



**Northwest Hills Council of Governments
REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS & PROPOSALS (RFQ)/(RFP)**

**Discover Litchfield Hills
Marketing Strategy & Advertising Campaign Services**

RFP # - EDD2024-01

The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) is issuing this Request for Qualifications & Proposals (RFQ/RFP) to retain a consultant or consulting team, as-needed, to assist the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) and the Northwest CT Economic Development District (EDD) in developing and implementing regional public relations, advertising, marketing, and multimedia strategies.

The EDD's marketing platform is Discover Litchfield Hills. The primary focus has been to develop the Discover Litchfield Hills website <https://www.discoverlitchfieldhills.com/> and social media pages (Facebook & Instagram). We are now positioned to invest in a more robust advertising campaign. However, before those funds can be committed, we must develop a strategy that guides this funding and established anticipated results.

This request for Qualifications and Proposals includes the following:

- Section I - General Conditions and Submittal Requirements
- Section II - Selection Process & Criteria
- Section III - Overview
- Section IV - Scope of Work
- Appendix A – Insurance Requirements
- Appendix B – Acceptance of Terms of this agreement
- Appendix C – Non-Collusion Affidavit

Section 1: General Conditions and Submittal Requirements

General Conditions:

Proposals shall include an original and seven (7) exact copies (in addition to the hard copy).

Proposals shall be delivered to NHCOC Offices, 355 Goshen Road, Litchfield CT 06759 during normal office hours or mailed to PO Box 832, Litchfield CT 06759 no later **than 3:00PM on November 1, 2024**. Submittals received after this date and time will not be accepted. Sealed envelope(s) should be clearly marked: **“RFQ/RFP #EDD2024-01, Discover Litchfield Hills”**.

All questions must be submitted by email to rmalanca@northwesthillscog.org by **12pm Noon on October 23, 2024**. Questions will be answered through an addendum which will be posted on the NHCOC website. Interested firms should check the website 48 hours before the closing date.

Firms mailing proposals should allow for normal delivery time to ensure timely receipt of their proposals. Proposals may not be submitted by e-mail or fax.

In the case where NHCOC Offices are closed for weather related or some other emergency related circumstance, then submittals shall be due the next day when offices reopens for business, no later than 3:00Pm on that day. No fax or e-mail Proposals will be accepted.

NHCOC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals; to waive any informalities; to negotiate and award a contract that it determines best meets their needs and best serve the interests of the NHCOC

NHCOC will not be liable for any costs incurred by a firm in the preparation or submission of a proposal.

Consultants responding to this RFQ/RFP are hereby notified that all proposals submitted, and information contained therein and attached thereto will not become public information until the NHCOC has awarded a contract to the successful respondent.

The information provided herein is not intended to and shall not bind NHCOC to any of the statements or assumptions set forth herein.

Responses must set forth accurate and complete information for each of the items listed below. At NHCOC's discretion, failure to do so could result in disqualification.

The successful respondent will be expected to be able to commence services as soon as possible upon award, as determined by NHCOC. Any contract entered by NHCOC and the successful respondent shall provide that the NHCOC may terminate the contract upon thirty (30) days' notice to the respondent. The information provided herein is not intended to and shall not bind NHCOC to any of the statements or assumptions set forth herein.

There will not be a public opening of this bid

MBE's, WBE's and SBE's ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Submittal Requirements

In your Proposal, NHCOG is requesting the following:

1. A cover letter signed by the primary firm binding the firm to all the commitments made in the proposal.
2. Clearly identify the areas you would like to be considered: Brand Audit, Marketing Strategy and/or Advertising Campaign
3. Resume of personnel that will be dedicated to this project; including: The name, business address, phone number, e-mail address of the firm and individual dedicated to working on the project
4. Narrative/description of relevant experience (no more than five (5) pages)
5. Portfolio highlighting other Marketing Plans or Marketing promotions the individuals performing work have developed
6. References
7. Proof of Insurance and Liability (See Appendix A)
8. Required Forms - Acceptance of Terms of this Agreement and Non-Collusion Affidavit (Appendix B & C)
9. Provide any additional information about your firm that is relevant to this RFP that you believe will assist NHCOG in making its selection (no more than five (5) pages)
10. Sealed Fee Proposal for Scope of Services, including hourly rates and expense schedule **Sealed in a separate envelope labeled "Fee Proposal for RFQ/RFP #EDD2024-01, Discover Litchfield Hills"**.

