



Request for proposals

Howard County Tourism Council Branding

Proposals due

February 13, 2018, 5 p.m. EST

Changes in RFP

1/10/2018

Any updates to this RFP can be found at HowardCountyTourism.com

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Project description

Howard County Tourism Council seeks proposals for the creative development of new brand standards that represent the tourism economy in Howard County, Maryland. The brand should resonate with visitors and residents alike, as well as planners, tourism industry partners, and community stakeholders.

The intent is for the Howard County Tourism Council to use the results of this branding process to develop the appropriate organization name, image and messaging to be used in all aspects of the general promotion of the Howard County Tourism Council and Howard County, Maryland as a destination.

Schedule

RFP opens January 23, 2018

Proposals due February 13, 2018, 5:00 p.m. EST.

Interviews March 28, 2018

Vendor selection April 2018

Product delivery no later than September 2018

Contact and proposals due to

Sarah Kurtanich

Director of Marketing

Howard County Tourism Council, Inc.

Sarah@HowardCountyTourism.com

Please, no unscheduled phone calls or visits.

General information for contractors

Why brand

- A. Clarification
 - a. Currently we have multiple brands, including several logos, that are holdovers from previous years.
- B. Effectiveness
 - a. We have spent the last two years gathering research data on visitor profiles, visitor sentiment and emotions, web traffic data and more. Armed with this information and the results of a Destination Next survey conducted in 2016, we are in a position to use this knowledge to create a new brand look that will reflect what Howard County truly is. This brand will need to be innovative and assist the HCTC in promoting the county as well as the various niche markets we represent. Some of the current niches we promote include outdoors, craft beverage tourism, food tourism, agritourism and regional events.
- C. Timeliness
 - a. We have multiple projects pending that will utilize a focused look this new brand will provide us. Our welcome center will undergo a renovation soon and our multi-year contract for our website will end soon as well.

Background

The Howard County Tourism Council serves as the lead organization to market and develop the county as a premier leisure and business travel destination. We are an energetic and innovative organization of talented and dedicated professionals who fulfill our mission by integrating the organization's work with our partners and serving as a credible advocate for Howard County's tourism industry.

Our organization is primarily funded through a funding allocation from Howard County Government. We are governed by a Board of Directors and receive supplemental funding via partnership dues. We are an advocate for the tourism industry and offer exclusive promotional benefits to individuals and businesses interested in capturing a greater market share of the millions of dollars tourism generates.

We currently utilize the name Visit Howard County for our public facing promotion efforts; we are alternatively known as Howard County Tourism or Howard County Tourism Council.

We have identified the following markets as our target audience:

- Leisure Travelers – Maryland, Washington D.C., and Mid-Atlantic states
- Meeting & Event Professionals – Government meeting planners and Social, Military, Educational, Religious, and Fraternal (SMERF) market
- Sports Groups – Amateur sports events (collegiate, youth, and club sports)
- Travel Trade – Tour operators, wholesalers, travel agents, etc.
- Media – Consumer, trade, lifestyle, travel, and sports media
- Local Residents – Howard County residents

We have visitor profile data compiled by Longwoods International, the results from a 2016 Destination Next survey conducted at the time of our most recent strategic planning initiative and web site traffic data from Google Analytics. We also have the results of a sentiment analysis that compiled reviews from attractions across the county and fed them through an AI opinion mapping tool.

Howard County is located between Baltimore and Washington D.C. and is considered to be a part of the Baltimore Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). An effective branding and marketing strategy will promote Howard County as a destination community, thereby benefiting all local businesses.

Project budget

While budget is an important consideration, it will not be the sole deciding factor in awarding this project.

Specifications

Project overview

The contractor is responsible for furnishing all labor, materials, tools, equipment, and methods required to interpret provided data and prepare an effective brand standard.

Project Requirements

The branding process will include several phases with specific milestones and deliverables identified at the end of each phase.

A. Discovery Phase

- a. Meet with the HCTC staff, inventory and assess all previous studies and reports provided by HCTC and conduct any additional research deemed necessary (with prior approval from HCTC). Information obtained during the discovery phase shall

be compiled and reported to HCTC in an executive summary prior to moving to the next stage.

B. Strategy Phase

- a. Identify new destination brand
- b. Develop new name, logo, brand standards and style guide
- c. Create language (“elevator pitches”) for describing Howard County’s tourism scene
 - i. 144 character, one paragraph and multiple paragraph descriptions
- d. Recommend visual elements in areas where the brand can be conveyed such as printed collateral, print advertising, web pages, media placements, social media, digital advertising, email, visitor guide, etc.

C. Execution Phase

- a. Assist in helping the HCTC develop a branding implementation plan with data-driven strategies and tactics to communicate the brand to internal and external groups.

Exclusions

1. A website redesign is not in the scope of this branding. The new brand identity will be implemented in a future website redesign.
2. An agency of record is not in the scope of this branding. The new brand identity will be implemented internally, or through contracts for creative as needed.

Responsibilities of contractor

The successful contractor will establish a work plan and schedule to ensure timely completion of each phase of the project. The schedule shall be prepared by the contractor and submitted and discussed with HCTC staff before a final schedule can be approved. Regular meetings, updates, and phone calls and emails with the project team are essential for ongoing communications.

The contractor will be responsible for reviewing existing research and materials related to tourism in Howard County, including general information, images, and past and current research related to tourism.

Proposal format

Please email (as attachment or link-to) proposals to Sarah@HowardCountyTourism.com. Proposals may be organized in any way. The following content, at least, should be included in the proposal.

- Contractor’s qualifications, experience, and references
 - Experience doing similar work
 - Location of office which will be performing the work
 - References for similar work

- Contractor's proposed work plan
 - Define all work you propose to do for this project. Include a list of deliverables and a work schedule
 - If any work will be subcontracted, list any subcontractors to be used
- Training, on-going support, and technical assistance
 - Describe training to be provided to staff during and after implementation
 - Describe method of obtaining support (outside of this contract) after implementation
- Fee schedule
 - Detail all costs incidental to this project. Include all costs in proposal: contractor will not be allowed to charge for costs not listed in the proposal

Proposal evaluation

RFP responses will be evaluated and ranked according to value based on the criteria below by Howard County Tourism Council staff.

1. Creativity and innovation
 - a. Contractor displays creativity in developing a brand that reflects the true look and feeling of a product.
2. Contractor's qualifications, experience, and references
 - a. Contractor displays evidence of stability and competent customer interactions
3. Contractor's proposed work plan
 - a. Contractor displays ability to provide for completion of a thorough and timely project
4. Fee schedule (pricing)
 - a. Contractor proposes fees as not-to-exceed costs for the contract and will include all professional fees and expenses.

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