Request for Proposal


Kara D. Dense, Executive Director
Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau
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To: Interested Creative Agencies

The Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau is seeking a qualified agency to work alongside our talented staff to market, brand, and increase awareness of the beautiful Greenbrier Valley.

In 2019, we completed a vibrancy and tourism research study with the new Greenbrier Valley Tourism Partnership. We are armed with new data, new partnerships, and a spirit of collaboration not seen in our area before. In March of 2020, the world as we knew it changed for everyone and changed the tourism industry landscape forever. Our destination is in a unique position, and we are looking for strong creative partners to work with our experienced staff.

A little about us: the Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau is a private non-profit 501(c)(6) organization funded primarily by hotel/motel tax revenues from Greenbrier County and the municipalities Lewisburg, Ronceverte, Alderson, and White Sulphur Springs. Our mission is to "positively impact the area’s economy by marketing the region as a premier tourist destination."

The Greenbrier County CVB is governed by a 16-member board of directors representing our various funding agencies, The Greenbrier, Greater Greenbrier Chamber of Commerce, Greenbrier Valley Airport, and various tourism businesses in Greenbrier County. Our board of directors’ policy is to revisit an RFP for agency services every three to four years to ensure quality and value in our contractors.

If you have what it takes to work with us and take tourism to the next level and navigate the changes happening daily to our industry, we want to hear from you.

If you plan to bid, please return the attached bid acknowledgment form by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 19.

Sincerely,

Kara D. Dense
Executive Director
1. Introduction

As a non-membership CVB, we represent more than 220 tourism-related organizations across Greenbrier County. We are funded by 50% of the hotel/motel occupancy tax collected by Greenbrier County and the municipalities of Lewisburg, White Sulphur Springs, Ronceverte, and Alderson. Through this revenue stream, the CVB promotes every tourism-related business and organization in the county.

The GCCVB was established in 2001 to grow the economy by marketing it as a premier tourist destination. It has become a model for successful tourism development in West Virginia. In late 2019, the WV Tourism Office released an economic impact study maintaining Greenbrier County's position as one of the top five destinations in West Virginia.

The Greenbrier Valley brand story is a promise to our visitors. Our success hinges on the key drivers that make this area one-of-a-kind -- The Greenbrier resort, the Greenbrier Valley Theatre, the state’s year-round professional theatre, Carnegie Hall, one of only four in operation worldwide, downtown Lewisburg, "America's Coolest Small Town," and the 78-mile Greenbrier River Trail to name a few.

In addition to our direct marketing and media relations efforts, the Greenbrier County CVB also manages and is the sole funder of the Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center in downtown Lewisburg. This 10-year-old facility is located on the main street in downtown and is a regional visitor center. The intercept marketing efforts are focused not only on Greenbrier County but also on Pocahontas, Summers, and Monroe counties.

2. CVB/Agency Structure

The Greenbrier County CVB has five full-time staff members. They include the executive director, marketing director, communications manager, office manager, and visitors center manager. We currently work with one Agency of Record that handles all direct advertising, print needs, and website maintenance.

The two full-time marketing staff members (with oversight by the executive director) are heavily involved in the strategic planning and day-to-day initiatives outlined in any given plan. They oversee all collateral creation, content development, asset collection, social media, and public/media relations.

With a strong, cohesive team in place, the GCCVB is looking to take the agency partnership to the next level. We are looking for a collaborator, an agency with the experience and resources to link/tie communication channels together to achieve goals synergistically. We see public/media relations as a top of the funnel tool that grows awareness and builds a positive reputation for Greenbrier County, while our marketing should create demand for the experiences we have to offer.
3. **Budget**

The budget of the Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau is currently at $632,000 a year. This number, of course, is an estimate for the current 20-21 Fiscal Year. Before the pandemic, our annual budget averaged $950,000 a year. Our revenue is always subject to hotel/motel tax collections. Our organization's practice is to evaluate the marketing budget quarterly to compare with current revenues and expenses. As it stands, the current marketing budget is approximately $350,000. This amount includes our agency fees, media buys, public relations costs, website development/maintenance, visitor guide production and printing, intercept print pieces and conferences and shows. For this proposal, please figure on a direct advertising budget of $200,000.

