



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

For: Strategic Planning

The Newport and Bristol County Convention and Visitors Bureau (Discover Newport) seeks a qualified consultant or firm to lead the development of a multi-year strategic plan that will guide the organization's priorities, partnerships, and resource allocation. The goal is to establish a clear, forward-looking roadmap that strengthens Discover Newport's impact, aligns stakeholders, and positions the organization for sustainable success in a rapidly evolving tourism landscape.

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 is launching a strategic planning initiative to define the organization's direction for the next 3 – 5 years. This process will result in a comprehensive strategic plan that aligns internal operations, stakeholder expectations, and regional tourism goals.

The selected consultant or firm will lead a collaborative process that includes stakeholder engagement and the development of clear strategic priorities, measurable goals, and an actionable implementation framework. This plan will serve as a roadmap to strengthen Discover Newport's impact, adaptability, and long-term success as the official destination marketing organization for Newport and its surrounding communities.

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 selected vendor will be responsible for the following:

- **Project Design and Management**
 - Develop a detailed work plan and timeline in collaboration with Discover Newport leadership.
 - Identify milestones, key decision points, and stakeholder engagement activities.
 - Facilitate regular check-ins to ensure transparency and momentum throughout the process.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**
 - Engage a broad range of stakeholders including staff, board members, municipal partners, industry stakeholders, and community members.
 - Use a mix of engagement tools (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups) to gather input on perceptions, priorities, and aspirations.
- **Vision, Mission, and Values Development**
 - Review and, if necessary, revise Discover Newport's vision, mission, and core values to ensure they reflect the organization's purpose, direction, and commitment to the communities it serves.
 - Facilitate consensus-building around identity and long-term aspirations.
- **Strategic Priorities and Goal Setting**
 - Facilitate collaborative workshops to identify key strategic priorities for the organization over the next 3–5 years.
 - Define measurable goals and objectives aligned with Discover Newport's mandate and regional tourism opportunities.
- **Implementation Framework**
 - Develop a practical and flexible implementation framework that includes timelines, responsibilities, performance indicators, and resource needs.
 - Ensure alignment between the strategic plan and operational planning, staffing, budgeting, and partnerships.
- **Final Plan Development and Presentation**
 - Produce a clear, actionable, and visually engaging final strategic plan document.
 - Present the plan to Discover Newport's board and staff, and provide recommendations for operationalizing and monitoring progress.

Qualifications

To be considered for this engagement, vendors must demonstrate a strong track record of experience and expertise relevant to the scope of this project. Minimum qualifications include:

- **Strategic Planning Expertise**
 - Demonstrated experience leading strategic planning processes for destination marketing organizations (DMOs), tourism agencies, nonprofits, or similarly structured organizations.
- **Tourism Industry Knowledge**
 - Strong understanding of the tourism and hospitality sector, including trends, challenges, and opportunities relevant to regional and destination marketing.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Experience**
 - Proven ability to design and facilitate inclusive engagement processes with diverse stakeholders including staff, board members, industry partners, municipal leaders, and community members.
- **Facilitation and Consensus Building**
 - Excellent facilitation skills to guide collaborative discussions and build consensus around vision, mission, values, and priorities.
- **Data-Driven and Insight-Oriented**
 - Ability to incorporate relevant data, research, and benchmarking into the strategic planning process to ensure informed, evidence-based decision-making.
- **Communication and Reporting Skills**
 - Strong written and visual communication skills, with a proven ability to deliver clear, compelling, and actionable strategic plan documents.
- **Project Management and Timeliness**
 - Demonstrated success managing complex projects on time and within budget, with clear communication and milestone tracking throughout the engagement.

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	May 12, 2025	
Proposer Inquiry Period Ends	May 19, 2025	5:00 PM
Final Agency Responses to Proposer Inquiries	May 27, 2025	5:00 PM
Proposers Submit Proposals	June 13, 2025	5:00 PM
Proposer Oral Presentations and Interviews (if applicable)		TBD
Estimated Notification of Selection and Begin Contract Negotiations	June 25, 2025	

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 July 1, 2025. This project is anticipated to take place over a period of 180 days from start to completion.

Budget

The maximum dollar amount shall not exceed \$40,000 over the Contract term. The payment terms are Net 30 days from the date Discover Newport receives an error-free invoice with all necessary and complete supporting documentation.

