



Responses to AOR RFP Proposer Inquiries

- 1) To help proposers align their recommended approach, what priorities, outcomes, or success indicators should be emphasized during the first year of the AOR engagement?

Grow the region into a year-round destination by increasing off-season overnight visitation, visitor spending, and brand awareness.

- 2) Are there specific goals or challenges Discover Newport considers most critical during this initial period?

See answer to Question #1.

- 3) In evaluating proposals, what level of strategic leadership is Discover Newport seeking from the AOR in addition to executional services?

See Scope of Work – Strategic Planning & Brand Stewardship – in the RFP.

- 4) Are there particular areas such as audience prioritization, seasonal strategy, channel mix, or budget allocation where strategic guidance is especially important?

See Scope of Work – Strategic Planning & Brand Stewardship – in the RFP.

- 5) To support accurate staffing and scope assumptions, how does Discover Newport envision the division of responsibilities between the internal team, the AOR, and any existing partners across key functions (e.g., creative development, media, social media, website support, analytics, and reporting)?

See Scope of Work in the RFP, which clearly outlines expected deliverables.

- 6) Are there current brand or messaging challenges Discover Newport would like the AOR to be mindful of?

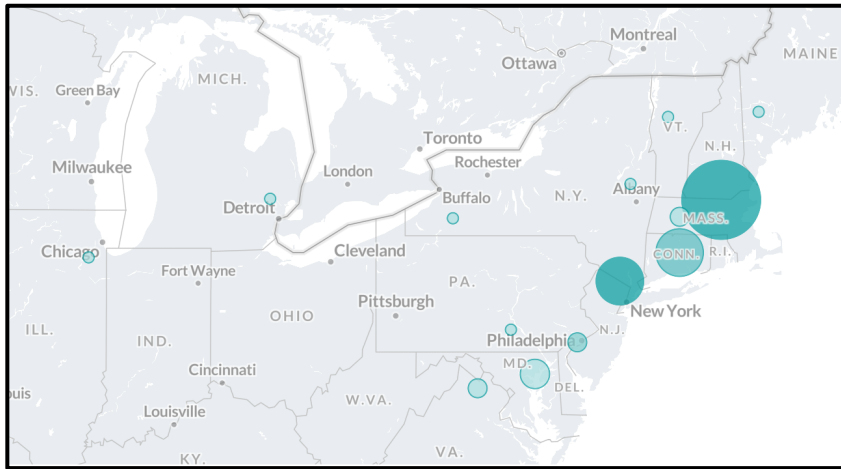
No.

- 7) During this contract period, is the organization seeking brand evolution, refinement, or primarily consistency and stewardship of the existing brand platform?

Initially, consistency and stewardship of the existing brand platform. However, Discover Newport is open to evolution as the engagement progresses.

- 8) Are there specific audience segments, markets, or lines of business (e.g., leisure travel, meetings, group tours, seasonal travelers, geographic priorities) that proposers should prioritize in Year One when developing their strategy and media approach.

For this RFP, focus on leisure travel. See below for 2025 origin market intel:



- 9) What metrics or KPIs will be most important in evaluating the AOR's effectiveness?

Hotel occupancy/rate and incremental spend throughout the destination.

- 10) Are there existing KPIs or benchmarks already established by leadership?

See answer to Question #9.

- 11) Will the selected AOR have access to relevant historical data (e.g., visitation, lodging CRM, digital performance) to support strategy development and ROI analysis?

Yes.

- 12) How should proposers reflect Discover Newport's priorities around destination stewardship, resident experience, and seasonal balance within their marketing approach?

Responses should explain how strategy, creative, media, and measurement will intentionally grow demand for shoulder and off-season travel.

- 13) Are there specific periods, markets, or channels where redistribution of demand or restraint is particularly important?

See answer to Question #12.

- 14) Does Discover Newport anticipate allocating the overall contract budget across defined categories such as agency fees, creative production, and paid media?

The budget listed in the RFP – Budget and Contract Period – is inclusive of fee, all deliverables listed in the Scope of Work, and out-of-pocket expenses.

- 15) Are there planning ranges or historical allocation assumptions proposers should consider when detailing fees and services?

