



Integrated Corporate Communications and Public Relations RFP Q & A

The following are answers to questions re: Integrated Corporate Communications and Public Relations RFP Q & A

Thanks to everyone who submitted questions regarding Brand USA's RFP for Integrated Corporate Communications and Public Relations RFP. Since many of the questions posed were similar, we have condensed and edited queries. Company names have been removed. If the answer to the question is already in the RFP, or if we were unable to understand a question, we did not provide an answer.

Q Is your team open to alternative software outside of Sprinklr?

A. Not at this time.

Q Would you accept a bid from a Canadian team as the Lead Agency with a U.S. partner?

A We are open to a variety of options, provided the resource is global in scope, including both Canadian and U.S. resourcing.

Q Would you accept a bid for Canada only?

A Yes.

Q What's driving this brief? Why now?

A Brand USA's corporate communications needs have evolved in recent years, digital platforms have proliferated and our audience has expanded. This RFP is geared to help us strategize and synergize our messaging across channels, including earned media, social media and other digital content.

Q How were firms selected to participate in the RFP process?

A The RFP is open to agencies that can deliver an integrated approach to achieve our corporate communications on a global scale.

Q Is this a procurement led process?

A Brand USA has clear procurement and compliancy goals that will be managed and met throughout this exercise. The agency selected via this process will be briefed on and expected to adhere to all of Brand USA's corporate guidelines and best practices related to budgeting, approvals and deployment.

Q Have you had specific challenges when working with agencies in the past?

A Brand USA has had the most success with agency partners who immerse themselves in our reason for being, understand our business model, and demonstrate integrated thinking across platforms and communication channels.

Q Can you outline the organizational structure of the Brand USA communications team?

A The integrated team is represented by a cross-functional group comprised of corporate comms, public relations, social media, and content development specialists. Depending on the initiative, we will also bring in internal and external team members based on expertise required.

- Q Please confirm if you're looking for a global agency to conduct project work or activate the mentioned markets?**
- A Ideally, we are looking for a global agency who can provide integrated corporate communication resources around the global. The first markets for deployment are the United States and Canada. Other markets will come on-line if/as required.
- Q Please clarify the reach of the project by market and timing, including US and abroad.**
- A It is expected that onboarding of the new agency will begin on or about June 1, 2021, and will be fully onboard, including goals, strategies, and plans by Oct. 1 of the same year.
- Q How many people at Brand USA would be the core contact points?**
- A It is expected that daily activities will require three core contact points at Brand USA, one each from corporate, public relations, and social media. Goal-setting, planned and opportunistic initiatives, and approvals will be required by the senior team.
- Q Until now, what considerations have you put into place in response to the fast-changing travel landscape due to pandemic pressures?**
- A Brand USA has entered into a "state of readiness," geared to monitor travel-related issues related to the pandemic (i.e. consumer sentiment, search, air capacity, and virus prevalence) on a market-by-market basis. Once we observe consistent progress toward re-opening in a given market, we will shift into recovery mode and marketing investment. Our messaging approach, which is based on foundational principals, may also evolve. The agency selected through this RFP process will be instrumental in identifying messaging needs, as well as differentiation and deployment across channels.
- Q Do you have a current key messages document (biz and leisure consumer) you can share with us? Will the message remain the same going forward?**
- A From our founding days, we have embraced a vision that has proven successful through our 10+ years of existence. However, it is our belief that healthy marketing requires regular scrutiny and assessment of platforms and messaging, and from time to time, and on a country-by-country basis, we have tweaked and expanded these messages to suit specific needs.
- Q Who do you view as your key competitors/peers?**
- A Brand USA takes a broad look at its competition, which includes both other international travel destinations and other lifestyle factors that compete for those same dollars. Brand USA is also fortunate to have strong and resilient relationships across the global travel industry, which provide us a forum to share insights and struggles equally.
- Q Please can you provide an overview on who within your company will be reviewing the submissions?**
- A Five individuals across the company have been selected as judges, based on their expertise in corporate communications, public relations, and social media.
- Q Is there a preference with being in N.Y. or U.K. given the international remit?**
- A There is no preference with the "home base" of the selected agency, provided they are willing to operate on eastern standard time and/or be flexible based on requirements of assignments.

