



EXPLORE BUTTE COUNTY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

Professional Marketing & Media Buying Services

Release Date: June 23, 2023

Proposal Submission Deadline: August 15, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Explore Butte County ("EBC"), a non-profit destination marketing and management organization, is seeking proposals for marketing creative and media buying services from a qualified agency experienced in tourism and/or destination marketing. The agency will assist the EBC team with the development and execution of innovative, effective, and integrated programs that drive overnight visitation while reinforcing Butte County as a premier tourism destination.

The goal of this Request for Proposal ("RFP") is to identify a qualified agency(s) ("Agency") and enter into an initial contract for a term of approximately October 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024, with the option of five (5) one-year term extensions if agreed upon and approved by both EBC and Agency.

All proposals will be carefully reviewed and evaluated based on the criteria noted in this packet. Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the conditions outlined in this RFP.

Respondents are required to submit eight (8) copies of their Proposal, one (1) of which is unbound and one (1) electronic copy.

The electronic copy must be in searchable and printable Portable Document Format (.pdf) and must be submitted on a USB flash drive. Respondents should be aware that the electronic copy will be used by the EBC to produce additional printed copies of the submittal, should they be needed.

All proposals must be received no later than 17:00 PST, August 15, 2023. Proposals shall be addressed to:

Explore Butte County
326 Huss Dr
PO Box 2154
Chico, CA 95927
Attention: Nichole Farley, Executive Director

Questions should be received via email by 17:00 PST, July 7, 2023, via email to:

Nichole Farley, Executive Director
email: proposals@explorebuttecounty.com

Publish Date: June 23, 2023

ABOUT EXPLORE BUTTE COUNTY

Explore Butte County ("EBC"), is the Destination Marketing and Management Organization for Butte County. EBC is a 501(c)6 non-profit organization formed in 2015 as the owners' association for the Butte County Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID). It is considered the destination marketing and management organization for Butte County tourism.

The Butte County TBID is an assessment district originally formed in November of 2015 pursuant to the Property and Business Improvement Law of 1994. The TBID includes the communities of Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, Paradise and the unincorporated area of Butte County. The annual assessment rate is two percent (2%) of gross short-term room rental revenue. Using the assessment funds collected, Explore Butte County strategically markets the county to increase overnight stays.

EBC has a Board of Directors that includes up to seven (7) lodging property representatives and two (2) at-large community members. The organization has three (3) full-time employees: an Executive Director, a Marketing Manager, and a Community Relations Coordinator.

The vision of the association is to be at the forefront of growing and sustaining a flourishing and diverse tourism economy, making Butte County THE must-visit destination in the Northstate. Our mission is to inspire people to visit Butte County, create tourism opportunities that contribute to economic vitality, and build community through partnerships. More on our Mission, Vision, Values, and strategic direction can be found [here](#) and in the Reference section at the end of this RFP.

Butte County has over 38 hotel and lodging partners. Additionally, two new hotel properties will be online in 2023 and 2024; one in Oroville and one in Chico, with additional hotel property developments in the pipeline.

EBC oversees the production of a variety of marketing activities that may include online advertising; content marketing to include website, social media, content series, collateral, and maps; cooperative programs; and public relations programs – all designed to promote Butte County to consumers, media, and the travel trade industry. For a full review of all Butte County has to offer, visit our website ExploreButteCounty.com.

ABOUT BUTTE COUNTY

Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, about 75 minutes northeast of Sacramento, travelers on Highway 70 and Highway 99 will arrive in Butte County, where rural agricultural life meets picturesque small-town living. Butte County has five incorporated towns or cities: Biggs, Chico, Gridley, Oroville, and Paradise.

Visitors can expect countless opportunities for outdoor recreation with nearly 300 days of sunshine a year. While Butte County experiences all four seasons, the average daily high in winter is 54°F. Summers are warm and temperatures are known to exceed 100°F, yet plentiful rainfall (when there isn't a drought) in the spring keeps the lakes and streams full for recreation all summer long. Summer is the opportune time to swim in [Upper Bidwell Park](#) swimming holes, paddle board at the [Lake Oroville Forebay](#), or kayak in [Paradise Lake](#). Spring and fall are perfect for exploring our surrounding parks ([Bidwell Park](#) in Chico), ecological reserves and public lands ([North Table Mountain Ecological Reserve](#) in Oroville), and mountain trails ([Colby Mountain MTB Trails](#) in Jonesville) by foot, bike, or horse. While it does not commonly snow in the lower elevations of Butte County, you can expect to find snow in the mountains around Butte Meadows and Jonesville, which offers plentiful snowshoeing and snowmobiling activities.

