

2026

MEET MINNEAPOLIS: AGENCY OF RECORD RFP

Shaping the Next Bold Chapter for Minneapolis



Meet **Minneapolis**
City by Nature

[minneapolis.org](https://www.minneapolis.org)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is Meet Minneapolis’s official response to questions submitted by prospective agency partners during the RFP process for a full-service Agency of Record engagement. All responses are provided simultaneously to all interested agencies to ensure a fair and transparent selection process.

This engagement marks a significant moment for Meet Minneapolis. The establishment of the Minneapolis Tourism Improvement District (MTID) provides dedicated, sustained funding for destination marketing at a scale that was not previously possible. We are seeking a strategic partner to help us build a differentiated, results-driven brand platform and execute an integrated brand and demand program over a three-year contract period beginning May 2026.

The core marketing team provided answers to these questions, with select input from other Meet Minneapolis team members. AI was used to assist in content organization and flow and to ensure all questions were addressed.

What we are looking for

We are seeking an Agency of Record to lead strategy, creative, media planning and buying, and production. The selected agency will be responsible for developing a fresh brand platform for Minneapolis - one that is confident, differentiated, and grounded in authentic insight rather than generic destination marketing conventions. The work must simultaneously serve two primary audiences: leisure travelers and meeting planners.

Critically, this is not a purely creative exercise. This engagement must be traceable to measurable economic outcomes - hotel room nights, qualified RFP volume, convention center bookings, and sustained occupancy growth. Brand investment and demand activation are not separate tracks; they must reinforce one another within a single, cohesive strategy.

Key decisions and positions reflected in this document

Budget and Structure. The annual marketing budget is \$1.5–\$1.75 million, inclusive of paid media, for each contract year. For 2026, the budget covers May–December only; full calendar-year budgets apply for 2027 and 2028. We anticipate production-heavy investment in year one, a balanced split in year two, and a stronger media weighting in year three. No fixed allocation is prescribed - agencies should propose a rationale-driven approach.

Brand Direction. We are seeking a fresh strategic foundation, not an evolution of prior campaigns. “City by Nature” remains the organizational tagline but is not the campaign platform. There is broad stakeholder alignment around the need for bold, opinionated creative - provided it is grounded in audience insight and defensibly tied to business results. Safe, generic work will not serve Minneapolis.

Audience Priority. Both leisure travelers and meeting planners are essential. A unified brand platform must serve both, with audience-nuanced executions. When prioritization is required, leisure holds a slight edge - in part because meeting planners are themselves leisure travelers, and strong leisure marketing creates the conditions for successful meetings business. Media spend will prioritize leisure audiences.

Scope. The agency will manage the full scope of work under a single point of accountability. Specialized subcontractors or partners are permitted; however, the experience for Meet Minneapolis must be seamless and cohesive. There is no incumbent agency and no existing AOR relationship. All platform accounts, data assets, and campaign learnings remain the property of Meet Minneapolis.

Measurement. Destination marketing attribution is complex and rarely deterministic. We do not currently have a formalized attribution model in place. A key expectation of this engagement is that the selected agency will help build a credible, defensible measurement framework - one that connects upper-funnel brand investment to downstream economic impact across both audience tracks and both short- and long-term horizons.

Local Presence. A Minneapolis–Saint Paul office is not required. Agencies from any geography are welcome. Key strategic and creative milestone meetings are expected to be conducted in person in Minneapolis.

How to use this document

This document is organized into twelve topical sections, each consolidating multiple agency questions under a single, comprehensive response. It should be read in conjunction with the original RFP. Where questions across agencies were substantively similar, they have been grouped together to avoid redundancy and provide the clearest possible answer.

We have also provided access to our research library that is available to all partner organizations and for a limited duration during this RFP process. You can access it here (password passw0rd): <https://www.minneapolis.org/partners/travel-research/>

Given the specificity and sensitivity of some of these requests, any questions not answered within this document will be shared with the selected agency partner as part of the onboarding process.

We appreciate the thoughtfulness reflected in the questions submitted by prospective partners. We look forward to reviewing proposals and identifying the partner best positioned to help Minneapolis compete - and win.

BUDGET & FINANCIAL

The RFP notes an anticipated annual marketing budget range of \$1.5–\$1.75 million and further states that \$1.75 million has been budgeted for both 2027 and 2028. Can Meet Minneapolis

please confirm that the \$1.5–\$1.75 million figure represents an annual budget for each contract year, rather than a total budget to be allocated across the three-year term?

Yes, these budgets are for each contract year.

Budget Allocation Questions:

- **To ensure we're aligned as we shape the response — can you confirm whether the budget ranges you outlined are inclusive of paid media placement? If so, it would be helpful to understand, at a high level, how that budget has historically been allocated between media, strategy, and production.**
- **How should agencies plan to allocate the annual \$1.5–\$1.75M budget across strategy, creative, production, and paid media? Are there preferred guardrails or benchmarks?**
- **Within the annual budget, is there a preferred or historical split across paid media, production, and agency fees?**
- **What percentage of media budget should support upper-funnel (demand) vs. lower-funnel (plan/book)?**
- **What percentage of that budget is expected to go to paid media, agency fees, versus production? What was the previous agency breakout? Asking this to see if there are ways we can uncover efficiencies in spend or place more towards reach and engagement over non-working dollars.**
- **Of the \$1.5-\$1.75M annual budget, what portion historically has been allocated to paid media versus production?**
- **Is there a historical or preferred percentage split between upper-funnel brand and lower-funnel demand investment?**
- **Do you have a preferred allocation of budget across media spend, production spend and agency fee?**
- **Brand vs. Demand Weighting: In the first year, do you envision a brand-heavy narrative launch, or a 50/50 split between brand storytelling and immediate demand activation (room nights/RFPs)?**

Budgets are inclusive of paid media. We don't have a fixed or historical percentage allocation across strategy, creative, production, and paid media. We've historically worked on a project basis without an AOR, though we did run a three-year campaign funded through one-time dollars with two distinct creative executions.

If reviewing on a three-year cycle again, we anticipate a lean toward production budgets in the first full calendar year, a more even split in year two, and a strong media budget in year three.

We do not view brand and demand as mutually exclusive tracks, nor do we anticipate a rigid percentage split. Seasonality, events, economic conditions, booking windows, and audience behavior all influence how we should show up in market. We will always need working media in market to support both meeting planners and leisure travelers - including always-on presence and activity during need periods.

The initial launch will likely require meaningful brand investment to establish a clear, differentiated platform. However, we will always require demand-driving activity to support room nights, RFP generation, and need-period performance. Weighting may flex by audience and market conditions - meetings often require longer confidence-building cycles, while leisure may lean more heavily into demand activation.

We're open to agency recommendations, but proposals should demonstrate strong stewardship of working dollars, thoughtful lifecycle planning, and clear rationale for how budget allocation drives measurable economic impact.

How should we structure our fees: An annual budget allocation for 12 month periods starting May 2026-April 2027? Or by calendar year having 2026 include a budget for only May - December, then an annual budget for January-December 2027 and January-December 2028?

For 2026, include budget for May–December (8 months) following the anticipated May 1, 2026 contract start date. Then provide annual budgets for full calendar years: January–December 2027 and January–December 2028.

This aligns with our internal budgeting and reporting cycles and will make it easier to track performance and investment year-over-year going forward.

SCOPE OF WORK & EXPECTATIONS

How involved are partners of Meet Minneapolis in the media planning process? For example, do they provide guidance or input on events or messages to promote?

Meet Minneapolis provides strategic direction around priorities such as seasonality, need periods, key events, and audience focus, and we value the ideas and input we receive from partners and stakeholders. That input helps inform what may be timely or relevant to highlight.

The selected agency will lead media strategy, planning, and buying in close partnership with our team. Together, we will determine how best to align messaging, timing, and channel strategy with our broader marketing objectives.

While partner insights are important, the agency will work directly with Meet Minneapolis leadership to shape and execute the media plan. Agencies should not expect to navigate a committee of external stakeholders in developing media strategy.

While this is focused on hospitality, what is being done to support local businesses (ex. Restaurants, breweries/distilleries, shops, music venues)?

While hotel occupancy and room nights are key economic indicators, Meet Minneapolis' work supports the full travel, tourism, meetings, and hospitality ecosystem, including restaurants, breweries and distilleries, retail, arts and cultural institutions, music venues, sports venues, events, attractions, and transportation partners.

