



## **Request for Proposal Destination Advertising Services**

**Responses are due by the close of business (5:00 PM Eastern Time) on Friday, October 15, 2021.**

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

## Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
About Wilmington and Beaches	2
The Ideal Agency Partner	3
Scope of the RFP for Advertising Services	4
Review Process	5
Expectations of the Agency Partner	6
Budget and Terms of Contract	8
Requirements of the RFP Response	8
Additional Information about the Response	11
Questions	11
Schedule	12
Other Important Information	13

The New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority is a component unit of New Hanover County Government and this bid is being posted on their behalf on the New Hanover County Government website:

<https://finance.nhcgov.com/purchasing-solicitation/open-and-closed-bids/>

## Executive Summary

The Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau (hereafter referred to as the CVB) is beginning a review of its advertising agency services. The selected firm will provide marketing services as a strategic partner to the CVB as part of its annual plan to promote Wilmington, NC and the communities of Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and Wrightsville Beach as premier coastal destinations.

The scope of work includes strategic planning, creative and selected media services combined with strategic insights that will drive overnight visitation to the destination. The CVB desires a strong partner that will build upon many years of destination promotion and a rich visit experience provided by many public and private partners. The selected agency is expected to drive measurable results via visitation and spending that sustain businesses in the Wilmington area and contribute to the community's tax base.

The ideal agency partner will have experience working with tourism organizations and be able to contribute breakthrough creative and bold, strategic thinking. The ability to understand key analytics and provide insights into the effectiveness of campaigns are important, as are traditional elements of an agency/client relationship, such as the timely delivery of work and responsive service. The incumbent agency of record is expected to participate in the review process.

The deadline to respond to this RFP is **October 15, 2021**. Spec creative will not be required from participating agencies as part of the review process. It is anticipated that the agency partner will be selected by the first week of December and begin work on January 1, 2022, with planning for the CVB's next fiscal year which begins July 1, 2022. The selected firm will commence serving as official agency of record on that date. The New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority is a component unit of New Hanover County Government and this bid is being posted on their behalf on the New Hanover County Government website: <https://finance.nhcgov.com/purchasing-solicitation/open-and-closed-bids/>.

## About Wilmington and Beaches



Wilmington and the three New Hanover County beach communities of Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and Wrightsville Beach are blessed with an abundance of assets that rival any coastal destination in the United States: pristine beaches; nationally-known historic sites; charming small beach towns; an abundance of arts and cultural treasures; remarkable culinary experiences; a modern convention center in a vibrant urban downtown; a large state university; many outdoor recreational opportunities; and a thriving film and television production industry. The area is easily accessible from

several major markets via Interstate 40, and the Wilmington International Airport is connected to nine major hubs via frequent nonstop flights on American, Delta, and United airlines.

Wilmington and Beaches is a year-round destination, but peak visitation occurs in the spring and summer seasons. Like many destinations, building off- and shoulder-season visitation is the critical strategic opportunity. The destination offers a wide variety of accommodation choices, ranging from beach vacation home rentals to historic bed and breakfasts to large downtown brand hotels adjacent to the Wilmington Convention Center.

The CVB team consists of 15 talented sales and marketing professionals. The work of the CVB is directed by a quasi-governmental board, the New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority, and is focused upon the generation of overnight visits to power the local economy. The CVB team works closely with its tourism and municipal partners in all four New Hanover County communities. The CVB is funded via a 6% occupancy tax applied to all accommodations in the county. This tax revenue also supports beach nourishment, the operation of the Convention Center, special events and festivals, and tourism-related facilities.

## The CVB's Ideal Agency Partner

The CVB is seeking a partner that will generate overnight visitation demand through exceptional, breakthrough advertising and innovative marketing tactics. The ideal agency partner will be collaborators with the CVB team who can marry the strategic with the creative and the data with decision-making, and who will collaborate with our private and public sector partners.

Our basic needs of a strategic agency partner include the following elements:

1. The ability and credit worthiness to purchase and bill media for an account with an estimated media budget of \$1,875,000. The CVB pays directly from agency invoices that are aligned with planned and approved flow chart expenditures.
2. Prior experience working with tourism entities or destination clients is preferred.
3. The agency should be located or have an office within a six-hour drive of Wilmington. This geographic limit generally encompasses most of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. This requirement is due to the expectation that representatives of the agency will attend CVB meetings occurring three times a year per destination (maximum of 12 meetings--see below under Expectations of the Agency Partner) and the need for a deep understanding of regional travel trends and media markets.
4. The agency should not have current clients (as either agency of record or as frequent, ongoing project clients) that represent competitive conflicts with Wilmington and Beaches. The CVB considers competitive conflicts to be any coastal destination marketing organization in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The CVB will make the final determination of whether any competitive conflict exists.