Butte County possesses a rich agricultural history. Home to numerous family-owned and operated brands that range in size and production, from [Lundburg Family Farms](#) to [Burns Blossom Farms](#) to [Rancho Llano Seco](#). Agricultural education opportunities are abundant with partners like the [CSU Chico University Farm](#) and the [Sierra Oro Farm Trail](#). Agriculture also aligns with local beer and culinary offerings. Butte County is home to [Sierra Nevada Brewery](#) (Chico) and many more craft beer, cider, distillery, and wine-tasting rooms.

Butte County's most notable landmark includes the Oroville Dam. At 770 feet high, it is the tallest earthen dam in the U.S. The dam impounds [Lake Oroville](#), the second largest man-made lake in the state of California.

BRAND POSITIONING

EBC's brand is based on the brand archetype, The Explorer, a person who is an adventurer, pioneer, and seeker. Our voice is of open-mindedness, resourcefulness, tolerance, and ambition. Our brand exists to help our visitors and prospective visitors go on adventures and explore new things so they can reach self-actualization. The Explorer allows themselves to have self-expression because they are free of judgment. For

Butte County, being an explorer and a person of adventure does not mean having to mountain bike down a single track in Upper Bidwell or snowmobile in Jonesville. Adventure for our visitors may include shopping in Downtown Oroville, visiting the Thursday Night Market in Downtown Chico, or wine tasting in the Durham Wine District. Exploration and adventure in Butte County is accessible for what each person seeks.

Note: EBC does not have a brand promise or a tagline, which we are open to exploring with the Agency partner. We are also not looking to re-brand; however, we are looking for an Agency partner to build upon and continue to enhance and evolve our [brand positioning](#).

TARGET MARKETS

The primary focus for the agency is to drive leisure traveler demand, with the possibility of growing the program into the Southern California regional market, travel trade groups, and internationally if the budget allows.

EBC focuses on two audience groups:

1. LEISURE TRAVELERS, broken into two regional categories:
 - a. Drive Markets
 - i. Expand the Sacramento and San Jose/San Francisco markets.
 - ii. Develop drive markets for Reno, Stockton, and Fresno - These locations do not have an active strategy.
 - b. Direct Flight Market
 - i. Consider the Southern California market – This is not an active strategy. With the possibility of commercial air service coming to the Chico Regional Airport (LAX to Chico), this is an area to consider in 2024/2025 to generate demand for future air service.

2. TRAVEL TRADE

- a. Expand opportunities to connect with travel trade professionals. EBC staff plans on attending the US Travel Association's IPW in Los Angeles in 2024.

PRIMARY AUDIENCES

1. Family Travelers (with children 13+)
2. Outdoor Lovers
3. Chosen Family: College Alumni Connection

Note: We see EBC as the driving force for the visitor economy in Butte County, impacting community alignment, economic development, destination development, and inclusiveness — as well as a leading proponent of community shared values throughout The Destination Management Cycle. This includes aligning our destination marketing strategy with our partners, including CSU Chico and Butte College.

SCOPE OF WORK

In coordination with EBC, the Agency will assist in developing a data-driven advertising strategy that includes innovative and cost-effective integrated marketing tactics, including but not limited to print, broadcast, digital and social, experiential, out-of-home, over-the-top, etc. Strategies will focus on attracting leisure travelers to Butte County, with a key emphasis on increasing overnight visitation and supporting local businesses within our six jurisdictions. Additionally, concept and creative services for EBC internal campaigns will be needed and other creative services on an as-needed basis. EBC must approve the use of subcontractors for this account.

