

Request for Proposals (RFP) to Implement a Marketing Campaign for the New Jersey Highlands Brand – Questions & Answers

BUDGET QUESTIONS:

Please confirm the estimated volume of content deliverables (e.g., number of blog posts, newsletters, social media ads, influencer collaborations expected in Year 1).

The Highlands Council anticipates a collaborative relationship with the chosen marketing team to determine how best to allocate our resources during the Year 1 campaign. No specific numbers have yet been decided upon. Please reference the Final Report for additional information on our intended approach - www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planning/economic/branding/FinalReport_web.pdf.

Please confirm if vendors should include paid media placement estimates in the proposal, or only professional service fees.

The cost of advertising and related expenses is not a requirement. Respondents are welcome to include an estimation of the cost of paid media and other associated activities if they choose. There is not a specific budget for paid media spend. As noted above, the Highlands Council anticipates a collaborative relationship with the chosen marketing team to determine how best to allocate our resources during the Year 1 campaign. The Council expects paid advertising placements, creator fees, and production expenses to flow through the contractor's contract as reimbursable direct costs. These details will be included in the executed contract.

Would you consider having a budget to support innovative marketing, activities or initiatives? If yes, what is the limit for such innovations?

As noted above, the RFP is seeking professional services from experts in the field of tourism marketing. The respondents are welcome to propose innovative ideas for achieving the desired outcomes of building brand awareness, increasing tourism and visitation, and marketing the Highlands as an identifiable brand.

Is this project grant funded?

No, the project is funded by the NJ Highlands Council. The chosen team will be subject to a contract as per the “Standard Terms and Conditions,” attached to the RFP.

The scope of work is extensive. If the budget provided is below what would be needed to provide service, is there a priority for the scope of work?

The respondents should feel free to break down anticipated costs and offer their professional opinions on how best to achieve the stated goals.

Is the Council open to proposals that phase the scope of work to better utilize available budget?

Yes, the respondent may choose to propose a phased schedule.

Are you open to extra costs for activities such as competitions, among others?

The RFP is seeking professional services from experts in the field of tourism marketing. The respondents are welcome to propose innovative ideas for achieving the desired outcomes of building brand awareness, increasing tourism and visitation, and marketing the Highlands as an identifiable brand.

The RFP describes a time and materials contract on a total costs not to exceed basis, but does not state a figure. Can the Council share the not-to-exceed amount, or a range, for Year 1? Without it, cost proposals will not be comparable to one another.

The RFP requests that respondents provide an estimate of anticipated professional service costs. No estimated contract value is available. As noted in the RFP, the Final Report:

www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planning/economic/branding/FinalReport_web.pdf provides additional details for a Three-Year marketing plan.

Section VI.C asks for hourly rates and a fixed fee by task. Section XX.B describes a time and materials contract with a not to exceed total. Should the task fees be read as caps billed hourly or as fixed fees? Can the rate schedule include an annual adjustment for the option years?

The executed contract will include a fee schedule broken out by task and deliverable. Hourly rates are expected to support the completed deliverables.

Can approved advertising and production vendors be paid directly by the Council, and are advance or milestone payments available?

The Council expects paid advertising placements, creator fees, and production expenses to flow through the contractor's contract as reimbursable direct costs.

Should the individual cost estimates in the Final Brand Print Report be treated as illustrative planning assumptions, available funding amounts or spending limits?

Yes, the cost estimates should be considered illustrative.

The RFP states that direct expenses will be billed at cost. Does this prohibit agency commissions or markups on media, production, and other third-party expenses?

Correct. No mark ups should be applied. The RFP is for professional services which will cover costs associated with management of ad buys.

CONTENT QUESTIONS:

Can we review the full Branding & Marketing Final Report?

The Branding & Marketing Final Report is available at www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planning/economic/branding/FinalReport_web.pdf

Can we access brand guidelines?

The Brand Standards are available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pt7Qcuxh-gd2weA9PxJar25hGESEE-j/view?usp=drive_link

For visual content production, should vendors assume coverage across all seven counties, or only priority destinations identified by the Council.