4. **MOU Term**

The GCCVB prefers to do a yearly Memorandum of Understanding, and the term will begin on July 1, 2021, and will run through June 30, 2022. (Subject to approval by GCCVB Board of Directors)

5. **Evaluation Process**

Members of the GCCVB’s Marketing Advisory Committee will review and evaluate the proposals. The committee may, at any time in the evaluation process, seek clarification.

The GCCVB selection committee will then review all responses and other submitted materials. Finalists will be invited to make a formal presentation at a specific time and place and will most likely happen virtually. Those invited to appear for a presentation will be asked to present samples of existing work, ideas and attitudes towards handling this account, and specific concepts to achieve the maximum return possible. Any presentation and preparation will be at the agency's expense; speculative work, while not required, will weigh in the decision process. This evaluation will consist of, but not be restricted to, the following points:

a. The ideas, thoughts, and comments given by the agency during its presentation

b. Knowledge of the travel and tourism industry with specific examples of positive relations with clientele in this field.

c. Innovative abilities - the creation of a well-rounded strategic marketing plan; may include non-traditional solutions.

d. Media knowledge.

e. Account mix of the agency.

f. High inclination to use CVB research in the development of strategic planning for the basis of all campaigns.

g. The ability to communicate effectively and work collaboratively with the client.
For a proposal to be evaluated and considered for award, the agency must respond to this Request for Proposal by submitting all data required herein. Failure to submit such data may be deemed sufficient cause for disqualifying the proposal from further consideration for award.

6. Expectations of Agency

The GCCVB is seeking an agency with extensive experience in various media and markets. The agency must have expertise in strategic planning with the ability to guide and assist direct advertising, social media, design, website development, and public/media relations as the primary activities. The agency must be up-to-date on current trends in the travel industry, strategic and tactical. The agency should be able to expand the impact of the campaign while focusing on the best return on advertising spend (ROAS).

   a. Increase brand awareness and destination consideration
   b. Grow qualified leads
   c. Nurture leads through buying journey
   d. Develop a content-driven strategy
   e. Ultimately drive visitation and overnight stays in step with the CVB’s mission

7. Agency Scope of Work

The following are areas that an agency must show in-depth experience. Based on the GCCVB’s needs noted below, please elaborate on your knowledge and strategies in the following areas.

   **Strategic Planning.** Although much of the GCCVB strategic plan is developed internally, the agency holds an important role in providing travel-related goals and objectives that are trending within the industry.

   **Brand Image.** The GCCVB relies on the agency to maintain a consistent brand image for the Greenbrier Valley. A brand style guide and voice document must be kept up-to-date by the agency and used in developing all brand-related collateral and marketing initiatives.

   **Marketing Campaign Development.** Work closely with GCCVB staff to develop a multi-faceted, inbound marketing campaign. Taking the lead on media planning, buying, and creative production is expected. Content development is managed internally at the CVB with creative suggestions/ideas provided by the agency that enhance the overall plan. Lastly, provide ongoing analysis and reporting with the ability to make on-the-fly campaign adjustments.

   **Fanbase Development.** Help cultivate a fanbase on two levels. The first, creating buy-in for visitors to make Greenbrier Valley a destination to which they return. The second is creating champions of the Greenbrier Valley brand on a local level.
Website Maintenance and Development. The site is built on Laravel. The GCCVB makes day-to-day content updates. Basic functional maintenance, ongoing site enhancements, and optimization are budgeted annually to improve usability, search and achieve goals. Within the next two years, we foresee a need for user experience and mobile-friendly enhancements as well as page speed improvements and authority development. We utilize CrowdRiff to display user-generated content (UGC) on all pages of our website. We also use the platform Hubspot to manage the Live Chat tool.

Media Relations. Provide viable media and influencer contacts that align with the Greenbrier Valley brand. Provide a process for vetting influencers. Track Greenbrier Valley's media footprint both digitally and in print and provide reporting.

Email Marketing and Automation. MailChimp is the current e-mail service provider. General maintenance and modifications/remodels to the custom template are expected from the agency to maintain brand consistency and keep us up-to-date on e-mail marketing trends. Developing a lead nurturing process using automated workflows is a priority.

Social Media. An advertising strategy that will retarget audiences as well as introduce new audiences to the Greenbrier Valley brand. Develop social media campaigns that engage audiences on all active platforms. Provide guidance to the communications manager regarding the evolution and best practices of the used platforms.

