

NCRLA

NC Restaurant
& Lodging Association

**Request for Proposal:
NC Hospitality Workforce
Campaign Marketing Services**

Responses are due by the close of business (5:00 PM Eastern Time) on February 24, 2023.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association

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Overview

The North Carolina hospitality sector has been devastated by the impact of Covid-19. Many restaurants, hotels, bars, and attractions across the state have experienced significant financial losses over the past two years. Government mandated shutdowns, capacity restrictions, mask mandates, consumer hesitancy, employee safety concerns, childcare issues, and supply chain disruptions have all taken a considerable toll on these businesses. However, the greatest challenges facing the sector today in light of the significant loss of employees during the pandemic are the difficulties they are experiencing in hiring and retaining workers and the significant costs associated with both recruitment and training these workers.

The North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association (NCRLA) seeks to help rebuild the state's hospitality industry and support hospitality-related businesses across the state by implementing an aggressive and comprehensive hospitality workforce development initiative. This work to rebuild the workforce will leverage and integrate a separate grant program administered by the NCRLA Foundation which will serve to complement the workforce recruitment campaign by providing training and career development opportunities.

NCRLA seeks a qualified communications firm to help develop and execute a marketing campaign to attract workers to hospitality careers in the state of North Carolina. The scope of work includes website, brand, creative, and delivery planning development, and execution of a targeted strategic campaign in 2023. The selected firm is expected to drive measurable results that contribute to the recovery of the state's hospitality sector. The ideal communications partner will have demonstrated experience developing strategic campaigns that deliver results. The ability to understand key analytics and provide insights into the effectiveness of an ongoing campaign is important.

The deadline to respond to this RFP is February 24, 2023. It is anticipated that a marketing partner will be selected by the end of March 2023 and begin working with NCRLA on this initiative immediately thereafter.

About NCRLA

The North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association is the uniting force of the North Carolina hospitality industry. We bring together restaurant and lodging establishments and partners who support our community. We impact legislation and policies, cultivate relationships, and provide valuable resources to help members run their businesses. Our mission is to serve our members by advancing and protecting North Carolina's hospitality industry. We do this in three ways:

- Build Industry Influence
- Build Industry Image
- Build Industry Engagement

More information about NCRLA can be found on its website at www.ncrla.org/.

Background

NCRLA received a significant grant from the North Carolina General Assembly (appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act) to administer a North Carolina hospitality workforce recruitment campaign with the goal of assisting the hospitality community in solving the current workforce shortage. Consultants were hired to conduct nine town halls in August and September 2022 to hear from owners, operators, and key management staff about their biggest challenges. More than 350 people registered to attend the town hall sessions where they identified strategies that were working, discussed problems, and brainstormed solutions.

A report that outlines the results of these conversations and provides a series of recommendations to improve workforce recruitment and retention in today's environment. The report includes recommendations on messaging that would likely resonate with target audiences in a workforce recruitment campaign. This report will be made available to selected firms, but not as a part of the RFP.

Qualitative and quantitative research is also being conducted to assess employee needs and wants. This work includes six focus group sessions (including in-person and

online sessions) of potential, current, and former hospitality workers, including at least one session held in Spanish. A comprehensive report with findings from the sessions and analysis and recommendations to inform the campaign will be available to the selected firm. Results of a quantitative survey with a sample size of 400 former, current, and potential hospitality workers will also be made available to the selected firm.

Profile of the Ideal Partner

NCRLA is seeking a marketing communications partner who will be a collaborator with its staff and who can marry the strategic with the creative, the data with decision-making, and who will understand our private sector partners' needs and respond to them. Basic expectations of NCRLA's strategic communications partner for this effort include the following:

1. Assign a single point of contact that will collaborate directly with the NCRLA team and provide consistent, responsive service.
2. Become familiar with key performance indicators tracked as part of the workforce development initiative.
3. Stay abreast of any business trends that may impact the execution of the initiative.
4. Carefully review all research performed as a component of the workforce development initiative (described above).
5. Demonstrate flexibility in planning and execution as business conditions warrant and move quickly to execute based upon new information or changes in the marketplace.
6. Learn quickly from mistakes and build upon successes.
7. Be expert in and provide regular tracking of the effectiveness of media vehicles through related analytics and reports if executing the delivery of the campaign.
8. Evaluate and respond to media opportunities and provide a point of view upon request.
9. Be proactive about researching, analyzing, and recommending approaches to media and messaging.

