

Brand Strategy & Creative
RFP Questions
1/25/23

Relationship

- Can you share why the business is in review?
 - As standard practice, we review all of our agency relationships every 3-5 years.
- What does your agency partner ecosystem look like? And how do you envision the new partner working with current agencies?
 - Brand USA works with a robust roster of agencies for work including, but not limited to, social media, influencers, paid media planning & buying, campaign development, creative services, etc. The expectation is that the selected agency for this RFP will collaborate with the other agencies in the IAT. Depending on the project there will be a lead agency assigned and the expectation is that all agencies involved will collaborate on their portion of the project.
- Knowing you need support for the overarching campaign and ad-hoc marketing initiatives, what is your desired engagement term with your new agency partner? (i.e. 6 months, 12 months, etc.)
 - Brand USA is looking for a long-term partner. As part of our due diligence we RFP for services every 3-5 years and review SOW on an annual basis.
- Is this a project, or do you envision this leading to a long-term agency relationship?
 - We envision this RFP leading to a long-term agency relationship. The awarded agency will become a key part of Brand USA's partner ecosystem, which currently includes a media agency, social agency, and various creative agencies.
- Can an agency partner with another agency to conduct the work?
 - Yes.
- Who would be on the core Brand USA project team? Does your team typically respond to agency creative in a timely manner i.e. within 48-72 hours?
 - This agency will work primarily with Brand USA's integrated marketing/brand team. The team responds to agency creative in a timely manner, agreed upon by both parties during the timeline development.
- Where is your core team based?
 - Brand USA's headquarters offices are based in Washington DC. The core team is based across the USA and works east coast hours.
- What do you deem to be most important in a successful agency relationship?
 - Doing great work: exciting, insights-driven creative.

- Collaboration (within our team and with other agencies): transparency and a desire to constantly optimize how we work together.
- Accountability: a team that we can depend on to deliver every time.

Research-Driven Strategy

- The RFP talks a lot about scope. But what is the business challenge Brand USA is looking to solve for? How would we define that in one sentence?
 - Brand USA's challenge is to position the USA as the top destination for international visitors and rebuild travel to the USA, aligned with the National Travel and Tourism Strategy's five-year goal of attracting 90 million visitors, who will spend \$279 billion annually.
- The RFP states that the agency's remit will be to helm an "evolution" of the current positioning "United Stories." Can you share details on how cemented this positioning is? How much flex does the agency have in changing/developing? What needs to stay and what doesn't?
 - Brand USA is open to changing, evolving, or developing a new brand strategy that is rooted in research and insight.
- What existing research do you have from a target market perspective?
 - Brand USA conducts primary research on a monthly basis to measure sentiment, intent, ad recall, etc. This data will be available to the selected agency for the scope of this work.
- Beyond target markets, what consumer data can you provide? Can you share target audience details?
 - Please refer to the United Stories brief for consumer data that is available for the RFP process.
- What is your risk tolerance for doing something completely different?
 - Brand USA is looking for a brand strategy and creative execution that will inspire international travelers to choose the USA as their next travel destination in the midst of a pivotal moment for the US travel industry as it comes out of the pandemic and through recovery. We are open to, and actively searching for, bold, exciting ideas that are rooted in research and consumer insights.
- If Brand USA was a celebrity, who would it be?
 - Through this RFP, we're hoping to identify an agency who can help us answer this question.
- Will you be open to sharing strategy you have done to date?
 - Please refer to the United Stories Brief

- What is the one thing you hope people feel or take away after experiencing the creative?
 - “I must visit the USA for my next trip”

Creative

- What worked well about your existing campaign? What are you liking / what’s working well with the creative current platform “United Stories” and the “Many Voices” strategy? And conversely, are there any pain points? And what are you hoping the evolution will accomplish that the previous work did not? Can you please provide more context about the existing United Stories platform and the agency partner’s role in continuing it? What are the mandatories to keep and where is there room to evolve?
 - Please refer to the United Stories Brief for more context around the creative platform and its current strategy.
 - What’s working: United Stories is an award-winning campaign that has exceeded all previous campaign’s benchmarks. Through emotive, story-led creative, we have been able to highlight the diversity of places, experiences, and people that make a trip to the USA so great. This campaign leverages our Many Voices strategy and allows us to easily lean into our three strategic pillars (possibility, proximity, welcome) throughout our messaging.
 - Looking forward: The world has drastically changed since the launch of United Stories in 2018. While we believe that the many voices strategy remained strong and true throughout the pandemic, we believe it is time to re-examine consumers’ mindsets, behaviors, and actions, and establish an updated brand platform with research-driven strategy and relevant creative.
- Can you share any relevant brand assets and style guides?
 - Brand assets and style guides will be provided to the selected agency. Those participating in the RFP can make assumptions regarding branding and style.
- Regarding the “creative direction” required in the proposal, what deliverables or touch points would be most helpful for you to see that ladders up to each direction? Understanding this is a 360 campaign, what are the priority markets / channels?
 - Please refer to the United Stories brief.
- What is the long-term vision for the brand strategy & campaign? Do you expect to pivot quickly after the post-Covid campaign, either through a campaign evolution or new campaign altogether? Should we win the business, will we ultimately be beholden to the “United Stories” campaign, or will we be given strategic & creative freedom?

- Brand USA is looking for a brand platform rooted in research-based strategy and corresponding creative. If our research and insights show us that United Stories is a relevant, impactful campaign, we would continue using it as our creative platform. If our research and insights show us that a new direction would be more effective, we would be open to this.

