



Responses to Questions

NFT RFP Number: 2020-05-AOR

Title: Strategic Marketing Agency of Record

GENERAL RFP & SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. Please confirm if the only form of submission is via direct email versus a Biddingo upload? Will submissions using file sharing platforms (e.g. WeTransfer) be permitted?

Vendors with a Biddingo account are encouraged to submit their proposal through that channel. Understanding that not all vendors use the Biddingo service, direct email submission is also an option. If file sizes are too large to email, please include a download link in your email vs submission directly through a file sharing platform.

2. Please advise if there are any restrictions on the size of the PDF submitted?

There is no size or page limited for proposals; must be submitted in PDF format.

3. Why are you issuing this RFP?

Niagara Falls Tourism wishes to develop marketing campaigns with a revitalized strategy for both the domestic and international markets. It is key to strengthening our overall image and positioning to compete as a world-class destination.

4. Is there a regional or local preference or are you open to agencies from across the country? Do you anticipate any issues with / pushback from members or stakeholders should you engage an out-of-province AOR?

NFT's goal is to work with the agency most suited to our requirements.

5. Do you have a current Agency of Record? If so, can you identify the agency and length of that agreement? Will the incumbent agency submit a proposal?

NFT does not have an Agency of Record.

6. The term proposed in the RFP is for two years with the possibility of three one year extensions, what was the term of the previous/current contract?

No previous AOR/contract.

7. How many vendors are open to pitch?

This RFP is open to all interested vendors.

8. How many firms have you invited to participate in this RFP?

RFP was posted on the NFT website, Biddingo and shared with a handful of Canadian agencies that NFT has not worked with in the past.

9. Considering COVID 19 and restrictions regarding in person meetings, will interviews be conducted via electronic means?

We will follow all recommended health and safety guidelines for meetings.

10. If interviews will be conducted via electronic means what platform/service will be utilized?

To be determined based on requirements.

BRAND & HISTORICAL DATA

11. Can you provide a summary of NFT's current brand strategy? The goal of the ask is to help us identify if there is an alignment gap with key target personas.

While the traveller is at the heart of our marketing activities, the tourism industry is at the heart of the economy for Niagara Falls. It's not just about offering a great vacation, it's about the potential to connect Niagara Falls to the world, which will benefit every corner of our city and region. The residents of Niagara Falls and travellers from around the world are inspired by our authentic experiences and breathtaking landscapes.

12. Can you describe your current brand mission?

NFT's mission is to provide leadership and focus to foster, develop and promote the tourism industry in Niagara Falls increasing visitors' experiences.

13. Is there an existing marketing plan for the business vision and values?

Yes

14. Is there guidance around percentage of focus around the Falls + local attractions vs the regional attractions?

NFT is the official DMO for the city of Niagara Falls, not the Niagara Region.

15. Would summaries of past years' campaigns (creative, media, budgeting, results, etc) be available for review?

NFT will share data and past campaign details with the successful vendor.

16. What has the NFT annual marketing budget been for the past five years?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

17. Have you executed a marketing/PR campaign in the past? Anything that has worked or hasn't?

NFT will share data and past campaign details with the successful vendor.

18. Could you please provide samples of / links to previous integrated consumer campaigns through which NFT has been telling the Niagara Falls story?

NFT will share data and past campaign details with the successful vendor.

19. Have you gone through a brand strategy exercise before?

Yes.

20. What does success look like for you?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

TEAMS & PARTNERS

21. In section 1.2, you refer to working with extended teams, can you advise who this includes?

Extended teams could include industry partners and stakeholders or project-based vendors.

22. Do you have current partnerships with media (planning and buying) and PR agencies, or would you be looking for the strategic marketing AOR to provide these services?

Media planning and buying is currently managed internally. NFT is looking for an AOR to provide strategic recommendations with the potential to require support with media buys.

23. Who currently manages your PR?

Currently managed internally.

24. From a PR perspective, are you looking for one national partner who will then network with local PR agencies in international markets or do you need one central partner to manage your full international network?

Open to options that ensure success.

25. As communications will be delivered in both domestic and international markets, do you currently have a multilingual counterpart, or would the AOR need to engage one of their multilingual partners?

Currently managed internally with required support for future initiatives.

26. Who manages your social media? Is this an important channel for you? If so, why? What purpose does it serve?

Currently managed internally. Social media is an important channel for reaching target audiences and driving traffic to the NFT website.

27. Who manages your current website? Any major pain points?

Currently managed internally. No major pain points.

28. Do you have an existing provider or internal capabilities to deliver on your analytical requirements?

Currently managed internally.

29. Are there other agencies NFT currently works with?

Not currently.

30. Describe the team responsible for this initiative at NFT?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

31. Who are the key decision makers?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

32. Does NFT have any current marketing partnerships with other regional, provincial, or national tourism agencies?

NFT collaborates with regional, provincial and national marketing organizations to promote the destination.

