

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Place Branding for Gaston County, NC

Issued by: Gaston County Tourism, GoGastonNC
GoGastonNC.org

Issue Date:
Friday, 4/17/2025

Proposal Due Date:
Friday, 5/22/2025

1. Introduction

Gaston County Tourism (GoGastonNC) seeks proposals from qualified branding agencies or consultants to develop a comprehensive **place branding strategy** for Gaston County, NC. The goal is to establish a **cohesive, compelling, and authentic brand identity** that enhances the county's reputation, attracts visitors, supports economic growth, fosters community pride, and engages local businesses and residents. The selected agency must also help **navigate collaboration with the towns and stakeholders** to ensure the county-wide brand complements, rather than competes with, existing identities.

2. Background

Gaston County is a dynamic and growing destination known for its **historic downtowns, outdoor recreation, and welcoming communities**. Located just west of Charlotte, NC, it offers a mix of **rural charm, adventure tourism, and cultural experiences**. The county has seen a rise in tourism and economic development, necessitating a **strong, unified brand identity** to highlight its unique offerings and competitive advantages.

A key component of this branding initiative is to ensure **broad community involvement and support**, encouraging **residents, business owners, and local organizations** to embrace and advocate for the brand. The branding effort must also respect and complement the existing **identities of the towns within Gaston County**, fostering collaboration rather than imposing a singular brand approach. Additionally, the county will retain its **current color palette** and website, and the new brand must follow these established visual guidelines.

3. Scope of Work

The selected agency will develop a **comprehensive place branding strategy** that includes:

A. Research & Discovery

- Conduct stakeholder interviews with **residents, business owners, local officials, and visitors**.
- Analyze **competitor branding** from comparable counties and regions.
- Evaluate current perceptions of Gaston County from **tourists, residents, and businesses**.
- Conduct surveys and/or focus groups to gather community insights and preferences.
- Engage **municipal representatives** to understand how the county brand can align with and support individual town branding efforts.

B. Brand Development

- Create a **brand identity** (logo, tagline, messaging, and visual assets) that integrates with the county's **existing color palette**.
- Define **brand values, personality, and positioning**.
- Develop a **brand story** that aligns with the county's tourism, economic, and community engagement goals.
- Provide **brand guidelines** for consistency across marketing channels and community-driven initiatives.

C. Community & Business Engagement

- Develop strategies to **integrate local businesses, organizations, and residents** into the brand identity.
- Create **toolkits and materials** for businesses and residents to adopt and promote the brand.
- Provide recommendations for **co-branded partnerships** and sponsorships.
- Establish a framework for **working with town governments** to encourage adoption without overriding their existing identities.

D. Marketing & Implementation Strategy

- Develop a **strategic marketing plan** for brand rollout.
- Provide **recommendations for digital, print, and experiential marketing**.
- Outline an **activation strategy** for businesses, local government, and community partners.
- Recommend **social media, website, and PR** strategies to maintain brand engagement.

4. Deliverables

- Comprehensive **brand strategy document**.
- Visual identity package (**logo, typography, and design assets**) that adheres to the county's **existing color palette**.
- Brand messaging and storytelling guidelines.
- Implementation roadmap for **brand launch, community integration, and sustainability**.
- Toolkits for **business and resident participation**.
- Strategy for **collaborating with local towns** to ensure brand cohesion.
- Final presentation to key stakeholders.

5. Budget

GoGastonNC has allocated **\$75k** for this project. Proposals should include a detailed cost breakdown, including **research, design, content creation, and implementation planning**.

6. Proposal Requirements

Interested agencies must submit a proposal including:

- **Cover Letter** introducing the agency and understanding of the project.
- **Company Background** including experience in place branding, community engagement, and tourism marketing.
- **Case Studies** of past projects with measurable success, particularly in community-supported branding initiatives.
- **Detailed Work Plan** with project phases and timeline.
- **Team Members** and their relevant experience.
- **Budget Proposal** with a breakdown of costs.
- **References** from previous clients.

7. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- **Experience and expertise** in place branding, community engagement, and tourism marketing (25%).
- **Creativity and strategic approach** to branding and business/community integration (25%).
- **Proven success** in similar projects (20%).
- **Understanding of Gaston County** and its unique opportunities (15%).
- **Budget feasibility** and value for investment (15%).
- **Ability to work collaboratively with town governments** without undermining their existing branding (bonus consideration).

8. Submission Process

Proposals must be submitted by 5/22/25

Submission Contact: Melissa McCauley, melissa.mccauley@gastongov.com

Submission Format: Digital PDF preferred.

9. Timeline

- **RFP Released:** Friday, 4/17/25
- **Deadline for Questions:** 5/2/25
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** 5/22/25
- **Review & Shortlist Selection:** 6/5/25
- **Interviews (if necessary):** 6/12/25
- **Final Selection & Contract Award:** 5/30/25
- **Project Kickoff:** 6/20/25

10. Terms & Conditions

- Gaston County reserves the right to **accept or reject any proposal**.
- All materials created during the project will become **the property of Gaston County Tourism**.
- The selected agency must adhere to all **local, state, and federal regulations**.
- The selected agency must demonstrate an ability to **work collaboratively with the county's municipalities**, ensuring that towns are part of the branding effort while maintaining their own distinct identities.

For inquiries regarding this RFP, please contact:

Melissa McCauley

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Gaston County Tourism, GoGastonNC

We look forward to receiving your proposal and partnering to create a compelling brand for Gaston County resonates with both visitors and residents alike!