Scope

- Please can you outline your earmarked budget for this initial engagement. Please break down into agency fee, production, and working media budgets if possible.
 - Media: For the sake of this RFP process, potential agencies can assume a hypothetical annual media budget of \$35MM.
 - Production: TBD. Production budgets will be treated separately from the selected agency's fee and will be determined depending on the strategy developed and ideas presented.
 - Agency fee: Fees for services will be outlined based on the scope for the RFP, which includes ongoing strategy, campaign development, and potentially a brand evolution.
- What is the timing around deliverables/the campaign should we be awarded the business? Is there a target in-market or launch date? What are your timings from project kick off (end of March) to completion? What is your target campaign launch date? How long will the campaign run? Are there any heavy-up periods?
 - We expect for the selected agency to hit the ground running to deliver creative assets for campaigns launching in the fall. Simultaneously, should we decide to invest more in evolving our brand, that will be a longer process with specific timing to be discussed.
- Taking into consideration the number of different target markets and languages spoken, is it up to the agency to translate the creative campaign content into different languages? If so, how many languages? With key markets outside of the U.S., would the awarded agency be responsible for adaption, localization and transcreation of assets in local markets?
 - Brand USA expects the selected agency to advise on the need for global vs. market-specific creative. The selected agency will provide local insights to guide transcreation needs and may be responsible for the localization and transcreation of assets. If needed, Brand USA can provide translations in seven languages (Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Simplified Chinese).
- Please clarify your expectations/deliverables for the development of 'thought leadership documents'.

- As the nation’s destination marketing organization, Brand USA strives to be a leader in the US tourism industry. One way Brand USA provides value to the industry is through thought leadership pieces. Brand USA will look to the selected agency, an expert in brand strategy and creative, to support us in this endeavor.
- Will this agency partner be responsible for handling state-specific advertising efforts for media placements both outside and within the US, or is the focus solely on advertising Brand USA to outside countries?
 - Brand USA’s remit is to promote the USA to international visitors. We do not advertise domestically.
- What is the expected scale for these deliverables?
 - Deliverables for the contract are dependent on the brand strategy established by the selected agency. We do expect these deliverables to help us fulfill a robust media plan across channels such as paid social, OLV, search, native, OOH, display, and more.
- What is the scope of the toolkit ask?
 - The full scope of the toolkit is to be determined, once a potentially new brand platform and creative campaign have been developed. Brand USA wants to create a toolkit that will allow its partners (trade and destination) to leverage its marketing collateral and promote the USA.
- Is there already a media plan and/or partnership in place?
 - Yes, Brand USA has a media agency partner that will create Brand USA’s media plans for FY23 and beyond.
- How is Brand USA defining “content creation” outside of the deliverables listed? Does this include always-on social strategy and community management, for example?
 - Brand USA produces a variety of content and uses production companies and other agencies to support these efforts. It is not out of the question to assume that the selected agency could contribute to our ongoing need for content. The scope of this RFP does not include always-on social strategy and community management. The selected agency will work closely with Brand USA’s social agency.

RFP Process

- In your RFP response, you’ve highlighted that there will be a creative assignment. Given the time investment required and the importance of getting to know each other, are you open to changing your process to include a tissue session? Could we have the opportunity to have an introductory conversation prior to the RFP submission 2/15

deadline? Are you offering a briefing meeting with participating agencies to meet the team / kickoff the pitch?

- To accommodate all prospective agencies in a consistent manner, we cannot change our RFP process.
- Whether companies from outside USA can apply for this? (like, from India or Canada). Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA? (like, from India or Canada)
 - The lead agency must be based in the USA. Other partner agencies can be based outside the USA.
- Whether we need to come over there for meetings?
 - Brand USA will expect in-person meetings with the winning agency on a regular basis. Frequency will be determined during the onboarding process.
- Can we submit the proposals via email?
 - The proposal should be sent electronically to rfpadmin@thebrandusa.com. Finalists will be expected to present at an in-person interview.
- How many agencies have you reached out to? How many will be selected as finalists?
 - Our RFP is posted publicly. There is no set number of finalists. We will select the agencies that we are interested in continuing the conversation with.
- Is the expectation for agencies to develop creative concept work as part of this RFP response?
 - Please refer to the United Stories Brief for specifics.
- Will we have an opportunity to pitch live, or can we only submit our response on 2/15 via email? How many finalists are you selecting and are the interviews in person (if yes, where)? What is the expectation of the “Finalist Presentation / Interviews” phase of the review process and what all will that entail? About how many agencies do you expect to include in this final phase?
 - The number of finalists is TBD. Interviews will be in person at Brand USA’s headquarters in Washington, DC on March 21 or 22.
 - Finalists will be provided a series of questions to prepare to answer for the interviews. Presentation format of these answers can be determined by the finalist.
- Perhaps this will be included in the brief itself, but are there specific deliverables or spec work (i.e. social, TV/OLV scripts, digital display, OOH, etc.) you’d like to see as part of the proposal response to the United Stories brief?
 - Please refer to the United Stories Brief.
- Can you give us a sense of the categories or business types you consider conflicts?
 - Conflicts include: Destination marketing organizations outside of the USA.
- Who are the decision makers in this process?

- The RFP selection committee is made up of team members from Brand USA's integrated marketing/brand team and partner marketing team.
- Is tourism experience required in the agency you will be selecting? How heavily will that experience be weighed in your decision making?
 - The selected agency will need to show relevant case studies and demonstrate an understanding of destination marketing.