



AGENDA SUMMARY EUREKA CITY COUNCIL

TITLE: Recommendation for bid # 2019-16: Marketing Services

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

PREPARED BY: Lane Millar

PRESENTED FOR: Action Information only Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

1. Declare Humboldt Made the preferred proposer for branding, marketing, and image building for the City of Eureka with targeted emphasis on visitors, businesses, and local residents.

FISCAL IMPACT

No Fiscal Impact Included in Budget Additional Appropriation

COUNCIL GOALS/STRATEGIC VISION

- Unique and abundant attractions/tourism choices for the community and visitors to enjoy
- Vibrant, flourishing, and safe community where people want to live and visit
- Financially stable, effectively run city with an engaged public
- Strong collaborative relationships with partner organizations and community
- Community that attracts and retains diverse, skilled workforce through business investment

BACKGROUND

For many years, the City of Eureka has partnered with Humboldt County and other local jurisdictions to jointly fund the Eureka Humboldt Visitors Bureau (EHVB), which promotes tourism associated with the general Humboldt County area, predominantly focusing on Redwood forests north and south of Eureka (www.visitredwoods.com). The target audience of the EHVB is “destination tourists” that live outside of the North Coast region and the EHVB’s objective is to attract tourists to visit Humboldt County.

On February 5, 2019, staff proposed to City Council that Eureka deliberately and strategically shift its funding and destination marketing efforts towards a marketing

strategy that concentrates specifically on Eureka while simultaneously expanding the target audience to include local/regional residents and the local business community. This is based on a well-recognized need to help many local and regional residents revitalize their image of Eureka. The Eureka City Council agreed with the new direction and directed City staff to release a Request for Proposals (RFP). Since that direction from City Council on February 5, 2019, the following sequence of events has occurred:

- RFP Announcement Released: February 6, 2019
- Optional Pre-bid Meeting February 15, 2019
- Proposals Due: April 5, 2019
- Review Panel of Proposals (12 firms): April 17, 2019
- Review Panel 1st Round Interviews (top 3 firms): May 1, 2019
- Review Panel 2nd Round Interviews (top 2 firms): May 8, 2019

DISCUSSION

A 10 person review panel, appointed by the City Manager, was created to assess the proposals. The panel consisted of Eureka staff, Arcata staff, local hotel owners, local business owners, and a representative from a local non-profit. The individuals on the panel were selected based on their knowledge of economic development, business, the hospitality industry, tourism, and municipal administration/communication.

On April 17, the panel convened to review the twelve submitted proposals according to the criteria set forth in the RFP. Each panel member awarded points to each proposal based on the following categories:

1. Narrative Regarding How to Accomplish City Goals (10 points)
2. Strategy for Collaboration and Partnerships (10 points)
3. Scope of Work (45 points)
4. Draft Operations and Finance Plan (15 points)
5. Qualifications (15 points)
6. Summary Document and Marketing Skills Sample (5 points)

At the conclusion of the first review, the panel aggregated the scoring and made the decision to conduct interviews with the three top firms, who scored as shown below:

1. Humboldt Made 88 points
2. MC2 83 points
3. Eddy Alexander 79 points

On May 1, the panel convened for the second time to meet the top three proposers in person for approximately forty-five minutes per firm. Each began with a presentation/overview of their submission followed by questions from the panel. At the end of three interviews, the panel unanimously agreed that the interviews felt too rush and that two of the three firms warranted further consideration. The firm MC2 was eliminated from further consideration. In addition, if the panel was forced to choose on the spot, the panel would recommend Eddy Alexander, but the panel found it difficult to come to a consensus regarding the top two firms.

On May 8, the review panel assembled for the final time to conduct a second round of interviews with the two remaining firms. Both agencies were given another hour of time. For the final section, the panel received an additional evaluation criteria that focused on the following areas of interest:

- Managing the relationship between the City and the consultant: What is your plan to establish this relationship? (10 points)
- Managing the relationship between the City and the consultant: What is your plan to maintain this relationship? (10 points)
- What will the City need to do to in order to improve overall marketing strategies? (10 points)
- What will the City need to do to support your firm's efforts? (10 points)
- Who will be the City's primary point of contact? Which individuals will the City work with most often? How many people on your team should the City expect to interface with? (15 points)
- How will audio, video, and photography be handled? For instance, how will you cover Arts Alive, Kinetic Sculpture Race and/or the Eureka Street Art Festival? What is your strategy for collecting candid, unscheduled, photos/video of everyday Eureka Life? (15 points)
- Describe the types of "on-demand" services that will be available to staff by your firm. How does this look in practice? (15 points)
- What is unique about your firm and how does that give you an advantage over the competition? (15 points)
- Firm is easy to work with on a day-to-day basis. Work relationship is convenient and efficient. (15 points)
- Firm has innovative ideas/approaches that push our limits and push our comfort levels. But, at the same time, firm knows when to take instruction and do what they are told to do. These two things need a healthy balance. (15 points)
- Eureka staff (primarily Lane) and staff from the firm need to be compatible and be able to work together comfortably. (15 points)
- Firm needs "genuine heart." We cannot afford "superficial marketing." Nothing about the ultimate products of this effort can feel fake. (15 points)
- Firm easily and efficiently collaborates with the City's partner organizations and private businesses. The City can/will facilitate relationships, but expects the firm to effortlessly be a natural partner with the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, Eureka Police Department, RREDC, City of Arcata, Humboldt County Economic Development, etc. (20 points)
- Firm must excel at strategically integrating their efforts into existing, on-going, and new City activities. (20 points)

The scores from the 2nd Interview were as follows:

1. Humboldt Made 1399 points
2. Eddy Alexander 1378 points

Combining the scores from the proposals and the interviews results in the following combined scores for the top two firms:

1. Humboldt Made 1487 points

2. Eddy Alexander 1457 points

As is evidenced by the closeness of the scores, the panel found both firms to be qualified to provide the services requested by the City. However, the panel also felt that the two firms did not represent an “apples-to-apples” comparison. Humboldt Made’s strengths include a strong local team with supplemental support from outside branding/marketing companies, a solid track record of operating Eureka’s new visitor’s center, the creation and maintenance of the new VisitEureka.com website, a strong existing social media presence, excellent relationships with existing businesses, and an appealingly-ambitious yet realistic proposal. Eddy Alexander’s strengths, on the other hand, include a very strong out-of-the-area team, top-of-the-field expertise, a broad company resume with extensive relevant experience, extensive recommendations, and a solid proposal. The panel agreed that both firms have strong leads in their respective Director roles.

One concern expressed by the panel regarding Humboldt Made included the fact that the firm might be “too local” and may not be able to bring in a fresh perspective and that their products would subsequently feel “home-grown” instead of “world class.” On the other hand, the panel was concerned that Eddy Alexander may never truly be able to understand the nuances of Eureka and our region and that their products subsequently would feel inauthentic.

The panel took this task very seriously and literally dedicated hours to reading proposals, questioning firms, and evaluating potential outcomes. The panel was impressively engaged and passionate about helping the City with its mission of evolving into a new strategic direction. In the end, the panel’s scoring process resulted in Humboldt Made with the highest score and the recommendation from the panel is to City Council is for Humboldt Made to serve as the City’s marketing consultant.

Staff Recommendation and Suggested Motion:

Declare Humboldt Made the preferred proposer for branding, marketing, and image building for the City of Eureka with targeted emphasis on visitors, businesses, and local residents.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY:

- City Attorney
- City Manager
- City Clerk/Information Services
- Community Services
- Development Services
- Finance
- Fire
- Personnel
- Police
- Public Works