

Request for Proposals: Marketing and Public Relations Services

Huerfano County Solicitation #2023-02

January 4, 2023

Summary of Request

The Huerfano County Board of County Commissioners (“the County”) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to provide marketing and public relations services including, but not limited to: (1) marketing Huerfano County, through the County Tourism Board, as Spanish Peaks Country; (2) advertising County services, such as Parks, the Spanish Peaks Regional Airport, and the County Waste Transfer Station; (3) assisting the County in providing general public information and emergency communications; and (4) assisting County partner agencies with marketing and public relations needs.

Submission Information

Written submissions for the supply of the services described herein will be accepted until Tuesday, **February 7, 2023 at 4PM MT**. Any proposal received after that time will not be considered. Submitted materials may be submitted via email in PDF format to administrator@huerfano.us.

Procedural and technical questions are to be submitted in writing to Carl Young at cyoung@huerfano.us by **4PM on January 25, 2022**.

Background

Huerfano County encompasses 1,593 square miles and is home to approximately 6,800 residents. The County is governed by a three-member Board of Commissioners, elected by districts to four year terms. Huerfano County is home to two incorporated communities Walsenburg and La Veta as well as two unincorporated communities, Gardner and Cuchara.

Tourism Board

The mission of the Huerfano County Tourism Board (HCTB) is to enhance the quality of life for residents by bringing visitors to our county, having a positive impact on our economy while preserving our environment and culture. Residents of Huerfano County felt strongly enough about tourism to pass a lodging tax in 2007. HCTB has branded Huerfano County as Spanish Peaks Country, a tribute to the distinctive twin peaks that watch over the Cuchara Valley. The Peaks have been among the most important landmarks of the southwestern United States, guiding Native American tribes, Spanish and French trappers, gold seekers, hunters, and American settlers. The Industrial Revolution brought coal mining to the region to feed the Colorado Fuel and Iron Steel Mills in Pueblo. Now, with the industry gone, we have a County that is growing and attracting new residents and visitors to experience a mild climate, amazing history, beautiful landscapes, and great people. HCTB’s current digital assets include spanishpeakscountry.com, the Spanish Peaks Country Facebook Page, Instagram account, and an e-mail newsletter that reaches over 50,000 addresses. HCTB also participates in the Colorado.com lead generation service. The Tourism Board’s annual budget is typically between \$75K and \$125K depending on lodging tax revenue.

Parks and Recreation

Huerfano County has a long history of managing parks and recreational facilities, but has only recently

created a Parks and Recreation Department to manage and oversee these facilities with the goal of increasing the health and vitality of the entire Community. The Department directly manages the Huerfano County Community Center and Fiesta Park in Walsenburg as well as the Raymond Aguirre Community Center in Gardner. The County has operating agreements with locally controlled non-profits to manage three other facilities: the Parker-Fitzgerald Cuchara Mountain Park operated by the Panadero Ski Corporation; the County Fair Grounds operated by the Huerfano County Fair Board Inc.; and the Fox Theatre Walsenburg operated by the Spanish Peaks Community Foundation d.b.a. Fox Theatre Walsenburg. The County is also seeking to develop the recently acquired Thorne Ranch into a new County Park with trails, pistol and rifle shooting ranges, and RV camping as primary attractions.

Public Information and Service Promotion

The Huerfano County Board of County Commissioners has made connecting with residents a significant priority. The County has a goal of increased promotion of public services, such as the Spanish Peaks Regional Airfield and Waste Transfer Station, to promote increased utilization. The County operates a website, www.huerfano.us, as well as a Facebook Page and Twitter Account, and seeks to better utilize these resources and develop new resources, such as a County newsletter, to engage with the public. Other goals include: increased awareness of public and community meetings and activities; improved emergency and crisis communications; and generally promoting a positive public image of Huerfano County and our communities.

