



Request for Proposal (RFP)

Brand Identity and Communications Strategy

Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce
(on behalf of the Monadnock Region
of Western New Hampshire)

Project Leaders:

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Final Date & Time for Receipt of Proposals:

Thursday, June 27, 2019
5:00pm EDT
Submit to Phil Suter

The Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce (GKCC) reserves the right to cancel this RFP at any time before or after the closing date and time has passed. The lowest priced, or any proposal, will not necessarily be chosen for negotiation of a contract for services.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------------|---|----------|
| 1.0 | Purpose and Project Goals | 3 |
| 2.0 | Background | 4 |
| 2.1 | The Monadnock Region & the City of Keene | |
| 2.2 | The Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce and its Taskforce to Promote the Monadnock Region | |
| 3.0 | Description/Scope of Services to be Considered | 6 |
| 3.1 | Part 1: Market Research & Strategy | |
| 3.2 | Part 2: Creative & Brand Strategy | |
| 3.3 | Part 3: Communications Strategy | |
| 3.4 | Part 4: Evaluation Strategy | |
| 4.0 | Requested Submission Content | 7 |
| 4.1 | Name, Address & Primary Contact of Submitting Agency | |
| 4.2 | Overview of Submitting Agency (Personnel/Contractors) | |
| 4.3 | Examples of Similar Work and References/Testimonials | |
| 4.4 | Outline of Approach to Delivery of Prospective Services | |
| 4.5 | Additional Information as Needed | |
| 4.6 | Estimated Range of Fee(s) to Delivery Prospective Services | |
| 4.7 | Estimated/Recommended Project Timeline | |
| 5.0 | Evaluation | 9 |
| 6.0 | Next Steps | 9 |

1.0 Purpose and Project Goals

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is for the Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce (GKCC), and other stakeholders comprising its Chamber Task Force on Promoting the Monadnock Region, to identify a full-service advertising/marketing agency partner – to conceive, design and manage a brand identity and communications campaign for the southwestern part of New Hampshire, often referred to as “The Monadnock Region.”

The intent of this process is to pick an agency to work with, based on qualifications, philosophical compatibility, and pricing structure. Should more than one agency demonstrate excellent qualifications, additional information may be requested, prior to a final decision and formal contract negotiations.

The information collected in the RFP will be used to obtain a more accurate assessment of the scope and cost of a meaningful branding and communications campaign. That information will, in turn, be used to raise the funds necessary to implement the project.

Agencies responding to the RFP should be able to demonstrate solid experience with, and/or access to, market research, multi-platform message and positioning development, corporate and/or destination identity/branding, and measurement/tracking of results.

While there have been attempts to brand and market the region, or parts of it, over many decades, the region does not currently have an organized, well-funded campaign in place, reflecting its desirability as a destination for *inter alia* tourism, skilled workers and students.

The campaign envisioned needs to spotlight a region that includes the City of Keene, the largest community in the region, as well 35-40 other picturesque New England towns.

The intent for a branding and marketing campaign to promote the region includes a number of elements, including:

- Insight, through research, into the brand promise. The region’s historical past, its characteristics today, and its aspirational goals for future increases in numbers of tourists, workers and students are factors to consider.
- A distinct and uniform brand that will convey a common message and image(s) to audiences both within and outside the region, designed to target those most predisposed to find travel and/or relocation to the region an enticing possibility, including those who may invest in the region.

- A sense of community identity/pride in the region and individual communities, that will differentiate the region in a competitive economic and community development environment in northeastern U.S. - for investors, businesses, retailers, visitors and residents.
- Creative and flexible brand elements that can be used to create future collateral, as well as by area businesses and organizations in their own marketing.
- A “tool kit” of area information and assets that can be delivered digitally through social media platforms (including apps), as well as in print, radio or direct mail.

To date, the taskforce has identified four “tracks” it believes a campaign must address:

- The desire to attract a skilled workforce to the region.
- The desire to attract more tourists/visitors to the region.
- The desire to attract families to the region.
- The desire to attract outstanding students to the region.