Proposers to this RFP shall provide a proposed fee structure for providing services necessary to complete the proposed scope items. Proposers shall include a total, maximum price to accomplish the scope items incorporated in the proposal. Fee structure proposals shall include, but are not limited to costs for specific task items from the Scope of Work along with an estimate regarding the duration and number of hours to complete each task. Additionally, Proposers shall provide a personnel schedule which includes job title and billing rate for any work which may be undertaken under this contract. Proposers shall also provide job titles and rates for any subcontractors that the respondent is including in this response. If the Proposer contemplates any purchases or pass-through charges during the engagement, any mark-up rate above actual cost shall be identified as a separate line item in the budget. Discover Newport reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.

In addition to showing how you will meet the requirements outlined above, Proposers should also provide information regarding the following:

- **Research & Analytics:** Provide an overview of how you determine success. What are the analytic tools or services that you use, and what type of information will you be reporting back to Discover Newport as it relates to meeting our objectives?
- **Travel and Administration:** The Proposer should estimate any travel costs expected to incur during contract period. Travel and per diem expenses shall not exceed rates authorized by Discover Newport.

Criteria for Selection

Responsive proposals for this RFP will be evaluated according to the Evaluation Criteria outlined below.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

	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 managerial team, staff, subcontractors, and related items.	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

NOTE: Designated Discover Newport staff or selected advisors will evaluate the written proposals. Discover Newport may at any time during the evaluation process seek clarification from Proposers regarding any information contained within their proposal. Final scores for each respondent will reflect a consensus of the evaluations. Any attempt by a Proposer to contact a member of Discover Newport's staff or selected advisors outside the RFP process, in an attempt to gain knowledge or an advantage, may result in disqualification of Proposer.

Instructions and 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 considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than 120 days following the date set for submission of proposals.
5. All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
6. Proposals misdirected to other locations, or that are otherwise not present at Discover Newport's office by the submission deadline for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered. For the purposes of this requirement, the official time and date shall be that of the time clock in the reception area of the Discover Newport office.
7. All proposals should identify the proposed team of professionals, including those employed by subcontractors, if any, along with respective areas of expertise and relevant credentials. Proposer should also provide a delineation of the portion of the scope of work for which each of these professionals will be responsible.
8. 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>
9. All proposals should include a completed RFP Response Certification Cover Form, included in this document.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. Interested parties are instructed to peruse Discover Newport's website (discovernewport.org) on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP. Addenda will also be posted to discovernewport.org/rfp.
13. 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.
14. Discover Newport reserves the right to award to one or more Proposers.

Proposal Requirements

In order to be considered responsive, proposals must at a minimum contain the following:

Technical Proposal Elements

1. Description of the proposed approach in delivering the Scope of Work. Activities and timelines should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time oriented. Include a timeline of major tasks and milestones.
2. Person who will be the primary point of contact with Discover Newport.
3. Qualifications of the Proposer to provide the requested services including capability, capacity, similarly complex projects and related experience and client references. Certification of availability of individuals in proposal.
4. A listing of the staff to be assigned to this engagement and their respective qualifications, past experience on engagements of this scope including resumes, and their role in those past engagements.
5. A description of the outcome monitoring and evaluation plan including a list of tools to track process, output and outcome measures for each component of the application.

Proposal Submission

Responses to this RFP are due on **June 13, 2025, by 5 p.m.**

Proposals must be submitted electronically and must include one full proposal and one with all Confidential Information fully redacted.

Electronic Proposals

Electronic Proposals must be addressed to:

TO: rfp@discovernewport.org

CC: Victoria Cimino, vcimino@discovernewport.org

Subject line must include: **RESPONSE TO RFP: Strategic Planning**

Electronic Submissions must be submitted using the following criteria:

- a. Searchable PDF Format

Note: Phone calls and late responses will not be accepted and will result in disqualification.

Questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP should be directed by e-mail to rfp@discovernewport.org no later than 5 p.m. on May 19, 2025. Responses to questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP will be posted online via addendum at discovernewport.org/rfp on May 27, 2025, to ensure equal awareness of important facts and details.

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, and by responding hereto, no firms are vested with any rights in any way whatsoever.

Discover Newport reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for not complying with the terms of this RFP.

Discover Newport

Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP Response Certification Cover Form

RFP Title:

Strategic Planning

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: _____