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## **Request for Proposal**

Domestic Public Relations Services

*Submitted: March 1, 2024*

### **Overview**

Travel Portland is the official destination marketing and management organization (DMMO) for the city of Portland, Oregon and the Regional DMO for the Portland Region under the statewide tourism program. Its mission is to strengthen the local economy by marketing Portland and the surrounding area as a preferred destination for meetings, conventions, and leisure travel. Travel Portland is committed to telling stories that showcase the city's character, diversity and tourism assets authentically to strengthen its reputation as a top-tier tourism destination.

Located in the Pacific Northwest a couple hundred miles south of Seattle and a day's drive north of San Francisco, Portland has a reputation as a progressive city known for its DIY-attitude, thoughtful urban planning, proximity to an abundance of nature, all are welcome mindset, and friendly residents. The city is a renowned culinary capital well regarded for its restaurant and dining industry which includes scores of high-quality dining experiences relying on locally grown or foraged seasonal ingredients, and arguably the country's best street food culture with hundreds of food carts spread throughout the city. Portland is also known as a creative city home to large brands such as Nike and Columbia Sportswear, but also smaller yet influential brands such as WildFang and Keen Footwear. The entrepreneurial nature of the city and its residents is found throughout its streets with thousands of small, owner-operated businesses.

From recent James Beard nominations to best of lists and media favorites, BIPOC business owners are at the heart of Portland's entrepreneurial spirit. In truth, Black, Asian and Latinx business owners have long played a crucial role in the thriving culinary and makers landscape of Portland. The diversity of Portland has only continued to grow over the past few years, bringing with it vibrant cultures and perspectives as many open up shop showcasing their respective trades to visitors and locals alike.

The city was a media darling leading into the pandemic where civil unrest in the summer of 2020 drew negative media attention, which evolved into negative coverage of livability issues such as homelessness, addiction, and violent crime in the years that followed. What wasn't shown on the news was that these protests were also a sparkplug for reckoning and evolution within the Portland community, hospitality industry, and beyond. While there is still much work to be done, there are more seats at the proverbial table and there is more diversity represented within it. These stories of diversity have naturally become some of our strongest



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and most important pitches, which are well-received by travel and lifestyle media who still have a soft spot for the City of Roses and continue to write about Portland.

### **Program of Work Overview**

Leisure Travel: We are seeking an agency partner to continue earning media placements in top-tier national publications as well as targeting regional and local publications in areas where potential visitors reside such as large metro areas in California. We will rely on traditional media tactics, but also explore new efforts to deliver messaging to younger audiences that consume media in new and different ways. We will look to our agency partner to help tell the stories of Portland's diverse businesses and the diversity of the people who run them – the chefs who lend out their restaurants to pop-ups every week or act as incubators for the next generation, the bartender paving the way with new cocktail trends, or the maker who pours passion and skill in equal parts to create heirloom goods of unquestionable quality. We will ask the agency to operate as an extension of our robust internal public relations team, possessing and researching destination knowledge, sharing regular industry intelligence, drafting and delivering thoughtful and timely pitches and media strategies, etc. to help make Portland a must-visit destination for every editor, influencer, and freelancer in the U.S. The result should be impactful positive coverage for the city of Portland both nationally and in key regional markets (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle).

Meetings & Conventions: A secondary scope of work will focus on proactive and reactive media relations strategies with the meetings and convention media, positioning Portland as a premier destination for large meetings, conventions, and other group events. The priority will be earning placements that position the city as a safe, affordable, efficient, capable, and attractive destination for large meetings and conventions in these publications as well as building relationships with staff through proactive pitching, reactive requests, and on-the-ground hosting. This program operates under a separate budget as noted below.

### **Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Media Relations & Communications:**

A key pillar within the Travel Portland organization is and will remain steadfast on diverse and equitable representation of the individuals and businesses that make up our city and tourism ecosystem, but also amongst our organization, agency partners, vendors, creators, content contributors who each bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the work that we do. It is a shared mindset that touches each department, and every individual within the organization. We seek to engage partners who also share this value system.