## Scope of the RFP For Advertising Services

1. Strategic marketing recommendations, including the development and presentation of a detailed annual advertising plan.
2. The purchase and billing of media along with reporting and related added-value programs and any related traffic. Media strategy, planning and performance analytics will be executed by Northampton Consulting of Durham, NC, and contracted through the CVB for FY22-23. Northampton Consulting will work closely with the agency media team during planning and performance of analytics processes.
3. Development and production of strategic, results-driven creative campaigns.
4. Management of the production of various creative concepts and delivery to media vehicles as required.
5. Development and execution of brand and promotional partnerships.
6. Deployment and reporting of appropriate analytical tools for measuring the impact of digital media strategies and tactics.
7. SEM will be executed by Simpleview, and coordination of billing, monthly direction, and performance review along with Northampton Consulting will be considered as part of the agency scope of services.
8. The agency will be expected to produce dedicated campaigns for the three beach communities as well as a unified plan for the entire destination of Wilmington and Beaches. The total destination media budget is \$1,875,000 for FY21-22.

The following are **not** included within the proposed scope of agency services or the media budget:

- Media strategy and planning
- Visitors guide creative and production
- Organic social media strategy, execution, and post amplification
- Paid influencer campaigns
- Public relations
- Group Sales-related collateral and advertising
- The Wilmington and Beaches destination website

The agency partner will be expected to understand how all CVB marketing channels work together and be able to articulate how its campaigns should be integrated with these other platforms. Additionally, given the abundance of talent in the area, the agency is requested to use local photographers, videographers, and models for its creative production.

The CVB executes its own regular program of market research, but the agency partner may want to recommend additional research initiatives as part of its scope of work.

### **Review Process**

This review is not contractually mandated, and the incumbent agency of record (French|West|Vaughan) is expected to participate.

We are particularly interested in relevant work that demonstrates strategic thinking around a client's business objectives, opportunities, and its challenges. We want to understand the agency's strategic thought process around great creative, exceptional insights, and how you judge success or learn from failures. We are interested in how you effectively break through the clutter to achieve results that further your clients' goals, including innovative thinking that elevates their brands. **The development of spec creative will not be a part of this agency selection process.** We desire a deep understanding of how you think as an agency and how the destination will benefit from your insights, processes, and service.

A CVB committee will evaluate agency responses and qualifications. This committee includes seven members:

- The President and CEO and the Executive Vice President of Marketing & Strategy of the CVB.
- One representative of the New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority board.

- One representative from each of the three beach community advisory committees in Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and Wrightsville Beach.
- One representative from Wilmington.

The CVB intends to finalize the selection of an agency partner by early December and for the selected partner to commence planning for FY22-23 in January 2022. Full engagement as agency of record will not commence until July 1, 2022.

### **Expectations of the Agency Partner**

The selected agency partner is expected to:

1. Assign a single point of contact that will collaborate directly with the CVB team and provide consistent, responsive service.
2. Be knowledgeable about national and regional tourism trends and understand the dynamics of the local and state tourism sector.
3. Become familiar with key performance indicators tracked by the CVB.
4. Stay abreast of consumer and trade trends that may impact the marketing of Wilmington and Beaches as a destination.
5. Understand the Wilmington and Beaches destination brand and execute strategies and tactics that are in alignment with that brand.
6. Demonstrate flexibility in planning and execution as business conditions warrant and move quickly to execute based upon new information or changes in the marketplace.
7. Learn quickly from mistakes and build upon successes.
8. Provide post-buy analyses and audits of campaigns upon request.
9. Develop plans with measurable goals and objectives in conjunction with the CVB team.
10. Be expert in and provide regular tracking of the effectiveness of media vehicles through related analytics and reports.
11. Evaluate and respond to unsolicited media opportunities and provide a point of view upon request.