Meetings and conventions are a particularly significant driver of this ecosystem. A single citywide convention generates hotel room nights, but it also produces concentrated midweek spending across dining, retail, entertainment, transportation, and a wide network of local service providers - including audio-visual companies, event production teams, caterers, exhibit builders, decorators, security firms, and freelance creative and technical professionals.

Leisure visitation similarly fuels neighborhood commercial districts, small businesses, and cultural institutions throughout the city. Both audiences, meeting planners and leisure travelers, contribute to a diversified and resilient visitor economy.

By strengthening brand perception and driving visitation across audiences, this work directly supports local businesses throughout the ecosystem. Additionally, Meet Minneapolis has undertaken local business marketing for a limited duration. This currently includes [Mpls for Mpls](#), [Go. Gift. Give.](#) and, in 2020, [We Need Us!](#)

Has there been a conscious PR push given the perception pitfalls of Minneapolis? If so, how has that played into a broader brand strategy? If not, is there a reason why PR has been avoided?

Historically, media relations work has been the cornerstone of our work to showcase Minneapolis. During Operation Metro Surge, our communications shifted entirely to crisis mode. We focused on providing accurate information about the negative impacts to our local hospitality community while emphasizing that the city remained open for business - continuing to host events, welcome visitors, and bring the community together.

Are there any existing guidelines around influencer or creator use?

Influencers/content creators have been used for campaign work only in the last six years.

Guidelines are created based on each program of work/campaign.

Are there social or storytelling platforms that Meet Minneapolis would like to see leveraged more boldly in the future?

Our primary social media channels are Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. We recently started incorporating YouTube Shorts and reactivated our Pinterest account. (We also have LinkedIn, Twitter/X, Reddit.) We'll work with our AOR to determine what platform(s) to use most prominently with the campaign. Historically, video-centered platforms have been prioritized in destination marketing and considered the most impactful on the consideration process.

With the campaign launching in "late 2026", is there a desire for the "Demand" side of the campaign to lead with a specific seasonal push (e.g., winter sports or holiday arts), or should the initial launch be a pure Brand re-introduction?

Likely yes - there is a need to ensure that our frequent visitors are considering a trip to Minneapolis this year.

While we want the agency to assess the landscape and propose the right launch approach, we do anticipate that the initial work will need to balance brand introduction with demand activation. We can't afford to wait months for brand awareness to build before driving conversions - we need early momentum and measurable impact.

The direction of the late 2026 launch should be guided by opportunity, stakeholder priorities, and strategic recommendation. Depending on timing and market conditions, that could mean a focused seasonal demand push (winter/holiday programming could be a natural fit), a broader brand campaign with conversion pathways built in, or a phased approach that establishes the platform while driving near-term visitation.

What matters most is that the work drives hotel room nights from the start, not just brand lift.

Is there openness to exploring other types of awareness media within the budget (earned, experiential, or partnerships)?

Yes! We're open to exploring earned, experiential, and partnership opportunities where they make strategic sense. In destination marketing, awareness often builds through integrated moments beyond paid media. As long as they're grounded in insight and clearly tied to driving visitation and economic impact – we're all for it!

Is the agency expected to manage tagging, pixels, and conversion tracking?

Meet Minneapolis owns and manages its website infrastructure; however, the selected agency will be expected to lead strategy and oversight for tagging, pixels, and conversion tracking aligned to campaign objectives.

Our internal team (and/or web development partners) will support technical deployment as needed, but the agency should assume accountability for ensuring tracking frameworks are properly structured, implemented, and optimized to support both Meeting Planner and Leisure Traveler measurement needs.

Given the complexity of destination marketing attribution, we expect proactive guidance on tracking enhancements and evolving best practices.

Is this engagement intended to be a ground-up brand build, or an evolution of existing brand strategy and campaign work?

While we have completed some brand voice work in the past and have historical campaign data that will be available for reference and context, we are seeking a fresh strategic foundation for the brand. Previous work may inform the process, but we're looking for new brand strategy, positioning, and creative direction rather than an evolution of existing work.

Will the agency be placing digital media or is that handled by the digital / social team?

The agency will place all digital media.

Can you provide a little more detail on how the agency will work with the digital and social teams regarding content and creative production?

The agency will be responsible for all content and creative production for paid campaigns. Our internal digital and social teams will review content and creative assets as needed and provide insights in the onboarding process.

Our social media manager will handle organic social media posting and community management.

Our website team will manage website assets and landing pages, which may include implementing agency-created content or creative on our owned digital properties.

Are there blackout periods, peak seasons, or known constraints?

When budgets allow, Meet Minneapolis operates an always-on marketing strategy across two primary audiences: meeting planners and leisure travelers. Media planning should account for both brand and demand objectives, which may require distinct flighting strategies and messaging approaches.

While leisure travel follows predictable seasonal patterns, our investment approach prioritizes “need periods” (shoulder seasons, booking windows, occupancy gaps, and specific demand-driving moments) rather than solely peak travel periods. For the meetings audience, booking cycles are longer and influenced by event calendars, convention windows, and industry planning timelines.

There are no standing blackout periods; however, as a destination marketing organization, we operate within a dynamic environment. Media plans should incorporate flexibility to allow for real-time budget shifts, audience pivots, or messaging adjustments as needed.

We are looking for a partner who can proactively guide these decisions rather than execute against fixed seasonal assumptions.

Scope Flexibility: Does Meet Minneapolis allow firms to pitch exclusively for the strategy and media planning/buying components of the RFP, or is the intention to award the full scope (including creative production) to a single Agency of Record?

We are looking for a single Agency of Record to manage the full scope of work, including strategy, creative, media planning/buying, and production.

That said, we understand that agencies often work with specialized contractors or partners to deliver certain capabilities. You're welcome to structure your team however it makes sense to deliver excellent work - whether that's fully in-house or leveraging trusted external partners for specific elements like production, media buying, or niche expertise.

What's important to us is that the process is seamless. We want one primary point of contact, one integrated strategy, and one team accountable for results. How you build that team internally is up to you, as long as the experience for Meet Minneapolis is cohesive and efficient.

Do you currently run any partner programs? If not, would you be interested in creating one?

We do not currently run a formal partner co-op program.

If you have experience developing successful partner programs for destinations or hospitality clients, we'd welcome your point of view on whether this is an opportunity worth pursuing and what that could look like for Minneapolis.

How does the AOR coordinate the PR efforts with Explore Minnesota or other state-level marketing entities?

While there will be awareness across all our partners including Explore Minnesota, this will be a separate body of work.

How are you thinking about PR/earned media against this effort? Do you have a partner or do you plan to use internal resources?

We have internal resources for pitching, but depending on the marketing deliverables may look for agency support of resources.

Looking ahead, are there key events or milestones that will be imperative that this work support/promote?

There are one-off events and reoccurring events that can be used as demand drivers, however, there are none so large as to impact the scope of this RFP. We are not hosting the World Cup, large scale America 250 celebrations or a similar high profile event.

Are there any upcoming shifts (funding, governance, city priorities, leadership changes, tourism trends) top of mind that will materially impact strategy during this contract period?

None that we can foresee. Meet Minneapolis is overseen by a 24-member volunteer board and this work is supported by the 9-member Minneapolis Tourism Improvement committee. The MTID committee has been clear on their prioritization of marketing programs within their work, and while those committee members will change occasionally, we have continuity.

How do you currently collaborate with nearby cities and attractions (e.g. St. Paul)? Is there any possibility of collaborating to stretch our mutual dollars?

We collaborate frequently with other nearby cities and attractions on everything from event support to partnership to trainings and education, and even joint campaigns. However, this program of work will not have any other funding collaborators and should be focused on Minneapolis.

CREATIVE & PRODUCTION

What is the scale and cadence of major production efforts (video, photography, OOH) anticipated annually, and should agencies plan to rely on existing Meet Minneapolis assets?

Meet Minneapolis maintains an existing asset library that will be available to the agency. However, these assets should not be assumed to fully meet the needs of a new brand platform.

We anticipate:

- Year one: Foundational production to support platform launch (hero video, key visual systems, core photography)
- Years two and three: Ongoing seasonal refreshes, audience-specific adaptations, and production aligned to priority periods and major events

Given Minneapolis is highly seasonal and experiential, creative should be structured modularly to allow efficient capture, versioning, and optimization across audiences, channels, and timeframes.