While these tracks have been consistent themes in our conversations around the region, and reflect what many key stakeholders tell us, it is possible – even likely – that other “tracks” may emerge around such themes as: the arts; clean economy; buy-local.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Monadnock Region & the City of Keene

What is generally considered “The Monadnock Region” – there is no precise definition – has a population of approximately 100,000, comprised of Cheshire County (approx. 76,000) and western Hillsborough County (approx. 25,000). The largest community in the region is Keene, the Cheshire County Seat, with a population of approx. 23,000. Keene is thought of as the economic engine of the region, and is home to Keene State College, with a full-time student population of close to 3500. The next largest towns in the region are Swanzey, adjacent to Keene (approx. 7,000) and Peterborough, 20 miles east of Keene (approx. 6,000). Antioch University New England, located in Keene, is well known for several graduate degree programs, and Franklin Pierce University, in Rindge, has a student population of about 2,000.

Cheshire County is the state’s 6th largest of the state’s ten counties. The County’s median age of 42.5 is just above the state’s median age of 42.4. The median household income is about \$60,000, slightly higher than Sullivan County, immediately north of Cheshire County (approx. \$59,000), and Carroll County in the northeast part of the state (approx. \$58,000). Approximately 10% of Cheshire County residents live in poverty.

Although somewhat isolated, the Monadnock Region enjoys a long legacy of advanced and precision manufacturing, good schools, good medical facilities, and a very vibrant arts community. Its active and full-service general aviation airport, only a couple of miles from downtown Keene, has the third longest runway in the state. The region's physical attributes include Mt. Monadnock, thought to be the most climbed mountain in the world, beautiful lakes and rivers, and an extensive biking and hiking rail trail system primarily from converting railroad beds. People love outdoors activities, from golf to gardening, and frequently support local businesses by "buying local."

With the Connecticut River marking the western edge of the region, and the border with neighboring Vermont, The Monadnock Region is sometimes referred to (by others in New Hampshire) as "the eastern most county of Vermont." In recent years, the region has leaned slightly politically liberal, with strong libertarian voices.

2.2 The Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce and its Taskforce to Promote the Monadnock Region

The Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce (GKCC) is the largest of several Chambers in the region, with nearly 500 member organizations in more than 40 communities, including a few in Vermont and Massachusetts.

In early 2019, the GKCC board of directors formed a taskforce to assess the feasibility of a multi-year, multi-platform branding and marketing campaign, and to report back to the board in the summer of 2019. This RFP was generated at the direction of the taskforce.

The "Promoting the Region" (PTR) taskforce is initially comprised of more than 15 individuals, representing: another Chamber in the region; key employers in the region; regional economic development organizations; the two largest institutions of higher education; the City of Keene; Cheshire County; smaller towns in the region; the manufacturing community; the healthcare community; a retirement community; a locally based national publishing company; and a certified B-Corp local manufacturer.

The PTR taskforce meets at least monthly and is in communication in between. Recently, as part of its Regional Issues Series, GKCC hosted a public forum on the idea of collectively promoting the region, drawing nearly 100 people for a two-hour presentation/discussion. More than half of those attending completed a short survey about what they'd heard – the results suggest a high level of interest in the idea – especially a campaign that can be sustained over several years.

A strong turnout for the forum was not a surprise. The region is well known for its collaborative approach to addressing issues, and its high level of civic engagement.

The PTR taskforce is ultimately charged with determining if there is significant interest in the idea, from throughout the region, and whether the interest can be sufficiently supported financially. There has been some nonspecific expressions of future financial support, and it is expected that there will be more, from a number of sources, including: large employers in the region; the City of Keene; Cheshire County; area colleges; some of the towns in the region; private foundations (local and statewide); state tourism grants; federal grants, etc.

Content from the winning proposal received in response to this RFP (with the permission of the submitting agency) may be incorporated as part of presentations made to key funders in the months ahead.

Once necessary funding commitments are in place and project management structure is determined, the plan is to enter into negotiations with the winning agency to complete a service contract to lead this effort.

The GKCC reserves the right to reissue an RFP for the project at a later date if circumstances have changed and the arrangement proposed by or negotiated with the winning agency won't meet the requirements of the project.

3.0 Description/Scope of Services to be Considered

3.1 Part 1: Market Research & Strategy

The "Promoting The Region" (PTR) taskforce is interested in knowing from those responding to this RFP about its strategic approach to market research, and the overall project strategy.

- What is the underlying research strategy?
- What would the brand research plan look like?
- How would information be gathered, within and outside the region?
- What is the nature of our competition; who are our competitors?
- What might examples be of both quantitative and qualitative research?
- Who are some of the key stakeholders with a vested interest in our brand?
- How would similar efforts within and outside the region be incorporated?
- What are examples of metrics to be applied to determine success?
- What is the estimated cost range of Part 1?