Proposers should assume flexibility rather than fixed historical allocations; Discover Newport is intentionally reassessing how resources are deployed to better align with evolving priorities around seasonal balance, destination stewardship, and performance accountability.

- 16) Should the AOR be assumed responsible for media planning and buying across all paid channels, or will certain media functions remain internal or with existing partners?

See Scope of Work – Media Planning, Buying & Optimization – in the RFP.

- 17) What level of creative development and production should proposers assume (e.g., ongoing original campaign concepting, full asset production, or adaptation of existing assets)?

Proposers should assume a need for ongoing creative development that balances original concepting with efficient adaptation of existing assets. Discover Newport anticipates continued evolution of its creative platform, supported by strategic refreshes, new executions, and full production as warranted.

- 18) Are there anticipated campaign cadences, production volumes, or major initiatives including the 2026 America 250 commemoration that proposers should factor into assumptions around effort, cost, and coordination with state, municipal, or cultural partners?

Assumptions around effort and cost should reflect the ability to scale services for marquee initiatives, manage multi-partner coordination, and integrate special campaigns into the broader, always-on marketing framework

- 19) Why are you looking for a new agency?

Discover Newport is seeking a new agency as part of a planned succession strategy. Historically, much of the Scope of Work was managed/executed internally, with media buying outsourced. With the planned retirement of key staff this year, the organization is proactively seeking an agency partner to ensure continuity, strengthen capacity, and support evolving marketing priorities.

- 20) What's the biggest challenge you currently face and why?

Discover Newport's biggest challenge is balancing strong demand with long-term destination stewardship and community well-being. As a highly desirable, peak-season destination, the organization must thoughtfully manage when, where, and how visitation is encouraged — continuing to shift focus on a right-sized, year-round visitation that supports the local economy while protecting resident quality of life and the visitor experience.

21) What are the three most important things you are looking for in an agency?

Discover Newport is seeking an agency partner that brings:

Strategic leadership and alignment – the ability to think beyond tactics, understand destination stewardship and community considerations, and translate organizational priorities into clear, disciplined marketing strategy.

Integrated, performance-driven execution – strong creative, media, and analytics capabilities that work together to drive overnight visitation, seasonal balance, and measurable results.

True partnership and adaptability – a collaborative team that acts as an extension of Discover Newport staff, offers flexibility as priorities evolve, and can scale effort for both always-on marketing and major initiatives.

22) Who will be on your team evaluating the submission?

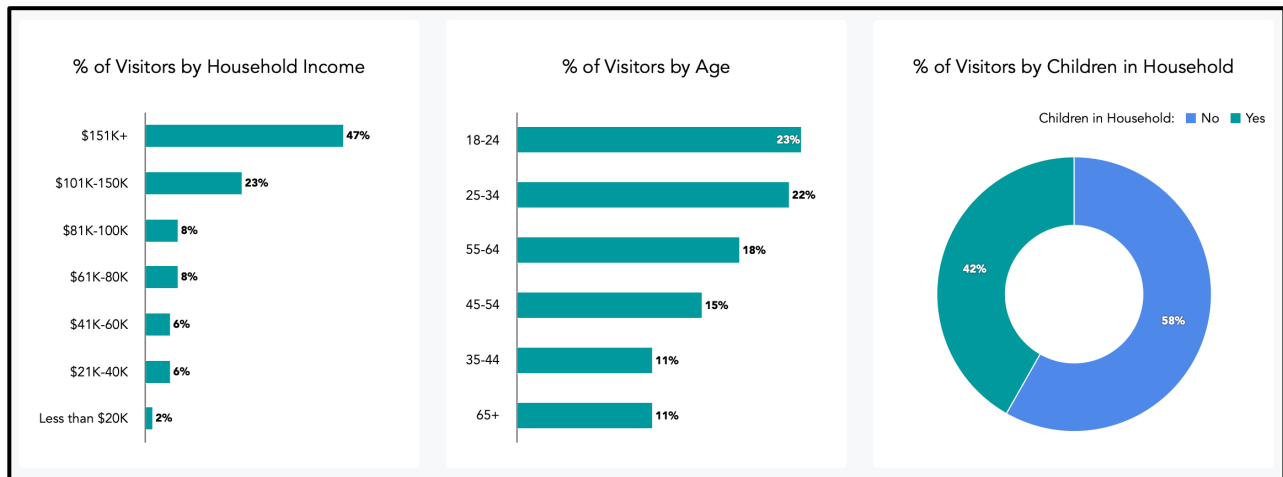
The procurement team will be comprised of Discover Newport board members and staff.