Agencies should propose a scalable production approach that balances high-impact brand storytelling with flexible, performance-oriented content. Include rationale for production cadence, asset longevity, and refresh cycles.

Beyond the initial brand platform and late-2026 launch, what level of ongoing creative development and optimization is expected in Years 2 and 3 of the contract?

The initial engagement will focus on development of a unifying brand platform and a late-2026 launch across priority audiences.

In years 2 and 3, we anticipate an evolution model rather than a reinvention model.

We expect ongoing creative development to include:

- Campaign optimization based on performance insights
- Refresh of core creative assets
- Audience-specific adaptations for meeting planners and leisure travelers
- Development of new executions tied to priority need periods, major events, or strategic initiatives
- Testing and refinement of messaging across brand and demand objectives

How does Meet Minneapolis think about brand clarity in a way that attracts audiences with the strongest affinity for the city, while remaining authentic to who Minneapolis is?

We believe brand clarity comes from being specific and confident about who we are – we are not trying to appeal to everyone.

Creative Risk Tolerance Questions

- **Where would you say the creative risk tolerance is for the Meet Mpls team? Liquid Death <--> Dasani Water? Closer to one or the other?**
- **Creative Risk Tolerance: Are there specific political, civic, or stakeholder-driven "red lines" that agencies should respect when developing the bolder, more opinionated creative approaches requested?**
- **The RFP calls for work that breaks through the 'sea of sameness.' Where do you see the greatest opportunity for boldness today and where are the non-negotiable guardrails agencies should understand early?**
- **How much appetite exists for creative risks or to take a different approach to what we as citizens of Minneapolis believe we need?**
- **You mentioned wanting a partner bold enough to tell the truth about the city's "grit" and "contrast." To what extent is the MTID Hotel Committee comfortable leaning into these more "raw" elements of the Minneapolis identity to differentiate the city from the "sea of sameness" in destination marketing?**
- **Narrative Ambition: Is the primary goal of this engagement to reframe Minneapolis' identity entirely, or to sharpen and amplify existing perceptions to cut through the "sea of sameness" mentioned in the RFP?**
- **You talk about telling the "real" Minneapolis and breaking through the sea of sameness. Where are you genuinely willing to take creative risk — and where are there immovable lines we should understand early?**
- **Stakeholder Alignment: How unified are the MTID hotels, the board, and city partners regarding the need for a potentially provocative brand direction?**

There is broad alignment among MTID hotel stakeholders, our Board, and city partners that Minneapolis must compete with clarity and confidence in a crowded marketplace. There is shared recognition that safe, generic destination messaging will not deliver the differentiation or economic impact required. Purposeful risk that drives results and authenticity is at the forefront.

We're not interested in being provocative for provocation's sake, but we are absolutely open to bold, opinionated creative that challenges perceptions and tells an honest story about Minneapolis. If the

creative approach can demonstrably drive hotel room nights, meeting bookings, and visitor conversions while representing the truth of who we are as a city, we'll lean in.

Safe, polished work that could be for any city won't serve us.

It's also important that we do not allow our own local assumptions — positive or negative — about how Minneapolis is perceived to drive the strategy. Part of this engagement will be validating what truly matters to priority audiences through research and insight. Boldness should be grounded in what moves target travelers and planners, not what we as residents believe needs correcting.

Where we see the greatest opportunity for boldness:

- Embracing the grittier, more complex truths about urban life here alongside the beauty and culture
- Taking a distinct point of view on what makes a city worth visiting, rather than checking boxes of generic urban amenities
- Media and channel strategies that break convention for destination marketing

The non-negotiable guardrails:

- Business results matter: the work must drive measurable outcomes (room nights, conversions, RFPs)
- Authentic representation: the story must feel credible and recognizable
- Strategic discipline: no gratuitous controversy or shock without clear business rationale
- Long-term stewardship: no creative that exploits tragedy or undermines core hospitality stakeholders

Ultimately, both Meet Minneapolis and the MTID Hotel Committee are focused on what works. We're less concerned with what citizens of Minneapolis *think* we need and more focused on what actually works to attract visitors and meet our business objectives. If you can defend the strategy and show us the path to results, we're ready to be convinced.

Past large scale campaigns: "[See What All the Fuss is About](#)", and evolution, "[All the Fuss](#)" are some examples of this direction.

[City by Nature/Brand Questions](#)

- **Will this brand platform replace "City by Nature" or live within the existing brand positioning?**
- **Should the new brand platform fully replace the existing "City by Nature" positioning, or evolve it and how much equity do you believe currently exists in that line?**
- **Are we replacing or building upon the "City by Nature" tagline/slogan?**
- **Are there any elements of the current brand that are off limits or that you are particularly interested in evolving?**
- **As the agency that designed the current Meet Minneapolis logo and tagline years ago, we want to ask if you are wanting to develop a new brand identity for this engagement. If you're not currently planning to do so, might it be a possibility if the next gen positioning warrants it?**

“City by Nature” currently functions as the organizational tagline for Meet Minneapolis as a destination marketing organization. It is not being actively deployed as a standalone consumer or meetings campaign platform.

We view “City by Nature” as representing the ethos of the organization rather than the product-level promise being actively marketed to audiences. If, through the strategic process, it becomes clear that a broader brand evolution would unlock greater long-term value, we are open to that discussion as a future phase. There are no ‘off-limits’ elements.

What elements of the current Minneapolis brand equity must be preserved versus evolved in this next chapter? Is there any desire to build the next version of the most recent in-market campaign?

Given the lapse of time in-market for our large scale campaign, we do not feel it is necessary to evolve our most recent campaigns nor any requirements for brand equity.

What perception gap matters most: safety? relevance? cool factor? Etc.

We do not assume a single, universal “perception gap” exists across all audiences. Perceptions of Minneapolis vary by geography, familiarity, industry segment, and personal experience

For meeting planners, perception drivers may differ significantly from those of leisure travelers, especially the core visitors. Planners often evaluate destinations through lenses such as operational confidence, attendee experience, accessibility, and stakeholder risk management.

What has been done by Meet Minneapolis to evolve the perception of the city following George Floyd, Annunciation, or the current ICE occupation? Has there been a platform created or a stance made? How closely does Meet Minneapolis work with local government entities to help evolve the perception of the city?

There has been an extensive program of work related to rebuilding tourism visitation levels post COVID, the murder of George Floyd and subsequent social unrest for both leisure and convention business. For more information, you can reference our [annual reports](#). Responses to Operation Metro Surge are referenced elsewhere in this document, or for more you can learn more by attending our [annual meeting on Feb. 25](#).

As the City's official destination marketing organization, Meet Minneapolis is the lead on advertising and promotion of the city to our core audiences of leisure travelers and meeting planners, and works alongside the City on communications efforts.

How does Meet Minneapolis envision paid media/ads will shift the perception of the city? Does Meet Minneapolis see that as a challenge for this agency partner to overcome?

We do not view paid media as a standalone solution capable of shifting perception in isolation. Perception change, particularly for a destination, is influenced by sustained storytelling, lived experience, third-party validation, and consistency over time.

Does Meet Minneapolis see this as a tourism campaign, a cultural reframe, or both?

This is a destination marketing campaign focused on driving visitation and meetings business - increasing room nights, RFP activity, and overall demand for both meeting planners and leisure travelers.

Our mission is to generate economic impact for the city and visitor economy: supporting local businesses, sustaining jobs, and strengthening the network of restaurants, venues, hotels, and cultural institutions that make Minneapolis vibrant.

This is not a cultural reframe, reputation management effort, or civic rebranding. While perception influences consideration and strong marketing can positively shift how Minneapolis is understood over time, our primary purpose is direct: inspire people to choose Minneapolis - book the meeting, plan the trip, attend the event, extend their stay - and generate measurable economic impact.

