



Marketing Strategy Plan Request for Proposals

Updated 9/3/20

Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) requests proposals for consulting services to develop a strategic marketing plan that supports overall organizational marketing and communications, key messaging and storytelling, as well as fundraising efforts.

NDC Mission

Founded in 1968, the Neighborhood Design Center is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the development of healthy, equitable neighborhoods through community-engaged design and planning services. By providing the tools, expertise, and partnerships necessary to realize neighborhood visions, we support broad participation in the evolution of the built environment.

Overview

NDC has been building equity through community-led design since our founding and has helped complete over 3,700 projects in Maryland in that time. NDC projects are collaborations between residents, community stakeholders, design professionals, local government agencies, fellow nonprofits, and our staff. Together we lay the groundwork for improving blocks, renovating parks and school grounds, reclaiming abandoned structures for community use, and revitalizing commercial districts.

We are a unique organization in Maryland with a growing national presence. Higher profile work of note includes hosting “Reverberations” a national conference on community design, in 2018, securing highly competitive national funding, winning competitive project commissions, and most recently, launching “Design For Distancing” with Baltimore City, to address COVID-era business re-opening needs, which has garnered international attention. Currently, much of our work focuses around our two main jurisdictions; Baltimore City and Prince George’s County, and we look to expand those impact areas in the coming years.

A great deal of work has been undertaken in the last few years resulting in a well-defined brand architecture and style guide, comprehensive fundraising strategy plan, and new website that was launched in 2019 (<https://ndc-md.org>). Current marketing and communications platforms/assets include; NDC Website, Social Media (Facebook, IG,

Twitter, Linked In) with limited paid content, Newsletter (Mailchimp), Events, Collateral. Identified audiences include: field leaders and design professionals, community leaders, donors and the general public. We strongly suggest that candidates review our website to understand our work, mission, community commitment and overall approach in our communications style.

Similar to our community-engaged design work, our internal process is collaborative. The selected marketing consultant will be required to work with NDC staff and a team of existing writing, graphic design, and social media contractors.

NDC has a rich inventory of highly visual stories to share, that grows with each year. We have increased investment in organizational marketing year over year, with the full marketing and communications investment in recent years as follows: FY19- \$46k, FY20- \$70k, FY21- \$96k). In order to maximize the impact of this investment, we are seeking a marketing consultant that can help us develop a detailed plan to better leverage our history of success, articulate our value, and expand our reach and influence.

Scope of Work

The marketing strategy must outline a strategic approach to accomplishing marketing goals that can be easily understood and managed by in-house staff and contractors. Specifically, we seek a consultant to:

- Evaluate current and archived marketing and communications tactics to understand why they were successful or not, and identify elements that can be expanded upon. Also, review other organizational documents that are relevant to the project.
- Develop a marketing program that will define goals, identify target audiences, and detail specific strategies and tactics to be developed and implemented over the next 12-18 months. Strategies are to be prioritized with project milestones and proposed budgets presented where appropriate.
- Address how existing marketing efforts and new recommendations can complement each other and leverage new opportunities, while utilize existing brand architecture, style guide, and audience personas.
- Develop key messaging and tactics to reach identified target audiences that helps to accomplish marketing goals. Create branded copy and talking points that can assist NDC navigate current times and transition the organization into the future
- Provide analysis and recommendations to include (but not be limited to): online marketing/advertising; social media content; collateral/print materials; NDC e-newsletter; website, including “Journal” (the news section); events; media

relations; public speaking/conferences and related activities; and additional nontraditional marketing strategies.