23) How many agencies are participating in the process?

To be determined. The RFP was distributed broadly.

24) Do you have any audience data you could share?

See answer to Question #8. See below for 2025 visitor demographic intel:



25) Can you share the Discover Newport strategic plan referenced throughout?

Yes. The strategic plan [in draft form] will be shared as a separate attachment on discovernewport.org/rfp.

26) Is there an expected number or mix of assets (video, static, etc.), or do you prefer agencies to propose recommendations?

See answer to Question #15.

27) What level of detail are you looking for in the Financial and Operational Stability section?

Evidence that a proposer has the financial strength to support a multi-year engagement without risk of disruption.

Proposers should include, at a minimum:

- High-level financial indicators demonstrating stability (e.g., recent annual revenue ranges, year-over-year growth or consistency, and overall financial health).
- Proof of solvency and liquidity, such as a current balance sheet summary or equivalent statement demonstrating the ability to meet ongoing obligations.
- Disclosure of material financial risks, including pending litigation, significant debt, ownership changes, mergers, or restructuring that could impact service continuity.
- Confirmation of insurance coverage, including professional liability and other relevant business insurance, with coverage limits.

28) Can you clarify if you want full personnel resumes or the short bio paragraphs we typically include in proposals?

Short bio paragraphs suffice.

29) Can you share Discover Newport's goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?

See answer to Question #9.

30) Please share a list of Discover Newport-owned websites.

- christmasinnewport.com
- christmasinnewport.info
- christmasinnewport.net
- christmasinnewport.org
- christmasinnewportart.org
- cliffwalknewport.com
- discovernewport.net
- discovernewport.org
- discovernewportrestaurantweek.com
- discovernewportrestaurantweek.net
- discovernewportrestaurantweek.org
- discovernewportrhodeisland.com

- discovernewportrhodeisland.net
- discovernewportrhodeisland.org
- discovernewportri.com
- discovernewportri.net
- discovernewportri.org
- discovernewportweddings.org
- newportburgerbender.com
- newportburgerbender.org
- newportcountyrestaurantweek.com
- newportdaffydays.org
- newporthotelcollection.com
- newporthotelcollection.org
- newportrestaurantweek.org
- restaurantweeknewportri.com

GoDaddy:

- theclassiccoast.com
- theclassiccoast.org

31) Please share your active social media channels and profiles.

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NewportRhodeIsland>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/discovernewport/>
- Threads: <https://www.threads.com/@discovernewport/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/discover-newport/>
- TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@dscvrnewport>
- X: <https://x.com/DscvrNewport>

Social Channels — not “active”

- BlueSky (secured account): <https://bsky.app/profile/discovernewport.bsky.social>
- Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/discovernewport/>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/DiscoverNewportRI>

32) Do you have other agency partners with whom we would work during the contract?

Discover Newport’s PR agency.

33) You reference external partners – can you share a list of who this is?

The hospitality industry, research/pr contractors, industry associations, etc.

34) Who will be the day-to-day contact person/team from Discover Newport during the contract?

Initially, the CEO will serve as the primary day-to-day contact. As Discover Newport continues to evolve and internal capacity is further defined, the primary point of contact may shift to ensure appropriate alignment and efficiency.

35) What internal marketing resources does Discover Newport have on staff? e.g., designer, social media manager, pr manager?

Discover Newport maintains a lean, cross-functional internal marketing team that supports strategy, creative, content development, communications, and partner engagement.

See answer to Question #19.

36) Can you share examples of experiential materials that you use and anticipate needing in your marketing program?

Out-of-home and in-market displays, event and tradeshow collateral, partner and visitor-facing materials, signage and wayfinding support, etc.

37) Who will maintain your website(s) on a day-to-day basis and CRM platform do you use?

Discover Newport's website(s) are maintained day-to-day by internal staff, with external technical support engaged as needed for development, enhancements, or specialized projects.

Discover Newport utilizes Simpleview as its primary CRM and CMS platform, supporting website management, partner listings, and customer relationship functions.