Section II: Selection Process & Criteria

Selection Process

Below is the proposed schedule and timeline for the selection process:

- Applicants are to respond to this request by **3:00 PM on November 1, 2024**
- All questions must be sent in by **12pm Noon on October 23, 2024**
- NHCOC reserves the ability to develop a short list of candidates based on the stated selection criteria to interview for the project. The short-listed firms will be notified via email and will be provide sufficient notice of the interview date and time.
- Fee proposals from firms that are determined to meet the qualifications of this RFQ, based on written proposals and the interview, will be opened and reviewed. Fee Proposal from Firms that do not meet the qualifications of this RFQ will not be reviewed.
- A decision is expected by the end of December

Selection Criteria

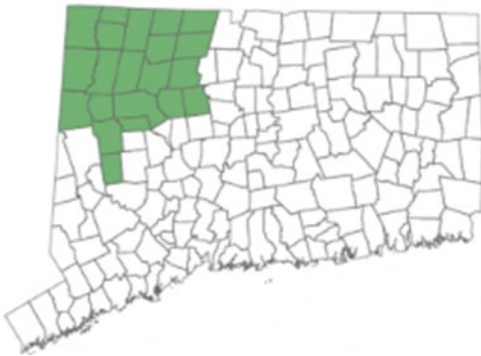
The selection committee will evaluate the applicants based on the following criteria:

- Thoroughness, creativity and clarity of the proposed work, schedule and project management plan to accomplish the objectives/goals of the project.
- Qualifications and Experience of personnel to be assigned to the project, including any subcontractors.
- Clear understanding of the goals and outcomes of the project.
- Experience on similar project. Preference will be given to consultants who have experience specifically working on tourism and destination marketing and demonstrated experience in: media relations; various multimedia and social media platforms (I.e. TV, radio, magazines, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok; established relationships with regional media; and a proven track record of placing stories
- Ability to provide services on time.
- Fee proposal
- References

Section III: Overview

Background Information:

The Litchfield Hills serve as both a gateway to the Berkshires and the welcome mat to CT from both NY and MA. The abundance of breathtaking natural landscapes, scenic outdoor recreation areas and a robust local agriculture sector offers an opportunity for the Litchfield Hills to establish itself as a vibrant and sustainable tourism destination and support economic diversification and growth throughout the region. The Litchfield Hills encompass 21 towns in Northwest CT:



Barkhamsted, Burlington, Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, Norfolk, North Canaan, Roxbury, Salisbury, Sharon, Torrington, Warren, Washington and Winchester.

This same boundary represents a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated Economic Development District (EDD), which develops a 5-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that guides economic prosperity and resiliency throughout the region.

One initiative that is in the current CEDS (as well as the previous CEDS) is to promote small businesses and attract visitors to the area so that local businesses, artists and non-profit organizations can thrive.

Through regional marketing efforts we are able to highlight local businesses, create a “buzz” around NW CT making it an attractive tourist destination and inform residents of local events and shop local options; in turn, supporting local businesses, creating/retaining jobs and building economic resiliency.

The EDD’s marketing platform is Discover Litchfield Hills. The primary focus has been to develop the <https://www.discoverlitchfieldhills.com/> website and social media pages (Facebook & Instagram).