The Year 1 campaign is intended to cover all of the 7 counties; however, there may be compelling reasons to focus on individual tourism assets and spend more resources in areas where significant result may be expected

Confirm if media training sessions are expected to be in-person, virtual, or a mix of both.

The media training sessions are expected to be conducted both in person and virtually. Logistical factors may influence decisions in this regard.

For tourism performance benchmarks, will the Council provide access to existing tourism data sources (e.g., Visit NJ, county data), or should vendors procure data independently.

The Highlands Council will facilitate access to existing tourism data sources. Respondents are encouraged to identify additional publicly available data sources that may be used for tourism performance benchmarks.

Clarify whether Year 2 and Year 3 extensions will follow the same scope, or if expanded deliverables are anticipated.

As noted in the RFP, the Final Report

www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planning/economic/branding/FinalReport_web.pdf

provides additional details for the Year 2 and 3 campaigns. It is expected that the results of the Year 1 campaign will influence the following years' implementation decisions.

Would you consider partnering with strategic commercial companies in entertainment for discounted site touring and videography as a marketing campaign?

The Highlands Council is seeking, through this RFP, professional services to conduct a marketing campaign. The respondents are free to assemble a team with the various necessary skills and may propose an approach which they believe will be effective.

The tourism performance benchmark database. Section III asks for a system to track tourism performance, establish benchmarks and demonstrate ROI year over year. Would the Council accept a licensed platform that the Council accesses and that carries the data, or does the Council require a system it owns outright and can operate independently of the awarded Team at the end of the term? If the latter, what form should the handover take?

Readily available data is acceptable. The Highlands Council will facilitate access to existing tourism data sources. Respondents are encouraged to identify additional publicly available data sources that may be used for tourism performance benchmarks. It is not anticipated that the contractor will create a Highlands-specific data system.

The regional events calendar. Should the digital and social calendar live within the existing enjoynjhighlands.com site, or may it be a hosted service embedded into that site under the Highlands brand? If it must live inside the existing site, who controls that site today and what platform is it built on?

The regional events calendar is expected to reside on the existing enjoynjhighlands.com site. The Highlands Council currently has a 3-year contract for hosting and maintenance.

Existing assets. Is the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand system, including logos, photography and video, available to the awarded Team, and does the Council hold the usage rights to that library?

The Highlands Council has full rights to all of the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand and is in the process of trademarking the logo. All materials will be made available to the marketing team.

Event data sources. Does the Council maintain a list of regional partners — county tourism offices, parks, farms, venues — whose events should feed the calendar, or is identifying and onboarding those sources part of the Team's scope?

The Highlands Council has a collaborative relationship with the County Coalition which is comprised of representatives of the seven counties that are part of the Highlands. The Council will facilitate cooperation and feedback from our partners and make this available to the marketing team.

On Task D, will the Council provide, or facilitate access to, the county-level Tourism Economics reports it receives through Visit NJ, any lodging data (STR or similar) it or its county partners already license, and any traffic monitoring data it has previously used, or should respondents budget to license these sources? And is the Year 1 action list in the Branding and Marketing Final Report (the Passport program, Seven County Snapshot photo spots, Secret Suppers and similar) considered part of this RFP's Scope of Services, or outside it?

The Highlands Council will facilitate access to existing tourism data sources. Respondents are encouraged to identify additional publicly available data sources that may be used for tourism performance benchmarks.

Respondents are welcome to include actions identified in the Branding and Marketing Final Report or propose other innovative ideas for achieving the desired outcomes of building brand awareness, increasing tourism and visitation, and marketing the Highlands as an identifiable brand.

Will the selected Team receive the brand guidelines, logo files, the existing photo and video library and access to enjoynjhighlands.com and the brand's social accounts? Who manages the website today?

The Highlands Council has full rights to all of the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand and is in the process of trademarking the logo. All materials will be made available to the marketing team.