- Address ways to leverage marketing and communication to increase individual and corporate giving, by building off a recently developed fundraising strategy plan, aligning campaign development with current and future trends.
- Assess established positioning and values in light of recent global events and changing dynamics of communication methods and messaging platforms to create powerful key messaging to clarify and strengthen the NDC brand.
- Craft an action-oriented plan that is easy to understand and provide enough detail for NDC staff to readily manage and implement in-house. Include a glossary of terms and tips if needed.
- Provide a series of draft plans for review over the lifespan of the contract, culminating in a final written plan in a PDF document with a final presentation with deck highlighting findings and recommendations.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- There has already been considerable work completed around gathering input from staff, board members, stakeholders and partners. We are not looking to invest further time and funds into gathering insights and feedback or recreate this work with this project, existing documents and feedback should allow the contractor to quickly get into the development of the marketing plan.
- This RFP does not include the creation of marketing and communications content (for example, website or social media content, annual report, collateral material design), or other elements that will be used in the implementation of the marketing plan. Rather, this RFP is focused on the creation of the strategy and tactics which will then guide implementation.

Proposal Requirements:

Firms considered for this project must be able to demonstrate the following:

- 1) Experience in working with non-profit organizations and creating comprehensive strategic marketing plans.
- 2) Understanding of the contexts within which NDC works, in order to develop a nuanced understanding and sophisticated articulation of the purpose and activities of the organization.

Proposal Timeline

- 1) Date of RFP Release: August 28, 2020

~~2) Deadline for submission of RFP questions: Sept 2, 2020~~

~~a. Questions regarding this RFP can be emailed to Briony Hynson at bhynson@ndc-md.org, no phone calls will be accepted.~~

~~b. If you are interested in receiving these responses please email by the above date that you would like to be added to the list.~~

3) Question responses emailed: attached

4) NEW Deadline for proposal submission: **September 15, 2020**

5) Notification of selection: September 18th, 2020

6) Contract execution: September 20, 2020

7) Expected completion of contract: December 20, 2020 if no delays on turnarounds

Proposed Budget

Range \$11,000 - \$13,000

Evaluation Criteria

- 1) Strategic vision: A winning proposal will demonstrate the ability to present a compelling vision
- 2) Outline the approach to project management and when milestones will be met from start to finish, including all the elements outlined in this RFP.
- 3) Ability to propose a compelling vision within budget

TO APPLY:

Proposals should include:

- 1) Cover letter to include key contact name, title, email address, phone number and email address. Acknowledgement of agreeing to proposed project timeline.
- 2) Detailed description of your qualifications and expertise to meet or exceed the specifications in the "Scope of Work".
- 3) Proposed work approach to complete the "Scope of Work" and list of expected deliverables.
- 4) Projected project plan and timeline, and resources that will be required from NDC to complete the project.
- 5) Overview of at least two recent, relevant projects that involved developing strategic marketing plans, with a special focus on non-profit organizations. This should include project contact information for reference research.
- 6) Identify key personnel to perform this contract and include resumes.

- 7) Proposed budget with a breakdown of costs for the project, including a clear description of services included in the fee and additional optional add-on or discretionary costs.

Proposals should be submitted to bhynson@ndc-md.org by no later than 4pm on September 15th, 2020.

Attachment A:

NDC RFP: Strategic Marketing Plan, Submitted Questions and Responses

September 3, 2020

NDC RFP: Strategic Marketing Plan

Submitted Questions and Responses

September 4, 2020

The RFP mentions "building off a recently developed fundraising strategy plan" - can you share a few more details about what the plan consists of, when it was developed and if it's available to review?

The plan was created in 2019 by a consultant who developed a Growth Capacity Assessment, Financial Plan and Development Plan. The Development Plan is divided into focal areas for NDC's main target raised revenue groups: 1) Foundations (grants) 2) Corporations (grants, sponsorships) 3) Individual Donor (major gifts, annual donations, one time donations, events) and 4) Government Entities (sponsorships). Groups 2 and 3 above are the primary focus for targeted organizational marketing, and Groups 1 and 4 are a secondary focus, with clear key messaging and a higher profile allowing those groups to see NDC's significant impact in our jurisdictions. The Development Plan will be available to review once the consultant is selected.

