



Request for proposal: 2023 Downtown general marketing campaign

Rochester Downtown Alliance
Proposals due by 11:59 p.m. January 27, 2023



Organization background

The [Rochester Downtown Alliance](#) (RDA) is a 501(c)6 nonprofit corporation comprised of and representing property owners, business leaders, the city, and others with a direct stake in enhanced business and economic development conditions in the downtown district. Through a series of special events, activities, and initiatives, we create energy, excitement, and a unique character to downtown Rochester, Minnesota. Our goal is to attract visitors, customers, and investment to Rochester's urban core.

Project overview/context

COVID-19 accelerated changes that were already occurring in downtowns across the country. Employees are now able to work from home with hybrid or fully remote models. Patients are taking advantage of telehealth and making shorter visits to hospitals. Consumers are shopping online rather than brick and mortar stores. All these behavior changes have resulted in fundamental changes in foot traffic and spending patterns for downtowns, including Rochester, Minnesota.

In response to these new realities, RDA and partner organizations continue to develop and execute strategies to support the downtown business community as they adapt to changing foot traffic and economic realities. One strategy that has been identified is a **general marketing campaign** to promote downtown as a destination for leisure, remote work, and unique experiences (differentiated from marketing campaigns that are executed by RDA to drive attendees to events). In addition, the campaign should highlight and drive customers to downtown's great shopping and dining options.

Downtown Rochester, Minnesota is home to more than 100 unique shops and restaurants, all located within walking distance of each other, as well as many cultural assets including the Rochester Art Center, Mayo Civic Center, and the Rochester Civic Theatre. Downtown has long been a popular location for large community festivals like Thursdays Downtown (approximately 20,000 visitors per week) and Social-ICE. RDA believes downtown is operating from a position of strength, but the neighborhood needs help to identify and promote its brand and/or value proposition in 2023 and beyond.



We are seeking a creative firm to help us promote downtown as a destination, and drive diners, shoppers, and visitors to make repeat visits to the neighborhood.

The goals of the project include:

1. Increase foot traffic to downtown's [special service district](#) area back to, or exceeding, 2019 levels.
2. Ideally, translate foot traffic to customers for downtown businesses.
 - Ideally, this campaign can establish some trackable conversions (coupons or similar) to demonstrate efficacy.
3. Help Rochester residents see downtown as a leisure destination and become repeat visitors.
4. Help Rochester residents see downtown as a remote work destination.
5. Overcome any existing negative perceptions of downtown (i.e. hard to access, too much construction, difficult parking, etc.).

To reach these goals, RDA is now accepting bids in response to this request for proposals.

What we're looking for in potential vendors

We're looking for a firm staffed by people with a demonstrated love of cities, travel, new ideas, and new experiences. The selected firm should be genuinely excited to promote the downtown experience to a wide audience of diverse backgrounds and should plan to draw from best practices from cities across the country and globe.

RDA is a dedicated, small team. We're genuinely excited you are considering bringing your capabilities and talents to our organization. We'll support you in every way we can, and we will view you as part of the team for the duration of the engagement.

We're looking for a firm that asks us good questions early in the engagement, respects our ideas but pushes us to think bigger, defines collaborations and expectations clearly, and checks in with us often throughout the campaign to make sure the entire team (your firm and RDA) is staying on task.



Scope of work

RDA expects the selected firm to conduct robust research with the downtown community and to review past work the RDA has completed about downtown's new residential populations. From preliminary feedback we have received from our downtown business community, we believe businesses are interested in developing a collective identity and brand for this campaign, growing a weekend visitation habit, and re-growing a lunch customer base.