OBJECTIVES

The three major objectives of the *Professional Marketing and Buying Services RFP* include:

1. Create a marketing strategy and efficient advertising plans that align with our mission and strategic goals, and build brand equity.
2. Execute an agreed-upon set of deliverables that drives growth in brand awareness and hotel bookings in a way that can be monitored/tracked and effective/efficient.
 - a. Develop a holistic approach to brand advertising, including concept creative materials and campaign elements for brand consistency.
 - b. Create high-quality travel content that aligns with our voice, mission, personas, and market preferences.
3. Measure, analyze, and optimize advertising campaigns to ensure we reach desired target markets in the most cost-effectively possible.

DELIVERABLES

The deliverables associated with the proposed scope of work include:

1. Multi-Year Marketing Strategy and Annual Marketing Plan

The Agency will work closely with EBC to develop a three-year marketing strategy and develop, execute, and track results for an annual marketing plan. Through this work, the Agency will be responsible for developing strategic direction, creative strategy, media plan, and cooperative plan. The media plan should utilize research and market insights to develop strategic recommendations for the media mix based on target markets, primary audiences, and budget allocation. The media mix should be diverse and digital-heavy. The Agency should also provide EBC with insights on emerging trends and new media to continually evolve and reach the target audience.

2. Creative Services

The selected Agency shall be the principal advisor and provider to EBC for creative services related to the conception, design, and execution of advertising campaigns and programs targeting a variety of audiences, including leisure visitors, travel trade professionals, media, and other target markets that can help accomplish EBC's mission. The Agency shall develop a comprehensive approach to brand advertising, including the conception and production of creative materials and campaign elements as needed. Deliverables will be executed under brand guidelines and coordinated with other marketing materials to ensure consistency. In doing so, the agency will adhere to the existing [Brand Standards & Style Guide](#). Creative materials to be developed by Agency *must* include:

- Biannual Adventure Guide (2024)
- Annual Cooperative Advertising Program
- Digital Display/Rich Media
- Digital Advertising
- Social Media Advertising
- Video assets (long and short form)
- Print Advertising

Depending on funds available, additional creative materials to be developed by Agency *may* also include:

- Native Advertising
- Out of Home
- Over the Top/Connected TV
- Consumer and Industry Email
- Other forms of marketing designed for all EBC target audiences

3. Media Buying and Reporting

The Agency shall plan, buy, execute, and measure media for EBC. Execution includes placement, optimization, cancellations, vendor payment, and billing.

Regular monthly reporting on the campaign and brand program performance utilizing expertise, agency tools, data, partnerships, and other resources to manage program efficiency and performance. EBC expects the agency to monitor campaigns on a weekly basis and make adjustments as needed and approved. End of campaign wrap-up reports, including screenshots of all assets, dashboard of goal performance, and executive summary of key takeaways, including results mapping to larger objectives. The Agency should always look for ways to evolve measurement and reporting to show the bigger picture and communicate value to EBC stakeholders. The Agency will be requested to attend and present at regular board meetings.

4. Metrics for Success

Lead Generation is extremely important. Preference will be given to an Agency that can specifically illustrate how submitted programs will assist in attaining important inquiries such as:

- Increase in overnight hotel stays
- Online Visits (Website, Facebook, and other social media)
- Online Conversions
 - Request Visitor Guide/ pocket map
 - Referral to Partner page (Hotel booking)
 - Request more information
 - Time Spent on Site/Average Engagement Time
 - Media Requests
 - E-newsletter Sign-Ups

5. Research

Participate in customer insight, awareness, creative testing, and segmentation research as needed. Provide data, creative assets, and insights as requested for market intelligence, research, and reporting. EBC currently partners with Zartico for metrics on visitation dashboards, booking history, and forecasts. This tool and data should be used to track and report on campaign success.

6. Account Support

Maintain regular communication on all activities. Attend on-site meetings as needed throughout the duration of the relationship at the Agency's expense (nonreimbursable). Provide clear budgets and plans outlining when materials are due for paid insertions prior to placing insertions. Collaborate with other EBC agency partners as needed to enhance our marketing efforts.