[Questions about Benchmarks, Inspiration and Best-in-Class Examples](#)

- **What are the cities that set the standard for destination marketing in the eyes of Meet Minneapolis?**
- **The RFP highlights the "Sea of Sameness" in destination marketing. Beyond avoiding clichés, are there specific destination brands (regional or national) that you feel currently set the gold standard for balancing "Brand" (emotion) with "Demand" (conversion)?**
- **Are there marketing campaigns that you admire for successfully changing public perception or reframing a narrative?**
- **Are there any tourism campaigns that you admire? Any that feel too safe?**
- **Are there cities that you believe have done a particularly strong job of rebuilding or repositioning their brand in recent years, and why?**
- **In regard to the sea of sameness, how does Meet Minneapolis see how the current work breaks from that mold? How does it differ from cities like Portland, Seattle, Denver, or outdoor/nature-driven communities?**
- **Of the 200 cities you mention currently doing tourism and economic development campaigns, are there any your team or board particularly admire? If so, why?**
- **We love that you want to do “bold” work. Are there any travel or tourism campaigns that you think are doing work you admire/that is bold?**
- **What metropolitan areas in your opinion have done tourism campaigns well?**

Every destination has its own story and set of realities, and we’ve certainly seen campaigns that helped clarify or strengthen how a place is understood. The destination campaigns that inspire us because they lean into authenticity and find smart ways to balance brand emotion with demand generation. A few that stand out:

- [Visit Oslo: Is it even a city?](#)
- [Discover Los Angeles: We Love LA](#)
- [7 Wonders of the World: Oregon](#)

These campaigns work for different reasons. They confidently showcase what makes each place genuinely distinctive, while others turn a narrative on its head to generate publicity.

Questions about Reputation Management:

- **Reputation & Context: How should the agency balance "truth-telling" regarding recent national attention with the need to move the narrative forward into a new era of brand storytelling?**

- **You emphasize telling "the truth about Minneapolis," including contrast and grit. Are there specific narratives, topics, or perceptions you do want addressed head-on, and any you consider off-limits?**

When we talk about telling “the truth about Minneapolis” we’re referring to authenticity - showing up in a way that feels real, confident, and reflective of the city’s full character.

This is not intended to be an issue-driven or reactive campaign. Our focus remains destination marketing: inspiring visitation, meetings, and economic impact. Perceptions do influence decision-making, but we want to be thoughtful about how we define and address them.

One important consideration is that those of us who live and work in Minneapolis may have assumptions, positive or negative, about how the city is perceived externally. Part of this engagement will be ensuring we do not project local narratives onto national or priority audiences without validating them through research.

We do not have a predefined list of topics that must be addressed or avoided. Identifying which perceptions meaningfully influence consideration, and which may be overstated or irrelevant, should emerge from discovery, research, and audience insight.

Resident vs. Visitor Sentiment: To what extent does resident sentiment act as a "gating factor" for external-facing creative, and how is that perception currently measured?

Residents are an important stakeholder and brand amplifier, but they are not the primary audience for this campaign.

Resident sentiment is not a formal gating factor for external-facing creative. Our focus is driving visitation and meetings business. That said, authenticity matters - the work should reflect Minneapolis in a way that feels credible to visitors and recognizable to the people who live here.

Resident pride has a direct business impact: approximately 48% of overnight visitors come to Minneapolis to visit friends and family. When residents feel excited about their city and proud of how it's being represented, they're more likely to extend invitations and recommend experiences to their networks.

We do not currently conduct formal tracking of resident sentiment specific to this work. However, we believe strong destination marketing should be something residents can feel pride in, as it represents their city to the world - and creates the conditions for them to become active ambassadors who bring visitors here.

It is undeniable that Minneapolis has a history of a more left-leaning culture and population. As it relates to the Meetings audience, does "inclusivity" include potential groups or organizations that wouldn't traditionally align with that culture; i.e. NRA, Heritage Foundation, National Right To Life, etc.? Or is it the vision to be inclusive within the acknowledgement of our historical cultural leanings?

Meet Minneapolis is a destination marketing organization focused on bringing meetings, events, and visitors to the city to support economic impact.

When we talk about inclusivity, we're speaking to hospitality and experience - ensuring that all attendees and visitors feel welcome, supported, and able to fully engage while they're here. It's about how people experience Minneapolis once they arrive.

Our role is to position the city as a capable, professional, and welcoming destination across industries and sectors. The brand work should reflect that spirit - highlighting Minneapolis as a place where events can succeed and where attendees can have a positive, memorable experience.

In any destination - and particularly in this polarized political climate - groups tend to be attracted to places that align with their values. We are not exclusive in terms of who we welcome here, but there are some selection considerations among certain groups who favor or don't favor Minneapolis based on our history and culture as a city.

To what extent should the 'Brand and Demand' strategy address current public perceptions of the city, and how much 'white space' is there for bold, artful installations to reshape that narrative?

Brand and demand work should be grounded in audience insight, not assumption. Perception influences consideration, and consideration influences action - but we do not view this as a reactive narrative-correction effort.

The strategy should identify which perceptions meaningfully affect Meeting Planners and Leisure Travelers, validate those through research, and determine where there is opportunity to strengthen differentiation. In some cases, that may involve clarifying or elevating aspects of the Minneapolis story that are underleveraged. In others, it may simply mean expressing our strengths with greater confidence and consistency.

We believe there is meaningful white space for bold, artful, and attention-driving expression provided it is strategically grounded and directly connected to brand and demand objectives. Installations or experiential moments can be powerful amplifiers, but they should serve a clear positioning and economic purpose rather than function as standalone statements.

Ultimately, the opportunity is to create work that is distinctive and culturally resonant while remaining focused on what drives visitation, meetings business, and long-term competitiveness.

Have your current objectives shifted from the past few years? If so, how?

Our core objectives have not shifted. Meet Minneapolis exists to make Minneapolis the destination of choice for the next event or vacation. Our focus remains on driving visitation, meetings, and events that positively impact the economic and social prosperity of our community.

By attracting visitors and securing meetings business, we support local workers and businesses while generating critical revenue for the city. While tactics and market conditions may evolve, our mission and overarching goals remain consistent.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS & CONTEXT

Additional Research, Performance Metrics, & Insight Questions

- **What were the key learnings coming out of the "See What All the Fuss is About" campaign?**
- **It is mentioned within the RFP that Meet MPLS is willing to share strategic insights, research, and past campaigns upon request. Would you be willing to share those with our team?**
- **Are there historical media and creative performance statistics that can be reviewed?**
- **As we begin developing our approach, could you share any relevant background materials that would help inform our thinking? Specifically, we'd appreciate access to your current strategic plans, any relevant research or insights, and examples of past campaigns.**
- **Are you able to share your audience research? (*from question 9 about Meeting Attendees*)**
- **You have provided a great deal of information but also offered that you "may share additional background information upon request." It would be appreciated if we could receive any applicable strategic plans, research, audience personas, and past campaigns that aren't already linked in the RFP.**
- **Can you share the historical media-only spend for recent previous campaigns? Channel mix?**



- **Since our last engagement ended, have you run any media? If so, was there any paid media included or was it all run out of your owned channels? Are you willing to include recaps of what was run and the performance of the efforts?**
- **Will you share research data (on travelers, past campaign success/opportunities...etc.)**

We appreciate the many requests we received for additional research, insights and campaign performance and agree that background materials are important to developing a thoughtful approach.

The materials included in the RFP are intended to provide a high-level foundation for all respondents. We have also provided access to our research library that is available to all partner organizations for a limited duration during this RFP process. You can log in here (password: passw0rd): <https://www.minneapolis.org/partners/travel-research/>

Given the specificity and sensitivity of some of these requests, any questions not answered there will be shared with the selected agency partner as part of the onboarding process.

AOR/Previous AOR Questions

- **Do you have a previous AOR? If so, are you willing to share why you are moving away from your previous AOR?**
- **Are there any agencies that would be considered incumbents participating in the selection process?**
- **Is this RFP process required or being prompted by a desire to change partners?**
- **What is not present in your marketing efforts today that you're looking to gain with a new agency partner?**
- **Is there a current AOR? If so, are they participating in this RFP? And, is there anything with the existing relationship that is being restructured through this RFP, or are there learnings from the existing relationship that have informed this RFP?**
- **Do you currently work with an ad agency or agencies? If so, will they be involved with this review?**
- **Will the Incumbent agency be participating in this RFP? What is the appetite for change?**
- **Historically, how has Meet Minneapolis engaged with agency partners, and what gets you excited about the prospect of working with a new partner?**

Meet Minneapolis has not historically operated with a traditional AOR model, and we do not currently have an AOR. Over the years, we've partnered with agencies on a project-by-project basis, including a multi-year campaign initiative with limited duration COVID-recovery funding.

All core marketing team leads have previously managed AOR relationships and/or worked in agencies serving in an AOR capacity in other organizations.

This RFP is not about moving away from or restructuring an existing AOR relationship. It is being driven by the launch of the Minneapolis Tourism Improvement District (MTID) and the expanded funding, scope, and expectations that come with it. The scale and complexity of this next phase of work call for a more formal, long-term agency partnership.

