



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Agency of Record

The Newport and Bristol County Convention and Visitors Bureau (Discover Newport) seeks proposals from qualified Vendors to serve as the organization's Agency of Record ("AOR"), tasked with the development and execution of a strategic marketing plan. The Selected Vendor will provide strategic direction to ensure the region's brand is properly conveyed across all programs and channels.

This document constitutes a Request for Proposal ("RFP"), in a competitive format, from qualified firms. This request is an offer by Discover Newport to underwrite, in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP, the services proposed by the successful firm(s), by contract.

The respondents ("Proposers") to this RFP shall provide a proposal, in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth herein, to provide all or part of services to Discover Newport as described in the Scope of Work.

Project Overview

Discover Newport seeks to engage a qualified Agency of Record to serve as a strategic partner in the development and execution of an integrated marketing program that advances the organization's mission, supports long-term destination stewardship, and drives sustainable visitation across Newport and Bristol Counties.

The selected vendor will be responsible for providing strategic leadership, creative direction, and tactical execution across paid, owned, and earned channels. This work will be grounded in data, research, and performance measurement, ensuring that Discover Newport's brand positioning, messaging, and marketing investments are effective, cohesive, and aligned with organizational priorities.

The Agency of Record will collaborate closely with Discover Newport staff and external partners to translate strategic goals into compelling campaigns that elevate brand awareness, influence travel consideration, and support priority business objectives such as seasonal balance, overnight visitation, and economic impact. The selected firm will be expected to bring best-in-class destination marketing expertise, audience insights, and innovative approaches to storytelling, while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing market conditions and emerging opportunities.

This engagement is intended to be a multi-year partnership, subject to annual review, performance evaluation, and available funding. Discover Newport anticipates that the Agency of Record will function as an extension of the organization's internal team, providing consistent strategic counsel, creative excellence, and accountable execution across all marketing and communications initiatives.

Background

Discover Newport is the official destination marketing organization (DMO) for Newport and Bristol Counties, Rhode Island. As a regional tourism leader, Discover Newport is dedicated to promoting the area as a premier travel and meetings destination. The organization works to drive economic growth by attracting leisure visitors, group tours, corporate meetings, and special events that support local businesses and enhance community vitality.

Scope of Work

The Agency of Record will provide strategic, creative, and operational support to Discover Newport across all marketing and communications functions. The AOR is expected to function as an extension of Discover Newport's internal team and to deliver services that are strategic, integrated, data-driven, and results-oriented. Services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Administration & Account Management

- Serve as Discover Newport's primary marketing partner and Agency of Record.
- Designate a dedicated account team, including a senior strategic lead, to manage day-to-day coordination and oversight.
- Facilitate regular status meetings (weekly, bi-weekly, or as determined) and provide clear project timelines, deliverables, and workplans.
- Coordinate across Agency disciplines to ensure consistency, efficiency, and integration of all efforts.
- Manage project workflows, approvals, and quality control.
- Provide budget oversight, tracking, and reconciliation for all Agency-managed activities.
- Collaborate with Discover Newport staff and third-party vendors as needed.
- Ensure all work aligns with Discover Newport brand standards, policies, and applicable regulatory or procurement requirements.

Strategic Planning & Brand Stewardship

- Lead the development of annual strategic marketing plan aligned with Discover Newport's strategic plan.
- Provide counsel related to brand positioning, messaging architecture, audience segmentation, and channel strategy.
- Develop integrated campaign frameworks that support priority objectives, including but not limited to seasonal balance, overnight visitation, and economic impact.
- Identify emerging market trends, risks, and opportunities relevant to destination marketing.
- Ensure consistent brand expression and narrative across all programs, platforms, and partners.
- Support internal and external stakeholder alignment around brand strategy and messaging.

Analytics, Measurement & Reporting

- Establish and maintain performance measurement frameworks tied to Discover Newport's goals and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Track and analyze campaign performance across paid, owned, and earned channels.
- Provide regular reporting (monthly, quarterly, and annual), including insights, trends, and actionable recommendations.
- Utilize available data sources and platforms to inform decision-making and optimization.
- Support return-on-investment (ROI) analysis and marketing effectiveness evaluations.
- Collaborate with Discover Newport on dashboard development, benchmarking, and data visualization as appropriate.

Creative Development & Production

- Provide creative direction, concept development, and execution across all marketing and communications initiatives.
- Develop brand-aligned creative assets, including but not limited to advertising, digital content, video, photography, print collateral, and experiential materials.
- Ensure creative work is compelling, accessible, inclusive, and optimized for intended audiences and channels.
- Manage creative production workflows, including timelines, revisions, and final delivery.
- Maintain and evolve creative standards to reflect market conditions and organizational priorities.