7. Quality Assurance/Quality Control

Deliverables shall be of the highest quality and executed under specified deadlines. Quality Assurance (QA) processes shall be enacted to prevent, to the extent possible, flaws in deliverables; Quality Control (QC) processes shall be enacted to identify flaws that were not caught in QA processes in deliverables.

FUNDING

A total of \$250,000 is available for all tasks associated with the Scope of Work for an initial anticipated contract term of October 2023 – December 2024. However, EBC reserves the right to adjust the budget and related services upon agreement from the EBC Board and the selected Agency.

CONTRACT TERM

The initial term of the contract shall be from execution of the contract through December 31, 2024. The contract term may be extended in one-year increments, with the option for up to five (5) one-year contract extensions. Contract extensions will be based on an annual review of accomplishments and subject to approval by the EBC Board. Each annual review will allow for consideration of adjustments in the Agency's scope and fees.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals are required to include the following information:

1. Project Approach and Organization
 - a. Provide a proposed approach to the delivery of an integrated strategic marketing plan and associated creative development and media buys.
 - b. Provide initial ideas that demonstrate how your agency's experience and capabilities can address the following areas of opportunity:

- i. The Explore Butte County brand: How would your agency help to communicate, develop, and solidify Butte County's brand as a travel destination? How would your agency embrace and/or differentiate our current brand identity? Would your agency recommend year-round or seasonal campaigns and why?
 - ii. Innovation: How would your agency utilize the latest technology and offerings to advance our destination, set us apart, and then report on that success?
 - iii. Partnerships: How would your agency incorporate brand partnership opportunities into campaigns?
 - c. Owned media: While the development and execution of the EBC's owned programming are done in-house, how would your agency help take our website and social content to the next level and integrate paid and owned media programs?
- 2. Relevant Work and References
 - a. Describe the experience your agency has in developing strategic marketing plans, creative materials, and travel/tourism campaigns for Tourism Business Improvement Districts or similar organizations.
 - i. Provide three [3] examples of campaigns developed and produced within the past two [2] years, including reference names, titles, address, email, and phone numbers
- 3. Proposed Schedule
 - a. Provide a schedule associated with creating and developing a three (3) year marketing strategy and a 2024 marketing plan with work anticipated to begin in October 2023. Include a timeline for the creation of an initial Winter campaign based on the completion of the Agency's strategic planning.
- 4. Proposed Budget
 - a. Provide a proposed budget for the development of a three (3) year marketing strategy and an initial Marketing Plan for 2024.
 - b. Considering the available funding noted on page 8 of the RFP, and the Agency's cost to provide a 3-year marketing strategy and a Marketing Plan for 2024, provide a proposed budget for the execution of the initial Marketing Plan for 2024. Per Sections 2 and 3 of the Scope of Work noted in the RFP, the cost shall include creative costs (labor and hard costs for production) and paid media. The budget proposal must contain any and all costs that would be invoiced to EBC for the performance of these services. Please list your hourly rates separately in the budget break-out. Include the following:

- i. Estimated media spend
 - ii. Estimated spend on creative and content development
 - iii. Estimated agency administration fee break-out (media buying, strategy, and account service)
 - iv. Other costs as needed or proposed
 - v. Agency hourly rates
5. Agency Information
 - a. A brief company history, overview of services, and capabilities.
 - b. Location of company headquarters and offices
 - c. Brief professional biographies of all staff members to be assigned to this client account.
 - d. Information on any proposed subcontractors to be used by the Agency, noting the anticipated work to be completed by each subcontractor.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Responsive Agencies that submitted all required proposal information within the timeline and format requirements as stated in this RFP will be considered based on the following criteria:

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE (40 pts)

- Highly creative people within the agency.
- Experience in the travel trade/tourism/hospitality industry, associations, not-for-profit organizations, and/or group sales/meetings advertising.
- Experience working with small destination management and marketing organizations.
- Capabilities in goal setting, strategic planning, client/agency communication, and measurable outcomes with proven ability to turn research and insights into innovative messaging.

APPROACH (40 pts)

- Agency's strategy to solidify Butte County's brand as a travel destination.
- Familiarity with the Explore Butte County brand and how this knowledge is integrated into the proposal.
- Strong in-house media and digital teams skilled in all aspects of digital marketing and measurement.
- Ability to integrate EBC-owned media content and public relations efforts.