38) Will your chosen AOR be completing social media management services, or do you have that capability on staff?

See Scope of Work – Social Media Strategy – in the RFP.

39) How frequently do your board meet and will your AOR be present at all meetings?

The Discover Newport board of directors meets six times a year, unless a special meeting is called. The AOR will be invited to present on an as-needed basis.

40) Could you provide more clarity on the fee structure request. It seems that there is enthusiasm for a fixed price model (which we also prefer). But, also a schedule with job titles and billing rates. Do you require both or would you prefer one or the other?

Discover Newport prefers a fixed-fee model, however, a schedule of job titles and billing rates is also requested to provide transparency and to establish a framework for out-of-scope, variable, or optional services.

41) Does the total budget of \$8.3M include all paid media, production, and agency fees, or are there separate allocations for media spend?

The total budget is \$10.3M for a period of 63 months. See answer to Question #14.

42) Does Discover Newport have a preferred allocation or target ratio between media spend and agency fees within the overall marketing budget?

Proposers should recommend an allocation that reflects the level of effort required to deliver effective strategy, creative, media, and measurement—while clearly articulating how the proposed balance supports desired outcomes.

43) The RFP notes the development of social media content calendars. Are you also looking for community management (e.g., engagement, responses, monitoring), or will that remain in-house?

Community management will remain in-house.

44) How satisfied is Discover Newport with the current brand positioning and identity? Are there plans or desires to evolve the brand strategically or visually?

See answer to Question #17.

45) Are there specific markets (domestic or international) that are high priority for media and marketing efforts in FY26 and beyond?

See answer to Question #8.

46) Can you elaborate on any past or future plans for co-op marketing initiatives with tourism stakeholders in the region?

Discover Newport plans to launch a 1:1 matching cooperative marketing initiative this spring.

47) What would you say is the single biggest marketing or brand challenge Discover Newport is currently facing?

See answer to Question #20.

48) Can you share who your current Agency of Record is and whether they are participating in this RFP process?

Currently, Discover Newport does not have an Agency of Record.

49) Will finalist presentations be conducted virtually or in-person?

In-person.

50) Additionally, would Discover Newport have any concerns with selecting a West Coast-based agency that also has international offices (e.g., in the UK)?

See Evaluation Criteria in the RFP.

51) Can you please share more about your internal marketing team? What functions are handled in-house?

See answer to Question #35.

52) What does the current governance structure look like? Is there a board or committee that reviews and approves marketing work?

Day-to-day marketing execution and tactical decisions are managed by staff. Agency partners should expect clear approval pathways, with staff serving as the primary liaison and the board focused on strategic direction rather than routine creative approvals.

53) The Scope of Work mentions aligning with Discover Newport's strategic plan. Can you share the key pillars or a summary of the plan or is that still in progress?

See answer to Question #25.

54) What industry data and research does Discover Newport already subscribe to?

STR, AirDNA, and Zartico.

55) We've noted that you've recently issued a local resident sentiment survey. When do you expect the output to be available?

Mid-March.

56) Is the primary goal to maintain and execute the existing "Classic Coast" campaign platform, or is the organization looking for a foundational rebrand/refresh in the first year?

See answer to Question #17.

57) With the rise of artificial intelligence in search and discovery (and its increasing relevance to DMOs), does Discover Newport have an existing policy regarding the use of generative AI in content creation or strategy?

No, but the creation of an AI policy has been identified as a priority.

58) Regarding the goal of 'seasonal balance,' are there specific occupancy rate targets or RevPAR goals for the shoulder seasons (winter/spring) that you share to inform media strategy?

Discover Newport has a goal to increase shoulder season occupancy by 2% YOY.

59) Is the destination able to estimate a breakdown of accommodation categories (hotels vs. short-term rentals)?

Yes.

60) What is the current Content Management System (CMS) for DiscoverNewport.org? Are you looking to maintain the current platform or migrate to a new technology stack?

Simpleview, which will be maintained.

61) Who currently creates content for the destination blog on the website?

Discover Newport staff.

62) Concerning website optimizations, can you provide a bit more information around the role of the agency in the execution of optimization recommendations we might make (vs. your internal team or the company who is hosting the current site)? As an example, would the agency be designing landing pages if recommended for media purposes or would they be directing a third party?

