

QUESTION RESPONSE: REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
Regional Trails Branding & Communication
October 2023

1. ***Many questions regarding budget.***

As opposed to a Request for Proposals, a Request for Qualifications does not typically have an identified budget, and we will not consider fees or costs in our evaluation of responses. We do not know what this project should cost, and rather than putting an arbitrary number out there, we are instead seeking to find the right partner, the right coach, that is best for our team and goals to help us answer these questions. Once we have identified the right partner, we'll begin negotiating a scope with budget and timeline, something we hope can be completed by mid-November. If we cannot reach an agreement, we may move to the next preferred vendor. We do have funds to begin immediately yet this year and will have additional funds from additional sources available in 2024. At this time funds are expected to be from TTI's budget and philanthropic sources. TTI operates on a calendar year fiscal year.

2. ***Many questions regarding timeline.***

Similar to the budget question above, we are seeking a partner or coach to help us understand how long this should take to do right. Based on a similar project and an understanding that the number of partners we desire to engage may take some time, especially up front, we believe this project will take at least one year. We would like to begin yet this year.

3. ***Many questions related to boundaries.***

Marion, Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Shelby, Johnson, Morgan, Hendricks Counties

4. ***Who will own and maintain the brand after completion of the project?***

Visit Indy will own and maintain the brand in a stewardship role, although it is possible an alternative steward may be identified during or after the process.

5. ***Is there a key point person from each organization who will be able to consistently participate in planning. Who will own final decision making?***

Who will be the primary contact for the agency?

Yes. Brad Beaubien with TTI will serve as the day-to-day project manager and point person for the consulting team. Each of the core organizations will have 1 or 2 individuals engaged throughout the duration of the project.

6. ***4.3.1 (Website): Will the vendor be responsible to produce all content or just lead the strategy and coordination with the client team?***

Will the selected partner be responsible for writing the website content, or will content be provided by the various partners to be edited for consistency?

The vendor will author or edit all content, although Brad and the core organizations will assist by helping provide draft copy as identified by the vendor.

7. ***Please confirm that web development is included in this website.***

Yes, the vendor will build the website and all its functionality as described in 4.3.1. Upon launch, the site will be turned over to the client team to subsequently manage without assistance.

8. ***Do you have an idea of the number of pages the website will include?***

We have not discussed this, but it is safe to assume there is at least a page for each regional trail as well as several general pages. Many of these should be template driven, so while there may be a page for each trail, there is a single structure and layout of the page.

9. ***Should we assume the map on the website is interactive?***

Can you expand upon the map functionality a little more. How many options do you foresee being part of an interactive map?

Yes, we envision the map as very interactive. We are open to thought leadership and need more conversation around this, but know we'll need to be able to display the trail system hierarchy, which could include zooming to a county or other area, and we'll need destinations, which might be a park or attraction like Newfields. Additional map-related functionality will be related to the route finding feature we desire, which likely has a map interface or result. For example, if someone indicated they wanted a two hour loop trail route with access to nature, the system might display results for 2 or 3 options on a map.

10. ***Will you want custom trail maps layered into Google Maps, or are you looking for more of an illustrated concept?***

While we may need a more illustrative map, we know we will need some way for users to eventually be able to access or retrieve a detailed Google map that they can follow. It is possible there is a more streamlined map, like a subway map, that focuses more on connections than actual on-the-ground paths.

11. ***Do you have more details on how you plan to integrate partner offerings? Will partners have CMS access or will you use existing Visit Indy data to populate the events and activities?***

This can be open to conversation with partners and the level of events that are to be included, but it is unlikely partners would have direct CMS access.

12. ***4.2.2. & 4.2.3 (Existing brand marks and other trail designations) Where might we source the information for this inventory?***

The core organizations can assist with much of this, particularly for Marion County, but the vendor should expect to need to reach out to adjoining counties and organizations to gather additional information.

13. ***Do the sub trails and greenways already have brands? Do you anticipate rebranding some / all of those trails as part of this effort?***

Many of the regional greenways do have a brand/mark or logo but not a fully developed brand. We do not anticipate redoing those marks or logos except in cases where we find there are significant conflicts between brands for different portions of the same regional trail. In these cases we would try to work with those trail authorities to synthesize into a common brand.

14. ***Is there an aspirational brand of a trail system that you are looking to as a model for the end result of this process?***

We do not have an aspirational brand of a trails system in mind.

15. ***With the “core group of partners,” how will consolidated feedback be delivered back to the agency? Who is the final decision maker if there is disagreement amongst the partners? Will the client team referenced in the RFQ be a combination of representatives from the core group of partners? Will the agency partner have one primary point of contact within the client team or will communication/decisions be a consensus among the client team?***

Brad Beaubien with TTI will be the project manager and point person for the vendor team, helping to consolidate feedback from the core organizations. Select representatives from these core organizations will comprise the client team

16. ***Do you have a vision of how the partners and stakeholders are involved in the design process? We typically include focus groups and interviews in the early discovery phase, but will they also be a part of providing feedback and approval to the design?***

We are open to the vendor’s thought leadership on how best to engage partners. We do envision the core group being more routinely engaged than other partners or stakeholders.