- Q Do you have one agency currently covering the scope of work for this RFP, or multiple?**
A Currently, Brand USA works with a team of agencies that cover corporate communications, public relations, and social media. Our goal is to work with a single-source that can integrate these initiatives for bigger impact and efficiency.
- Q What do you feel your consumers value most about your brand?**
A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.
- Q Will you be sharing demographic data for Brand USA?**
A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.
- Q Do you have any customer data you can share? Demographic surveys? Customer satisfaction surveys?**
A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.
- Q Who is the priority audience?**
A For this scope, our focus is on Brand USA's key stakeholders, which includes the global travel industry, global media, country-level journalists, and domestic partners.
- Q Who specifically are you looking to engage? With which demographics are you seeing slippage or big gains? How do these demographics shift across brands?**
A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.
- Q Do you have any information on customer perceptions towards Brand USA currently and if this has changed throughout the pandemic?**
A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.
- Q What are some of the biggest internal and external/competitive challenges you are facing? What's your key concern?**
A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.
- Q How would you rank, in order of importance, the various capabilities you're looking for?**
A This request for proposal is geared to drive integration across communication channels for our corporate messaging. The agency assigned for this role will demonstrate expertise in goal-setting, thought leadership, strategic messaging development, high-level media relationship-building, social media best practices, adherence to executional excellence, digital analytics and ability to identify insight and practical applications that will enable us to continually improve our messaging.
- Q What does success look like for Brand USA in one year, five years?**
A In general, success for this scope of work means we will demonstrate consistent, engaging, and meaningful messages to our constituents that are measurable and showcase Brand USA thought leadership across the industry.
- Q Are there regional targets or priorities for PR? i.e. are certain states a higher priority than others?**
A Brand USA is responsible for representing the entirety of the United States, including both rural and urban destinations equally. Whether promoting key gateways or lesser-known destinations, our goal is to make it easy and obvious for international travelers to choose the USA for their next international trip.

Q What is the split of coverage desired? I.e. consumer vs trade?

A This scope of work is specifically focused on a B2B audience that is interested in and will benefit from our corporate messaging and insights on international tourism to the United States. These include a wide range of stakeholders, including government, destination and corporate partners, the travel industry as a whole, traditional and new media organizations and both endemic and non-endemic businesses.

Q What are the tiering of the markets? Which are the priority and which require more support?

A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.

Q What are the budget parameters for this brief?

A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.

Q Markets: Your RFP mentions you currently have public relations representation in 14 international markets. May you confirm the need from this RFP is to expand and establish PR representation in the U.S. and Canada only?

A Brand USA currently has agency partners located in many of our key markets. These teams are responsible for country-specific activations. At this time, we are prioritizing needs for global support for our corporate social media channels and earned media-outreach in the U.S. and Canada. However, if/as requested, the assigned agency must have the ability to expand its efforts into other markets.

Q Corporate Communications: Even though it is not mentioned on the RFP, will you require your agency's support around Board of Directors meetings or quarterly reports? If so, what is the extent of the desired support?

A Brand USA will require support for both Board of Directors meetings and quarterly and annual reporting. This may include reporting, analytics, case-study creation, strategic messaging, and other "story-telling" requirements that help us show the impact of our initiatives.

Q Executive Communications: Beyond support for Chris Thompson, how many executives/who else will require agency support?

A Depending on the opportunity, Brand USA has a wide variety of expertise across its senior leadership, all of whom are available for interviews and speaking engagements. However, pre-planned executive visibility will primarily focus on its C-suite.

Q Executive Communications: Are you primarily looking for support in/around moments/speaking opportunities already secured by Brand USA or are you open to recommendations for other engagements?

A It is expected that the assigned agency will take a leadership role in developing executive communications across our owned channels, including development of an editorial calendar, and developing opportunities for visibility at key events, and thought-leadership presence with tier-one media outlets.

Q Earned Media: What does success look like in terms of earned media overall?

A We will work with the assigned agency to develop goals and KPIs, but overall, our goal is to showcase Brand USA as a global thought-leader in the international tourism space with high-impact placements and engagements.

Q Earned Media: How many pieces of content do you expect your agency partner coordinate and pitch to media per month?

A Regular, high-impact placements across all of Brand USA's relevant initiatives are expected. Goals will be established with the assigned agency, to include support for planned outreach related to reporting, events and speakerships, but also opportunistically based on the news cycle and other considerations.

Q Earned Media: What specific tools/platforms do you currently use to monitor media coverage and understand communications impact? Do you have any current benchmarks in place respective to media coverage or communications impact?

A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights, with the assigned agency.

Q Earned Media, Measurement: Will the chosen agency only compile global reports from 14 international markets to share with you or will the agency also play a role of coordination of media outreach by your existing teams in those 14 markets? In terms of language and that reporting, is it handled in English or would the agency have to identify and/or provide translation services to fulfill this report compiling function?

A All of our agency communications with the home office are managed in English. It will be the role of the assigned agency to create reporting templates for use by our in-market teams, and to compile global reports that provide analytics, insights, key learning and best practices that allow us to continually improve our efforts.

Q Earned Media, for Canada: Could you provide more concrete details about the desired scope? Should it be integrated in the budget along with the U.S. market or should we budget that market's support separately?