33. Section 2.5 indicates NFT's intention to work with only one vendor and section 2.7 indicates NFT may undertake a non-exclusive approach please clarify?

Intention is to work with one vendor, but the final decision will be based on proposals to ensure NFT has the best partner(s) to reach our goals.

34. If NFT decides to work with additional providers will the AOR be required to partner with any such provider?

Yes, depending on the project.

35. Will certain assignments be distributed to various vendors on a per campaign basis? How is this decided?

If NFT chooses to work with various vendors, assignments will be based on services required.

TARGET AUDIENCE & INSIGHTS

36. Can you share target personas? The key segments are referred to as families, couples, and explorers – are the personas you refer to more nuanced breakouts of these segments are they one and the same?

NFT will share data and detailed personas with the successful vendor.

37. Can you tell us more about your visitor profile and length of stay? Do you have information about the varying trip types (i.e. day trips/no hotel, weekend trips etc).

Approximately 60% of visitors to Niagara Falls are on a day trip, 40% overnight visitors.

38. Tell us about your target audience – How/where do you connect with them? How would they describe you? Describe their journey? Any current pain points?

NFT will share data and detailed personas with the successful vendor.

39. Can you share geographies of focus (national and international)? Taking into account currency exchange, are the market spends weighted?

Niagara Falls visitation is comprised of 67% domestic market, 25% USA market and 8% international market. Market spend is not relevant to the procurement process.

40. In terms of Key Visitor Personas that NFT has developed: do they align with Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient traveler types? Do you access Destination Canada's data for traveler insights, or perform your own research?

NFT's target personas are developed based on data from regional, provincial and national research, including Destination Canada.

41. If your target personas are already developed and set, would you be looking for the agency to further develop these visitor profiles or are they considered complete?

NFT wishes to further develop target personas specific to our destination.

42. Of the customer segments that you identified, who would be the priority target(s)?

All three key segments are priority targets.

43. Domestically and internationally, what markets do you want to prioritize?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

44. Who do you consider your key competitors? Can you share what destinations you are usually competing with in the minds of your target audience?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

45. From a national and international perspective, which markets have you prioritized in the past 3 years and why?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

46. Can you share the activities in Niagara Falls that are preferred for each of your personas?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

47. Do you have a database of prospects, previous visitors, or members of any of the destinations or attractions in Niagara Falls? If so, could you provide details (eg. quantity, source, profile information, etc)?

NFT will share data and details with the successful vendor.

48. Can you share any of your past website analytics and/or insights?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

49. Are you currently leveraging any CRM data?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

50. What do you anticipate being the biggest hurdles post-COVID?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

51. The RFP says we could have access to your internal info/documents - is this for the RFP stage or if we should move forward?

NFT will share data with the successful vendor.

52. What type of research do you have access to?

In addition to research conducted by NFT, NFT has access to research from regional, provincial and national organizations. Data will be shared with the successful vendor.

53. What is your opinion on AirBnB and short term rentals? While this is obviously a threat to the hotel industry, these are becoming more and more normal as part of the travel experience. Do you recognize or profile these ever?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

54. Have you implemented any new safety measures in the age of COVID? Are there certain attractions that you will prioritize over others (i.e. outdoor, individual activities vs large gatherings)? Have any festivals/attractions been reimagined?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

55. What has the reaction been for some of your virtual experiences? Have they been well received?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

56. Prior to COVID-19, was tourism in Niagara Falls generally trending upwards? Any indicator would be helpful, including total economic activity, employment, number of visitors, etc.?

12.95 million visitors annually - \$2.4 Billion economic impact - 40,000 tourism jobs

57. Do you have any working assumptions about how your member's offerings will change due to the pandemic, and if so, what are they? Do you have any data or findings about consumer travel trends to Niagara Falls, from pre-pandemic as well as during quarantine, that addresses where visitors will come from, what will drive them to visit and what messaging will resonate with them?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

58. The reference to 'strengthen our overall image and positioning' suggests there was an area or issue you wanted to improve prior to the pandemic. Do you have any data or insights that suggests your image and positioning were under-performing?

NFT wishes to develop a revitalized strategy for domestic and international markets, including increasing off-season overnight visitation.

CASE STUDIES

59. In the Submission Requirements you have asked for case examples to demonstrate three very distinct types of projects (if not components of projects). You have asked for all case examples to include a description outlining the situation, communications objectives, key audiences, tactical plan, evaluation of results and high-level budget breakdown. This list is not necessarily relevant for all three projects you have asked for (e.g. showcasing destination market research doesn't include a tactical plan, though obviously it does eventually lead to one). Is all the criteria mandatory for all case examples or can we tailor the list so we can better focus on the projects you have asked for?

Please provide all relevant information and detail for each type of project.

DELIVERABLES & METRICS

60. You mention you want to strengthen your image. What is the current market perspective of Niagara Falls? What do you want to shift/change?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

61. Can you please clarify the media deliverable? Are you asking for media strategy recommendation, planning, buying and execution or do you have a current media partner with whom we would partner?