At minimum, RDA is seeking the following deliverables from this engagement:

- **Primary deliverables:**
 - Focus groups with the downtown community that helps hone the message to ensure that it is responsive to their desires and intended audiences. The research and focus group stage of this engagement will be *critical* to win buy-in from our downtown business community. Separate focus groups may also include but are not limited to residents outside the urban core to determine why they do or do not come downtown, patients, and visitors.
 - Clear audiences and messages to be reviewed with RDA and select participants from business focus groups before proceeding.
 - Cohesive marketing campaign, which tells a strong and identifiable story about downtown and can be marketed across multiple channels. Channels may include but are not limited to print collateral, direct mail, coupons or promotions, on-site signage, social media, traditional media, digital, events, etc.
- **Other deliverables:**
 - Suggestions from firm for new events/activities/ideas to support the campaign. Help us be realistic—and creative.
 - All copy related to the campaign. Management of asset production and installation.
 - Plans for media buys (TV, radio, digital), execution (or hiring for execution) of media buys, and analysis on success after completion.
 - Presentation following campaign to RDA that at minimum offers key insights like those included in a [typical RDA event recap packet](#) and preferably offers higher level insights and recommendations for future campaigns.
 - *Note:* Some suggested projects (vacant storefront work, campaigns involving multiple businesses) may need extensive support from RDA staff. These potential projects should be defined and agreed upon early in the campaign planning. Preference will be given to firms who can offer more hands-on assistance in this regard.



Target deliverable schedule

Timeline

- January 3, 2022: RFP released.
- January 27, 2023: 11:59 p.m. RFP due to Elia Banuelos, RDA marketing and design project manager, at ebanuelos@downtownrochestermn.com.
- February 3, 2023: Selection of firm made and communicated to respondents.
- Before February 10, 2023: Kickoff meeting with RDA team to discuss plans.
- Between February 10, 2023 and March 24, 2023: Downtown focus groups and campaign planning.
- April 3 to 7, 2023: Presentation of campaign to RDA team.
- April 24 to October 24, 2023: Execution of a six-month campaign. Note: depending on the focus of the campaign, a shorter length could be considered for impact.
- By November 17, 2023: Recap presentation to RDA team on successes/learnings of campaign.

Ideal campaign kickoff date:

The expected campaign kickoff date is April 24, 2023. Not every element of the campaign needs to be completed at this time. If this date needs to be adjusted, please include your readjusted proposed date, as well as your reasoning for shifting the schedule. All proposed date changes will be considered.

Budget constraints

- \$20,000 total budget from RDA. RDA prefers for the budget to be used as follows but will consider other allocations if needed:
 - \$5,000 – Firm consultation, design, and creative fees.
 - \$5,000 – Production budget (print assets, media buys, etc.).
There is some flexibility in production budget if RDA can secure partnerships for initiatives, or if events/initiatives suggested by firm can be covered by other aspects of RDA’s annual budget.
 - \$10,000 – vacant storefront vinyl artwork project management (i.e. determining sizing requirements and coordinating with vinyl production company to produce and install)
- If other entities partner with RDA, we could allocate funds for a \$30,000 total marketing campaign with the following:
 - \$10,000 – Firm consultation, design, and creative fees.
 - \$20,000 – Production budget (print assets, media buys, etc.).
 - \$20,000 – Vacant storefront vinyl artwork project management



Evaluation metrics

RDA will evaluate bidders and proposals based on the following criteria:

- Previous experience/past performance history.
- Samples and/or case studies from previous projects.
- Projected costs.
- Experience and technical expertise.
- Responsiveness and answers to questions in the next section.

Submission requirements

Please send a proposal of *no more than five pages* as a PDF to ebanelos@downtownrochestermn.com by 11:59 p.m. Friday, January 20, 2023. Please include:

- Team qualifications
- Two (2) references from a similar project
- Examples of graphic design work
- Case studies from similar projects
- Description of project approach
- Anticipated timeline
- Answers to these questions:
 1. What is one positive insight about downtown Rochester you think hasn't received enough public attention yet?
 2. What is one negative story you hear about downtown that you believe this campaign can help correct?
 3. What is the best measurable indicator your firm believes can be used to help determine the success of the overall campaign, and how will you track it?

Contact information

For questions or concerns related to this RFP, contact Elia Banuelos: ebanelos@downtownrochestermn.com or 507-218-8969.