

Elizabeth City-Pasquotank County Tourism Development Authority



Questions and answers for the Public Relations and Advertising RFPs Published March 19, 2021

This is a summary of the questions submitted in response to the concurrent RFPs in search of a Public Relations firm and Advertising Agency of record as published on VisitElizabethCity.com. It is our intention to provide the responses to questions to all firms that have submitted them by the deadline of March 22, indicating interest in participating in the proposal process. Questions have been organized into topic groupings and separated by which RFP they are in regards to in the following order: General, Public Relations, Advertising.

General

Q1: *We see that you have asked for 8 printed copies. As an agency that tries to reduce its environmental footprint, are we able to submit digital copies instead?*

A1: While we appreciate the initiative in reducing the environmental footprint, with Board members across the county and due to hybrid meetings still being in effect, we do ask for 8 printed copies to simplify the review process of each proposal.

Q2: *Must printed copies be in receipt of Visit Elizabeth City by March 31 at 3pm or is postmarked by March 31 acceptable so long as a digital version is also submitted on the 31st by 3pm?*

A2: Printed copies need to be in-hand by the deadline of 3pm on March 31 to be distributed in a timely manner to Marketing Committee members for review. We recommend shipping printed copies with tracking information, but we are aware of postal delays and will not disqualify a proposal if their printed copies arrive later than scheduled due to unforeseen shipping delays, so long as the digital submission is submitted on time.

Q3: *Are you looking for a local agency? How much will being local weigh on your decision? What do you consider "local" (within the state, inside 100 miles, etc.).*

A3: There are no geographic restrictions upon the location of service providers allowed to submit responses. All service providers however, must demonstrate their ability, recommended plan and commitment to serve the account, regardless of location. Any costs associated with travel to complete the project should be included in the cost proposal. That said, the Board will have a preference for a domestic agency.

Q4: *Will in-person meetings be required?*

A4: Ability to attend in-person meetings are not a requirement for the selected agency.

Q5: *Have you had any challenges with your agencies in the past? What are you looking for in a new agency that you didn't get from prior agencies?*

A5: Our procurement policies require us to consider both new and existing agencies to fulfill contracted jobs regardless of satisfaction. That being said, we're always looking for new, innovative ideas and ways to promote the Elizabeth City destination and improve as a DMO.

Q6: *Is there any advantage to an agency who is able to offer both PR and Advertising services? If responding to both RFPs, would you prefer separate or combined responses?*

A6: There is no preference for a single or separate agency for these RFPs. The Board will look at each proposal with careful consideration and choose those that best align with Visit Elizabeth City's needs and vision.

Q7: *Is this agreement for a year?*

A7: Yes, the contract will be for an initial one year period with the option to renew for up to five additional one year extensions.

Q8: *What do you call the area businesses, collectively, that comprise Visit Elizabeth City (i.e. members, stakeholders, constituents, businesses)?*

A8: We refer to our local businesses as our Tourism Partners or simply, "partners".

Q9: *Is every business in the destination automatically included in the Visit Elizabeth City marketing efforts, or is it a membership-based or some other type of pay-to-play participation?*

A9: We do not operate on a membership basis as we are funded solely through Occupancy Tax collected in Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County. We strive to include and promote as many businesses as possible where appropriate that fall under the scope of tourism and what will entice a visitor to plan an overnight stay in Elizabeth City.

Q10: *What is the current quality of your image and videography assets? We saw photography/videography as a strategic priority in the Marketing Plan. Have photography and videography been pursued in 2020-2021 despite COVID?*

A10: Our current photography library consist of several recent (2019 and 2020) professional shoots highlighting outdoor activities, local businesses, Christmas in Elizabeth City, and general tourism interest with plans to continue to expand the existing photo library. Video assets are limited. 2020 video shoots did not happen according to plan, but we are prioritizing this creative need in 2021.

Q11: *Are there any current studies that have been conducted about the travelers to Elizabeth City or on the business community that can be shared?*

A11: Visitor Research was conducted in 2019 on past and prospective visitors. A summary of that research is [available here](#).

Q12: *How does visitation to Elizabeth City vary by season?*

A12: In a typical year, our close proximity to the beaches of the Outer Banks means our “busy season” follows suit with the our coastal partners with summer being the busiest season. Overnight visitation typically begins to taper off in the fall and starts to climb in early spring.

Q13: *Would you see working with other NC destinations as a conflict?*

A13: No, we do not believe there should be a conflict of interest within the confines of professional agency services. However, please be sure to check with your current client(s) if this issue is of concern to you.

Q14: *Do you currently work with any other agencies? If so, can you share who they are, and whether the incumbent(s) will be participating in the RFP process?*

A14: Yes, the incumbent is invited to participate. We will not be releasing a list of any applicants prior to or during the RFP process. This is an open RFP process and all applicants will be considered equally.

Public Relations

Q15: *The RFP quotes the following: “a public relations budget in the \$20,000 to \$40,000 range.” Is this budget range for an annual PR budget? How are press trip / journalist visit expenses covered? Is there budget for additional out-of-pocket items such as experiential events, mailers, etc and if so, can you please clarify what additional budget you may have to cover these costs?*

A15: The referenced \$20,000-\$40,000 public relations budget is the estimated annual budget for agency fees. We have a separate budget for hosting journalists (\$2500 in the 2020-2021 FY), and we also work very closely with partner businesses to facilitate hosting and extend that budget as much as possible. We currently do not have a budget for experiential events, mailers, etc. however, are open to considering impactful ideas and managing other areas of the budget as needed to accommodate.

Q16: *For public relations, the RFP mentions you are interested in both a national and regional PR campaign. Can you elaborate on the degree to which the focus would be on national vs. regional?*

A16: We acknowledge that as a small town, we cannot always generate national attention. However, strategically weaving in both regional and national press as appropriate and recommended by our selected agency partner is key to a successful public relations program.

Q17: *Are social media services requested as part of the PR RFP and within the 20-40K budget?*

A17: No, social media content is handled in-house.

Q18: *Are influencer relations services requested as part of the PR RFP and within the 20-40K budget?*

A18: We’re open to considering influencer relations as part of a PR campaign, but they are not a requirement for the suggested plan. The \$20,000 - \$40,000 budget is agency fee only. Any influencer or journalist expenses will be a separate cost.

Advertising

Q19: *In the budget section you write: “For this proposal, please assume a digital advertising budget in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000.” Does that mean the budget for both the media buy and agency fees should be included in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range, or is that simply pure advertising spend?*

A19: The \$50,000-\$100,000 is pure advertising spend. Agency fees can be addressed separately.

Q20: *In the budget paragraph, it notes that your total marketing budget is \$275,000 and it specifies a digital advertising budget in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000. Can you confirm that you are requesting a proposal on how to allocate the full budget and not only the digital advertising budget? Can you elaborate on the detailed allocations for the website development and maintenance, visitor guide production and community marketing grants?*

A20: We are only requesting a recommended allocation of the digital advertising budget. Visit Elizabeth City staff internally manage the other stated items. We are just beginning our budget development for 2021-2022 FY and so do not have detailed allocations to share on the other stated items.

Q21: *Have you done any extensive keyword research already to guide organic and/or paid search programs as well as content?*

A21: A keyword map was created and implemented as part of a sitewide SEO program launched in August 2020.

Q22: *How set is your existing content creation schedule and are you open to additional input from your advertising partner on other potential themes?*

A22: We welcome and encourage input from the selected advertising partner on potential themes and a recommended schedule.

Q23: *The process we feel would be most successful for Elizabeth City would be focused on disruption rather than optimization, which we feel is different than what is outlined in your Marketing Plan. Would you be open to proposals that don't strictly follow this approach?*

A23: Ultimately, our mission is to drive increased overnight visits and overall economic impact. We are absolutely open to whatever method your agency feels would best help us accomplish that end goal. We are seeking the best possible agency partner(s) for our community to help move us forward.

Q24: *Is any local advertising desired as a part of the overall advertising scope, or do you plan to address communications with local residents via other channels and keep advertising focused on out-of-market prospective travelers?*

A24: Visit Elizabeth City's mission is to promote overnight visitation that drives economic impact through destination marketing and enhancement of the visitor experience in Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County. We're open to suggestions and recommendations about ways to leverage one campaign for both visitors and residents in alignment with that mission.

Q25: *Please confirm, is the creative development (for social, display, etc.) part of the scope?*

A25: Yes. Visit Elizabeth City will provide photography assets, brand colors and our logo, the selected agency will be responsible for creating engaging and appealing ad creative.