

Request for Proposals

Communications / Public Relations Firm

Long Beach, California
Downtown Long Beach Associates



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INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA) seeks professional consultant services to evaluate and recommend improvements to the organization's internal and external communications. Known within Long Beach as the "Downtown" area, Downtown contains a mix of commercial (both office and retail), institutional, civic, and residential properties. Downtown is regarded as the civic and ceremonial heart of the greater Long Beach community.

The DLBA is a private, non-profit organization that administers the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID). The organization is directed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of Downtown property owners, business representatives, residents, and community leaders. Representing a wide array of community members and interests, the DLBA serves a large and diverse constituency that demands the highest quality of service and responsiveness. For reference, there are approximately 1,300 companies within the Downtown, roughly 15,000 residential units, and over a million square feet of street-level retail space. A comprehensive market study of the Downtown was recently completed by the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency and is available for review at www.longbeachrda.org.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

As a BID, the DLBA has both direct and indirect stakeholders. Individuals that own property or businesses with the Downtown area directly contribute to the organization financially, whereas any individual that enters the Downtown experiences the programs and efforts of the organization. Whether through the production of a special event that attracts thousands of metropolitan-area residents, graffiti abatement programs, business development exercises, or governmental advocacy, the efforts of the DLBA help to shape the overall experience of the Downtown.

The DLBA utilizes a wide array of mediums to communicate key messages and other important information to its constituency and wider audiences. At the forefront is the organization's website, www.downtownlongbeach.org, which receives more than 140,000 unique views annually. DLBA staff recently conducted a consumer survey regarding its website, and those results will be made available to the selected consultant(s). The DLBA also conducts annual surveys to better understand the needs and priorities of the community. That information is used annually to assist in the development of the organization's budget and work plan, and when appropriate, to aid in the development on multi-year organizational strategic plans.

Additional communications tools include but are not limited to: bi-monthly e-newsletters sent to nearly 20,000 recipients, printed collateral designed to appeal to visitors, an annual organizational report released each year in concert with the DLBA-produced "State of the Downtown" event, economic development advertising and collateral

designed for business interests, mobile device applications, and numerous short-run collateral pieces designed to draw awareness to a particular promotion or other opportunity.

Within the last year, the organization has demonstrated considerable attention to aligning the design of its collateral under a single design direction. That effort has produced laudable results. Examples of this new identity package include the organization's new logo, the 2010 Downtown Economic Profile, Downtown Deals, and more. The website is currently being redesigned to embody this identity. At this time, the DLBA hopes to build upon its recent successes by honing in on core messaging, communications tools and associated protocols to develop a more effective and efficient communications plan for the organization. As a goal for this effort, the DLBA hopes to position itself as *the trusted, go-to resource for information about the Downtown*.

ANTICIPATED SCOPE OF WORK

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP should be responsive to the following suggested scope of work. However, respondents are encouraged to deviate from this scope of work should it be determined that such deviation will better advance the project. Reasons for such deviations should be described as part of the proposal narrative.

1. **Startup Meeting:** The consultant(s) will meet, preferably in person but optionally via conference call, with the DLBA's project team, which shall consist of Kraig Kojan, DLBA President & CEO; Kristopher Larson, DLBA Vice President; Steve Sheldon, DLBA Marketing and Special Events Manager; and others who may be later identified. Key action items for the meeting include the finalization of the scope, scheduling, milestones, and expected deliverables.
2. **Current Communications Projects Audit:** Consultant(s) will work with DLBA staff to develop a comprehensive audit of the various external communications tools utilized, their purpose, distribution, intended audiences.
3. **Initial Feedback Collection:** Once familiarized with existing tools, the consultant(s) will hold two separate charrette-style meetings with DLBA staff and board members to collect preliminary feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of DLBA communications tools and processes. The purpose of the meetings is to gain an understanding of both internal and external perceptions of DLBA communications-associated activities, their associated strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement therein.