There are no incumbent agencies, and no external agencies will be involved in the evaluation or selection.

With this AOR, we're looking to strengthen integration across brand and demand, sharpen audience insight and measurement, bring greater cohesion to how we reach both leisure travelers and meeting Planners and produce dynamic creative. We are most excited about these things and being able to do them over a sustained period of time and build upon our successes/learn from our failures.

Questions About Ideal Agency Partner

- **Stepping outside the document for a moment — what would make you say, "this agency just gets us,"? Are there any past campaigns that stand out to you as examples of that?**
- **What matters most to you in an agency partner?**
- **Do you favor agencies with experience in travel and hospitality or firms that have solved the same challenges faced by our great city?**

An agency “gets us” when they translate what we love about Minneapolis and who we are into creative that drives measurable results, without naval gazing that forgets the end consumer or, conversely, focuses so much on the promotion that it loses the authentic core of who and what makes up our city and our community.

While we appreciate strategic thinking that can translate across categories, destination marketing has unique challenges - seasonal demand patterns, consideration cycles, attribution complexity, balancing multiple stakeholder needs, and the nuances of inspiring travel behavior.

We favor agencies with proven experience in urban destination marketing, or, barring that, experience marketing a product that a client does not own or operate.

What matters most to us is clear insights + accountability with excellent creative, backed by true partnership driven by mutual respect and clear communication and expectations.

How would you describe Meet Minneapolis' working style and culture?

Strategic, collaborative, transparent and fast-paced. Meet Minneapolis manages simultaneous projects across varied audiences with an array of stakeholders, driven by a shared passion for our dynamic city.

Questions about previous success

- **Are you seeing any recent success in any of your marcomm initiatives (paid media, influencers, organic social, pr)? If so, any insight into what's working/not working?**
- **Where have you seen the most success in the past few years?**

Success has been strongest where we've aligned compelling moments or meeting destination strengths with clear audience targeting.

Major conventions, sporting events, and cultural moments have consistently driven strong visitation and visibility for the city. On the meetings side, we've seen success when industry alignment and Minneapolis' unique meeting destination strengths are clearly articulated to planners.

Overall, success has come when strategy, storytelling, and distribution are tightly aligned - something we're looking to build on in this next phase.

Is this RFP driven primarily by contract timing, MTID funding evolution or a strategic shift in brand/demand direction? What is the rationale for launching the RFP now?

This RFP is driven primarily by the MTID funding evolution. The establishment of dedicated tourism funding through the Minneapolis Tourism Improvement District gives us the resources and mandate to invest in destination marketing at a level that wasn't previously sustainable.

STRATEGY & MARKET DATA

Questions about Revenue/Room Night Split

- **What is the revenue split between leisure vs. group?**
- **What percentage of tourism-related revenue is currently driven by leisure travel versus meetings and conventions?**
- **What percentage of room nights are from meetings vs leisure?**

- **What percentage of revenue or economic impact is currently driven by leisure versus meetings and conventions?**

Both leisure travel and meetings/conventions are essential drivers of Minneapolis' tourism economy, though they contribute in different ways.

Based on January RevPAR data from Kalibri Hummingbird:

- Leisure: 40%
- Commercial: 33%
- Group: 25%
- Contract: 3%

From a room night standpoint (share of occupancy), the breakdown shifts slightly:

- Transient (leisure + commercial): 74% total (44% leisure / 30% commercial)
- Group: 21%

Leisure travel accounts for the majority of overall visitation volume and supports seasonal demand, attractions, restaurants, and broader hospitality activity.

Meetings and conventions, while representing a smaller share of total visitor volume, generate disproportionately high economic impact on a per-visit basis due to group room nights, extended stays, midweek occupancy, and ancillary spending. Historically, securing meetings and events has been the foundation of Meet Minneapolis' contract with the City of Minneapolis.

Are you aware of any product delivery or satisfaction issues that may affect visitor experiences and/or perceptions beyond the research you have shared?

Beyond the research and insights already shared, we do not have additional data to provide at this stage in the RFP process.

As a destination marketing organization, we do not directly own or operate the visitor experience. Hotels, venues, restaurants, attractions, and service providers are independently managed across the city. Our role is to market the destination and work closely with partners to help ensure the experience aligns with the expectations we set.

We collaborate regularly with hospitality and meetings stakeholders to support strong visitor and attendee experiences and to help the industry collectively deliver on the promise of Minneapolis as a destination.

While awareness of Minneapolis is high, where in the funnel are you seeing the most significant drop-off for potential visitors, is it the transition from Consideration to Conversion (booking)?

While we would like to grow the funnel at all stages, we know that there continues to be opportunity in the conversion space.

Questions about Barriers for Meeting Planners

- **If you have any intel, what are the biggest barriers meeting planners cite when considering Minneapolis?**
- **What would hotel owners say is the #1 narrative holding back bookings?**

We're not in a position to speak on behalf of individual hotel owners or identify a single narrative holding back bookings. Each property is unique, with different target audiences, business mixes, and offerings, so performance drivers can vary.

In a national study, meeting planners cited Minneapolis' biggest weakness as "Hotels Well Suited for my Largest Meetings." This is not an area that we think can be influenced by marketing, as it is generally a size constraint issue.

Demand is influenced by many factors - economic conditions, competitive markets, industry cycles, and broader travel trends - with perceptions or "narrative" being just one part of the equation. Our focus is on strengthening Minneapolis' overall competitive position and driving demand across meetings and leisure in ways that support our hotel and hospitality partners.

What would meeting planners say is the biggest objection they must overcome internally?

We wouldn't be able to identify a single, universal objection. Meeting planners are highly diverse - spanning associations, corporate, SMERF, and specialty sectors - each with different event sizes, approval structures, stakeholder priorities, and success metrics.

Our largest groups at the Minneapolis Convention Center tend to be associations. Associations often generate a significant percentage of their operating budget or member engagement from their annual meeting. For that reason, risk mitigation is often paramount.

Questions about Competitive Set

- **Who do planners compare Minneapolis against most often?**
- **Which cities is Minneapolis losing meetings/events/tourism to? What else is in the consideration set?**
- **What destinations are Minneapolis most frequently losing in meeting RFPs, and what barriers are cited?**
- **To help inform strategic positioning, creative differentiation, and media planning, can Meet Minneapolis clarify how it defines its primary competitive set? Specifically, are there destination markets they most frequently compete against for leisure travel and meetings/conventions that agencies should consider when developing strategy and recommendations?**

Meet Minneapolis competes in a dynamic and situational competitive landscape that varies significantly by audience, event size, geography, and time of year.

For Meetings and Conventions:

We often have visibility into the competitive set during the RFP process, as meeting planners typically evaluate a shortlist of cities based on event size, facility requirements, geographic rotation, accessibility, and industry segment. In these cases, we frequently compete against comparable convention-capable cities in the center of country, though the set varies depending on the opportunity. The specific competitive set shifts with each RFP based on the planner's criteria and constraints.

For Leisure Travel:

The consideration set is broader and less transparent. We are competing for leisure time, which can often be not against another city but against another competing time demand. Travelers may evaluate a range of urban destinations - regionally or nationally - based on budget, seasonality, accessibility, experience preferences, and major events. Large-scale sporting events, cultural moments, concerts, and festivals often play a meaningful role in driving consideration and timing of visits. Unlike meetings, we rarely have direct insight into which cities (or other leisure pursuit) were evaluated and ultimately not chosen.

Agencies are encouraged to articulate how they would approach competitive analysis and positioning in complex, multi-audience destination environments where the competitive landscape is fluid rather than fixed.

What is the average booking lead time for conventions?

This varies greatly depending on convention size. A “citywide convention” can book 8+ years in advance. However, most of our large groups book 3-4 years in advance.

You cite residents as both a primary leisure audience and a source of civic pride. How do you envision residents participating in, or benefiting from, the brand and demand work?

Minneapolis residents are not a primary audience in the same way as meeting planners or leisure travelers; however, they are an essential stakeholder and brand amplifier.

As a destination marketing organization, our work is most effective when it aligns with authentic local sentiment. Resident pride, participation, and advocacy contribute to the credibility of the brand and the visitor experience itself. A destination brand cannot succeed externally if it lacks resonance internally.

Where appropriate, elements of the brand platform may be expressed in ways that invite resident participation - but this engagement should support, not distract from, primary tourism and meetings objectives.