A The Canada budget can be submitted separately, and should include earned and social media support for both consumer and travel trade audiences.

Q Earned Media: Since you mention the possibility of including other markets on a country-by-country basis, should the agency just provide confirmation of the ability to execute work in those markets or are you expecting further information about our international capabilities on this proposal? Could you confirm if any possible work to be performed in these markets, if asked, would be budgeted and billed separately at a future time?

A Demonstration of the ability to deploy earned media across the globe should be included in the proposal, though in-depth details are not required. If/as requested, earned media requests on a country-specific basis will be considered incremental to this scope.

Q Digital & Social Media: For digital campaigns across social channels and specifically content development on YouTube, are you looking to your agency partner to create all content? Or how many videos and what length videos do you imagine your agency partner developing at a yearly basis?

A Demonstration of strong content creation skills is preferred, though Brand USA has alternate resources for creation of digital and social content. It is anticipated that all social posts will require development of content, whether graphic or video. Measurement for these initiatives will include content engagement.

Q Digital & Social Media: Are you looking for your agency partner to provide a rate card for any video production? If so, what parameters of location, stakeholders featured, and days of filming should be considered?

A We will work with the assigned agency to develop a budget and parameters for content creation related to graphic and video production.

Q Digital & Social Media: For content creation on digital platforms, are you looking to your agency partner to create blogposts? Or how many blog posts do you imagine your agency partner developing at a monthly basis?

A We will work with the assigned agency to develop a comms strategy across platforms, that may or may not include blogposts.

Q Digital & Social Media: For story mining, are you looking for the agency partner to reach out to partners and individuals directly to source content and produce it or would that be sourced internally and then passed on to the agency?

A We will work together with the agency partner on an editorial calendar and story ideas, and determine who is best suited to outreach.

Q Digital & Social Media: Are you considering implementing a paid media budget towards social media content amplification?

A For the purposes of integrated corporate communications, it is not anticipated that a paid media budget will be deployed.

Q Digital & Social Media: For in market events and activities, do you foresee need for on the ground social support gathering content and amplifying live?

A From time to time, it is anticipated that we may need boots on the ground support for content creation and amplification.

Q Digital & Social Media: Do you have existing audience data from a consumer/corporate standpoint to help understand how they are landing on Brand USA's corporate owned social platforms?

A Understanding audience behaviors and establishing goals and KPIs will be one of the first initiatives undertaken by the assigned agency.

Q Budget: Is there a budget range you could share with us for this work?

A We will share a full briefing document, including market-level insights and budgets, with the assigned agency.

Q Do you have a lead global agency we would collaborate with? If so, who is it and how long have you been with them?

A Brand USA works with a variety of agencies all over the globe, including agencies of record for media planning and buying and consumer marketing. It is expected that the assigned agency will develop a strong relationship with and work seamlessly with these other teams.

Q Plan of activity: The RFP asks for an executive summary, review of any potential conflicts, the team, two case studies, and a budget. It does not specifically ask for our team's proposed strategic plan, which would include an understanding of the main challenges and opportunities for Brand USA, as well as the strategy and tactics we would propose for the brand at this time. Should those be included in our proposal? In the evaluation criteria, it does not include a section to judge the action plan as such.

A A strategic plan is not required as part of the RFP. Demonstration of skills and expertise should be showcased elsewhere in the document, and especially in the case studies provided.

Q Scope of Work: As per the first question, if we are not to provide a proposal of work as such, should the scope be presented by a rate schedule of the teams which would lead different areas of activity, and a range of the hourly dedication for a possible retainer?

A Please provide a staffing structure, including names/bios of the team members identified to work on the Brand USA assignment. Team members can be located outside of the USA, but the day-to-day contacts must be willing to work within Eastern time parameters.

Q Will the role of the U.S. be more of the U.S. gateway and global hub, and thought-leadership driver?

A As the destination marketing organization for the United States, it is critical for us to ensure our key stakeholders are aware of, have access to, and are engaged with Brand USA thought-leadership related to international travel.

Q Measurement is clearly a significant part of the scope. Can you share how you currently measure success? What KPIs are most important?

A We will work together with assigned agency to put a measurement plan in place, but our current focus is on high-quality placement, impressions, and engagement.

Q Can you tell us more about what you're looking for in the Executive Summary?

A A successful proposal will include demonstrated expertise in the area of corporate communications, earned media placements, and social media engagement, and the integration of these channels to create consistent, high-profile, thought leadership. This, combined with strong case studies, a solid team and the willingness to immerse yourselves in the business of Brand USA, are important.

Q We see that it's a 36-month contract. When would the work begin?

A The master-services agreement will be valid for 36-months, though a separate scope of work will be negotiated on an annual basis. It is anticipated that the work will be on June 1, 2021.