12. Be proactive about researching, analyzing, and recommending new approaches to media and messaging.
13. Make advertising recommendations as part of the CVB's annual planning prior to the start of each fiscal year.
14. Effectively utilize any available audience marketing research (whether provided by the agency or by the client) in the development of advertising initiatives.
15. Deliver all work on time and allow the client sufficient time for review and feedback.
16. Produce accurate and timely invoices, inclusive of detailed supporting documentation if required by auditors, for the execution of services. Invoices will be generated monthly and will carry terms of no less than thirty (30) days net. All credits for media campaigns already executed will be expected to be reported to the CVB on a timely basis.
17. Provide a weekly status report to the CVB for all current initiatives.
18. Produce written estimates for any project authorized by the CVB in advance of any work on that project.
19. Disclose all discounts and special offers provided by vendors that the agency uses to execute the approved plan of work.
20. Proactively respond to any special needs of the destination as required, including natural disasters and other events that may impact visitation.

**Important:** In-person attendance by representatives of the agency at scheduled meetings of the New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority is expected, along with attendance at meetings of Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, and Wrightsville Beach marketing advisory committees. The 2022 schedule for these meetings is:

**Carolina Beach and Kure Beach**

January, March, August

**Wilmington**

January, August, September

**Wrightsville Beach**

February, April, August

## **Budget and Terms of Contract**

The FY21-22 budget for media is approximately \$1,875,000. This amount is expected to grow at a conservative rate in future years barring unforeseen circumstances and external disruptions such as major hurricanes and pandemics. It is subject to change based upon actual occupancy tax collections which fund destination marketing and other budgetary decisions and should not be construed as guaranteed. The future budget available for creative and production will be determined in early 2022. New creative concepts will be needed for a Wilmington and Beaches unified campaign beginning in fall 2022. The three beach communities may require either a new dedicated beach campaign or more individualized concepts for each of the three beach communities. This will be discussed and finalized shortly after the review is completed. The above media budget figure does **not** include production or agency fees.

Terms of the contract between the agency partner and CVB will be negotiated annually. The contract will be valid for one year, but there will be no mandated review during the relationship. Both parties will be required to give 90 days' written notice if either wishes to terminate the contract prior to expiration.

## **Requirements of the RFP Response**

Please provide the following information in your response:

### **A. Agency Overview**

1. The office location(s) that will be used to serve the account.
2. Capitalized billings in the most recent fiscal year.
3. The number of employees of the agency.
4. Current agency of record clients and length of service to each. If your agency has multiple offices and Wilmington and Beaches will be served primarily by one office, please list the clients that are served from that same office.

5. Describe any recent agency experience in the travel and tourism category, particularly with destination marketing organizations, regardless of the location from which it is served. Any relevant category experience should be noted as to whether it is held by the agency as an organization, or by current agency employees while employed at other firms.
6. If you will use multiple offices, describe how they will work together to serve client needs. If you are part of an agency network which you will use as a component of serving the client, describe how you work within that network.
7. Provide brief biographical information for the agency employees expected to be assigned to CVB.
8. Detail how the agency has served clients in the event of employee leave, vacations, terminations, voluntary separations, reassignments, and other similar circumstances, and ensured a continued level of professional service.
9. Provide information for any significant subcontractors, partners, or other firms who will be used on the CVB account, including biographical information for key employees who would be assigned to work regularly with the CVB. Agencies may choose to align themselves with another partner company or consultant for the purpose of satisfying the scope of work requirements within this RFP. Agencies will not be penalized for making such proposals; however, scope of work services not handled in-house must be identified upfront, with information provided for the partner company and a description of previous experience working with that company.
10. Detail any pending litigation against the agency, and whether such litigation would hinder your ability to perform to the client's expectations.
11. Three (3) references from recent clients, including name, title, telephone number, email address, and nature of the relationship. These contacts do not necessarily need to be from travel and tourism clients.

## **B. Creative Process**

While we are not requesting spec creative as a part of this process, we are interested in understanding your creative approach and how you integrate audience insights and client business objectives into your work.

1. Please provide a recent example of a creative campaign (placed into the market and not just submitted for competition or as part of a portfolio) of which you are particularly proud and share the specific reasons why.
2. Describe your typical strategic approach when identifying a client business challenge that merits a creative solution.
3. Provide an example of something you would consider an agency fail, and what you learned from the experience. If a client (past or present) is involved, it is not necessary to reveal their name or brand.
4. Describe the process you would use to on-board the CVB as a new client and produce highly effective creative within the first six months of our relationship.