17. ***We understand the core group of stakeholders involved in this program. Please identify or indicate intentions regarding the broader group of stakeholders intended to be engaged in the development of this package.***

This broader group includes trail authorities or support organizations in adjoining counties as well as trail-related organizations that provide programming, education, or advocacy that touch trails. This could include groups like Free Wheelin Bikes, Bicycle Garage Indy, and Nine13sports.

18. ***What role will the agency play in developing and managing the consensus-building necessary to advance this program? Will the agency be able or expected to: Develop and communicate agendas to drive this work?; Schedule, manage, facilitate and report out on stakeholder meetings to drive this work?***

It appears that several local municipal departments will be involved in the project. Will Tourism Tomorrow take the lead in vetting deliverables with the different stakeholders or will you be taking more of a committee approach similar to the White River Vision Plan branding project?

We are open to recommendations and thought leadership in this area, but expect the vendor will have a lead role in designing and facilitating a consensus-building process, which could include developing agendas and scheduling, managing, facilitating, and reporting on stakeholder meetings. TTI and its partners can play as active of a role as is desired and productive, including at least endorsing, inviting, and convening the stakeholders.

19. ***Who manages the legislative relations aspect of this program? What is the annual budget for the legislative relations aspect of the program, if an external resource is used. What is the expectation regarding how the agency and any legislative relations resource interact / liaise / report out?***

There is not a government affairs or legislative advocacy component of this effort. In fact, while promoting trails and building the user base of them may lead to increased public demands for trail investments, advocacy is explicitly not a primary desire of this work.

20. ***Can you elaborate on what you mean by “develop a shared brand”? How much do you want the new brand to be tied to the existing Visit Indy branding?***
This brand is expected to be independent of the Visit Indy branding or any other regional brand. By shared brand we mean a brand that is stewarded by a lead entity (currently expected to be Visit Indy) but is embraced and able to be used by partner organizations. While Visit Indy as the brand steward may be pushing the button to make updates to the website or social media posts, a partner organization should feel comfortable reinforcing the brand promise and storyline through their own publications and stories and work. The website and social media should include content from and links to these partner organizations to convey a sense of mutual collaboration. While we do need guardrails on who and how the brand can be used, we see the brand as very democratic.
21. ***Have you previously worked with a marketing agency partner on a similar shared branding project? If yes, are they participating in the RFP?***
Yes, the Discover White River brand is similar in nature to this, although with a very different group of core partners. That vendor team has received this RFQ.
22. ***Please identify any agencies with whom you are currently working, and provide an outline of their responsibilities.***
The many partners collaborating on this effort work with many different creative agencies on many different projects. While we cannot identify by name, TTI is currently engaging two firms related to its Discover White River website and digital marketing campaign. The website firm previously facilitated a branding exercise followed by website development, and is currently making enhancements to the discoverwhiteriver.com site. The other firm is managing Meta ad buys and google ad words.
23. ***How many agencies are invited to respond?***
We sent the RFQ to 27 vendors, although response is not limited to only them. It is also posted on our indydestinationvision.com website.
24. ***Specifics around communication toolkit deliverables will be determined during the foundational brand and communication strategy. Are you open to a budget range?***
As noted above in the budget question, we do not have a set budget and are seeking a partner or coach who can help guide us in this regard. Options with different budget implications can be discussed during scope negotiations with the preferred vendor.
25. ***Do you have any existing research (ex: customer insights, competitive analysis, market insights) you can share that would influence our approach to your specific assignment?***
Very limited. From the tourism perspective, we know qualitatively that Central Indiana performs poorly in perception of access to outdoor recreational amenities. Also for tourism, we estimate that in 2019 about 3-4% of all visitor trips (day or overnight with someone traveling more than 50 miles) to Central Indiana were for the primary reason of outdoor recreation.
26. ***Is the user testing focused on the identity, the website or both?***
We will look to the vendor team for their thought leadership and experience, but do believe limited user feedback on the identity is valuable as well as greater user feedback on site usability would be beneficial.

27. ***User testing can take on many forms and scales - do you have a vision of how you'd like users to be included in the design process?***

We will look to the vendor team for their thought leadership and experience as to what would help us achieve our best outcome. This is not intended to be an open public engagement process, but the extent to which users are engaged, and the methods by which that is done, is something we need to hear from the vendor.

28. ***Who are the audiences that you would like to include in user testing? Have you identified / reached out to these groups in the past or would you be looking for the consultant to lead the identification of individuals?***

What are your expectations in regards to user testing for the website? Does this include public user feedback or testing by project partners?

We do not have groups established and will be looking for direction from the vendor. The core organizations, as well as many of the other stakeholders, should be able to help in providing specific names if that is desired, but we do hope for at least some unaffiliated public users. Defining who the audiences are is a desired service (Item 4.1.3). We do know we at least want to build representative profiles that incorporate different racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, incomes, geography, and trail experience.