The Highlands Council currently has a 3-year contract for hosting and maintenance of the enjoynjhighlands.com website. The Highlands Council and the consultant team both have the capability to add and edit content.

Is there a required or preferred platform for the tourism performance database? Does the Council already hold the Tourism Economics and Visit NJ county data or should the Team price licensing it?

The Highlands Council does not currently hold licenses for data sources. If the chosen team demonstrates need for specific licenses or data sources, the Council will cover the costs of those determined to be necessary.

The Highlands Council will facilitate access to existing tourism data sources. Respondents are encouraged to identify additional publicly available data sources that may be used for tourism performance benchmarks. It is not anticipated that the contractor will create a Highlands-specific data system.

Do paid influencers, content creators and photographers engaged for the campaign count as subcontractors that need Council approval and New Jersey business registration?

No.

For the Tourism Performance Benchmarks task, does the Council currently hold (or intend to fund) licenses for the underlying data sources like Tourism Economics county-level reports, lodging occupancy/ADR data, and any mobile-location or visitor-analytics platform? If the selected Team must procure these, should the subscription costs be carried in our cost proposal, or will the Council contract for them directly?

The Highlands Council does not currently hold licenses for data sources. If the chosen team demonstrates need for specific licenses or data sources, the Council will cover the costs of those determined to be necessary.

The RFP calls for an "owned tourism performance database." Owned by whom, hosted where, and is a dashboard or BI layer expected? Must the system transfer to Council staff at contract end with no ongoing license obligation?

It is not anticipated that the contractor will create a Highlands-specific data system.

Benchmark data collected during this effort will be shared with the Highlands Council.

Which existing tourism data, brand files, and campaign accounts will the selected team receive?

The Highlands Council has full rights to all of the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand and is in the process of trademarking the logo. All branding materials will be made available to the marketing team. The Highlands Council does not currently hold licenses for data sources. If the chosen team demonstrates need for specific licenses or data sources, the Council will cover the costs of those determined to be necessary.

Of the campaign's goals around brand awareness, visitation, economic impact, and tourism growth, which outcomes and KPIs will be considered the highest priorities when evaluating Year 1 success?

Each of the campaign's goals are very important for the Year 1 operations. Brand awareness is considered crucial to accomplishing all the related goals.

How much flexibility will the selected agency have to refine the campaign strategy, audience segments, messaging, channels, and media mix based on research and performance data, versus working within predetermined campaign parameters established by the Council?

The RFP is seeking professional services from experts in the field of tourism marketing. The respondents are welcome to propose innovative ideas for achieving the desired outcomes of building brand awareness, increasing tourism and visitation, and marketing the Highlands as an identifiable brand.

For the original photography and video requested across all seven counties, does the Council have existing relationships, contacts, priority destinations, events, or experiences it expects the selected agency to feature, or will the agency be responsible for identifying and coordinating those opportunities?

The Highlands Council has a collaborative relationship with the County Coalition which is comprised of representatives of the seven counties that are part of the Highlands. The Council will facilitate cooperation and feedback from our partners and make this available to the marketing team.

We really like the thinking behind "You Never Knew Jersey." How fixed should we consider the current expression of that work? Are you primarily looking for a partner

to build awareness and activation around the existing system, or are you open to evolving how the platform comes to life creatively?

A goal of this project is to develop and promote the New Jersey Highlands Region by building brand awareness of “You Never Knew Jersey.” The Branding and Marketing Final Report provides many ideas for activation. Respondents are welcome to include actions identified in the Branding and Marketing Final Report or propose other innovative ideas for achieving the desired outcomes of building brand awareness, increasing tourism and visitation, and marketing the Highlands as an identifiable brand.

How do you think about the relationship between the Highlands as a destination brand and the individual towns, businesses, attractions, and experiences within it? Should the Highlands itself be the hero, or is its role more about creating an umbrella that helps people discover everything underneath it?

The New Jersey Highlands brand creates a consistent regional identity and will be used to market the region as a unified destination. However, the brand will also support communities and partners in creating and implementing individual plans and programs. The intention is for the Highlands brand to exist alongside existing brands.