Outline of Services to be Provided

The selected firm(s) will be expected to service the marketing, branding, and public relations needs of Huerfano County and the Huerfano County Tourism Board's Spanish Peaks Country Destination Marketing Program. Interested parties may submit proposals to provide one or all of the services the County requires, which include, but are not limited to:

Marketing Strategy and Execution

Work closely with the County to develop a multi-year strategic direction including high level goals and objectives for the County marketing programs. The selected respondent will then develop, execute, and track results of the annual marketing plans to meet said goals and objectives. Strategic documents and annual plans will reflect the differing needs of County business units and include:

- Develop a concrete social media strategy using tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- Create coordinated marketing campaigns (print, broadcast, digital, online, email, etc.) to include a written plan addressing objectives, audience/market description, strategies, tactics, and budgets.
- Media planning & buying: media negotiations, client meetings, correspondence related to specific media plans/buys.

Public Relations

Build messaging that can be used in various channels including earned media, social media, and paid traditional media to geo-target key audiences through relevant channels to drive awareness, create an emotional connection and educate on key actions. Messaging should drive interaction and build excitement through sharing relevant content and providing opportunities to interact with Huerfano County and Spanish Peaks Country to include:

- Develop and pitch storylines and press releases, fact sheets, issue briefings, and industry highlights to the media.
- Develop and maintain targeted media lists (local, trade, and national).

- Support communication efforts (i.e., blog posts, monthly newsletters, etc.) as needed.

Content Creation

Develop creative concepts and campaign elements. This includes producing written copy and custom graphics as well as managing the process of working with subcontractors as needed. Selected respondent will work with the County to bring approved materials to their final form. Creative materials may include but are not limited to:

- print advertising
- audio/video assets
- digital graphics
- signage
- branded merchandise

Website Maintenance and Updates

Keep content on both Huerfano County websites updated and maintain the backend systems to insure minimal downtime, including:

- Keeping Event Calendars of both sites up to date as directed
- Making updates to the Business Directory of the Spanish Peaks Country Website
- Making posts or updating pages as requested
- Managing Search Engine Optimization
- Ensure website security and ADA standards are met

Qualifications

Firms must have at least 5 years experience providing the services proposed. Experience working with local governments, particularly county governments, is highly desirable.

Selection Process

Selection will be made through a four-step process. The County reserves the right to select a qualified individual or firm without holding interviews. The scoring in the first two steps is cumulative. If it is determined that interviews are not to be held, the scoring will be based on the first step, Review of Proposals submitted. The process for selection and award of the Professional Contract for Services will be as follows:

Step One	Review and scoring of Proposals submitted
Step Two	Interviews (if required)
Step Three	Selection of successful firm, negotiation of Professional Contract for Services
Step Four	County Commissioner approval of Professional Contract for Services

Anticipated Timeline

Dates are approximations for the process steps and are subject to change.

Step	Date	Selection Process
One	January 4, 2023	Solicitation Issued
	January 25, 2023	Questions may be presented prior to 4PM MT on this date.
	February 7, 2023	Proposals due at 4PM MT
	February 8, 2023	Committee Review of Proposals
	February 9, 2023	Notifications of Interviews (if required).
Two	February 17, 2023	Interviews conducted (if required).

Three	February 21, 2023	County notifies the selected proposer.
Four	February 28, 2023	Professional Contract for Services executed.

Submittal Requirements

Written submissions for the supply of the services fully described herein will be accepted until the date set forth in the Anticipated Timeline above. Any proposal received after that time will not be considered.

Submissions should be no longer than 25 pages and include:

1. Brief overview of the history and structure of the firm including structure, time in business, number of employees, and other data to assist in characterization of the firm.
2. Statement of the particular expertise and experience providing marketing and/or public relations services for local governments, including any experience with Colorado local governments, county governments, government enterprises, state and federal grants, or development projects.
3. A description of the firm's approach to client service including onboarding process, communication methods and approaches, as well as availability to take on projects and answer questions.
4. Brief description of 3 or 4 similar engagements performed by the firm within the past five years. Please provide contact information for these clients. Letters of reference are also accepted.
5. A listing of and resumes for the project lead and any others that would support the project with a summary of each team member's area of responsibilities, expertise, experience and qualifications for this work. Provide an organizational chart of the project team.
6. Cost proposal with specific payment terms and arrangements (e.g. hourly rate vs. retainer or a combination).
7. The proposing firm shall include as part of the proposal a disclosure of the name of any employee or official of Huerfano County who could be directly and personally benefited if the proposing firm is awarded a contract pursuant to this RFP. If there is nothing to disclose, the proposal shall so state.

