

Statement from the Executive Director (ED)

The Vidalia® Onion Committee (the “VOC”) , located in Vidalia, GA, has opened a search for marketing/public relations agency to work with us for the upcoming Vidalia onion season. The VOC’s goal is to broaden the exposure of Vidalia name and highlight the unique characteristics of the Vidalia sweet onion. It is important to note that the Vidalia sweet onion is the pioneer of the sweet onion category; however, we have seen a proliferation of other yellow onions attempting to emulate our success by marketing themselves in the sweet onion category, e.g., Texas 10-15, Walla Walla, etc.

We would like to provide you with some background information on the Vidalia sweet onion to assist you in this process:

- The Vidalia name, when used in connection with onions, is protected by a federally registered trademark (owned by the Georgia Department of Agriculture).
- The growing and packing of Vidalia sweet onions is regulated by both a state law and a federal marketing order – this means that a Vidalia onion can only be grown and packed in a specific region of Georgia.
- Vidalia sweet onions are the Official State Vegetable of Georgia.
- Vidalia sweet onions have an annual farm gate value of \$125-150-million, typically making it the top vegetable commodity for the State of Georgia.
- Vidalia sweet onions are only available seasonally (mid-to-late-April through early September).
- Our primary, direct customers are retailers.

Susan Waters, Executive Director
Vidalia® Onion Committee
Phone 912.537.1918
swaters@vidaliaonion.org
VidaliaOnion.org

VOC Overview

The Vidalia® Onion Committee is a nonprofit commodity group that represents all growers and handlers of Vidalia Onions, providing both marketing and research functions on their behalf. All growers and handlers of Vidalia Onions must:

- 1) Be registered with the State of Georgia, which oversees the Vidalia® certification mark on their behalf.
- 2) Comply with the Federal Marketing Order by which the Vidalia® Onion Committee (VOC) exists and pay assessments to the VOC to execute those marketing and research functions.

The Vidalia® Onion Committee administers locally the Federal Marketing Order with oversight by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Federal Marketing Order for Vidalia Onions was established in 1989 under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 and is codified in Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 955. The VOC has authority to assess a mandatory assessment on all handlers in the production area to fund production research, marketing research and development, and marketing promotion programs, including paid advertising.

In addition to the federal protection provided by the Federal Marketing Order, the Vidalia certification mark is owned by the Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture. The Commissioner of Agriculture is authorized to take all actions necessary and appropriate to create, register, license, promote, and protect a trademark for use on or in connection with the sale or promotion of Vidalia onions and products containing Vidalia onions. The Commissioner is authorized to impose and collect a royalty or license fee for the use of such trademark on products containing Vidalia onions or the packaging containing such onion products.

The Vidalia® Onion Committee consists of nine members who administer the terms and provisions of the Federal Marketing Order. Eight members are producers and one is a public member. At least four of the producer members are producer-handlers. Each member has an alternate who shares the same qualifications as that member.

The VOC employs an Executive Director (“ED”) who is authorized to act on its behalf as outlined in the Committee by-laws. That ED is authorized to hire additional staff, which currently includes an Executive Assistant and a Compliance Officer. The ED also decides when jobs should be outsourced and is responsible for managing those outsourced jobs and personnel. All communication with the Committee should be directed through the ED.

Vidalia onion means all varieties of *Allium cepa* of the hybrid yellow granex, granex parentage or any other similar variety recommended by the committee and approved by the Secretary, that are grown in the production area.

Handler is synonymous with *shipper* and means any person (except a common or contract carrier of Vidalia onions owned by another person) who handles Vidalia onions, or causes Vidalia onions to be handled.

Handle or *ship* means to package, load, sell, transport, or in any other way to place Vidalia onions, or cause Vidalia onions to be placed, in the current of commerce within the production area or between the production area and any point outside thereof. Such term shall not include the transportation, sale, or delivery of field-run Vidalia onions to a person within the production area for the purpose of having such Vidalia onions prepared for market.

Producer is synonymous with *grower* and means any person engaged in a proprietary capacity in the production of Vidalia onions for market.

Producer-Handler means a producer who handles Vidalia onions.