COST EFFECTIVENESS (20 pts)

- Budget management, experience delivering cost-effective solutions, and ability to negotiate favorable media rates.
- Cost proposal that is reasonable and appropriate for the scope of work, providing maximum services in relation to fees charged.
- Turnkey administrative and account support, from strategic level planning to concise day-to-day communication to timely billing that aligns with budget plans provided by Explore Butte County.

TIMELINE

The tentative schedule for this project is provided below. Any change in the scheduled dates for the Deadline for Final Questions or the Submittal Deadline will be advertised in the form of an addendum to this RFP, which will be published on the [EBC website \(explorebuttecounty.com/agency-rfp\)](https://explorebuttecounty.com/agency-rfp). The schedule for the evaluation process and other future dates may be adjusted without notice. If any additional information or discussions are needed with any bidders during the proposal evaluation period, the bidder(s) will be notified.

RFP Published	June 22, 2023
Deadline for Final Questions	July 7, 2023
Questions Answered	July 14, 2023
Submittal Deadline	August 15, 2023
Evaluation of Proposals	August 21 - 31, 2023
Finalist Agency Presentations	September 6 - 8, 2023
Final Selection and Agency Notification	September 30, 2023
Intended Contract Start Date	October 1, 2023

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

EBC reserves the right to waive any requirement or condition of the RFP upon finding that it is in the organization's best interest to do so. EBC is not under any obligation to award a contract and reserves the right to terminate the Request for Proposal process at any time and to withdraw from discussions with any or all vendors who have responded. *Costs for developing proposals are entirely the responsibility of the proposer and shall not be reimbursed by EBC.*

QUESTIONS

EBC will not consider questions received after the July 7, 2023 due date. No telephone or oral requests will be considered. Questions and requests for clarification from an Agency must be submitted by only a single representative and must include the requestor's name, address, telephone number, and email address, and the company that he/she represents. EBC may rephrase questions as it deems appropriate and may consolidate similar questions. EBC may also create and answer questions independent of the Agency's question(s).

Written responses to submitted questions will be included in an RFP Addendum posted on the [EBC website](#).

Questions should be received via email by 17:00 PST, July 7, 2023, via email to:

Nichole Farley
Executive Director
email: proposals@explorebuttecounty.com

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Respondents are required to submit eight (8) copies of their Proposal, one (1) of which is unbound, and one (1) electronic copy.

The electronic copy must be in searchable and printable Portable Document Format (.pdf) and must be submitted on a USB flash drive. Respondents should be aware that the electronic copy will be used by the EBC to produce additional printed copies of the submittal, should they be needed.

Submissions shall clearly indicate the legal name, address, email, and telephone number of the proposer and include a signature above the name and title of the main contact on behalf of the agency submitting. The signer shall have the authority to bind the proposer to the submitted proposal and thereby swears that all information contained within the proposal is truthful in its entirety and the signer agrees to the general terms and conditions outlined in this RFP.

Proposals received after the deadline shall not be accepted and will be returned unopened. EBC assumes no responsibility for delay in delivery of the proposal to the designated delivery location by the United States Postal Service, City mail services, electronic mail, or by any other means.

All proposals must be received no later than 17:00 PST, August 15, 2023. Proposals shall be addressed to:

Explore Butte County
Attention: Nichole Farley, Executive Director
326 Huss Dr
PO Box 2154
Chico, CA 95927

RESOURCES

[Explore Butte County Strategic Plan](#)

[Butte County Tourism Business Improvement District Management Plan](#)

[Explore Butte County Adventure Guide](#)

[2023 Smith Travel Research Reports](#)

[Explore Butte County website](#)

[Explore Butte County Instagram](#)

[Explore Butte County YouTube](#)

[Brand Guidelines](#)

[All Supporting Documents](#)

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

All responses to this RFP become the property of the EBC. If submitting financial or proprietary information believed to be exempt from California's Public Records Act disclosure, please label each confidential or proprietary page as such.

Although a document may be labeled "confidential" or "proprietary" information may still, at the EBC's discretion, be subject to disclosure under the California's Public Records Act.