3.2 Part 2: Creative & Brand Strategy

The "Promoting The Region" (PTR) taskforce is interested in knowing from those responding to this RFP about its strategic approach to creative & brand strategy.

- What is the underlying brand strategy to approach creative development?

- What is the approach to design concepts; how many would be submitted?
- What creative elements are envisioned/recommended?
- What is the approach to messaging/positioning?
- We welcome any ideas you want to offer about a brand for the Monadnock Region and accompanying creative
- What is the estimated cost range of Part 2?

3.3 Part 3: Communications Strategy

The “Promoting The Region” (PTR) taskforce is interested in knowing from those responding to this RFP about its strategic approach to a communications strategy for this project.

- What platforms would be envisioned/recommended (tactics)?
- What might a web presence include in content and delivery (e.g. mobile apps)?
- What target markets, outside the region, might be envisioned/recommended?
- What is the estimated cost range of Part 3?

3.4 Part 4: Evaluation Strategy

The “Promoting The Region” (PTR) taskforce is interested in knowing from those responding to this RFP about its approach to evaluation strategy for this project, including estimated cost range. What would be measured, and how frequently? How is ROI considered?

4.0 Requested Submission Content

The “Promoting The Region” (PTR) taskforce requests that two (2) hard copies, and one digital copy, of responses to this preliminary RFP be delivered to the Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce, at the address on the cover of this document.

4.1 Name, Address & Primary Contact of Submitting Agency

Submitting agencies must put the name and address of the agency on a cover page, along with the contact information of the agency’s primary contact for this project.

4.2 Overview of Submitting Agency (Personnel/Contractors)

Submitting agencies must provide an overview/description of the agency, with as much information as will demonstrate capabilities and experience, for this project such as: the number of years in business; a little about the agency’s leadership; the number of employees, associates and contractors (including what the account team might look like for this project).

4.3 Examples of Similar Work and References/Testimonials

The PTR taskforce will be particularly interested in seeing examples and descriptions of similar product branding and marketing work, especially including any work with the branding and marketing of other geographic destinations.

4.4 Outline of Approach to Delivery of Prospective Services

Critical to the PTR taskforce's assessment of the feasibility of implementing the campaign described here will be the submitting agency's recommendations vis-à-vis the approach to, and scope of, the project. This may include an analysis of what minimal level of effort would be required to see noticeable and meaningful transactional results (a level below which it probably wouldn't make sense to proceed with the project). Agencies are also encouraged to be bold in showing more robust levels of effort, with a higher likelihood of transformative results. The resulting description of the agency's approach should provide a cost range, over a recommended campaign timeline (see 4.7 below).

4.5 Additional Information as Needed

If there is something we have missed, or if there is something about the submitting agency's history, approach or unique capabilities the taskforce should consider, please include it.

4.6 Estimated Range of Fee(s) to Delivery Prospective Services

To the degree possible, the taskforce would prefer that cost estimates/ranges be submitted in the for parts outlined in Section 3.0 above:

- Part 1: Market Research & Strategy
- Part 2: Creative & Brand Strategy
- Part 3: Communications Strategy
- Part 4: Evaluation Strategy

The taskforce strongly prefers a single vendor for this project. Submitting agencies are strongly urged to make the case for a single vendor, with subcontractors if/as needed.

4.7 Estimated/Recommended Project Timeline

While there is some sense of urgency for this project to begin as soon as is reasonably possible, the taskforce also believes that it is more important to get it right. There is not, at this point, a target start date, nor is the duration of the campaign pre-determined. Agencies responding to this RFP are encouraged to recommend a duration for the campaign.

Submitting agencies are urged to envision a reasonable, t-plus type, timeline for the project, based on an undetermined start date (which will be determined by the taskforce once funding commitments and project management structure are both finalized).

5.0 Evaluation

The taskforce is in the process of creating a formal template of criteria or scoring for choosing an agency to lead this project. Cost estimates will be an important factor, but *value* will be most important.

6.0 Next Steps

Depending on the responses received to this RFP, the taskforce will select its branding and marketing partner in July 2019. Fundraising for this project will begin soon thereafter.

The decision to move ahead with the branding and marketing campaign will depend on when the taskforce will be able to secure necessary funding commitments and finalize its project management structure and approach.

Feel free to contact us with questions. Thank you for considering to be part of this important work for our region.

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