Visitors Guide & Other Print Needs. The annual visitors guide is the GCCVB’s primary collateral. Other print projects include the annual report and a reformatted newspaper insertion of the same, a workshop postcard, three seasonal event calendars and a media pitch sheet. Additional needs may include banners, posters, invitations and intercept pieces. For all collateral, planning, content generation, ad sales, proofing and print services are managed internally. We look to the agency for creative direction, design execution and proofing.

Analysis & Reporting. Ability to set up tracking in Google Analytics (campaigns, events, etc) that align with goals and KPIs. Provide analysis and reporting during and at the conclusion of marketing campaigns. Make key recommendations during the advertising to allow for better performance and meet the goals of the GCCVB. Recap should include general recommendations for the next campaign.

8. Audience

The recent vibrancy assessment as well as internal conversion studies, identify a visitor profile driven by affluent GenX and Baby Boomers seeking leisure travel. They look to the Greenbrier Valley for ways to relax, enjoy the history and culture, soft adventure and take in the local cuisine. They want an experience filled with scenic beauty and small-town charm that’s authentic and welcoming.
We focus on three core profiles for our marketing efforts:

**Affluent Nature Lovers**
- 68% male with an average age 45
- 73% above $50k HHI with 27% of them above $100k HHI
- average party size 3.5; 41% travel with significant other

**Culinary Spenders**
- 58% female with an average age 53
- 63% above $50k HHI with 16% of them above $100k HHI
- average party size 3.1; more likely to travel with friends

**Culture and History Seekers**
- equally male/female with an average age 55
- 36% above $50k HHI with 8% of them above $100k HHI
- average party size 1.8; 36% travel with significant other

As we look to address their needs, understanding why they travel is just as important as who they are. Emotional triggers that motivate travel to the Greenbrier Valley include life enrichment, looking for new experiences, needing a break from the day-to-day, and connecting with loved ones and friends. Available time off, along with holidays and special occasions, also precipitate a reason to travel.

Based on Google Analytics metro analysis, the Greenbrier Valley resonates with overnight travelers from Washington D.C., Charleston-Huntington, WV, Chicago, IL (due to a direct flight), Roanoke-Lynchburg, VA, Pittsburgh, PA (due to cooperatives with state tourism office).

9. **Brand Voice**

The Greenbrier Valley voice has many facets, but overall it’s sophisticated and smart while warm and energizing. It’s authenticity (with the charm of Appalachia) instills a welcome feeling for our visitors. It’s inquisitive and conversational because we truly care about the guest experience. And it highlights the flavor of our towns and people with journalistic storytelling and thoughtful vignettes.

10. **Tentative Schedule**

   **February 3, 2021** - Request for Proposals Released
   **February 19, 2021, 5:00 p.m.** - Intent to Bid Returned to Greenbrier County CVB
   **March 31, 2021** - Proposals Due
   **Week of April 12, 2021** - Presentations to Marketing Committee
   **April 22, 2021** - Recommendation Made to Full Board of Directors
   **July 1, 2021** - Start Date
11. Minimum Requirements

a. **Notice of Intent to Bid**
   The Bid Acknowledgement Form must be returned by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 19, 2021. If this requirement is not met, your proposal will be rejected. Also, by affixing your signature to this form, you hereby state that you have read all proposal specifications and conditions, and agree to all terms, conditions, and provisions, and are currently licensed to do business in West Virginia, if required by state or federal law, for the services and commodities you will provide under these proposal specifications.

b. **References**
   Provide three client references. At least two must be current clients. Include name, contact information, and engagement start and end dates.

c. **Current Tourism Clients**
   Please list all tourism clients you are currently doing business with or have done business with in the past year. If a current client could be a potential conflict of interest, please discuss how you plan to resolve the issue.

d. **Case Studies**
   Please provide one or more case studies that demonstrate through the marketing campaign how your agency achieved increases in intent to travel to a destination and return on ad spend.

e. **Financial Statements**
   Please list your agency’s bank affiliations and identify your credit sufficiency. You may include a statement from your certified public accountant or bank, or a profitability history, etc.

