



## **UPPER SHORE REGIONAL COUNCIL (USRC)**

### **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

#### **Regional Economic Development Strategic Marketing Plan**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) seeks proposals from qualified marketing consulting firms to develop and implement a Regional Economic Development Strategic Marketing Plan focused on business attraction, talent retention, and regional branding across Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties in Maryland.

This plan will integrate regional assets, economic strengths, and workforce opportunities into a cohesive branding and marketing strategy that attracts businesses, site selectors, and skilled workers while leveraging multi-platform advertising, digital engagement, and strategic partnerships.

## **II. OVERVIEW OF THE UPPER SHORE REGIONAL COUNCIL (USRC)**

The USRC is a regional development organization facilitating economic and workforce development across Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties in Maryland. By fostering collaboration between public and private stakeholders, the USRC supports infrastructure investment, business growth, and job creation to enhance economic resilience in the region.

More information about the USRC can be found at [usrcmd.org](http://usrcmd.org).

## **III. PROJECT PURPOSE & REGIONAL CONTEXT**

A strong regional marketing strategy is critical to attracting businesses, promoting investment, and fostering economic growth. The Upper Shore region is home to diverse industries, a skilled workforce, and an attractive quality of life. However, regional marketing efforts must be coordinated and data-driven to maximize impact.

Each county offers unique economic advantages:

- Cecil County: Positioned along the I-95 corridor, with strengths in logistics, advanced manufacturing, and life sciences.
- Kent County: A rural-based economy powered by key sectors such as agriculture, education, healthcare, manufacturing, and tourism.
- Queen Anne's County: Offers an Eastern Shore lifestyle with unparalleled access to 'big city' amenities in nearby Annapolis, Baltimore and Washington D.C. Key sectors include tourism, manufacturing and agriculture.

This initiative will align marketing efforts with existing county economic development strategies, USRC's Industry Cluster Study, the Queen Anne's County Asset Study, and Maryland Department of Commerce initiatives to ensure a strong regional identity and cohesive business attraction strategy

#### **IV. SCOPE OF WORK**

The selected consultant will be responsible for:

##### **1. Regional Branding & Messaging**

- Develop a regional brand identity with a compelling slogan and messaging that encapsulates the economic strengths and business opportunities of the Upper Shore.
- Ensure branding reflects industry targets, workforce assets, and lifestyle advantages.
- Incorporate place-based marketing strategies highlighting economic clusters, workforce pipelines, and key business incentives.

##### **2. Comprehensive Marketing Strategy**

- Multi-Platform Approach:
- Digital Marketing: SEO, PPC campaigns, content marketing, and social media engagement (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram).
- Traditional Advertising: Print collateral, billboards, radio/TV ads, and event-based marketing.
- Video Marketing: Produce a high-quality, multi-use promotional video for business attraction.
- Site Selector & Trade Show Strategy: Provide marketing recommendations tailored for national and regional business recruitment events.
- Data-Driven Content Strategy:
- Utilize DataStory and GIS mapping to showcase commercial sites and regional assets.
- Integrate regional economic data and workforce statistics into marketing materials.

##### **3. Workforce & Talent Attraction Strategy**

- Develop messaging for workforce attraction focused on business-friendly resources, skilled labor availability, and quality of life advantages.
- Address talent recruitment for targeted industries in manufacturing, technology, logistics, and professional services.
- Ensure messaging resonates with employers, entrepreneurs, and job seekers.

##### **4. Stakeholder Engagement & Public Outreach**

- Work with a committee of representatives from each county's Economic Development Office to align messaging with local business attraction efforts.
- Present strategy recommendations to county officials, business groups, and key economic stakeholders.

## 5. Implementation Plan & Performance Metrics

- Develop an implementation roadmap with a timeline, key milestones, and budget allocation.
- Establish performance metrics (KPIs) to track success, such as:
- Website traffic and engagement.
- Social media performance (ad impressions, engagement rates).
- Business leads generated.
- Trade show and event ROI analysis.

## V. CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

Qualified firms must demonstrate expertise in:

- Regional economic development marketing and business attraction.
- Brand identity development for economic development organizations.
- SEO, digital advertising, and multi-platform marketing.
- Data-driven content strategy & site selection marketing.
- Public engagement and stakeholder facilitation.

Proposals should include examples of prior work on similar projects, along with references and case studies.

## VI. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All proposals must include:

- Cover Letter: Summarizing interest and qualifications.
- Project Approach & Methodology: Detailed strategy and execution plan for the Scope of Work.
- Proposed Timeline: Schedule with key milestones.
- Budget Proposal: Comprehensive cost breakdown.
- Experience & References: Examples of similar projects with client references.
- Resumes of Key Personnel: Backgrounds of team members assigned to this project.

## VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Project Understanding & Approach – Creativity and effectiveness of proposed strategy.
- Relevant Experience & Qualifications – Past work in economic development marketing.
- Stakeholder Engagement Strategy – Approach to public outreach and collaboration.
- Timeline & Ability to Meet Deadlines – Feasibility and efficiency.

- Budget & Cost Effectiveness – Realistic and justified pricing.
- Innovative Strategies & Measurable Outcomes – Use of data-driven marketing techniques.

### **Contract and Payment Terms:**

Based on USRC's interviewing and review of proposal submissions, a Contractor will be chosen for this project, and a Contract, whose term shall be established and mutually agreed upon, will be initiated. Invoices shall be submitted monthly for the duration of this project, as determined via the Contract documents, and shall be delivered either electronically or manually. For electronic submissions, please email to Janice Palmer at [Jpalmer@kentgov.org](mailto:Jpalmer@kentgov.org) ; However, for manual submissions, please mail to:

Upper Shore Regional Council  
Attn: Janice Palmer  
122 North Cross Street  
Chestertown, MD 21620

Approved payment shall be made within thirty (30) calendar days upon receipt of an acceptable and itemized invoice.

## **VIII. TIMELINE**

- RFP Release Date: May 20, 2025
- Questions Due: June 17, 2025
- Proposal Submission Deadline: July 8, 2025
- Consultant Selection: July 29, 2025
- Project Start Date: August 12, 2025
- Project Completion: January 27, 2026

## **IX. SUBMISSION DETAILS**

All proposals are not required to be sealed and should be submitted to USRC by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, July 8, 2025. Proposals shall be submitted in electronic format via email to Janice Palmer at the following email address: [Jpalmer@kentgov.org](mailto:Jpalmer@kentgov.org)

**Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.**

All questions or inquiries for further information will go to Janice Palmer at either the above email address or by phone at **410.810.2126**.

USRC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or negotiate contract terms with the selected firm.