10. Deliver all work on time and allow the client sufficient time for review and to provide feedback.
11. Produce accurate and timely invoices, inclusive of detailed supporting documentation if required by auditors, for the execution of services. Invoices will be generated monthly and will carry terms of no less than thirty (30) days net. All credits for media campaigns executed will be expected to be reported to the client on a timely basis.
12. Disclose all discounts and special offers provided by vendors that the firm uses to execute the approved plan of execution.
13. Provide a weekly status report to the client for all current initiatives.
14. Produce written estimates for any element of the initiative authorized by NCRLA in advance of any work on that project.
15. A firm should possess the ability and credit worthiness to purchase and bill media for a project with a total budget of \$4.5 million if required as part of the execution of the program of work.
16. The proposing firm should be registered to do business in the state of North Carolina. Although NCRLA's offices are in Raleigh, it is not required for the firm to have a presence (office or employee) in the Triangle area. Representatives of the firm may engage frequently with NCRLA and other stakeholders, but it is not necessary for all engagement to be in person.

Scope of Work For Services Requested

This RFP includes four marketing communications components of the scope of work for the workforce development initiative. The budget for the entire scope of work is up to \$4.5 million, inclusive of all fees, external partners and vendors, and out-of-pocket expenses such as travel. Interested firms may partner with other firms to fulfill the scope of work requirements but should provide only one point of client contact. It is anticipated that the initiative will be 12 – 18 months in length once launched.

North Carolina Hospitality Career Website

A dedicated website will be developed to serve as portal for candidates to explore career opportunities in the industry in North Carolina. The website will showcase

individuals currently employed, will help connect individuals with jobs in the industry, and will connect them with opportunities for career training and education.

North Carolina Hospitality Career Brand Development

This strategic development of a dedicated brand will serve to create an image of career opportunities in the North Carolina hospitality industry, will showcase peers who have found rewarding careers in the industry, and will help to distinguish hospitality career opportunities from opportunities provided by other sectors. The development will include aligning this North Carolina hospitality career brand with business objectives and employment opportunities/needs of the industry, developing a plan for communicating the brand to the target market, and the updating or strengthening the North Carolina hospitality career brand as necessary.

Campaign Creative Development

This portion of the initiative will involve the development of creative content for the recruitment campaign. This component will support the development of creative materials needed including photography, video, and messaging to be used in various media vehicles including social media, website, digital media, radio, television, etc. Firms are requested to use North Carolina-based photographers, videographers, and models for creative production wherever possible.

Campaign Delivery

This portion of the project will involve the execution and delivery of the North Carolina hospitality workforce recruitment campaign. This component may include in-state media placement including digital, radio, television, etc., needed to support the campaign, or it may include any other innovative media for delivery of the campaign. The plan for delivery of the campaign should be sustainable beyond this initial effort. This includes management of the delivery to needed vehicles as required and deployment and reporting of appropriate analytical tools for measuring the impact of tactics.

All client recommendations related to each component above should be strategically focused and results-driven. Additionally, NCRLA will want your insights into evaluating the results of the project.

RFP Process

NCRLA is particularly interested in your firm's past work that demonstrates strategic thinking around a client's business objectives, opportunities, and challenges. We want to understand your strategic thought process generating exceptional insights and how you judge success or learn from failures. We are interested in how you effectively break through the clutter to achieve results that further your clients' goals, including innovative thinking that elevates their brands. The development of spec creative is not a part of this selection process. We desire a deep understanding of how you think as a firm and how NCRLA, its partners, and the state of North Carolina will benefit from your work. NCRLA staff will evaluate RFP responses and qualifications and select a partner to begin work before the end of the first quarter of calendar 2023.