Is there anything you’ve learned from the work to date about audiences, messaging, visitation or what has and hasn’t resonated that would be helpful for agencies to consider as we develop our approach?

The Marketing and Branding Final Report summarizes research conducted as part of brand development that may be helpful to consider when developing their approach.

How are pre-existing methods and third-party asset licenses treated within the ownership provision?

The Highlands Council has full rights to all of the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand and is in the process of trademarking the logo. All branding materials will be made available to the marketing team.

Does the Council expect respondents to follow the Final Brand Print Report’s three-year tactical plan as written, or may they recommend different tactics, timing and channel allocations that better support the RFP’s objectives and available funding?

The respondents are welcome to propose innovative ideas for achieving the desired outcomes of building brand awareness, increasing tourism and visitation, and marketing the Highlands as an identifiable brand.

What existing materials and systems will be available to the selected team, including brand standards, editable creative files, photography and video, attraction data, research files, content calendars, mailing lists, advertising accounts and historical performance data?

The Highlands Council has full rights to all of the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand and is in the process of trademarking the logo. The logo is available as a pdf, png, eps, and jpg. All branding materials will be made available to the marketing team. The Highlands Council has a collaborative relationship with the County Coalition which is comprised of representatives of the seven counties that are part of the Highlands. The Council will coordinate with the County Coalition to provide data and materials as available.

What continuing role, if any, will North Star have in website hosting, maintenance, brand oversight, content development or coordination with the selected team?

North Star will continue to host and maintain the website for the previously agreed upon three year timeframe.

Will the selected team receive CMS and analytics access for EnjoyNJHighlands.com, and may the team create or modify landing pages, forms, SEO content and tracking integrations?

The chosen team will receive access to necessary analytics and content creation. The team will have creative flexibility, however, any changes to the existing website will be subject to approval by the Highlands representatives.

Does the digital awareness scope include ongoing organic social publishing, audience response and community management, or only content planning, development and paid placement?

It is anticipated that digital awareness will include ongoing social media activities.

The Highlands Council anticipates a collaborative relationship with the chosen marketing team to make decisions related to the campaign.

Does the Council have minimum quantities or distribution requirements for advertisements, blog posts, newsletters, influencer partnerships, media visits, photography and video? Must content provide equal representation to all seven

counties, or may coverage vary by season, audience interest and available tourism assets?

The Highlands Council anticipates a collaborative relationship with the chosen marketing team to determine how best to allocate our resources during the Year 1 campaign. No specific numbers have yet been decided upon. Each of the seven counties is expected to be included in the Year 1 campaign, however, there may be compelling reasons to focus on specific assets that may not be equally spread across the entire region.

Please clarify the intended campaign governance and approval structure. Will the Brand Coordinator recommended in the Final Report be a Council staff member or a function staffed by the selected team, and what approval or coordination roles will county tourism offices, municipalities and regional partners have?

The coordinator for the Year 1 campaign will be a Highlands Council staff member. Bi-monthly meetings will occur between the Highlands coordinator and the team lead. As appropriate, county tourism representatives and other partners may be involved in decision-making as the campaign proceeds.

Are there established conservation, visitor-capacity, access, traffic or seasonal restrictions that the selected team must incorporate when promoting specific destinations?

No

For the tourism benchmark database, should respondents use complete data for all seven counties or develop a methodology for estimating activity within the legislatively defined Highlands portions of those counties? What Tourism Economics, Visit NJ, lodging, traffic and baseline research data will the Council provide?

The Highlands Council will facilitate access to available databases. For purposes of the tourism campaign, the entirety of each of the seven counties will be included.

Is there an existing creative toolkit?

The Brand Standards guidelines may serve this function.

What photography/video libraries currently exist?

The Highlands Council has a photo library. Photos posted on the enjoynjhighlands.com website are also available.

What website analytics are available?