Our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion definitions:

- **Equity**: The custom tools that identify and address inequality. Relates to the goal of everyone getting what they need to survive or succeed, whether that is access to opportunity, networks, resources or other, to reach their fullest potential. Equity is not the same as equality. Equity is not charity. Equity assumes that everyone starts from different places in terms of history, experiences, opportunities, and resources. Equity involves understanding of the root causes of disparities in our society (or region). For Travel Portland, our goal is to ensure that our policies, programs, practices and investments create conditions that are impartial, fair and provide equal possible outcomes for every individual.
- **Diversity**: It is the presence of differences. Within the workplace and our vendor contracts, this can include dimensions of race, religion, color, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), parental status, socioeconomic class, national origin, age, disability, family medical history or genetic information, political affiliation, or military service. There are also differences related to work style, life experience, education, beliefs, and ideas. Honoring these differences is essential to our commitment.
- **Inclusion**: Refers to the degree to which individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences can engage fully in the decision-making process within an organization or group. It is the practice of ensuring that people feel a sense of belonging in the workplace, ensuring that every employee feels comfortable, supported by the organization, and able to be their authentic selves.

**Program Objectives:**

- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**: Seamlessly integrate Travel Portland's EDI focus by thoughtfully working with media from diverse backgrounds and including Portland's diverse businesses into every media activity as appropriate.
- **Media Relations**: Serve as the majority proactive media arm for Travel Portland by building relationships with digital, print, and broadcast media. Secure media visits and media appointments, develop pitch materials and bring opportunities to the table that will move the needle by increasing domestic visitor arrivals to the city of Portland (both

leisure and meetings/conventions) and shine a light on Portland's diverse businesses.

- Creative Ideas: Consistently recommend, create, and execute new tactics that will keep Portland top of mind with media, leading the pack for other city DMOs around the world.
- Content Creators: Recommend and target key influencers for content creation partnerships by developing influencer campaigns and building lasting relationships with content creators.
- Reporting - Media Monitoring and Evaluation: Demonstrate the impact of our public relations campaigns to Travel Portland stakeholders in cooperation and informative to current Travel Portland reporting procedures.

### **RFP Submission Requirements**

Your proposal should demonstrate how the agency will operate as the majority proactive arm for Travel Portland's media relations program. It should be based on a full year of activities and speak to how the agency will represent Portland in both the leisure travel and meeting and convention markets, while illustrating our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the program.

In order to be considered for selection, each proposal must be complete and include the following items.

- A. Summary of Organization
  - Brief overview of agency history, experience, culture, and work style noting agency key differentiators – what makes you stand apart from other agencies?
  - Include the year in which the company was formed.
  - Which industry conferences does your agency attend annually and which professional media, tourism, and public relations associations do you hold membership?
  - Contact information such as contact name, address, and phone number. Please note the agency HQ and other cities in which the agency operates (if applicable).
  - Current and past client list (please flag any potential conflicts of interests in the Q&A portion of the RFP process).

- Size of the organization by head count, noting the number of full/ part time employees and subcontractors.

B. Industry Analysis

- Provide your perspective on the United States travel market and current marketplace conditions considering the current economic environment for both leisure travel and meetings and conventions.
- What does the current media landscape look like and how does your agency work to stay at the forefront in the minds of media?

C. Agency Team Structure

- Please include your proposed Travel Portland account team including an organizational chart. For each potential team member, please include:
  - Brief bio including client experience and media expertise, including where each team member is located in the country. Please note if there is a meeting and convention media specialist.
  - Include the length of time with the agency and in the industry.
  - Percentage of time they will be assigned to the Travel Portland account.

D. Organizational Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Please indicate if proposer is a certified Emerging Small Business (ESB), Minority/Women Business Enterprise (M/WBE), Service-Disabled Veteran (SVD) or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE and ACDBE), via Oregon state's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) at Business Oregon (<https://www.oregon.gov/biz/programs/cobid/pages/default.aspx>) or another comparable certification. If you do not possess an official designation, but would qualify as such, mention that also, and provide a short explanation about why you would qualify.
- Please describe how your organization has demonstrated its commitment to internal equity, diversity, and inclusion practices. Please include your EDI statement as well as your approach to finding and engaging with minority staff, businesses and subcontractors.
- We ask that members of the proposed project team (Section C) complete a demographic survey so that we can better understand the proposed project team. Survey: <https://form.jotform.com/210554277566158>
  - Please note: All survey responses will be anonymous, and for each question, team members may choose not to self-identify. All responses will remain confidential.

E. Proposed Scope of Work

- We are keen to see how your agency thinks - how would you approach an earned media program if there were no constraints or KPI's and could focus on input instead of output? Please develop a detailed and creative proposal that discusses your recommended approach to media relations and public relations that includes (but is not limited to) the below tactics.
  - Build relationships with media on behalf of Portland both nationally and regionally with print, digital, and broadcast media.
  - Identify, draft, and deliver compelling story angles and pitches to target media.
  - Arranging media appointments for Travel Portland PR staff in key domestic markets.
  - Secure a steady stream of media visits that highlight a variety of story angles and personalities.
  - What tactics would you deploy to reach Gen Z travelers? This could include (but is not limited to) developing campaigns with content creators and influencers.
  - Conceptualize and plan compelling media events and large-scale PR activations.
  - Include any out-of-the-box ideas that would support Travel Portland's public relations efforts. How can we be different and emerge from the crowd of destinations all offering a similar line of messaging and media experience?