The RFP references recent "marketing and communications investment[s]" of "FY19-\$46k, FY20-\$70k, FY21-96k". Would you mind sharing more detail on what that money was spent on and if the outcomes of those efforts will be made available to review?

Elements that were covered by the marketing and communications budget included:

- brand overhaul, including brand architecture and style guide.
- new website and new branded collateral (2019)
- professional photography to build NDC assets
- freelance writer to support website, newsletter, social media
- freelance graphic designer
- ongoing costs for platforms for website hosting and support, mailchimp etc
- occasional paid social media promotion (Facebook and Instagram)

Outcomes of those efforts will be available to selected consultant, either as deliverable products to review or via access to metrics on NDC platforms (mailchimp, facebook, etc)

Who created the "existing materials" and will their discovery reports be made available?

Yes, all of these materials will be provided as a package to the selected consultant. They have been made by a range of different consultants.

There has already been considerable work completed around gathering input from staff, board members, stakeholders and partners. We are not looking to invest further time and funds into gathering insights and feedback or recreate this work with this project, existing documents and feedback should allow the contractor to quickly get into the development of the marketing plan.

The RFP states that it's focused solely "on the creation of the strategy and tactics which will then guide implementation." Can you confirm that implementation will be handled in-house, vs. through contractor support?

As of now, the goal is that implementation will primarily be handled in-house by staff and existing freelance writing and graphic design consultants. Depending on the findings, and the funding landscape to come (currently unknown in the COVID/Post-COVID era), future implementation via contractor support is not off the table altogether.

RFP Process

How many firms are submitting proposals?

Unknown.

Do you have a targeted completion date?

Yes, per the updated RFP, "Expected completion of contract: December 20, 2020" based on no delay on turnarounds.

What does your "project team" look like (for the engagement itself) and, more specifically, how large is your decision-making/approvals team?

Decision making/approvals team is made up of one staff lead, one executive team member for review and approval, and 1-2 board members.

The last page of the RFP, "Proposed budget with a breakdown of costs" (with your proposed

budget higher on the page specified at \$11,000 – \$13,000):

If our proposed project plan (scope and recommendations) works with your project goals and budget, are you looking for anything more than the breakdown of what's included in the project fee vs. potential additional expenses?

Your proposal should include your fee, aligned to a project plan, and containing a breakdown of what is included in the project fee. (Optionally you can include supplemental information along the lines of 'hourly rate for work beyond scope,' printing, travel, or other optional add-on or discretionary costs.

Cost estimates/budgeting of potential implementation expenses is not listed as an requirement of the RFP, but would be expected in the plan deliverable. (#2 in Scope of Work: "proposed budgets presented where appropriate".)

RFP Scope/Requirements:

Audiences – to confirm, you have identified audiences ("include: field leaders and design professionals, community leaders, donors and the general public") and documented audience

personas ("utilize existing... audience personas"). Yes, this is correct.

Regarding this item, “Assess established positioning and values” in the current context “create powerful key messaging to clarify and strengthen the NDC brand”:

· In addition to the brand architecture and brand identity you mentioned in the RFP, do you have a documented brand platform (i.e., positioning, purpose, values, value proposition for each of your audiences, etc.) that will need to be assessed against in the current context or is it something you are looking to formulate/formalize as part of the process?

We do not have a singular document with a full and documented brand platform that includes all of the elements you describe, though we have most elements. We have purpose, values, voice persona, audience personas, but no value proposition for each audience persona.

· Is the expectation that “powerful key messaging to clarify and strengthen the NDC brand” delivered as part of the plan, or will the plan include assessment/recommendations and the messaging gets developed during execution (not part of this project’s scope)?

The key messaging is part of the expected plan deliverable. The consultant will develop key messaging and tactics to reach identified target audiences that helps to accomplish marketing goals. Create branded copy and talking points that can assist NDC navigate current times and transition the organization into the future.