The website performance report includes a summary of active users, views, sessions, engagement rate, engagement time, page views per user, bounce rate, user trends, device category, top pages, top traffic sources, landing pages, and Google search information.

What would be the main call-to-action in the digital creative assets?

In Year 1, the primary objective is to establish the “You Never Knew Jersey” brand and lay the foundation for regional tourism by building local momentum and credibility.

What CMS powers enjoynjhighlands.com?

WordPress

Will the agency have content publishing access?

If the Highlands Council determines that content publishing is appropriate, it will facilitate access.

Is SEO optimization in scope?

No. The enjoynjhighlands.com website is not the main focus of the Year 1 campaign.

What email/newsletter platform is used?

The Highlands Council uses Constant Contact for email.

Is there an ability to build a separate landing page per campaign, connected to the main site?

The Highlands Council can work with the team on website updates (adding new things to do, new content, etc.)

Has any media outreach been conducted since the brand launched?

There has been limited media outreach. The Year 1 campaign is intended to give the Highlands brand exposure.

Are there existing media contacts or partnerships?

No.

Are there identified spokespersons today?

No.

What tourism datasets are already available through Visit NJ and Tourism Economics? Will there be given access to review historical data?

Existing data sources have not been identified. The Highlands Council will facilitate access to existing tourism data sources. The Highlands Council does not currently hold licenses for data sources. If the chosen team demonstrates need for specific licenses or data sources, the Council will cover the costs of those determined to be necessary.

Respondents are encouraged to identify additional publicly available data sources that may be used for tourism performance benchmarks.

Does the Council currently subscribe to any tourism intelligence platform?

No.

Is a dashboard expected, or only reporting?

Only reporting.

How much photography/video production is expected in Year 1?

The Team should plan and budget for sourcing original photography and video to capture content throughout all seven counties. However, the Highlands Council has a photo library that the selected Team will have access to. Photos posted on the enjoynjhighlands.com website will also be available.

What usage and copyright requirements are determined?

The Highlands Council has full rights to all of the "You Never Knew Jersey" brand and is in the process of trademarking the logo. All materials will be made available to the marketing team.

Are drone/video permits already secured?

No.

Are there featured destinations or attractions that must be prioritized? How are these businesses/destinations prioritized?

The Year 1 campaign is intended to cover all of the 7 counties; however, there may be compelling reasons to focus on individual tourism assets and spend more resources in areas where significant result may be expected.

The Highlands Council has a collaborative relationship with the County Coalition which is comprised of representatives of the seven counties that are part of the Highlands. The Council will coordinate with the County Coalition to provide input on potential businesses/destinations to prioritize.

What constitutes success after Year 1? Are these KPIs already identified?

- Awareness/Engagement targets
- Media impression goals
- Website traffic growth targets
- Social audience goals
- Earned media goals

KPIs have not been identified. The selected Team will communicate results and economic impacts.

What additional KPIs will influence authorization of Years 2 and 3?

Additional KPIs influencing authorization of Years 2 and 3 have not been identified. Per the RFP, the Highlands Council may authorize in writing Year 2 and Year 3 as optional contract extensions, subject to contractor performance, the availability of funding, and continued program needs.

Are there minimum expectations for media placements or impressions?

Minimum expectations have not been identified.

In addition to the stated partnerships with County partners, does the Highlands Council currently have relationships or coordinate with established Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or other tourism entities within the seven counties? If so, what are their respective roles and responsibilities?

Representatives of the DMOs located within the seven-county NJ Highlands Region participate in the County Coalition. The Highlands Council collaborates on tourism and economic development initiatives with the County Coalition.

Does the Council currently track or receive data regarding short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb, Vrbo) in addition to traditional hotel and lodging metrics? If so, what data is available?

The Council does not track or receive data on short-term rentals.

How should respondents anticipate content production being structured during Year 1? Should proposals assume county-by-county asset collection, ongoing seasonal content creation, or multiple photo/video shoots throughout the year?

The Highlands Council anticipates a collaborative relationship with the chosen marketing team to determine how best to allocate our resources during the Year 1 campaign.

