



Town of Unity • 74 School Street • P.O. Box 416 • Unity ME 04988

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Marketing Consultant Services Request for Qualifications

The Marketing Committee of the Unity Economic Development Committee seeks a qualified consultant to recommend a marketing strategy for the Town of Unity. The budget for the scope of work is \$5,000. Deadline for submissions is Noon on June 6, 2017.

Qualifications Sought

Experience in rural Maine destination tourism marketing with a proven track record is highly desired. Client experience with nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and/or volunteer groups with limited marketing budgets is preferred.

Background

Unity, an agrarian small college town with a population of slightly over 2000, has recently embarked on a purposeful effort to stimulate economic development befitting its small town character. Significant features supplementing Unity's agricultural heritage include Unity College (with a Performing Arts Center and Field of Dreams lakeside public recreation facility), the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardener's Association (MOFGA, with its high-traffic annual Common Ground Fair), Unity Raceway, a bustling recently-settled Amish community, and Lake Winnecook (aka Unity Pond). Downtown Unity is also the inland terminus of the new Hills to Sea Trail.

Town government is lean, run by a volunteer Selectboard and supplemented by energized volunteer community groups. Within the past three years, a logo has been developed, a business association (Unity Business Exchange, or UBx) has been formed, a Tax Increment Financing Policy has been adopted, and an official Economic Development Committee (EDC) has been created. A promotional video is under development. A survey of existing business needs conducted in 2016 identified shared marketing and attraction of high-quality lodging and restaurant services as high priorities.

In order to generate sufficient traffic to support quality lodging and restaurant businesses, the EDC launched a "Unity as a Destination" Initiative in February. Affiliated with the Making Headway program of GrowSmart Maine, working groups are currently exploring strategies for developing key amenities: lodging, an artist's maker's space, and outdoor recreation (trail network and lake). Private entrepreneurs are seriously exploring brew pub and restaurant options. It was agreed that cementing Unity's brand and developing a cohesive marketing strategy were essential to the success of all other efforts. As a result, a Marketing Committee has been formally appointed and charged with engaging a consultant.

The Marketing Committee is carrying out the recommendations of the Branding Work Group established in February as part of the “Unity as a Destination” Initiative, which evaluated the status of the Town logo, 3 tag lines currently in use, current web sites (www.unitymaine.org sponsored by Unity Barn Raisers as a community information site and www.unityme.org, the new official municipal government site) and potential branding strategies.

The Branding Work Group endorsed keeping the current logo with its focus on the “U” in Unity (emphasizing welcoming & diversity), crossroads (physically and culturally) and green and blue coloring (ecological connections of land and water). A style guide is under development. Three taglines sanctioned by a prior Selectboard and in uncoordinated use are: “Small Town, Big Community,” “Come Grow with Us”, and “Incorporated in 1804.” The Branding Work Group considered those and is proposing “Find Yourself in Unity” as a better marketing tagline.

Further marketing needs identified by the Work Group include:

1. New web site content focused on visitor attraction, with photographs, videos, itineraries and blogs
2. Engaging local businesses to help them advertise
3. Getting clarity on how to reach our target audiences and measure success
4. Engaging a Marketing and Outreach Consultant/Employee on a permanent part-time basis to manage the Marketing Strategy under the oversight of the Marketing Committee

Scope of Work

Recommend prioritized marketing and outreach strategies to be implemented by EDC volunteers and anticipated future Town employee/consultant.

- Sharpening the proposed tagline(s): message, number, and use
- Emerging market niches and trends of which Unity should take advantage
- Messaging style and platforms Unity should use to successfully attract potential visitors
- Measureable outcomes and cost effective methods of measurement
- Cost-effective campaign ideas, advertising venues, outlets and partnerships (clarifying which are in reach of in-house personnel vs. requiring a marketing firm)
- What the Town should be prepared to pay to execute strategies
- Timing of strategies in relation to development of additional tourism amenities
- Expected return on investment; rational basis for the strategies recommended

Deliverables

The consultant will deliver an in-person presentation for the EDC, Selectboard and interested members of the public, accompanied by a written report articulating recommended marketing strategies for the Town of Unity. Recommendations will be prioritized and include timed action steps, budgets and projected measurable outcomes.

Schedule

Deadline for responses is Noon on June 6, 2017. Responses will be opened at the Selectmen's meeting at 6:30 PM. Interviews with top candidates will be scheduled for the morning of June 15, 2017. The Town anticipates awarding a contract on June 20, 2017. The Town prefers that work commence as soon as practicable after that date and be completed no later than August 31, 2017.

How to Apply

Prospective consultants are asked to submit:

1. Statement of Interest, Qualifications, Experience, Availability and References (3 minimum)
2. Proposed approach, including means of orientation/interaction with client, workplan, and schedule. Budget-friendly alternatives to some elements of the scope of work may be proposed, with explanations.
3. A portfolio with representative work (links to online materials are acceptable).

Electronic submissions in a single PDF under 15MB in size with "Marketing RFQ" in subject line are preferred and must be submitted to visit@unityme.org by Noon on June 6, 2017. Hard copy responses (3 copies, one unbound and suitable for scanning) in an envelope addressed to Marketing RFQ, Town of Unity, PO Box 416, Unity ME 04988 must be received in the PO Box by 8 AM or physically delivered to the Town Office at 74 School Street by Noon on June 6, 2017. One copy of any expensive print worksample is sufficient.

Selection Process and Award

Responses will be evaluated based on a combination of: (a) the quality and responsiveness of the proposed work plan to Unity's stated needs, and (b) qualifications including demonstrated experience, quality of portfolio, and references. Interviews may be conducted in person or via videoconference. The Unity Marketing Committee will make recommendations to the Selectboard, who will make the final decision. The Town reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to negotiate a final contract with the preferred consultant.

Point of Contact

Questions concerning this RFQ may be directed to Jennifer deHart, Unity Marketing Committee chairperson via visit@unityme.org or 207-509-7295 through June 2, 2017. All questions asked and answers provided will be posted on the Town web site at www.unityme.org each Monday by noon, with final posting on June 5, 2017.

Supplementary Material

Existing Town Web Sites:

- www.unityme.org (GovOffice municipal site less than year old; tailored design service available)
- www.unitymaine.org (20 year old volunteer-based site owned by Unity Barn Raisers featuring “This Week in Unity” event promotion distributed to 355 email addresses; otherwise needing update/refocus)

Unity as a Destination

- Phase 1 Report <http://www.unityme.org/vertical/sites/%7BBBD3F5A50-C38D-41AB-8BD9-2E84C4267B00%7D/uploads/UnityasaDestination-Phase1Report2.28.17.pdf>
- Morning Sentinel article link <http://www.centralmaine.com/2017/03/21/unity-group-envisions-five-projects-to-help-make-town-a-destination/>

EDC Goals and Priorities from Town Ordinance:

- In doing its work, the Committee will ensure that policies and strategies it develops are in keeping with the Unity Comprehensive Plan and the following economic development goals: diversifying the local tax base, creating local jobs, providing citizens and visitors with local services and improving the overall quality of life in Unity. Galvanizing and strengthening local businesses will be a priority, followed by attracting complementary businesses that will enhance the commercial center and maintain the rural character of the town.

