**
 - Include any relevant contact information, including who should be contacted with any questions we may have.
- **Summary of Relevant Experience and Ability**
 - See below, “What’s Important to us in a Proposal”
- **Approach**
 - A summary of how the Consultant would undertake the scope of work.
- **Deliverables**
 - What, specifically, would the Consultant provide? Refer to sample deliverables in the scope of work above, but alternative deliverables may be proposed.
- **Proposed Timeline**
 - Create a timeline with estimated completion dates and milestones for your projected work-plan.
- **Pricing**
 - A cost proposal for the work to be performed. Note that no in-person travel is anticipated for this project.
 - The amount USFWC has budgeted for this project is \$10,000.
- **Additional Information**
 - Any additional information that the Consultant wishes to bring to our attention that is relevant to this RFP.

What is important to us in a proposal

The contractor’s qualifications should demonstrate:

- Demonstrated experience advising and coaching organizations on anti-oppressive practices, combating anti-Black racism, restorative justice (vs. punitive approaches), and workers’ rights, and clear alignment with these principles
- Knowledge of democratic, horizontal and/or participatory management structures
- Demonstrated experience successfully advising and coaching organizations with 10+ staff and \$1 million + budget

The proposed approach should include:

- A clear response to our proposed scope of work and a clear justification any proposed elements or deliverables that differ from the sample scope of work
- Participatory methods that engages staff at all levels, with an awareness how intersectional and complex identities across our staff inform power dynamics

How to submit

- All proposals must be submitted by **March 31st, 2023**. Please send proposals to hiring@usworker.coop, subject line: "RFP Response: Shaping USFWC's Staff Growth"
- If you have any questions before or after submitting your proposal, please contact Savanna Lyons at savanna@usworker.coop or Ricardo Nuñez at ricardo@theselc.org.
- Once submitted we will notify you by email if we need any further information. You can expect a response to your proposal within two weeks.