Is there any seasonality that exists within the hospitality bookings and meetings that we need to be aware of?

Yes. Overnight visitor volume to the MSP metro shows clear seasonality by quarter:

- Q1: 22%
- Q2: 25%
- Q3: 30% (peak)
- Q4: 24%

Summer is our strongest visitation period. Marketing strategy and media investment should account for building off-peak visitation where opportunity exists.

What do you see as your biggest challenge in getting primary audiences to consider, visit, and book events here?

The biggest challenge is not a single issue, but competing for attention and consideration in a crowded, highly competitive marketplace.

Meeting planners and leisure travelers have more destination options than ever, and decision cycles are influenced by budget pressures, accessibility, perceived value, and overall experience.

Because of the similarities in challenges facing the city today and the challenges in 2020, can you share what strategies you felt were most effective in encouraging more major events and visitors in the past five years?

We don't see today's environment as a direct comparison to 2020. One thing that has remained consistent is the power of strong, event-driven momentum.

Major conventions, sporting events, and cultural moments have consistently helped drive visitation, generate positive visibility, and reinforce that Minneapolis continues to be a place where people gather, create, and connect. Events often serve as catalysts, introducing first-time visitors to the city and sparking broader interest and return trips.

As we look ahead, we believe the right approach should be informed by current research and real audience insight rather than assumptions based on past periods. The goal is to build positioning that feels relevant to today's landscape and competitive environment.

Questions About Perception

- **What perception research do you currently have regarding the safety concerns of Minneapolis? How has that been addressed locally and regionally?**
- **In the previous campaign, safety was an important barrier to overcome from a perception standpoint. As we look at this new effort, what has your research shown as the key barriers to entry or perception challenges?**
- **The RFP mentions the early 2026 federal immigration enforcement activity and its impact on travel sentiment. Is there specific research or qualitative feedback from meeting planners regarding this "uncertainty" that the brand strategy needs to directly mitigate, or should the response be more foundational and long-term?**

Our most recent research shows that our historical challenges remain: lack of a compelling reason to visit, lack of awareness around things to see and do, and competitive demands on time. These are the primary barriers we need to address.

Regarding Operation Metro Surge specifically, research was conducted while enforcement activity was underway. We share this information with the caution that sentiment has shifted rapidly during this time. In mid-to-late January, Future Partners—a marketing research consultancy specializing in travel and tourism—fielded questions via their proprietary monthly survey of n=2,030 American travelers:

- Among Minneapolis-interested travelers (approx. 150), 20.6% have altered travel plans in the past 12 months due to ICE activity

- Among all respondents, 46.1% say they are likely to avoid a destination if they expect a visible federal law-enforcement presence

We do not currently have specific research or formal qualitative feedback from meeting planners directly attributing booking decisions to immigration enforcement activity.

Are there must-use media channels or existing sponsorship commitments that should inform planning?

We do not have any existing sponsorship commitments that go beyond 2026, nor anything large enough to inform planning.

What seasonal or occasion-based demand gaps are most critical to fill in the next one to two years?

There is capacity for most times of the year for hotels and leisure visitors. Convention Center bookings vary by year but also has capacity.

Are you currently partnering with Epsilon or Priceline to gather insights from travelers and where interest in Minneapolis may be trending? If so, what are the trends that you're seeing that you find interesting or see as low hanging fruit.

We are not currently partnering with Epsilon or Priceline. We are partnering with Expedia. We continue to see significant bookings coming within 7 days of arrival, and a suppression of activity from Canada, neither of which we think are trends we can sufficiently impact.

AUDIENCE & SEGMENTATION

Audience Nuance: Are you open to distinct tonal shifts between leisure travelers and meeting planners, provided they both ladder up to a singular, unified brand core?

Yes, we expect audience nuance, provided all expressions clearly ladder up to a singular, unified brand platform.

Who owns first-party data strategy, audience segmentation, and data privacy compliance?

Meet Minneapolis retains ownership of all first-party data and maintains responsibility for overarching data governance and privacy compliance.

Meet Minneapolis is responsible for compliance with applicable data privacy regulations. The agency is expected to operate within these policies and provide guidance on evolving media and data best practices. [You can read our privacy policy online.](#)

Questions About Leisure and Meeting Planner Audience Priority

- **Within the primary audience of leisure travelers and meeting planners, is there a priority audience for either of the campaigns or would you weight them as equal?**
- **We understand this work must serve multiple audiences. Given the two primary audiences, do you prioritize those equally, or one more than the other?**

Both are critical to the destination's economic vitality, though their decision cycles, impact, and conversion timelines differ.

However, we know that meeting planners are leisure travelers too. Very rarely would a meeting planner consider a destination for a meeting that they wouldn't enjoy traveling to or think their attendees would like to visit. For that reason, leisure would have the edge. Put another way: it can't work against our efforts to appeal to meeting planners.

Within the leisure traveler audience, are there segments you see as most critical to growth, such as the regional drive market, or should all leisure segments be weighted evenly?

The regional drive market will always be important, as it is for most destinations, particularly for short-term and need-period demand. That said, we don't believe all leisure segments should be weighted evenly by default.

A key part of this engagement will be validating which markets and audience segments show the highest intent and strongest alignment with what Minneapolis offers. We expect research and performance data to guide prioritization rather than assuming a fixed hierarchy upfront.

Questions about Geographic Priorities

- **Within the five-state drive market (and Chicago), which DMAs are the highest priority for incremental growth?**

- **Can you please clarify geographic priorities? The RFP references a 60–300 mile drive radius and a broader five-state area. Can you confirm the states and share any DMAs you see as highest priorities?**

The 60–300 mile drive radius and broader Upper Midwest region will remain important components of our leisure strategy. The five-state area generally includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota. We have also had high levels of visitation from large population centers within a day's drive or a short flight, notably Chicago.

We expect research, performance data, and audience insights to guide final geographic weighting rather than predefining a fixed hierarchy in advance.

The RFP anticipates a majority of spend in primary markets for the first year. Is there an appetite to test "fly-in" markets beyond Chicago to diversify the visitor profile, or is the strategic priority for the 2026–2028 period strictly focused on regional recovery?

While regional and drive markets will remain important, we do not view the strategy as strictly limited to them. We are open to testing and scaling into fly-in markets where research and performance data indicate strong alignment, intent, and growth opportunity.

You've identified Meeting Attendees as a secondary audience. Does Meet Minneapolis view this group primarily as a "trip extension" opportunity, or is there a strategic goal to convert these business travelers into permanent brand advocates and future leisure visitors? Are you able to share your audience research?

Meeting attendees represent an important opportunity, both in the moment and overtime.

In the short term, there is value in encouraging trip extension and increased on-the-ground spending during their visit. When appropriate, we aim to highlight experiences that make it easy to add a night, explore neighborhoods, or engage more deeply with the city.

More broadly, we see meeting attendees as future leisure travelers and brand advocates. A positive attendee experience - both within the event and across the destination - can influence return visitation, word-of-mouth, and long-term affinity for Minneapolis.

We do not currently have first-party research specifically tracking long-term conversion from business/meeting attendee to leisure visitor. However, we recognize the organic potential of that pathway and view the attendee experience as an important brand touchpoint within the broader ecosystem.

Data & Insight Gaps: Beyond existing research, where do you feel your current understanding of the audience is weakest -- is it with leisure travelers, meeting planners, or national perception?

Leisure travelers, specifically regional visitors, represent our biggest insights gap and opportunity. We do not have regular tracking that assesses the health of our destination brand or perceptions among that segment of the traveler marketplace.

We have a solid understanding of meeting planners and national perception, but we're most interested in learning what marketing and media tactics are most successful in changing behavior and driving conversions across all audiences.

Questions About Personas

- **We know you've done great work in defining personas, have those changed in the last year or so?**
- **Are there defined personas for each segment? Or segments from within each category?**

We do not currently have fully developed, research-based leisure personas. As noted in earlier responses, destination data is inherently complex and not transaction-driven, so refining audience segmentation will be an important part of this engagement.

We do have stronger directional insight within the Meetings audience based on historical booking success and industry vertical alignment (e.g., corporate HQ presence, medical, engineering, faith-based, LGBTQ+ affinity).

Which two to three markets currently present the greatest brand perception or visitation challenges?

Historically, those who are closer to/in the MSP DMA have had more negative feelings than those who are slightly further away or nationally.