The agency will design items like a landing page and/or collaborate with staff to create new assets.

63) Does the scope need to include ongoing website maintenance or is that managed by a third party?

Ongoing website maintenance will be managed internally, however the AOR will be expected to provide ongoing strategic guidance and support major initiatives or redesigns.

64) The RFP mentions developing brand-aligned creative assets including video and photography. Does Discover Newport have an internal library of recent assets we can utilize/augment, or should we budget for a full library refresh in Year 1?

Discover Newport has a healthy video/image library that can be utilized by the AOR.

65) Can you provide an overview of the current DMO team and roles/responsibilities?

<https://www.discovernewport.org/about-us/staff-directory/>

66) What are the biggest challenges or missed opportunities you hope the new AOR will address?

See answer to Question #20.

67) Should we assume a materially reduced scope of work during the initial contract period given the lower budget, or is the expectation that scope is phased differently in Year One?

It is unlikely that media will be purchased until late-August, early-September.

68) Are you seeking continuity with the existing "Classic Coast" brand platform, or is there openness to evolving or reimagining the brand as part of this engagement?

See answer to Question #17.

69) Should we plan for a single core brand campaign with versioning, or multiple seasonal or thematic campaigns over the course of the year?

A single core brand campaign with versioning.

70) Is paid search included within the AOR scope, or managed separately by Discover Newport or another partner?

Paid search is included within the AOR scope.

71) Do you currently utilize a digital asset management platform, or would the selected AOR be expected to assess and recommend solutions as needed?

Discover Newport utilizes Canto.

72) For website-related work, should we assume that enhancements and optimization are included within the AOR scope, while major initiatives or redesigns would be scoped and funded separately?

Major initiatives, including full or partial website redesigns, large-scale structural changes, or platform migrations, should be assumed to be scoped, scheduled, and funded separately as distinct projects.

73) Can you confirm whether the annual not-to-exceed budget amounts are intended to be inclusive of all costs, including paid media, or if paid media budgets are managed outside of the contract value?

See answer to Question #14.

74) Are all services outlined in the Scope of Work expected to be delivered by the AOR, or are any functions currently handled in-house or by existing vendor partners (e.g., PR, website development, research, influencer marketing)? If there are any existing vendors, can you please share the company name/service?

Yes, services listed in the Scope of Work are expected to be delivered by the AOR. Additionally, see answer to Question #19.

75) We assume the annual budget figures provided represent total marketing investment inclusive of agency fees. Can you confirm that is accurate?

See answer to Question #14.

76) Will the AOR be responsible for contracting and paying media vendors directly, or will media placements be paid directly by Discover Newport?

The AOR is responsible for paying media vendors directly.

77) Is there a specific media budget that you're working within for each year of the contract? We welcome any details that you're willing to share on historical breakdowns by medium.

See answer to Question #15.

78) Does Discover Newport have established KPIs or performance benchmarks currently in place, or is the selected AOR expected to help evolve or define success metrics moving forward?

See answer to Question #9.

79) Is there an incumbent Agency of Record, and if so, does Discover Newport anticipate a formal transition or knowledge-transfer period at the start of the engagement?

No, there is not an incumbent Agency of Record.

80) Is there a specific geographic market you want to concentrate on? Does the geographic area change based on campaign/seasonality?

Current DMAs include Boston, New York City, Hartford, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Target DMAs change based on campaign/seasonality.

81) What does "seasonal balance" look like for Discover Newport? Are there specific visitation targets for off-peak periods?

See answer to Question #20.

82) Do you have a preferred media mix or channels that has historically performed best?

See answer to Question #15.

83) What internal challenges or resource gaps do you most want an AOR to solve for you?

See answer to Question #19.

84) How should Proposers measure not just performance but impact in terms of economic benefit, brand lift and traveler intent?

See answer to Question #9. Additionally (and separate from this contract/scope of work), Discover Newport will conduct an annual Return on Investment/Ad Effectiveness study.

85) Do you have an existing dashboard environment we should integrate with (e.g., GA-4, Simpleview, Data Studio), or should we build a new one?

Discover Newport currently utilizes Simpleview and Zartico.