Media Planning, Buying & Optimization

- Develop integrated media strategies that align with campaign objectives and target audiences.
- Plan, negotiate, and place media across relevant channels, including digital, social, print, out-of-home, audio, podcasts, influencer, and other emerging platforms as appropriate.
- Optimize media performance through ongoing monitoring, testing, and adjustments.
- Provide transparent media plans, budgets, and post-campaign analyses.
- Ensure efficient use of funds and adherence to agreed-upon budget parameters.
- Coordinate with Discover Newport on co-op or industry partner media opportunities, as applicable.

Website(s) Strategy, Management & Optimization

- Provide strategic guidance for Discover Newport-owned websites, including user experience, content strategy, and performance optimization.
- Support ongoing website enhancements, including content, navigation, and functionality improvements.
- Collaborate on search engine optimization (SEO) and accessibility best practices.
- Provide analytics and insights related to website performance and user behavior.
- Support major website initiatives or redesigns, as requested, either directly or in coordination with third-party vendors.

Digital Asset Management

- Develop and manage digital assets in alignment with Discover Newport's brand and usage guidelines.
- Support organization and distribution of creative assets across teams and partners.
- Ensure assets are optimized for intended platforms, formats, and performance requirements.
- Maintain documentation and standards related to asset usage and governance.

Social Media Strategy

- Develop and implement social media strategies aligned with overall marketing objectives.
- In collaboration with Discover Newport staff, create and manage content calendars, platform-specific content, and paid social campaigns as applicable.
- Monitor engagement, performance, and audience growth across platforms.
- Provide community management support, including engagement best practices and escalation protocols, as appropriate.
- Analyze social performance and provide insights to inform ongoing strategy and content development.
- Stay current on platform trends, algorithm changes, and best practices.

Collaboration & Flexibility

- Respond to evolving organizational needs, market conditions, and emerging opportunities.
- Provide additional services or support, as mutually agreed upon, within the scope of an Agency of Record relationship.
- Participate in strategic meetings, planning sessions, and presentations to the Board of Directors, as requested.

Budget and Contract Period

The maximum dollar amount shall not exceed \$10.3M over the Contract term. The successful Proposer(s) will enter into a contract for services with the Discover Newport. The duration of the initial contract between Discover Newport and the successful Proposer is expected to begin on April 1, 2026. The term of the contract is for a period of 39 months (April 1, 2026 – June 30, 2029) with an option to renew for two additional years (July 1, 2029 – June 30, 2031).

April 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027	\$2.3M
July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028	\$2M
July 1, 2028 – June 30, 2029	\$2M
July 1, 2029 – June 30, 2030	\$2M
July 1, 2030 – June 30, 2031	\$2M

Payment terms are Net 30 days from the date Discover Newport receives an error-free invoice with all necessary and complete supporting documentation.

Discover Newport reserves the right to modify the scope of services and adjust the associated budget accordingly.

Proposal Elements

Proposals shall not exceed 25 pages, excluding appendices. The following materials may be submitted as appendices and will not count toward the page limit: resumes, detailed budgets or rate cards, creative samples, references, and required forms.

Proposals shall be submitted in PDF format, using a minimum 11-point font, 1-inch margins, and standard 8.5” x 11” page size. Discover Newport reserves the right to reject proposals that do not comply with these requirements.

Proposals must include the following:

1. **Approach & Timeline**
Description of the proposer’s approach to delivering the Scope of Work, including key activities and a timeline of major tasks and milestones.
2. **Account Team & Procurement Point of Contact**
Identification of the primary procurement point of contact and proposed account team, including roles, qualifications, and relevant experience. Resumes for key personnel should be included.
3. **Firm Qualifications**
Summary of organizational qualifications, capacity, experience with similar engagements, financial/operational stability, and five (5) client references.

4. **Measurement & Evaluation**

Description of the approach to performance measurement, monitoring, and evaluation, including tools and metrics used to assess progress and outcomes.

5. **Fee Structure & Costs**

A proposed percentage-based, monthly retainer fee to fulfill the Scope of Work, including a total, not-to-exceed cost and line-item detail by task or scope component. Proposals must include a personnel schedule with job titles and billing rates for all subcontractors, as well as any anticipated purchases, travel, third party contracts/services. All costs, including media, must be invoiced at net and approved by Discover Newport.

Schedule

The following table provides a Schedule of Events for this RFP through contract finalization and approval. Discover Newport reserves the right to amend this Schedule at its sole discretion and at any time through a published Addendum.