Who are your highest-value audiences today (by revenue, impact, or influence), and how are you prioritizing them? Is the priority short-term booking or long-term brand perception?

Meeting planner audiences are the highest value by revenue/impact/influence and there is a robust sales and marketing program of work that is undertaken to reach this audience. However, this RFP and spend exists to extend our reach by placing additional emphasis in the leisure tourism space.

Near term priority is short term bookings, but long term brand perception is needed for overall growth and sustainability.

Are there underserved or emerging audiences you want to grow (e.g., multicultural travelers, regional drive markets, international, niche event planners)?

Yes, and we will look for research to help identify opportunities, most likely in year 3+.

How do you define "high-value visitor" for Minneapolis?

Multiple night stays in paid accommodations, spending in locations throughout the city at several businesses, especially during need periods like winter or lower visitation evenings like Sunday, and become advocates of the city.

Do leisure and meetings/meeting planners require separate messaging territories or one story?

One story with nuanced messaging – there is a lot of overlap of interests, but not everything.

Is your audience priority to still focus on "Drive Markets" or how has that evolved?

Audience priority is still 'drive markets' for the near term.

Has travel intent changed for those considering to visit Minneapolis from drive markets or even non drive markets? What are the trends you're seeing over the past 2-3 years? Is there variation by demographic?

There have not been any wholesale shifts year-to-year – we still draw from our drive markets with some slight variations and strong visitation from areas with large populations (i.e. Chicago). We will share more research with the selected agency.

MEASUREMENT & SUCCESS METRICS

Questions about Priorities/Success Measurements:

- **KPIs for the organization include: group hotel room nights, Minneapolis convention center revenue, partnership retention and growth, and lodging tax receipts. Which of these are the highest in priority? How frequently are partners providing data on these metrics?**
- **Defining Success: Given the lack of a direct point of sale, which specific performance indicators (KPIs) are most vital for justifying the investment to MTID stakeholders**
- **Of the stated KPIs (awareness, perception, conversions, room nights, RFPs), which will be considered the primary measure of success in the first 6–12 months?**
- **What KPIs does the MTID governance committee view as nonnegotiable indicators of success?**
- **The Partnership Legacy: At the conclusion of this three-year term, what specific shift in how Minneapolis “shows up in the world” would lead you to deem this partnership a definitive success?**
- **Is there attribution modeling that’s currently in place to be able to track and understand the media and efficiencies, as well as understand channel performance and specific KPIs?**
- **What existing tools, partners, or data sources are already in place for attribution, brand lift, and conversion measurement?**

As a destination marketing organization, Meet Minneapolis does not own the end product or point of sale. Attribution and conversion measurement therefore require a multi-source approach rather than reliance on a single transactional data stream.

We currently utilize a combination of paid media platform reporting, website analytics, CRM and lead tracking systems, RFP and sales pipeline reporting, hotel performance data, partner reporting, and third-party research to assess performance across awareness, engagement, room night production, and conversion indicators.

We also recognize the importance of original research to measure brand awareness, perception, consideration, and intent to travel among priority audiences and markets. Establishing credible baselines and tracking movement over time - particularly across both meeting planners and leisure travelers - will be an important component of evaluating brand effectiveness.

Destination marketing attribution is inherently complex and often directional rather than deterministic. **A key expectation of this engagement is that the selected agency will help refine and strengthen our measurement framework.** This includes:

- Recommending appropriate attribution models for both leisure and meetings audiences
- Advising on methodologies to connect media investment to room nights and pipeline growth

- Identifying tools or partners to support brand lift, perception tracking, and longitudinal research
- Establishing clear KPIs aligned to brand and demand objectives
- Creating transparent reporting that connects upper-funnel investment to downstream economic impact

We are seeking a partner with demonstrated experience building credible, defensible measurement systems in complex environments without a centralized point of sale. The ability to clearly articulate how you have approached similar challenges will be an important evaluation factor.

Success metrics will differ by audience and campaign objective. In the first 6–12 months, we will evaluate progress based on indicators most appropriate to each audience’s decision cycle and economic impact model.

Meeting Planners

Given the longer booking windows and higher per-event economic impact, primary early indicators of success will include:

- Increase in qualified RFP volume
- Growth in pipeline value and booking pace
- Engagement with priority planner segments
- Positive perception shifts among decision-makers

Future Room Nights and MCC revenue produced may lag initial campaign activation; therefore, RFP activity and pipeline health will serve as leading indicators in year one.

Leisure Travelers

For leisure audiences, which have shorter decision cycles and more immediate conversion potential, primary early indicators will include:

- Conversions and attributable room nights
- Website engagement and trip-planning actions
- Hotel performance during identified need periods
- Awareness and perception movement in priority markets

Demand performance will be evaluated alongside brand lift to ensure short-term visitation does not come at the expense of long-term positioning.

Overall Measurement Approach

This engagement is not a single-metric assignment. We expect the selected agency to develop a measurement framework that clearly differentiates:

- Brand vs. demand outcomes
- Short-term vs. long-term impact
- Planner vs. leisure performance timelines

In the first year, success will be defined by demonstrable movement across the full funnel, with evidence that brand investment and demand activation are reinforcing one another to drive sustained economic impact.

Questions About Organizational Priorities, Governance & Investment Justification

- **KPIs for the organization include: group hotel room nights, Minneapolis convention center revenue, partnership retention and growth, and lodging tax receipts. Which of these are the highest in priority? How frequently are partners providing data on these metrics?**
- **What KPIs does the MTID governance committee view as nonnegotiable indicators of success?**
- **Is there a priority in revenue goals between meetings and leisure?**
- **Have KPI's from the last RFP changed? If so, how/why?**
- **How have your internal goals evolved since our last engagement and how do you see that impacting media campaign goals?**
- **How have you historically defined incremental return on marketing investment, and how might that evolve under MTID funding?**
- **What reporting cadence and level of detail does the MTID governance committee expect?**
- **Defining Success: Given the lack of a direct point of sale, which specific performance indicators (KPIs) are most vital for justifying the investment to MTID stakeholders**

For MTID stakeholders, the most vital indicators will ultimately be those that demonstrate sustained economic impact — including future room night production and lodging tax growth.

However, the MTID metrics of success will be different than the four organizational KPIs, while still working toward the overall goals of Meet Minneapolis, with some overlap, especially around room night production/tax revenue. The KPI goals for Meet Minneapolis have, generally, monthly reporting from established sources.

Given booking windows and the absence of a direct point of sale, leading indicators must serve as credible proxies in earlier stages. This includes qualified RFP volume and pipeline growth for meetings, and attributable room nights, conversion actions, and hotel performance for leisure.

Regarding brand lift, this is an anticipated program of this work, especially compared to non-advertising-exposed audiences. We expect reporting cadence to Meet Minneapolis to be different than the frequency of what is provided to the MTID committee, and for those expectations to be aligned based on the target market and program of work with the selected agency partner, and for the KPIs to be expanded from our previous work based on the broader scope versus what was reported for our 2023-2024 campaigns (ad accountability/brand lift/net promoter).

A key objective of this engagement is to work with the selected agency to further define and validate the most defensible combination of leading and lagging indicators that clearly justify MTID investment over time.

Questions About Success Framework: Leading Indicators & Time Horizons

- **Of the stated KPIs (awareness, perception, conversions, room nights, RFPs), which will be considered the primary measure of success in the first 6–12 months?**
- **Given that your 2026 KPIs-like Group Hotel Room Nights and Convention Center Revenue-are primarily influenced by multi-year B2B sales cycles, what “leading indicators” does Meet Minneapolis value for the leisure/DTC side?**
- **Given the desire for this to be a campaign that drives perception of the Minneapolis brand versus a traditional promotional or direct response, do you have historical references or expectations in terms of the runway or length of time a top of funnel type campaign should drive measurable and/or tangible results such as hotel bookings, convention center revenue, etc.?**

Success metrics will differ by audience and campaign objective. In the first 6–12 months, we will evaluate progress based on indicators most appropriate to each audience’s decision cycle and agreed upon KPIs, as noted above.

Traditional leading indicators/success metrics for meeting planners:

- Increase in qualified RFP volume
- Growth in pipeline/tentative
- Annual booking pace

Future Room Nights and MCC revenue produced may lag initial campaign activation; therefore, RFP activity and pipeline health are generally considered key leading indicators.