29. ***Do you already have a research partner for consumer testing for the branding or can we bring in our own partner?***

For tourism purposes, Visit Indy uses SMARI Insights. However, the vendor is welcome to use another partner.

30. ***Do you have an in-house team that will be taking the brand guidelines and creating the assets required for launching the new brand / sharing with other partners? Should we include any consulting scope to help with that transition?***

The vendor will develop all the web assets (4.3.1) and a suite of visual assets (4.3.3) and provide guidance on other use of the brand via guidelines. Sample brand usages and adaptations would be helpful to have in the brand guidelines document to help our in-house team apply and adapt the brand going forward.

31. ***What do you envision the end deliverable for the environmental graphics / elements? Is the goal to develop an environmental graphics strategy? Or to have a catalog of the environmental graphics / elements to be selected and implemented in a future phase? Will any elements be implemented as part of this scope? Will physical signage on the trails be included as a deliverable in this project?***

We are open to thought leadership in this area, and we recognize that any actual implementation of our recommendations is up to individual trail authorities that are often operating within other brand structures. As conceived of in the RFQ, we believe our most effective use of environmental graphics/design is to provide a suite of physical design cues and environmental graphic opportunities that reinforce the hierarchy of terms (for example, the sign shape and color varies based on the level of system a motorist drives on, from interstate to us highway to state highway to major road). It could be we recommend only the regional greenways receive brand marks while connector or other trail levels are simply names. Regardless, a catalog of recommendations and ways to apply the recommendations in different contexts would be helpful. Construction drawings of actual signage or plans for actual physical design improvements are not needed.

32. ***Please identify any marketing, public relations, advertising or communications services delivered by in-house staff, and share names and titles of the individuals providing these services.***

The many partners collaborating on this effort have different capacities internally. Brad Beaubien currently maintains and manages several Wordpress-powered websites. TTI, as a sibling organization to Visit Indy, does have access to Visit Indy's internal team, the most relevant of which includes: Chris Gahl, EVP and Chief Marketing Officer; Jeff Robinson, Senior Director of Marketing; Morgan Snyder, Senior Director of Public Relations; Christin Zetzi, Associate Director of Marketing; Erin Morgan, Visual Communications Manager; and, Katrina Youngs, Digital Marketing Manager. Note that while Visit Indy typically does all graphic design and media placements and buys in-house, TTI has historically typically used consultants.

33. ***Related to the three listed project goals 3.1-3.3, how do you plan to measure if these are achieved?***

Specifics have not been determined, but Visit Indy does track local and national media placements that can help in measuring brand effectiveness and penetration and will have access to geolocation data that, together with that sourced from other partners, can provide measurements on trail usage.

34. ***Many questions related to measuring effectiveness of PR and marketing initiatives.***

Measurements for this trail-focused initiative will likely vary from Visit Indy's typical measurements, but Visit Indy most closely measures web sessions and Friday/Saturday non-group room-night hotel bookings. All paid media pushes to VisitIndy.com and Friday/Saturday non-group room-nights generally identifies leisure visitors staying in Indy. We affectionately refer to this overarching Visit Indy goal as "heads in beds." We report pace to goal monthly.

Visit Indy utilizes Google Analytics to monitor web session starts and data from Smith Travel Research (STR) to monitor non-group room-night hotel bookings. We currently contract with ADARA to showcase visitor attribution to paid media efforts.

Visit Indy utilizes a media monitoring service called Muck Rack to measure reach, advertising equivalency rates and media sentiment on earned media efforts. We report these stats monthly.

SproutSocial is used to plan, execute and measure effectiveness for Visit Indy's social media strategy.

35. ***Does TTI have paid or earned media lists?***

Yes, we have both paid media and earned media lists.

36. ***Describe your current and near term (2- to 3-year) marketing technology infrastructure. Who are the vendors and what are your aspirations for each piece of the tech stack? Email service provider; Tag Manager (customer data platform); CRM; Web content management system(s) (and any custom coded aspects); Programming language; CMS***

Visit Indy worked with Simpleview to design and launch VisitIndy.com last fall 2022. We use Simpleview for our CMS and an internal proprietary CRM platform called Jupiter.

However, this particular website will not use Simpleview's platform, and other TTI-managed websites, such as DiscoverWhiteRiver.com and IndyDestinationVision.com, are powered by WordPress. It is expected this website will similarly use WordPress.

Visit Indy uses ActOn, a subset of Simpleview for our email marketing. We use CrowdRiff for managing user-generated content and our own image library. DOMO is also a platform used within Visit Indy to aggregate and analyze data.

37. ***What does a successful engagement look like?***

All partners embrace and are supportive of the resulting brand and desire to be a part of sharing it.

38. ***What are some “intangibles” you’re looking for in an agency partner?***

We hope to emotionally connect with a vendor that shares our passion for and belief in trails and outdoor recreation. We hope the vendor has an understanding that this project isn’t just selling a product to consume; it is helping to define an experience a resident or visitor should expect to have in Central Indiana.