Are there priority attractions, businesses, communities, or tourism experiences that must be featured during the first year?

No

The 2025 brand launch produced a Branding and Marketing Final Report, and enjoynjhighlands.com has been live since early 2026. Can the Council share any existing key messaging language, media lists, or other foundational materials to inform development of the key messaging document (Section III.B) and media research (Section III.C) deliverables?

The Final Report and website are the key deliverables produced to date.

Has the Council already identified specific challenges, limitations or perceived weaknesses that the messaging should address, or should the selected team identify these through research and stakeholder interviews?

The Marketing and Branding Final Report summarizes research conducted as part of brand development that may be helpful to consider.

Should the messaging framework establish one overarching regional narrative with supporting messages for each county and tourism category, or does the Council envision another structure?

The New Jersey Highlands brand creates a consistent regional identity and will be used to market the region as a unified destination. However, the brand will also support communities and partners in creating and implementing individual plans and programs.

Does the Council have an existing “roster” of representatives and/or spokespeople from among the region’s business, cultural, historical, hospitality, agricultural, communities who would be effective participants in the media relations and marketing campaign? Should respondents include expansion of that “roster” and cultivation of new relationships with natural “brand ambassadors” in their responses?

The Highlands Council does not have an existing list of representatives and/or spokespeople. However, the Council has relationships with many organizations and entities across the region and anticipates working with the selected team to identify participants.

Does the Council have an inventory of tourism assets, events, accommodations, restaurants and potential itinerary partners, or should the selected team develop that inventory as part of the media relations work?

There are assets and itineraries highlighted on enjoynjhighlands.com. The Highlands Council expects the inventory to grow as part of the media relations work.

Should Sections III.B (Media Relations Program) and III.C (Media Blitz) be treated as two distinct phases: development of key messaging and materials, followed by an active outreach campaign? Is there a compelling event the Council has in mind for a launch of the media relations campaign?

The respondent can propose that the tasks be treated as two distinct phases or that they occur concurrently. There is no compelling event in mind for the launch.

With seven counties in scope, should media outreach represent the region evenly, or initially focus on a smaller number of priority destinations and experiences?

The Year 1 campaign is intended to cover all 7 counties; however, there may be compelling reasons to focus on individual tourism assets and spend more resources in areas where significant result may be expected

Are there seasonal opportunities, signature events or priority destinations already planned for Year 1 that should anchor the media outreach calendar?

Nothing has been planned for Year 1. There are many seasonal opportunities, events, and destinations that could anchor the media outreach calendar.

Enjoynjhighlands.com lists a few annual events and festivals held in the NJ Highlands Region.

Section III.A calls for original photography and video production. Will those visual assets be available for use in the media kit (Section III.B) and outreach materials (Section III.C), or should the media relations Team plan and budget for sourcing specific visuals for those purposes?

Per the RFP, the Team should plan and budget for sourcing original photography and video. However, the Highlands Council has a photo library that the selected Team will have access to. Photos posted on the enjoynjhighlands.com website will also be available.

For the media training component in Section III.B, does the Council have a general sense of how many spokespeople it anticipates designating and training for this effort? Does the Council envision one group media training session, multiple topic-specific sessions or individual preparation for priority spokespeople? Should respondents assume training will be conducted in person, virtually or through a combination of both?

The anticipated number of spokespeople has not been identified. Respondents should propose how they envision training taking place. In person, virtual, or a combination of both are acceptable options.

Does the Council have any benchmark data and/or target numbers of media visits, press trips, or familiarization (FAM) experiences it anticipates for Year 1, to help scope the Media Blitz program (Section III.C)?

No. Benchmark data and target numbers have not been identified.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

In Section VI, RFP Submittal Requirements, A.3 states:

“Technical Approach and Proposed Work Plan - Technical Approach and Proposed Work Plan: A detailed description of the Team’s approach for satisfactorily completing the Scope of Services set forth in Section III above including any alternate suggestions for implementation. Include a detailed schedule that

includes a description of all tasks and activities, significant milestones and anticipated deliverables.”

