



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: September 4, 2018
TO: Community Development & Visit Fort Bragg Committees
FROM: Scott Schneider, Administrative Services Director
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: **Receive Report and Make Recommendation to City Council Regarding Promotional Program Services Including Website Design, Development and Deployment; Social Media Content Creation; Design/Creative Services; Public Relations Services; and Marketing/Advertising Services**

ISSUE:

On June 12, 2017, City Council approved the Visit Fort Bragg Marketing & Promotions Action Plan ("VFB Action Plan"), which was prepared by City staff with extensive input from hotel operators, community and business groups and Visit Fort Bragg Committee. The first task in the VFB Action Plan was to develop a brand for Visit Fort Bragg. Additional tasks included in the plan were put on hold due a reorganization of the Visit Fort Bragg promotional program.

With the reorganization of the Visit Fort Bragg Committee complete, the scope of work for Website Design, Development and Deployment was reviewed and approved by City Council at its April 23, 2018 meeting. The remaining scopes of work which include a majority of the remaining tasks were presented to the Community Development Committee for review at its June 12, 2018 meeting. These scopes of work include social media content creation; design/creative services; public relations services; and marketing/advertising services. One Request for Proposal ("RFP") which included all five scopes of work was released on July 17, 2018. The RFP is included as Attachment 1.

The RFP stipulated respondents could respond to a single proposal for any number of the individual scopes of work or a single scope of work or a combination thereof. Regardless of how many individual scopes of work each respondent applied for, each proposal would be given equal consideration. The scopes of work and the RFP were developed to allow for the broadest array of responses from qualified firms, but with enough specificity to ensure quality responses could be properly evaluated. With Fort Bragg just starting a full promotional program, it was important to allow responders to add their own ideas and creativity to their responses.

The distribution list for the RFP included 58 marketing professionals whose contact information was provided by various regional tourism entities, including many local firms and also included respondents to the branding RFP released in June of 2017. In addition, the RFP was released to interested parties who have registered for notifications from the City's Bids and RFPs page. By the response due date of August 13, 2018, 18 responses were received from 16 different agencies.

A review committee comprised of 5 individuals – two members of the Visit Fort Bragg Committee and three members representing Fort Bragg's tourism industry and was supported by the Project Manager and City staff - who narrowed the pool to six finalists. These finalists participated in extensive interviews which were conducted on August 27 and 28. Staff would like to thank the RFP ad hoc review committee for the 4 days of in person review and interviews, as well as the dozens of hours of their own review time they put in to this exciting project:

1. Nancy Bennett - Visit Fort Bragg Committee member
2. Robert Pinoli - Visit Fort Bragg Committee member
3. Molly Barker - Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
4. Alison de Grassi - Visit Mendocino County
5. John Scott - Orso Palazzo, LLC

Valuable committee member's time was spent not only interviewing the six finalists, but reading through 18 proposals, many of which were over 50 pages in length.

The job of reviewing and ranking the 18 proposals included a full evaluation of each proposal to help committee members decipher which responses they felt would work best to implement Fort Bragg's new marketing and promotions program. Meetings were held on August 20 and 21 to discuss each of the proposals and come to a decision on those to invite for interviews the following week.

The six responders selected to be interviewed were asked to make a 30-minute presentation to the committee with additional time (30 – 60 minutes) for questions and answers. Respondents were emailed interview details on August 22 which included presentation guidelines which acted as a way to get to know the responders and allow the ad hoc committee to get a feeling of how they would fit with Fort Bragg's new promotional program. A copy of the instructions is attached to this report.

The six finalists which were selected for interviews include the following (in alphabetical order, with the scopes of works they responded to and their location):

- AMF (all 5 scopes of work – San Luis Obispo, CA)
- Chamber of Commerce (social media content creation; design/creative services – Fort Bragg)
- Crowd (all 5 scopes of work – multiple locations with San Francisco as the point of contact)
- Cubic, Inc. (all scopes of work except public relations services – Tulsa, OK)
- Inkfish Design (website design, development & deployment – Fort Bragg)
- The Abbi Agency (all 5 scopes of work – Reno, NV)

All interviews were conducted in person. Respondents were each asked a series of probing questions designed to generate additional information about the consultants' capabilities, qualifications, and experience, with a focus on Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) experience; specifics about their process; and proposed outreach methods. The questions, which were developed by the committee, are included as Attachment 3.

The review panel was impressed with the qualifications of all finalists and had a difficult time narrowing down the choices. A couple of things became clear to the committee during the interview and selection process:

1. It is in the best interest for the management, execution and overall success of the promotional program to have one consultant executing all services outlined in the RFP. This not only helps with coordination and management of the work, but more importantly, it guarantees a program that is cohesive, follows the Marketing Plan and speaks to potential visitors with a single brand strategy and narrative through all of the promotional channels (i.e. website, social media, public relations, collateral material, etc.). This is especially vital as the promotional program and voice is being developed and executed over the next 6 – 9 months. Moving forward, a program that has been successful for several years will have a much easier time utilizing multiple consultants for different services as strengths, weaknesses, needs, desires and success of the program and activities get established and evolve.
2. It is ideal to have a local individual/business work force chosen by the consultant for social media efforts – specifically content creation – as a person “on the ground” can provide quick, on-the-fly content to enhance social media efforts. This can include content around local events, conversations with local businesses and personalities and testimonials from current visitors – all of which provide a sense of place to the social media audience.

After extensive discussion and debate, the committee was asked to rank their top three choices in order to evaluate whether a clear “winner” was apparent. The results of the ranking were Cubic, Inc. as the number one choice and The Abbi Agency coming in at a close second. Staff thought it most beneficial to ask both agencies to present the same presentation to this Committee as was presented to the ad hoc committee – albeit 15 minutes instead of 30. References checks of the two finalists were conducted prior to today's meeting.

The ad hoc committee is requesting the Visit Fort Bragg Committee receive presentations from both Cubic, Inc. and The Abbi Agency – proposals are attached. A matrix consisting of the four evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP is being provided (Attachment 4) to help evaluate the proposals and come up with a final recommendation for Council.

It is the hope of the ad hoc committee that a recommendation be made today with a proposed contract, including a scope of services, presented to Council for consideration at its September 24th meeting. This allows for activities to get underway beginning October 1, 2018. Should Cubic, Inc. be chosen as the recommended Agency, a follow-up RFP will be distributed specifically for public relations services as no responses were received which included only those services. It is estimated that public relations activities will begin 60-90 days following the start of the remaining activities outlined in the RFP.

Recommendation

Receive presentations from both Cubic, Inc. and The Abbi Agency and evaluate the proposals based on the RFP evaluation criteria matrix provided (Attachment 4).

Provide a recommendation to the City Council on which agency(s) should be awarded the scopes of work outlined in the RFP.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Request for Proposal
2. Interview/Presentation Guidelines
3. Suggested Interview Questions
4. Finalist Evaluation Criteria
5. Cubic, Inc. Proposal
6. The Abbi Agency Proposal