F. Case Studies

- Please provide at least four recent case studies from work deployed within the past seven years with a focus on:
  - *Destinations*: Share an example of a destination campaign you conceived and executed that sparked interest with national and regional media.
  - *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*: Share an example of a PR campaign that illustrates your work within EDI, whether it be garnering media coverage for a BIPOC-owned business, working with a BIPOC media contact or another relevant example.
  - *Innovation*: We are always looking to push the envelope by executing meaningful and innovative work. Please share an example of an out-of-

the-box PR campaign the agency conceived and executed, demonstrating how you pushed a client beyond the industry norm.

- *Meeting & Conventions:* Share an example of how your work in the meeting and convention space moved the needle for a client.

G. References: Please include at least three relevant client references.

H. Reporting: What are your preferred KPI's? What do you think is the best measurement of your impact and success?

**Timeline**

Deadline	RFP Event
March 1, 2024	RFP Announcement
March 15, 2024 (by 4pm PST)	Deadline to submit your Intent to Bid (Addendum A) to <a href="mailto:TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com">TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com</a>
March 15, 2024 (by 4pm PST)	Deadline for agencies to submit questions via <a href="mailto:TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com">TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com</a>
March 22, 2024	Q&A Available, which will be populated in the below link: <a href="https://travelportland.box.com/s/vnfs6bwa6ic6d5z6axd5airftegmw7bi">https://travelportland.box.com/s/vnfs6bwa6ic6d5z6axd5airftegmw7bi</a>
April 12, 2024 (by 4pm PST)	Deadline to submit proposal via <a href="mailto:TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com">TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com</a>
April 30, 2024	Finalists selected and notified
Week of May 20	Conduct in-person presentations at the Travel Portland office: Agencies moving onto the final round of the selection process should be prepared to travel at their expense to Portland for in-person interviews. We encourage the day-to-day account team to attend in-person presentations.
May 31, 2024	Selected agency announced, contract negotiations begin
July 1, 2024	Commencement date of new contract

### Program Budget and Duration

The total annual budget for agency fees and services is estimated at \$245,000 (a separate budget is available for approved media hosting, meetings, etc.). However, \$65,000 of this budget must be allocated toward the Meeting and Convention component of the contract and billed as a separate line item. The remaining \$180,000 may be allocated in any way for use towards agency services. This estimated budget is for planning purposes and will be confirmed upon awarding of the contract.

As noted above, a separate budget is available for approved out-of-pocket expenses relating to media meetings, media hosting, and other media activity.

The length of the contract is one year (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025) with potential to renew.

### Other Considerations

The selected proposer will be invited to enter into a service agreement with Travel Portland. This agreement will stipulate the terms and conditions of the services to be provided. Travel Portland reserves the right to change any terms and conditions of the service agreement prior to execution of the agreement.

- Confidentiality: It is understood that proposals may contain confidential information relating to previous client strategies, goals and results. This information will be kept private and only used in the evaluation of proposals.
- Acceptance/Rejection of Proposals: Travel Portland reserves the right, at its discretion, to reject any proposal for any reason, including proposals that do not meet the stated Criteria.
- Disclosure: Other than the name of the selected proposer, no other information regarding the candidates or their proposals shall be made public.
- Cost for Preparation of Proposals: Travel Portland is not responsible under any circumstances for any costs incurred as the result of the preparation or submission of the candidates' proposals.
- Equal Opportunity: Travel Portland strongly encourages businesses that represent,





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celebrate and encourage diversity to submit proposals in response to this RFP.

- Awarding the Project Contract: Travel Portland reserves the right to award one or multiple contracts for the outlined scope of work; Travel Portland also reserves the right to not award a contract agreement to any candidate. The contract will be negotiated with the successful respondent, to be signed prior to the commencement date of July 1, 2024.



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**Addendum A**

**Notice of Intent to Bid**

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**Due March 15, 2024 (by 4pm PST)**

**Send to:**

[TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com](mailto:TravelPortlandRFP@travelportland.com)

Name of Proposer:	
Contact Person:	
Mailing Address:	
Agency URL:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	