This appears to overlap with Section VI, RFP Submittal Requirements, B.1 and B.2, which state:

“Technical Proposals must include the following items – 1. A detailed approach for achieving satisfactory results regarding the Scope of Services of Section III above; and 2. A detailed schedule and flow chart of tasks for completion of the Scope of Services.”

Should the responses to VI.B.1 and VI.B.2 be incorporated into the response to VI.A.3, or does the County expect separate responses to these requirements?

Sections VI.A.3, VI.B.1, and VI.B.2 address the same general components of the Technical Proposal. Section VI.A.3 provides the overarching description of the Technical Approach and Proposed Work Plan, while Sections VI.B.1 and VI.B.2 further identify the technical approach and schedule/flow chart that must be included in the Technical Proposal.

Respondents are not required to provide separate or duplicative responses to these sections. A single, integrated response may address the requirements of Sections VI.A.3, VI.B.1, and VI.B.2, provided that all of the required information is included. This includes the proposed technical approach, a detailed schedule identifying tasks, activities, milestones, and deliverables, and a flow chart of tasks for completion of the Scope of Services.

Work examples and references. Sections VI.A.5 and VI.A.13 ask for prior projects and client references for similar work. Does the Council consider destination marketing work performed outside the United States as responsive, provided the scope is comparable?

Relevant work example and references may come from work performed outside the United States.

Business registration. Item VI.A.14 requires proof of New Jersey business registration. Must the certificate be in hand at the time of submission, or is evidence of a pending application acceptable with the certificate provided prior to award?

The selected Team must provide a valid New Jersey Business Registration Certificate pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:32-44 prior to contract award. The successful respondent can obtain and provide the required Business Registration Certificate before the contract is awarded rather than at the time of submission.

In addition, pursuant to RFP Section VI(O), Compliance With Requirements of N.J.S.A. 52:34-13.2, services performed under a State contract primarily for services, including services performed by subcontractors, must be performed within the United States. Accordingly, the selected Team must ensure that all services under this contract are performed within the United States.

Insurance. The Standard Terms require Commercial General Liability and Automobile Liability at \$1 million per occurrence, from carriers admitted in New Jersey with an A.M. Best rating of A or better. Must certificates be in place at submission, or upon award and prior to commencing work? Also, does the Council require Professional Liability or Cyber Liability, and at what limits, for the data system described in Section III?

The required insurance coverage does not need to be in place at the time of proposal submission. The selected Team must obtain and maintain the insurance coverage required by Section III.I of the Standard Terms and Conditions prior to contract execution and commencement of services. The selected Team will be required to provide certificates of insurance demonstrating the required coverage.

The Professional Liability insurance requirement and limits set forth in Section III.I of the Standard Terms and Conditions apply to this contract. The Council is not adding a separate Cyber Liability insurance requirement through this Q&A.

Workers' Compensation. For a Team member with no New Jersey employees, what evidence does the Council expect regarding New Jersey Workers' Compensation coverage?

Because the scope of work for this contract includes both remote duties and scheduled in-person activities within New Jersey, any out-of-state vendor must ensure their staff are properly covered while performing services under this agreement. The selected Team must provide evidence of workers' compensation coverage, or other documentation demonstrating compliance with applicable workers' compensation requirements, as required by the Standard Terms and Conditions and applicable law.

SDVOB. Item VI.A.9 asks prime bidders using subcontractors to make best efforts to award at least 3% to a service-disabled veteran owned business. Is that documented best effort scored in the evaluation, and does the Council have a preferred form for documenting it?

The SDVOB best-efforts requirement is not a separately scored evaluation criterion. Prime bidders that intend to utilize subcontractors are required to make best efforts to award at least 3% of the contract value to a service-disabled veteran-owned business. The Council does not require a specific form for documenting best efforts. Bidders should describe, as appropriate, the efforts they anticipate taking to identify and utilize qualified SDVOB subcontractors.