4. **Defining of Audiences:** Consultant(s) will develop a matrix displaying the DLBA's audience segmentation, and will conduct research to determine what types, preferred mediums for and frequency of communication are best suited to produce the most effective, efficient, and equitable message penetration for each audience.
5. **Development of Core Messaging:** Using an ad hoc committee format, the consultant(s) will engage DLBA staff, Board members, and other key stakeholders in defining the organization's key messages. Additionally, committee members will be asked to assist in the development of metrics to evaluate the success of future DLBA communications and provide input regarding those companies, organizations, etc. that demonstrate the most effective local communications. DLBA staff will handle the administrative responsibilities involved in developing the invitation list and other functions needed to assemble the group.
6. **Development of Applied Messaging:** Utilizing the previously developed core messaging and audience segmentation, the consultant shall develop nuanced, applied messaging designed to appeal to each of the individual audiences defined in Task 4.
7. **Best Practices Review:** Using the information and preferences provided by the Board, staff, and ad hoc committees, the consultant(s) shall build upon that base of input and develop a best practices synthesis and summary document to include their own analysis of effective local communications efforts within the local area supplemented by national or international best practices in communications methodology.
8. **Internal Communications Protocols:** Following the development of the draft core messages, applied messaging, existing internal information flow, and the determination of the appropriate mediums, the consultant(s) shall develop a list of recommendations for process flow within the organization to ensure the delivery of consistent, timely, and effective messaging to the organization's audiences.
9. **Refine Recommendations:** After developing the internal and external recommendations, the consultant shall present those recommendations to the ad hoc committee utilized in Task 5 to capture feedback needed to refine the final recommendations.
10. **Final Recommendations Presentation:** The consultant(s) will provide the DLBA's Board of Directors with a detailed presentation regarding the process, recommendations, and implementation steps (including any staffing reallocation needed) regarding the development of the recommended organizational communications plan.

11. **Implementation Guidance:** Following the completion of the process and a review by the Board of Directors, the consultant(s) shall periodically advise DLBA staff on the implementation of the recommendations. These periodic reviews shall occur at 15, 30, 60, and 90 day intervals following the Board's review and will ideally occur in-person but can be accommodated via conference call if long distance travel and budget precludes in-person visits.

Deliverables

Project deliverables shall consist of the following:

- Draft and final reports detailing the consultant's process, findings, and recommendations.
- A PowerPoint presentation to the Board of Directors summarizing the study findings and recommendations.

Project Schedule

A 90-120 day timeline is anticipated from startup to the delivery of the recommendations. The final presentation to the Board of Directors may occur outside of this timeframe by a period of weeks or months.

PROPOSAL DETAILS

Registration of Intent

All interested consultants are encouraged to send an email to Kristopher Larson registering their interest in responding. The email should also identify the contact information for a point person within the firm and detail how the firm learned about the RFP. All firms expressing interest will be added to an email distribution list (see Question and Answer Period below). Firms failing to register in this manner may not receive all information relevant to the preparation of their proposals.

Submittal Requirements

Four hard copies of the proposal are due by close of business on November 19, 2010. Proposals are to be submitted to Kristopher Larson at the address on the cover of this RFP. Proposals must include the following items:

- Cover letter

- Project understanding
- Scope of work
- Two to four examples of and references from similar work
- Proposed budget, including consultant fees and direct expenses
- Proposed staffing, including resumes for all project staff
- Proposed timeline (December, 2010 – March, 2011 preferred)

Project Budget

Per DLBA policy, the project budget is not disclosed. However, the amount of funding available for this study is modest but fair, and respondents should plan their scope of work and other aspects of their proposal accordingly. DLBA staff will work with the selected consultant to minimize consultant time and expense related to data collection and travel.

Question and Answer Period

Any questions regarding the proposal may be submitted by email only to Kristopher Larson at KristopherL@DLBA.org. The deadline for submitting questions is November 10, 2010. All questions will be answered via email and CC'd to all *registered* consultants in the order in which they are received.

Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed by a four-person selection committee comprised of DLBA staff plus selected community stakeholders. In-person interviewing of consultants is preferred, but not mandatory. The decision will be made based on the proposal, references, and interviews. The selection criteria shall include:

1. Quality and completeness of the proposal
2. Consultant's understanding of the project
3. Demonstrated experience with similar projects
4. Qualifications, references, and capability of key staff
5. Availability of staff assigned to the project
6. Reasonableness of proposed hours and fees
7. Ability to work closely with DLBA staff during all phases of work. A strong, positive, and responsive working relationship must be maintained.

Based on the above criteria, the selection committee will identify a first and second choice to undertake the project. This recommendation will be forwarded to the DLBA President & CEO for approval. Following the approval, the

project manager will work with the top consultant to finalize the scope of work, the budget, and the final contract. Should the project manager be unable to reach an agreement with the selected firm regarding scope and budget, the project manager will begin negotiations with the second choice firm.

All proposals submitted shall become the property of the DLBA. The DLBA reserves the right to reject any or all responses to this RFP, to advertise for new RFP responses, or to accept any RFP responses deemed to be in the best interest of the community.

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