12. Questionnaire

a. When was your agency established?

b. Please explain your agency’s status: fully independent, a branch office, subsidiary, member of an affiliate network, etc. If your agency is a subsidiary, list your parent firm and your agency’s relation to it.

c. If you have more than one office, which office would serve the account?

d. Please list the total number of full-time personnel on your staff, identifying them by the department and by professional/support status. (Do not include consultants, freelance, part-time or contract-service staff.)

e. How many clients have you added in the past five years?
f. Please outline the tourism-related experience of your current staff members who would work on this account. (Include experience outside your agency and outside the advertising field.) As a result of their experience, what opinions do your staff members hold about the way an organization such as the GCCVB should develop marketing/advertising within the tourism field?

g. Exactly who in your agency's management would be assigned to GCCVB's account (creative/account executive), and how much of their time would be spent on the account?

h. Who, within the agency, would take prime responsibility for and have final authority on the account?

i. Include a brief discussion of your media and creative departments' operational structure.

j. How do you normally charge for your services?

k. After reviewing the scope of work, what do you anticipate your costs to be? Please denote specifically your costs encompassing creative planning, production, advertising, web maintenance, media relations, etc. in regard to the current budget noted in #3 above.

l. If you would like to make any additional comments indicating how you could contribute to the growth of the Greenbrier County destination and further encompass attractions throughout the county, please do so.

13. Terms and Conditions

a. The bid prices shall include all labor, materials, freight and taxes, delivery, insurance, etc., to cover the finished work.

b. The GCCVB specifically reserves the right to reject any conditional bid and will normally reject those who make it impossible to determine the true amount of the bid.

c. The agency shall be responsible to the GCCVB for all acts and omissions of employees or subcontractors while performing any work-related directly or indirectly with the project covered by the contract documents or related instruction and documents.

d. All work that does not conform to the contract documents shall be rejected and considered defective. The work shall not be considered complete until all rejected work is completed according to the contract documents. The agency shall promptly correct all rejected work.
e. The GCCVB, without invalidating the MOU, may order changes in the work consisting of additions, modifications, or deletions to the contract. The contract price and time of completion will be adjusted accordingly. All such changes in the work shall be authorized in writing and signed by the Executive Director or Marketing Director of the GCCVB.

f. The agency shall indemnify and hold harmless the GCCVB, its Board of Directors, representatives, employees, etc., from all suits, actions, or claims of any character brought about because of any injuries or damages received or sustained by any person or persons employed or contracted by the agency working or involved in this contract.

g. For questions related to this bid, contact Kara Dense (304-646-7582) or kdense@greenbrierwv.com. All information obtained during this bid process, by all bidders or by the selected agency during the course of its relationship with the Bureau, is considered confidential.

h. All agencies submitting a bid must sign and submit the Bid Acknowledgement Form that also contains a non-disclosure statement. Only bids received by agencies with this form on file will be considered.

i. The GCCVB acknowledges that information obtained from bidders may be proprietary. Upon receipt and acceptance of any bid resulting from this request, the Bureau affirms the confidentiality of all information contained in the bid document. Only duly appointed members of the selection committee and the Executive Committee of the Bureau shall have access to information and will treat the information on a confidential basis.

j. Bids will not be considered from vendors who are currently involved in official financial reorganization or bankruptcy proceedings.

14. Proposal Delivery

Please deliver one digital version of the proposal to the e-mail address below. Written proposals and/or other materials may be sent to the address below. The deadline to accept proposals is 5:00 p.m. on March 31, 2021.

Kara D. Dense, Executive Director
Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau
905 Washington Street W
Lewisburg, WV 24901
kdense@greenbrierwv.com
GCCVB Bid Acknowledgement Form

______________________________ acknowledges receipt of the request for proposal from the Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau for marketing & advertising and/or website services.

The agency affirms that it is a legal corporation that may operate in the state of West Virginia. It is acknowledged that the request for proposal has been read in its entirety and that the information contained is understood and that the questions will be answered in a full and comprehensive manner.

It is also acknowledged by signing and returning this form that all information obtained during discussion or correspondence may be of a proprietary nature and should be treated as confidential. Further, by signing and returning this form, the individual and all individuals within the agency agree to conform to conditions of non-disclosure during discussions, fact-finding, and during the life of the contract if the agency listed below is selected.

______________________________
Name Printed

______________________________
Signature

______________________________
Name of Agency

______________________________
Date

Please e-mail this form by February 19 at 5:00 p.m. to:

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