Services Required

The VOC needs a full-service marketing/public relations organization to assist it in developing a coherent, focused marketing plan to broaden recognition of the Vidalia name among multiple market sectors. The VOC believes that this plan should highlight the unique characteristics of the Vidalia sweet onion, including its limited availability (seasonality and regional nature). Once the marketing campaign plan is developed and approved by the VOC, the marketing organization will coordinate the marketing campaign plan, including purchase of mailing lists, design and content of all communications pieces, physically mailing or emailing all correspondence including postage, making travel arrangements, setting up interviews, etc. The marketing organization should budget to pay all costs associated with the production of communication pieces, including photography. If the campaign includes conferences, trade shows, or other events requiring travel, the marketing organization should pay travel expenses for their representatives. The VOC pays separately for travel expenses incurred by the ED.

The Executive Director is the official spokesperson for the VOC. However, a marketing organization representative may be requested to represent the VOC on certain occasions. In the past, the VOC has established a Chef Advisory Board made up of relevant, esteemed chefs from around the country. These chefs have created Vidalia onion recipes for press materials and brochures, and they have at times made public appearances on behalf of the VOC.

While print advertising—both consumer and trade—has traditionally been generated directly out of the VOC office, we do purchase limited print and/or online advertising each year and are receptive to how paid advertising might work into our marketing plan.

Questionnaire Overview

The following questionnaire was designed to gather general information about your company's experience, *particularly in the area of food, commodity board, or agricultural public relations.*

If company has more than one office, *please indicate which offices service what accounts and which accounts are serviced by the office that would service the Vidalia account.*

Questionnaire

Company Background:

1. Company contact person (please include company, contact person name, address, direct phone line, email and web site).
2. When was company established?
3. Please provide a list of current clients. Please note longevity of each account as well as client contact.
4. Please note any accounts lost during the last three years and reasons.
5. What were the total billings of your office for the last two years? What is your smallest account? What is your largest account? What is median account size?

Personnel:

6. Please provide a brief background for each employee **who would work on the Vidalia onion account.** Please **include name and title as well as standard hourly rates for those individuals.**
7. If you have multiple offices, which office would primarily handle the account? We would prefer the office be on (1) Eastern or (2) Central Time but are not otherwise concerned about its geographic proximity to Georgia.
8. Are any current employees in your office fluent in Spanish?
9. What services do you take full responsibility for executing and what services do you outsource?

Business Philosophy:

10. Describe your company's competitive advantage over that of other companies.
11. What method do you use for controlling the quality of your work?
12. What method do you have for measuring the effectiveness of your public relations work?
13. What products' marketing successes has your company recently contributed to? (Please submit up to 5 case studies and/or samples). Please include at least one example that is similar in size to this account.

Request for Proposal Overview

Please submit a public relations proposal to represent the Vidalia Onion Committee during the 2017 calendar year. Please base your proposal on an estimated budget of \$150,000. The proposal should be designed to meet the following objectives:

- **Develop a marketing campaign to rejuvenate the Vidalia brand, highlighting its unique characteristics, and establishing the Vidalia sweet onion as the premium product in the sweet onion category.**
 - **The campaign should target the retail sector and should include a detailed plan of action to reach this sector**
 - **The campaign should also include a plan of action to increase and broaden consumer awareness.**

Request for Proposal

Your proposal should include the following:

- Recommended target audience(s)
- Recommended target markets(s) and or target retailers
- Specific tactics to reach target audiences including:
 - tactic overview
 - measurable objective of tactic
 - budget (please show break out of fees/compensation and out-of-pocket expenses)
 - timeline
- Specific tactics (i.e. in-store demonstrations, point-of-sales materials, retail incentive programs) including:
 - tactic overview
 - measurable objective of tactic
 - budget (please show break out of fees/compensation and out-of-pocket expenses)
 - timeline

Budget

- **Please base proposal on \$150,000.**
- **Make sure to include a break-out of hard costs and fees.**

Submission Guidelines & Deadline

Please notify the VOC at the following email by **Friday, November 11, 2016** if you plan to **participate in this proposal process**.

Provide one **electronic copy** of the questionnaire and proposal to swaters@vidaliaonion.org and **one hard copy of both**, along with any samples of your work **particularly for food or commodity boards and for similar-sized groups**, to:

Susan Waters
Executive Director
Vidalia® Onion Committee
PO Box 1609
Vidalia, GA 30475

Street Address for Fed-Ex or UPS:

100 Vidalia Sweet Onion Dr.
Vidalia, GA 30474

Deadline for questionnaire and proposal is Friday, December 2, 2016.

Please limit response to not more than 25 pages.

***Any and all* questions should be directed to Susan Waters at swaters@vidaliaonion.org.**

We will be narrowing down the firms that we would like to present to the VOC in person to be scheduled during the first two weeks of December. **Please note that we will expect the team that presents to be the same team that will work on the account.**