Purpose:
We are now positioned to invest in a more robust advertising campaign that will extend our reach beyond NW CT. To be sure our efforts are methodical, and results are measurable, we are seeking a consultant or team of consultants that can provide services, on an as-needed basis, to assist the EDD in developing regional public relations, advertising, marketing, and multimedia strategy and services.

This consultant(s) will work directly with the NHCOC Director of Community and Economic Development. A small subcommittee of the Northwest Hills Economic Development Collaborative (EDC) has been established to provide input and guidance on branding, marketing and advertising efforts. The consultant may be required, as necessary, to attend subcommittee meetings as well as full Board meetings of the EDC. We are expecting a multi-year contract, that can be extended by agreement of both parties.

Due to the wide breadth of services, applicants may submit qualifications for only the portions of the Scope of Work they wish to be considered for or can submit a proposal for all aspects of the Scope of Work and may include subcontractors if necessary.

Goals:

1. Further build brand image and solidify the region's identity in a way that resonates with residents, visitors, businesses and potential investors.
2. Continuing the momentum of Discover Litchfield Hills that has been developed over the past several years.
3. Clearly define ways that local businesses, non-profit organizations and local governments can utilize the regional marketing strategy to improve their reach and effectiveness.

Section IV – Scope of Work

1. Conduct a Brand Audit of Discover Litchfield Hills

- Develop and implement a framework that allows the EDD to gain a better understanding of how customers perceive and connect with Discover Litchfield Hills. This audit will identify the brand's strengths and weaknesses.
- Should include a review of the existing ecosystem of other local marketing and branding efforts throughout the region to identify synergies
- This data will be used to inform our strategies for improvement and guide the development of a multi-media advertising campaign.

2. Develop a Marketing Strategy

- This strategy is intended to create an action plan and instructions for all stakeholders (i.e. EDD, NHCOC, Municipalities, local business, non-profit organizations and local artists) across a broad range of activities that support regional branding, marketing and advertising
- Strategic research to identify targeted market. What does this audience need or want?
- Annual and long/range action plan to reach targeted markets, including cost schedules for advertising expenses and other related costs
- Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of success. What is the goal of these efforts, why do we want to increase visitors. What is the overall benefit to the region and local community?
- A coordinated advertising and media plan, a blend of printed and digital material, organic and paid advertising, storytelling, blogs, influencers and journalism
- Messaging that can be used on various channels
- Digital and social media Strategy
- Develop and pitch storylines, press releases, facts sheets and interview
- Identify local and regional assets that will support marketing goals

3. Development and implementation of an Advertising Campaign

- Implement and oversee advertising, multimedia, digital, communications and other components of the marketing strategy to reach target audience
- Develop and produce advertising content such as ad copy, radio spots, television, commercials, creative storylines, print and broadcast notices, digital, indoor and outdoor advertisements, billboards, transit signage and additional content to communicate and promote the Region
- Execute media buying activities, negotiating competitive rates and securing ad placement
- Plan, create and execute marketing strategies and campaigns to reach target audience.
- Encourage user-generated content and identify potential influencers

APPENDIX A
NHCOG
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Discover Litchfield Hills

RFP EDD2024-01

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Certificate of Insurance: All insurance policies must include a Waiver of Subrogation whereby the insured waives its right to subrogate against the State of CT, NHCOG its subsidiaries, employees, volunteers, directors, and officers. Proof of proper insurance coverage, Workers Compensation Insurance, Liability and Property damage, and Vehicle Insurance shall be filed with within 10 days after the award of the bid. The Certificate of Insurance must name the State of CT, property owner and Northwest Hills Council of Governments, 355 Goshen Rd, Litchfield CT, its subsidiaries, employees, volunteers, directors & officers as the “Additional Insured” and filed with the Purchasing Agent prior to commencement of work. Renewal Certificates of Insurance must be mailed to the Purchasing Agent 10 days prior to the expiration of the required coverage.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

