

**TOWN OF WINDHAM
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
DIGITAL/SOCIAL MEDIA CONSULTANT**

PURPOSE:

The Town of Windham (Windham) is seeking proposals from qualified firms and/or individuals for a Digital/Social Media Consultant as part of the Town's continuing implementation of its 5-year Marketing and Branding Campaign (the Campaign).

BACKGROUND:

Windham is an eastern Connecticut community located on Route 6 and 32, approximately 27 miles east of Hartford and 27 miles north of Norwich. The town is 27.9 square miles in area and includes the historic area of Willimantic and three rural villages. The majority of the Town's population of 25,268 (2010) resides in Willimantic. The town is home to Eastern Connecticut State University, 3rd Thursday Street Fests, the Victorian Neighborhood Association, The Garden on the Bridge, Willimantic Whitewater Partnership, Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum, Windham Mill Museum, Windham Theatre Guild, the annual 4th of July Boom Box Parade and is on the East Coast Greenway.

In the past several years, Windham has been engaging in a series of economic development projects that includes efforts to reinvigorate the historic downtown of Willimantic. In addition to downtown revitalization, other examples of projects include, creation of new developments and retail stores and a series of public-private partnerships. The town recently constructed a new band shell (the Shaboo Stage) which had its first concert on August 3, 2018.

Under the direction of the Office of Economic Development (OED) and the Economic Development Commission (EDC) and with approval of the Town Council, Windham began undertaking a comprehensive 5-year Action Plan in order for the town to compete on a level playing field with other communities that have utilized similar strategies. Some of the initiatives implemented under the branding/marketing campaign include: creation of: branding initiatives, a web portal, promotional videos and other materials, strategies for leveraging existing assets to better work in concert with each other, etc.

Windham seeks to continue the branding marketing campaign by leveraging additional grant dollars in order to complete aspects of the campaign that have been unrealized to date. The available resources for the part of the project that is the subject of this request for proposals will be directed at the following activities:

SCOPE OF SERVICE:

The successful awardee shall develop and implement the following strategies, including, but not limited to:

- 1) Execution of a Digital Marketing Campaign;
- 2) Engaging a public relations consultant for newsletters, email blasts and increased social media presence;
- 3) Assist local and regional stakeholders with marketing efforts; and
- 4) Reinforcing Summer/Fall 2020 Campaign in Spring 2021

DIGITAL MARKETING:

To date, Windham has not purchased significant digital advertising and only a portion of last year's media buy included a digital component.

In Year Three of the Campaign, Windham seeks to step up its digital marketing which implements a primary recommendation from their Strategic Plan.

The digital marketing strategy will utilize paid advertising with the goal of increasing followers/page views on the web portal and the Town's social media pages; build awareness of the new web portal and drive web hits and should supplement and highlight other promotional initiatives, i.e., television commercials.

SOCIAL MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Due to the relatively small size of the Town's Economic Development Department (EDD), and the broad, varied tasks associated with economic development policy, the EDD struggles somewhat to give the proper attention to sustained public relations efforts.

One recommendation from the Strategic Plan was to "aim to post something every day, even if the content is shared from another page or repeated..." Given the limited staff time mentioned above, the Town seeks to engage a public relations professional to enhance existing public relations efforts and move this aspect of the Campaign to the next level. This professional would lay the foundation for the Town to follow up with another Strategic Plan recommendation, "to dedicate staff to social media management."

While the OED has created a presence on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn, these sites remain under-engaged given staff time constraints.

The Town also seeks to expand its capacity in the public relations area to include:

- Newsletters
- Email Blasts (e.g., Constant Contact or Mailchimp)
- Surveys via Survey Monkey or other vehicle

The scope of services, as outlined in this RFP, is preliminary. The final scope of services will be negotiated with the selected agency/individual and modified as needed, and to the extent of available funding.

REQUIREMENT INFORMATION:

The following information, at a minimum, shall be submitted:

1. In an effort to educate EDC members about digital marketing, describe the breadth and scope of a digital marketing campaign, including your firm's process and approach.
2. Provide company name, mailing address, phone number, and main contact's email address and direct phone number;
3. A brief description of the company's structure and capabilities;
4. List of services provided in-house and services provided by outside consultants, if any. If outside consultants will be used, provide a brief description of these outside consultants, their roles and capabilities;
5. Provide a minimum of two to three case studies of similar services your firm provided to an organization this size. Please include a brief description of the services provided and a discussion of the outcome, including name of project, description of project and project period and cost;
6. Provide at least three references that have used your professional services for a similar project. Please include a contact name, mailing address, phone number and email address;

7. Describe your process and approach working with local stakeholders with a diverse community like Windham/Willimantic.
8. Provide a detailed fee proposal or budget, outlining the specific activities that will be performed, including hourly rates, required expenses and other costs involved; and
9. An approximate timeline to complete the scope of services stated above (it is anticipated that the contract will end at end of FY21 (6/30/2021)).

SUBMISSION:

An original electronic copy of the proposal must be submitted to Jim Bellano, Director, Economic Development by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17, 2021. Late proposals will not be considered.

The budget for this project is limited, but there is some flexibility.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Submissions will be reviewed by a Selection Committee composed of the OED and EDC. Windham seeks to hire a firm that the Selection Committee deems will be the most successful in developing a long-term marketing/branding campaign. Selection criteria will include:

- Overall cost of services and cost effectiveness (lowest cost will not be the sole determining factor);
- The firm's reputation and familiarity and experience with this type of project/process, including references and demonstrated ability to work successfully with town-wide stakeholders;
- Personnel assigned; and
- Quality of plan to execute the scope of services mentioned in this RFP.

Based upon the evaluation of the proposals submitted, finalists will be invited to present and to be interviewed. The Town of Windham will negotiate terms with the most qualified bidder. If unsuccessful, the Town of Windham intends to negotiate with the next most qualified bidder.

PROCUREMENT SCHEDULE*:

RFP Release Date: February 25, 2021

Proposals Due: March 17, 2021 by 5:00 pm EST

Invitation to Interview Prospective Finalists: Week of March 21, 2021

Final Selection/Notification of Successful Individual/Agency: Week of March 28, 2021

***Windham reserves the right to amend or to cancel this RFP.**

DURATION OF AGREEMENT:

The proposed contract period for services will be approximately three months, with frequency of payments made as agreed upon in terms of contract. Invoices must be submitted for services rendered. All material produced, data collected, and reports generated by the vendor and subcontractors on behalf of the Town of Windham are public records and become the property of the town. The contractor may not share program materials and data, industry or program participant contact information, etc. unless explicitly authorized by the Town of Windham to do so.

This RFP does not commit the Town of Windham to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal or to procure or contract for services. The town reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this RFP, to negotiate with all qualified bidders, and to cancel the RFP, in part or in its entirety at its sole discretion.

POINT OF CONTACT:

Questions concerning this Request for Proposal should be addressed to Jim Bellano, Director of Economic Development at jbellano@windhamct.com or (860) 465-3062.

The Town of Windham reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received in response to this request and to negotiate with any of the vendors or other firms in any manner deemed to be in the best interest of the Town of Windham.

THE TOWN OF WINDHAM IS AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER