



Request for Design & Content Proposal

2026-2027 Chicago Northwest Inspiration Guide

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Meet Chicago Northwest (MCNW) is seeking proposals from qualified firms or individuals to provide design, content development, and production of the **Chicago Northwest Inspiration Guide**. This publication is the official lifestyle and travel guide for the Chicago Northwest suburbs, serving as both a destination marketing tool and a visitor resource. It will highlight the region's attractions, dining, nightlife, events, and outdoor assets, using an inspirational, photo-forward design with concise, engaging copy. The final piece should closely align with the quality, layout, and style of the [2024–2025 guide](#), while incorporating creative enhancements.

While last year's guide did not include any advertising, we would like to explore advertorial-style advertising for our partnership to purchase. Selected vendor would be responsible for advertising sales, material gathering, and advertorial layout within overall guide.

AUDIENCE:

- **Primary:** Out-of-market visitors considering a trip to the Chicago Northwest suburbs
- **Secondary:** Meeting and event planners/attendees
- **Tertiary:** Local residents seeking things to do in their own backyard

GOALS:

- Inspire and motivate travel to the Northwest suburbs of Chicago.
- Showcase the uniqueness and diversity of the region through compelling photography and short-form editorial.
- Maintain a balanced mix of aspirational storytelling and practical visitor information.
- Look and feel should be that of a high-end lifestyle magazine rather than a directory of businesses.
- Incorporate QR codes to connect users to [ChicagoNorthwest.com](https://chicagonorthwest.com) and specific landing pages for up-to-date information.
- Integrate advertising seamlessly into the flow of content so it feels natural—not like a purchased ad—while staying within the page count mentioned below.

PUBLICATION SPECS:

- **FORMAT:** 40p body (60# matte text #3) + 4p cover (80lb 9pt dull cover with outside dull varnish), 4/4 process with bleeds, saddle stitched
- **TRIM SIZE:** 8.5 in wide x 10.875 in high
- **SHELF LIFE:** 18 months (March 2026 - September 2027)
- **VERSIONS:** Print and Digital version (issue or similar flipbook to use on [ChicagoNorthwest.com](https://chicagonorthwest.com))

CONTENT & EDITORIAL STRUCTURE:

Vendors should propose a layout that mirrors the [2024–2025 Inspiration Guide](#), including:

- Front
 - Welcome letter
 - “By the Numbers” infographic
 - Illustrated regional map
- Community Profiles
 - Dedicated spreads for each of the eight communities
 - “Local Voice” / Sidebars featuring partners
- Feature Sections
 - Ways to Play (seasonal and year-round activities - kid-friendly, outdoor activities, performing arts, cultural)
 - Retail Therapy (shopping highlights)
 - Dining (cuisine variety and restaurant features, highlight of iconic Chicago foods)
 - Nightlife (craft breweries, winery, wine bars, beer bars)
- Travel Information
 - “Arrivals & Departures” (transportation, parking, transit access)
- Listings & Resources
 - Activities, attractions, dining, accommodations
 - Organized by category & community
 - Advertising
 - Integrated in a way that complements editorial content
 - Must fit within page count above
 - No display ads. Advertorial only.

PHOTOGRAPHY REQUIREMENTS:

- Provide cover photography shoot as an optional add-on.
- Cover photo will wrap both front & back.
- Use full-bleed hero images and lifestyle photography prominently.
- Include seasonal variety and a balance of wide, mid, and close-up shots.
- Represent all eight communities fairly.
- MCNW will provide a majority of photos; proposal should include pricing for 10–15 stock images.
- Ensure all photos meet print-quality standards (300 dpi, CMYK).

COPYWRITING REQUIREMENTS:

- Submit story outlines to MCNW for approval prior to writing.
- Provide approximately 5–6 short-form feature stories (300–500 words each).
- Research content ideas for sidebars.
 - Interview partners for Local Voices sidebars.
- Match the tone and style of the current guide—light, inviting, and informative.
- All copy will be reviewed by MCNW staff for accuracy.

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS:

- Production includes 4 initial design concepts (Present cover, content story layout, and listing layouts. Advertorial layout, if selected by MCNW.)
- Concepts must demonstrate:
 - Photography placement
 - Typography hierarchy
 - Color palette
 - Iconography style
 - Advertising integration

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS:

- **Resolution:** 300 dpi for print, 72 dpi for web PDF

- **Color:** CMYK (print), RGB (digital)
- **File Delivery:** Packaged InDesign files with linked images/fonts + PDF/X-1a:2001 print file + web-optimized issue with active links

TIMELINE & DELIVERABLES:

- **Proposals Due:** Monday, September 8, 2025
- **Vendor Selection:** Friday, September 19, 2025
- **Kick-off Meeting:** Week of September 22, 2025
- **Weekly Production Meetings:** Week of September 29, 2025
- **Design Concepts & Story Outlines Due:** Wednesday, October 15, 2025
- **Final Files to Printer:** late January / early February 2026 (MCNW will source printer directly.)
- **Release Date:** March 2026

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

- Detailed proposal include design, copywriting, illustration and cover photo shoot.
- Detailed proposal for potential number of ads and revenue share to MCNW.
- Links to previous destination visitors guides with and without advertorial.
 - Mail hard copies to Meet Chicago Northwest, ATTN: Heather Larson, 1933 N. Meacham Rd., Suite 210, Schaumburg, IL 60173
- Destination references required.
- Links to previous creative copy writing.
- A brief creative vision statement for this project.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Proven experience in destination marketing visitors guides with and without advertorial.
- Quality and relevance of portfolio work.
- Creative integration of photography, design, and editorial.
- Ability to meet deadlines and work collaboratively with MCNW.
- Competitive pricing.

QUESTIONS:

Contact: Alyssa Ullo, Director of Marketing; aullo@chicagonorthwest.com