AOR to provide strategic recommendations with potential to aid with media buying. Currently, media planning and buying is done internally.

62. Do you have existing communications or messaging in market while the COVID isolation is in place?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

63. Can you provide detail on what your communication plan would look like in a normal year (not disrupted by COVID)?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

64. Can you share which digital channels you are currently active in? Question is not relevant to procurement process.

65. What marketing communications channels do you tend to rely most heavily upon? Such as digital ads, media relations, OOH, TV/video, etc.?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

66. Have you undertaken any communication adaptation measures such as workshops, internal comms planning that take into account the changing realities due to COVID or will you require the agency partner to demonstrate capabilities around COVID recovery planning and workshops to build collaborative plans?

NFT is investigating adaptation measures for travel trade and will look to the AOR for thought leadership on new initiatives.

67. What is your planning cycle and when is your anticipated commencement date for the contracted agency?

NFT's fiscal year is concurrent with the calendar year. NFT's goal is to enter into an agreement with an agency in Q3.

68. Are you looking to target international media and influencers?

Yes

69. How do you currently measure brand recognition, brand awareness, reach/engagement?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

70. Do you have benchmarks for the sample ROI program you've outlined?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

71. Do you have a revenue target in mind?

Question is not relevant to procurement process.

72. Are there specific KPIs (# of trips, spend per trip, email database acquisition, email open rates, Niagara region tourism partnership participation rates, cost per acquisition of bookings, quantitative and qualitative earned media measurement, etc.) that are already in place would help us develop plans? Visitors to site, online booking leads, overnight visitation and visitor spending are listed in the RFP, but is that the actual final KPI set and are there hard metrics against those?

NFT will share data with the successful vendor.

73. Regarding the deliverables, there is a desire to implement ROI programs. The measurements listed indicate an increase in visitors to the website, online booking leads, overnight visits and spends. What are you using as a baseline, and how is it different from previous campaigns?

Year over year data from internal and external sources are used to determine the ROI of marketing campaigns. NFT will share data with the successful vendor.

74. Is there any current dashboarding and/or campaign post-reporting documents we can review to assess what's currently working or not working within the Niagara Tourism marketing mix?

NFT will share data with the successful vendor.

75. Have you made any decisions as an organization as to what your tourism strategy will look like during and post COVID-19? Are there existing plans for a phased rollout of services? Will some services/tourism destinations change service offerings entirely?

NFT has been working on a recovery plan since the beginning of the COVID-19 situation. Details will be shared with the successful vendor.

76. Are you looking for the agency to provide issues management support to your internal stakeholders (e.g. with a post COVID-19 recovery plan and the risk of potential future curves)?

Potentially.

BUDGET & FEES

77. Can you share an estimate of how the \$5 million annual budget would be allocated between media, production, agency fees and other?

Not at this time. Budget allocation will be based on marketing strategy going forward.

78. How are you currently distributing media dollars within regions (Canada/US/international) and across media channels?

Media spend is based on seasonal campaigns and target audiences. NFT will share data of past campaigns with the successful vendor.

79. As it relates to creative development and execution of campaigns, can you provide your expected division of responsibilities between our team and your internal team(s)?

AOR to assist with developing marketing strategy and creative concepts. NFT's goal is to continue producing content and executing campaigns internally.

80. Are there broad guidelines that NFT normally uses for media/production budget splits? For example, is there a mandatory 70%/30% split between media and production? And within each of media and production, are there further guidelines around hard cost vs fees % splits?

No. Production spend is based on individual campaigns and existing asset inventory.

81. Public Relations is specifically called out as a key requirement in the RFP. Is there specific budget guidance on PR specifically? E.g. should PR be a min % of spend?

PR spend will be based on strategic approach.

82. Can you share your expectation for 2.6, section G, in regard to associated fees given that some of the scope in Schedule A is high-level without sufficient details to accurately estimate. Is this to get a sense of how much effort and costs these tasks would take or are you looking to build out a full fledged sequential timeline with associated costing?

An estimate on timing and associated fees for Deliverables as set out in Schedule A to be provided based on your experience and expertise with similar projects.

83. For Schedule A, could you also let us know for what period or length of time do you think the execution of the campaign would last?

NFT typically executes seasonal campaigns.

84. Will the scoring of the pricing section (25%) be based upon Schedule B, the estimate of associated fees or the deliverables mentioned in 2.6, section G, or both?

Both.

85. Does Schedule B (Pricing Template) need to be submitted separately or in the same document as our response?

Schedule B to be submitted as part of the proposal.

86. Can we add/change the roles to Schedule B (rate card) to match the team we are proposing?

Additional lines may be added to detail the full scope of your services, including a range of rates based on team seniority. If a listed service is not provided in-house, please leave blank.

87. Are you looking for a single hourly rate for each service (for example, video production) or all relevant hourly rates that may apply to that service?

Please provide all relevant information.