EVENT	DATE	LOCAL TIME
RFP Released to Proposers	January 15, 2026	
Proposer Inquiry Period Ends	January 26, 2026	5:00 PM
Final Discover Newport Responses to Proposer Inquiries	February 6, 2026	5:00 PM
Proposers Submit Proposals	February 25, 2026	5:00 PM
Discover Newport Submits Oral Presentation Assignment to Finalists	March 5, 2026	5:00 PM
Proposer Oral Presentations and Interviews	March 19 – 20, 2026	TBD
Estimated Notification of Selection and Begin Contract Negotiations	March 23, 2026	TBD

Proposal Submission

Responses to this RFP are due on **February 25, 2026, by 5 p.m.** Late responses will not be accepted and will result in disqualification.

Proposals must be submitted electronically as a PDF and must include one full proposal and one with all confidential information fully redacted. All proposals should include a completed RFP Response Certification Cover Form, included at the back of this document.

Proposals must be addressed to:

TO: rfp@discovernewport.org

CC: vcimino@discovernewport.org

Subject line must include:

RESPONSE TO RFP: AOR

Questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP should be directed by e-mail to rfp@discovernewport.org no later than 5 p.m. on January 26, 2026. Responses to questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP will be posted online via addendum at discovernewport.org/rfp on February 6, 2026, to ensure equal awareness of important facts and details. *Any attempt by a Proposer to contact a member of Discover Newport’s procurement team outside the RFP process, to gain knowledge or an advantage, may result in disqualification of Proposer.*

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for this RFP will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria outlined below. Discover Newport will establish an evaluation team to score proposals. Should a Proposer fail to achieve 70 points, it will receive no further consideration from the evaluation team.

	Points
OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF COMPANY & DEMONSTRATED RESULTS An assessment of the history of your company, your experience as it relates to the requirements within this RFP, evidence of past performance, quality and relevance of past work, references, and related items.	35
SCOPE OF WORK Proposal demonstrates understanding of the project and articulates a well-thought out and creative process with a workplan, timeline, and additional considerations to achieve the desired results.	25
QUALIFICATIONS OF PERSONNEL An assessment of the qualifications and experience of your team and subcontractors.	25
BUDGET APPROACH/COST EFFECTIVENESS Effective and efficient delivery of quality services is demonstrated in relation to the budget allocation. The allocation is reasonable and appropriate.	15
Total	100

Oral Presentations and Interviews

Finalists will be invited to oral presentations/interviews. Discover Newport retains the sole discretion to determine whether to conduct oral presentations, with which Proposers, and the number of interviews.

Proposers invited to be interviewed will receive an assignment no later than March 5, 2026. In addition, Discover Newport may ask the Proposer to provide clarification of elements of the written proposal. Information gained from oral presentations/interviews will be used to refine preliminary scores.

Notifications to Proposers

1. Potential proposers are advised to review all sections of this RFP carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.
2. Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals that depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this RFP will be rejected as being non-responsive.
3. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content, shall be borne by the Proposer. Discover Newport assumes no responsibility for such costs.
4. Proposals are irrevocable for a period of not less than 120 days following the date set for submission of proposals.
5. All pricing submitted will be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
6. Late proposals will not be considered.

7. All proposals should include the proposer's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9, downloadable from <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>.

8. The purchase of services under an award made pursuant to this RFP will be contingent on the availability of funds and made at the discretion of Discover Newport.

9. Awarding this RFP is based on the Evaluation Criteria set forth in this RFP. Vendors are advised, however, that all materials and ideas submitted as part of this proposal and during the performance of any award shall be the property of and owned by Discover Newport, which may use any such materials and ideas.

10. Interested parties are instructed to peruse Discover Newport's website (discovernewport.org/rfp) on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP.

11. In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no corporation organized under the laws of another state or country shall have the right to transact business in Rhode Island until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). This is a requirement only of the successful bidder.

12. Discover Newport reserves the right to award to one or more Proposers.

13. Discover Newport reserves the right to terminate this solicitation prior to entering into any agreement with any qualified firm pursuant to this Request for Proposal.

Discover Newport

Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP Response Certification Cover Form

RFP Title:

Research Services

Vendor Information

Company Name:	
Mailing Address:	
City, State, ZIP:	
Primary Contact Name:	
Title:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Company Website:	

Certification

By signing below, I certify that:

- I am authorized to submit this proposal on behalf of the vendor listed above.
- The information contained in this proposal is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- The vendor is in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- The vendor agrees to the terms and conditions outlined in the RFP and understands that Discover Newport reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or to negotiate with any proposer prior to awarding a contract.

Authorized Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____