The respondent agrees and warrants that in the performance of the contract pursuant to this solicitation he/she will not discriminate or permit discrimination against any person or group of persons on the grounds of sex, race, color, religion, age, marital status, ancestry, national origin, past history of mental disorder, mental retardation or physical disability or other basis in any manner prohibited by the laws of the United States, the State of Connecticut or NHCOG

INDEMNIFICATION

To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Firm shall indemnify and hold harmless the State of CT, NHCOG and their respective consultants, agents, and employees from and against all claims, damages, losses and expenses, direct, indirect or consequential (including but not limited to fees and charges of attorneys and other professionals and court and arbitration costs) arising out of or resulting from the performance of the Firm’s work, provided that such claim, damage, loss or expense is caused in whole or in part by any negligent act or omission by the Firm, or breach of its obligations herein or by any person or organization directly or indirectly employed or engaged by the Firm to perform or furnish services, or anyone for whose acts the Firm may be liable, regardless of whether or not it is caused in part by a party indemnified hereunder.

As to any and all claims against NHCOG or any of its consultants, agents or employees by any employee of Firm, by any person or organization directly or indirectly employed by Firm to perform or furnish any of the work, or by anyone for whose acts Firm may be liable, the indemnification obligation under this section shall not be limited in any way by any limitation on the amount of type of damages, compensation or benefits payable by or for Firm under worker’s or workman’s compensation acts, disability benefit acts or other employee benefit acts.

**APPENDIX B
NHCOC
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Discover Litchfield Hills
RFP EDD2024-01**

Acceptance of Terms of this Agreement

Name of Proposer: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Authorized Signature _____

Title: _____

Name Printed: _____ Date: _____

Federal Tax Identification Number: (FEIN) _____

It is agreed by the above signed proposer that the signature and submission of this proposal represents the proposer's acceptance of all terms, conditions, and requirements of the proposal specifications, and, if awarded, the proposal will represent the agreement between the parties.

The proposer agrees that the cost of any work performed, materials furnished, services provided, or expenses incurred, which are not specifically delineated in the proposal documents, but which are incidental to the scope, intent, and completion of this contract, shall be deemed to have been included in the prices for the various items scheduled.

**APPENDIX C
NHCOG
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Development of a Multi-Year Marketing Strategy
RFP EDD2024-01**

NON-COLLUSION AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF _____ COUNTY OF _____

I, _____, being first duly sworn, deposes and says that:

1. I am _____
of _____, the
Bidder that has submitted the attached Bid for “ _____”;
2. I am fully informed respecting the preparation and contents of the attached Bid and of all pertinent circumstances respecting such bid;
3. Such Bid is genuine and is not a collusive or sham Bid;
4. Neither the said Bidder nor any of its officers, partners, owners, agents, representatives, employees or parties of interest, including this affiant, has in any way colluded, conspired, connived or agreed directly or indirectly with any other Bidder, firm or person to submit a collusive or sham Bid in connection with such Contract, for which the attached Bid has been submitted nor has it in any manner, directly or indirectly, sought by agreement or collusion or communication or conference with any other Bidder, firm or person to fix the price or prices in the attached Bid or of any other Bidder, or to fix any overhead, profit or cost element of the Bid price or the price of any Bidder, or to secure through any collusion, conspiracy, connivance or unlawful agreement any advantage against the NHCOG or any person interested in the proposed Contract; and
5. The price or prices quoted in the attached Bid are fair and proper and are not tainted by any collusion, conspiracy, connivance or unlawful agreement on the part of the Bidder or any of its agents, representatives, owners, employees, or parties in interest, including this affiant.

(Printed) _____

(Signed) _____

(Title) _____

Subscribed and sworn to before this _____ day of _____, 20____.

Notary Public Printed

Notary Public Signature

My Commission Expires _____

(Notary Seal)

NOTE: Documents must be signed before and sealed by a Notary Public. Only documents bearing a notary seal will be accepted.