Step 1: Review of Proposals

Following an initial screening of the proposals, the committee will select what it considers the most highly qualified individuals or firms to provide the services outlined in the scope of services. Selection will be based on the evaluation criteria set forth below. The firms or individuals submitting proposals will be ranked, and the committee will then recommend the most qualified individual or firm.

The following selection criteria will be the basis for the ranking of most qualified proposer:

Criteria	Points
Qualifications, years of relevant experience, and proven abilities in performing similar work.	30 Points
Experience working in a rural context and familiarity with Huerfano County and/or Southern Colorado	25 Points
Approach to client service, communication methods and approaches, capacity to take on projects.	25 Points
Quality of previous projects undertaken and references	20 Points
Total	100 Points

Step Two: Interviews (if required)

1. If the County determines that interviews are required in the best interest of the County, interviews will be conducted for the purpose of determining which respondent is the most highly qualified to perform the scope of services; which respondent has the personnel best able to complete the scope of services; and which responds most fully understands and is able to perform the work envisioned by the County.
2. Key personnel from proposer to be assigned to the project are required to be present and participate in the interview.
3. Respondents are asked to give a presentation on their organization and proposal. The Review Board will then ask any questions they have of the respondent.

Step Three: Selection of Finalist(s) and Negotiation of Professional Contract for Services

1. The County will negotiate with the selected finalist(s), whether individuals or firms, on a mutually agreeable payment arrangement and fee structure.
2. After the successful individual or firm is selected, the County will negotiate a final Professional Contract for Services.

Step Four: County Commissioners Approval of Professional Contract for Services

1. The successful respondent is encouraged to attend the Commissioners' meeting to answer any questions concerning the proposal, or the respondent's qualifications.
2. The County reserves the right to undertake or award supplemental or successor contracts for work related to this Contract.
3. This solicitation shall not be binding upon the County and respondent, and no services shall be performed under the terms of the proposal or the Professional Contract for Services until the Contract has been reduced to writing and approved by the County Commissioners.

Selection and Contracting Provisions**Notifications**

The County will provide timely notifications in writing (letters and/or emails) of the following actions to individuals or firms responding to the Request for Proposal as follows:

- Selection of short-listed individuals or firms for interviews (if required);
- Individuals or Firms not short-listed;
- Selection of recommended individual or firm; and County Commissioner approval.

Right to Reject

The County reserves the right to waive informalities in the proposals or fees and to reject any and all proposals and re-advertise this solicitation at any time prior to County Commissioner approval of the recommended firm or individual and the negotiated professional contract for services if doing so would be in the public interest, as determined by the county in its sole discretion. The County reserves the right to award this solicitation to the individual or firm that best fits the requirements outlined in the request for proposals. The County reserves the right to waive any informality in any submittal and/or reject all proposals, and to accept the proposal that is in the best interest of the County. The County further reserves the right to: (1) negotiate a final professional contract for services that is in the best interests of the county and the public; and (2) request any additional information county deems reasonably necessary to allow the County to evaluate, rank and select the most qualified respondent to perform the services described in this solicitation.

If the County and the selected individual or firm cannot agree on the contract, the negotiations will be

terminated, and the County reserves the right to begin negotiations with the next highest ranked respondent.

Procedure Requirements

1. Any individual or firm failing to submit information in accordance with the procedures set forth herein may be considered non-responsive.
2. All costs incurred by individuals or firms choosing to participate in this process shall be borne by the proposing individual or firm.
3. All proposals submitted regarding this solicitation are the property of the County and will only be returned to the individual or firms if requested in writing to the County at the sole discretion of the County.
4. Late submittals shall not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the individual or firms to ensure that the proposal arrives at the Huerfano County Administrator's Office, prior to the date and time stated in this solicitation.

Conflicts of Interest

Any conflicts of interest whether real or perceived by the individual or firm submitting a proposal should be fully disclosed and explained within the proposal.