Requirements of the RFP Response

Please provide the following information in your response:

A. Firm Overview

1. The North Carolina location that will be used to service the client. If you plan to use multiple offices for this initiative, describe how they work together to serve client needs. If you are part of a network which you will use as a component of serving NCRLA, describe how you work within that network.
2. Capitalized billings in the most recent fiscal year.
3. Current clients and length of service to each.
4. Any recent experience related to the work should be described as part of this initiative. Any relevant experience should be noted as to whether it is held by the firm as an organization, or by current employees while employed at other firms. Prior experience in the hospitality sector is not required.

5. The number of people employed by the firm (not including freelance or contract talent), and whether any employees that will be assigned to this effort work remotely full-time.
6. Your firm's policy towards remote work.
7. Brief biographical information for the firm's employees expected to be assigned to NCRLA.
8. Information for any significant subcontractors, partners, or other firms who will be used on this project, including biographical information for key employees who would be assigned to work directly with NCRLA. Interested firms may choose to align themselves with a partner firm for the purposes of satisfying the scope of work requirements within this RFP. Firms will not be penalized for making such proposals; however, scope of work services not handled in-house must be identified upfront, with information provided for the partner firm and a description of any previous experience working with that company.
9. Any pending litigation against the firm, and whether such litigation would hinder your ability to perform to the client's expectations.
10. Three (3) client references, including name, title, telephone number, e-mail address, and nature of the relationship.

B. Work Process

NCRLA is interested in understanding your approach to a client project and how you integrate market insights and client business objectives into your work.

1. Please provide a recent example of a relevant project of which you are particularly proud and share the specific reasons why. The example can be from any client category, but it should demonstrate results-oriented outcomes.
2. Describe your typical strategic approach when identifying a client business challenge related to the work being proposed, including a demonstration of how you apply insights, learning, research, and analytics into the process, and any tools you rely upon when developing and executing strategies for clients.

3. Using the above as a foundation, describe the process you would use to produce highly effective work for NCRLA as a deliverable. It should be relevant to the scope of work required.
4. Describe how you would recommend evaluation of the effectiveness of the project, and how the firm has recommended measurement of the results of other client assignments.
5. Produce a detailed project schedule for the scope of work proposed.

C. Fee Proposal

The fee proposal should be based upon a reasonable expectation of the work required as a deliverable for the scope described above. The fee should be included in the budget for each component described above. Fees should include all usual costs to provide the deliverables expected, including but not limited to any travel expenses, postage and express delivery, telephone, and copying. Such regular out-of-pocket costs to service the account will not be billed separately to the client. Please include your firm's hourly blended rate in the fee proposal.

Additional Information about the Response

The response to this RFP will be e-mailed but should be no more than 50 pages in length. Responses should be in a format that is easy to read and user-friendly. Please number pages wherever possible. You may include links to examples of creative work in your response.

Notification of Interest and Questions Related to the RFP

Firms should notify NCRLA's consultant partner, Chris Cavanaugh of Magellan Strategy Group, at ccavanaugh@magellanstrategy.com of their interest in the RFP opportunity, and submit any questions related to the RFP no later than the close of business (5:00 PM ET) on **February 1, 2023**. Responses to submitted questions will be discussed during a webinar scheduled for **February 7, 2023**. Interested firms will be send a link to the webinar, and the webinar will be posted on the NCRLA website for later viewing.

Schedule and Delivery Instructions

- Responses to the RFP are due by close of business (5:00 PM ET) on February 24, 2023. Please email the response to Chris Cavanaugh of Magellan Strategy Group at ccavanaugh@magellanstrategy.com, using a file transfer service or online folder as needed for larger files.
- NCRLA will evaluate RFP responses and determine whether interviews of select interested firms are required.
- NCRLA expects to make a final selection no later than the end of March 2023. Work should commence immediately following notification and contracting.

Other Important Information

1. Firms will not be compensated for any costs related to their participation in the RFP process.
2. Lobbying of NCRLA staff and board members is not encouraged and may negatively impact consideration of the firm.
3. NCRLA is not obligated to select the lowest cost fee proposal.
4. NCRLA may choose to suspend or terminate the review process at any time for any reason, or to reject any or all proposals.
5. It is anticipated that negotiations will be conducted with the selected firm regarding fees and the terms of the contract before the award is made final.
6. Creative assets and intellectual property supplied by selected firms will be the property of NCRLA.
7. The firm will be responsible for payment of all model and talent residuals.