For an out-of-state firm, may proof of New Jersey business registration (N.J.S.A. 52:32-44) be provided prior to award rather than with the October 16 submission, if the NJ-REG filing is in process at the time of submission? Related: is the \$5,000,000 professional liability limit in Section III.I(1)(d) of the Standard Terms a firm requirement for this marketing services contract, or will the Council consider a lower professional liability limit alongside higher general liability coverage?

The selected Team must provide a valid New Jersey Business Registration Certificate pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:32-44 prior to contract award. The successful respondent can obtain and provide the required Business Registration Certificate before the contract is awarded rather than at the time of submission.

In addition, pursuant to RFP Section VI(O), Compliance With Requirements of N.J.S.A. 52:34-13.2, services performed under a State contract primarily for services, including services performed by subcontractors, must be performed within the United States. Accordingly, the selected Team must ensure that all services under this contract are performed within the United States.

The \$5,000,000 professional liability insurance requirement set forth in Section III.I(1)(d) of the Standard Terms and Conditions applies to this contract. The Council will not consider alternative insurance limits or coverage arrangements in response to this Q&A.

Sections VI.A.14 and VI.A.16 direct the Team to provide business registration and the Chapter 51 / Chapter 271 / EO 129 certifications as part of the proposal, while the General Requirements section states that "the selected Team" must provide these prior to award. Which items must be submitted with the October 16 proposal, and which are required only from the successful respondent?

The W-9 identified in Section VI.A must be submitted with the proposal. The applicable Chapter 271 certification must be submitted with the proposal, as required by Section VI.A.

The Source Disclosure Certification: Exhibit J (EO 129 later codified as N.J.S.A. 52:34-13.2) must be submitted with the proposal.

The New Jersey Business Registration Certificate and the applicable Chapter 51 certification are required from the selected Team prior to contract award. The Chapter 51 certification form will be provided to the selected Team prior to contract award.

Format. Is there a page limit for the Technical Proposal, a required file format, or a maximum attachment size for the submission email?

There is no page limit to the Technical Proposal. Other than the outlined submittal requirements, the respondent is free to present an explanation of their proposed scope of work in whatever manner they choose. Our maximum attachment size is 25mb per email. Bidders may submit via file sharing in order to avoid attachment issues.

We're based in NYC, although much of our place and destination work has been in the region. Are you open to considering agencies based outside New Jersey, as long as they can be present in person when it matters?

Yes, agencies based outside of New Jersey will be considered.

May a proposed team combine its members' work examples and references?

Yes.

Are the stated professional-liability limits mandatory for every subcontractor, or assessed at the prime/team level?

Prime level.

Is the place branding consultant that developed the brand and marketing plan eligible to respond to this RFP? Will it have a role in Year 1 implementation?

Any entity that meets the requirements is eligible to respond.

TIMING:

Presentations. Does the Council anticipate interviews or presentations with shortlisted Teams, and if so, approximately when?

The Council anticipates interviews with a select group of respondent teams. These are expected to occur sometime between the deadline for proposals and the end of November 2026.

Will interviews be in person in Chester or virtual?

The Council anticipates interviews with a select group of respondent teams. These are expected to occur sometime between the deadline for proposals and the end of November 2026. The interviews can be held in person in Chester or virtually.

What is the anticipated award date and notice to proceed? The twelve-month term runs from contract execution, and seasonality materially affects when original photography and video can be captured.

It is anticipated that a contract and authorization to proceed will occur before the end of the calendar year.

What is the desired in-market launch date or timeframe for the overall campaign?

January 2027

Does “bi-monthly” mean twice monthly or every two months, and may the team lead participate remotely throughout?

Bi-monthly means twice monthly. Bi-monthly meetings can occur virtually.

Section IV indicates that the key messaging document, media kit, media training program, and media blitz plan must each be submitted to the Council for review and approval or comment before finalization or implementation. What turnaround time should the Team plan for in the Council's review of these materials, for scheduling and planning purposes

The Team should plan for a 1–2-week Highlands Council review period.