### **C. Digital Expertise**

The CVB is interested in your agency's digital campaign expertise. Please help us understand how your agency excels in this area by providing examples of efforts that were particularly successful (including the metrics for determining success) and include an example demonstrating the agency's ability to drive meaningful results through a highly targeted digital campaign. It does not need to be from the travel and tourism category. Describe your strategic approach and tactics used in the campaign and how you measured the effectiveness of the campaign using specific metrics.

### **D. Strategic Thinking**

1. Destination marketing as a category is still relatively early in learning how to measure and apply analytics. Most DMO websites are not transactional, and it can be challenging to connect marketing to actual results. Please describe an approach you have executed to analyze and understand a client's business and identify opportunities for growth, including your experience with and approach to audience targeting. Provide a demonstration of how you apply insights, learning, research, and analytics into the strategic process, and describe the essential planning, and analytical tools that you rely upon when developing and executing strategies for your clients.

2. With a board and several advisory committees in place to provide input and feedback, building consensus in support of a strategic recommendation by the agency is a much-needed skill for any firm working in this destination. Please describe any experience you have in soliciting diverse viewpoints and bringing stakeholders together around a common strategic vision.

### **E. Fee Proposal**

The fee proposal should be based upon a reasonable expectation of the work required for **the first full year** of the client relationship for the scope described above beginning July 1, 2022. (January – June 2022 will be considered an interim planning period prior to full engagement of the firm as agency of record. The fees for this planning period will be discussed separately during negotiation.) Fees should include all usual costs to service the account, including but not limited to travel expenses, postage and express delivery, telephone, and copying. Such regular out-of-pocket costs to service the account should not be billed separately to the client. We are seeking a commission-based media fee structure. A portion of the commission on the media buy will be used to compensate Northampton Consulting for media planning work.

Please include your agency's hourly blended rate in the fee proposal.

### **Additional Information about the Response**

The response to this RFP should be no more than 50 pages in length. Please resist the urge to include all the work your firm has performed in the last decade or more. Responses should be in a format that is easy to read and user-friendly. Please number pages wherever possible. You may include links to examples of creative work, agency bios, client lists, etc. in your response.

### **Questions**

Please submit any questions related to the RFP **by email only** to the CVB's consultant partner, Chris Cavanaugh of Magellan Strategy Group, at [ccavanaugh@magellanstrategy.com](mailto:ccavanaugh@magellanstrategy.com) no later than close of business (5:00 PM

ET) on **Monday, October 4, 2021**. Responses to agency questions will be made available to all interested agencies within seven days of that date.

### **Review Schedule and Delivery Instructions**

- The RFP will be published on Monday, September 20, 2021. Questions are due by Monday, October 4, 2021.
- **Responses to the RFP are due by close of business (5:00 PM ET) on Friday, October 15, 2021.** Please send eight (8) **printed** copies of the response to:

Wilmington and Beaches CVB

Attention: Marketing

1 Estell Lee Place

Unit 201

Wilmington, NC 28401

(910) 341-4030

Please email a digital copy of the response to Chris Cavanaugh of Magellan Strategy Group at [ccavanaugh@magellanstrategy.com](mailto:ccavanaugh@magellanstrategy.com), using a file transfer service as needed for larger files.

- The CVB review committee will evaluate agency responses and notify selected finalists no earlier than October 25.
- Finalist agencies will be requested to visit Wilmington to meet with and present to the committee in person during the week of November 29.
- Formal approval of the agency recommendation from the committee by the New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority board will be required before the selected firm can begin work.
- A kickoff meeting with the CVB in Wilmington will be scheduled for the week of December 13.

### **Other Important Information**

1. Agencies will not be compensated for any costs related to their participation in the process. This includes travel to and from New Hanover County at any time during the selection process.
2. Lobbying of the CVB team, board members, or other area tourism partners is not encouraged and may negatively impact consideration of the firm.
3. The CVB is not obligated to select the lowest cost fee proposal.
4. The CVB may choose to suspend or terminate the review process at any time for any reason, or to reject any or all proposals.
5. The CVB and its communications are subject to open records laws of the State of North Carolina.
6. It is anticipated that negotiations will be conducted with the selected agency regarding fees and the terms of the contract before the award is made final.
7. Creative assets and intellectual property supplied by the selected agency will be the property of the CVB. The agency will be responsible for payment of all model and talent residuals.
8. Some market data and research may be provided to agency finalists in anticipation of their presentations but will not be provided to any interested firm prior to receipt of RFP responses.