Traditional leading indicators/success metrics for leisure travelers:

- Conversions and attributable room nights
- Hotel performance during identified need periods
- Awareness and perception movement in priority markets

We do have past measurements that can serve as background or benchmarks for some of these programs and can share those with selected agency.

We do not want short-term visitation to come at the expense of long-term positioning.

We recognize that brand-driven campaigns require a longer runway than direct response initiatives, particularly within meetings and convention sales cycles that span multiple years.

We expect the selected agency to help establish realistic performance timelines and benchmarks that align brand investment with economic outcomes, balancing short-term demand activation with long-term positioning strength.

Questions About Brand Health, Perception & Long-Term Impact

- **The Partnership Legacy: At the conclusion of this three-year term, what specific shift in how Minneapolis “shows up in the world” would lead you to deem this partnership a definitive success?**
- **Beyond standard ‘heads in beds’ metrics, how does the MTID define a ‘game-changing impression’? Are you prioritizing immediate social amplification or long-term brand advocacy?**
- **What baseline metrics exist for awareness, favorability, consideration and intent?**
- **Are there brand trackers that can inform the impact of previous messaging and positioning, and how it has resonated/not resonated?**
- **Do you currently have any brand attitude and awareness goals within your KPI metrics?**
- **What does success look like for your engagement with a brand partner?**

Brand awareness, favorability, consideration, and intent are recognized as important components of our overall performance framework; however, formalized benchmark targets and longitudinal tracking methodologies are areas we expect to further refine through this engagement.

Establishing credible baselines and tracking movement over time — across both meeting planners and leisure travelers — will be a critical early priority, as well as giving some proof points of success on how Minneapolis “shows up in the world.” In three years, we want more people to love, advocate for and visit Minneapolis. Historically, the marker for additional hotel growth is a sustained baseline of 70% occupancy.

While not a current organizational KPI, we do have some brand sentiment data to share with the selected agency based on past campaigns and the impacts of previous messaging and positioning. We do not have an ongoing measurement tool with regular reporting cadence across standardized respondents. We do anticipate brand sentiment growth will be key to supporting ‘game-changing impressions’ and know that destination marketing lends itself very well to a strong social media presence.

Questions About Brand vs. Demand Integration Philosophy

- **Since the RFP emphasizes that brand builds “emotion” while demand drives “conversion”, how does Meet Minneapolis currently view the attribution overlap between the two? Specifically, are you looking for a measurement framework that can track how brand sentiment directly lowers the cost-per-acquisition (CPA) for trip-driving campaigns?**
- **Can you share how Meet Minneapolis currently evaluates whether brand-building efforts are meaningfully supporting downstream demand outcomes, particularly when attribution is indirect?**

Destination marketing attribution is inherently complex and often directional rather than deterministic. The idea of a measurement framework that tracks how brand sentiment lowers CPA is an intriguing one and one that seems inherently true but we haven’t seen a framework around it.

A key expectation of this engagement is that the selected agency will help refine and strengthen our measurement framework. This includes:

- Recommending appropriate attribution models for both leisure and meetings audiences
- Advising on methodologies to connect media investment to room nights and pipeline growth
- Identifying tools or partners to support brand lift, perception tracking, and longitudinal research
- Establishing clear KPIs aligned to brand and demand objectives
- Creating transparent reporting that connects upper-funnel investment to downstream economic impact

We have used various methodologies and attribution models for parts of spend, as well as exposed/unexposed audiences, but are always looking for ways to measure a greater reach using the latest methodologies available. We are seeking a partner with demonstrated experience building credible, defensible measurement systems in complex environments without a centralized point of sale. The ability to clearly articulate how you have approached similar challenges will be an important evaluation factor.

Questions About Attribution Modeling & Measurement Infrastructure

- **Is there attribution modeling that's currently in place to be able to track and understand the media and efficiencies, as well as understand channel performance and specific KPIs?**
- **What existing tools, partners, or data sources are already in place for attribution, brand lift, and conversion measurement?**
- **Since you do not have a POS, how is your "inspiration" towards your KPIs tracked? Do you have example reports of how you receive your KPIs? Do you have baseline benchmarks identified or specific KPI goals?**
- **How do you currently connect paid media exposure to hotel bookings, RFP submissions and room nights?**
- **What measures do your partners share or report back to you, so you can accurately track results for your KPIs?**
- **How are you tracking performance currently – both in terms of media and ultimate visitor outcomes? Are there any gaps in your data or reporting that you'd like agency help with?**
- **What RSM and data platforms are currently in place for leisure and meetings audiences?**
- **Have you conducted media mix modeling, incrementality testing and geo-lift studies previously?**

As a destination marketing organization, Meet Minneapolis does not own the end product or point of sale. Attribution and conversion measurement therefore require a multi-source approach rather than reliance on a single transactional data stream. We do not currently use any attribution models but have worked in the past or are familiar with Epsilon, Adara, Sojern and others in this space.

We currently utilize a combination of paid media platform reporting, website analytics, CRM and lead tracking systems, RFP and sales pipeline reporting, hotel performance data, partner reporting (limited), and third-party research to assess performance across awareness, engagement, room night production, and conversion indicators. Partner reporting is mostly limited to overall room night volume in the market via STR, but not specific lead volume for meetings.

We have not done any media mix modeling of note; we have done some incrementality testing (and would be interested in more of it as a measure of success for this campaign) and previous geo-lift studies have not shown statistically significant variation on a consistent basis, which could have been a limitation of spend.

We also recognize the importance of original research to measure brand awareness, perception, consideration, and intent to travel among priority audiences and markets.

QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

These are questions we consider more appropriate for the work with our selected agency partner.

- **To help us understand the right tone and voice for the creative, if you could personify our great city, what famous person or persons would it be and why?**
- **What are three personality words you would assign to Minneapolis considering its legacy, its present-day challenges, and its desired future state?**
- **Where do you feel past advertising and marketing efforts were particularly successful? Where do you think are the biggest opportunities to improve upon past efforts?**
- **In the years following the civil unrest and heightened national attention, what role did Meet Minneapolis play directly or in partnership in assisting recovery, and what did you learn about how perception actually shifts? How have those experiences informed the expectations you now have of a collaborative agency partner?**
- **Where do you feel past advertising and marketing efforts were particularly successful? Where do you think are the biggest opportunities to improve upon past efforts?**
- **In the years following the civil unrest and heightened national attention, what role did Meet Minneapolis play directly or in partnership in assisting recovery, and what did you learn about how perception actually shifts? How have those experiences informed the expectations you now have of a collaborative agency partner?**

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Who owns platform access (Google, Meta, DSPs, analytics tools)?

Meet Minneapolis retains ownership of all paid media platform accounts, pixels, analytics tools, first-party data assets, and historical campaign performance data.

The selected agency will be granted appropriate administrative access to manage and optimize campaigns across both key audiences (Meeting Planners and Leisure Travelers), supporting both brand and demand objectives.

Because our strategy includes:

- Always-on presence
- Audience-specific targeting
- Brand and performance media layers
- Periodic budget shifts toward need periods

Full transparency and centralized ownership of data and platform access are required to ensure continuity and long-term performance management.

Any new accounts created during the contract term must be established under Meet Minneapolis ownership. All audience segments, dashboards, reporting structures, and campaign learnings remain the property of Meet Minneapolis and must be transferable at the conclusion of the agreement.

We are open to agency-recommended tools and technologies; however, ownership, transparency, and data portability are essential.

Questions about First-Party Data

- **Is there a CRM infrastructure or first-party data that can inform the personas and media strategy?**
- **Is first-party data available for paid media activation and audience modeling?**

This is limited.

Meet Minneapolis maintains CRM infrastructure and first-party data assets that include meeting planner contacts, sales pipeline history, RFP activity, and an opt-in leisure consumer email database. These sources may be able to provide some directional insights into engagement behavior, geographic markets, and audience interaction patterns.

Regarding leisure travelers, as a destination marketing organization, we do not have a centralized point-of-sale system or individual-level transaction data. Our first-party data is therefore more engagement- and relationship-driven than purchase or visitation driven.

PROCESS & GOVERNANCE

What do the existing relationships with local hospitality partners or corporate partners look like? How are they involved in decision-making? Are there shared funds or brand considerations that we need to be aware of?

Meet Minneapolis is a partnership organization of nearly 500 member businesses, however its major partners are the City of Minneapolis/Minneapolis Convention Center and the Minneapolis Tourism Improvement District. It is overseen by a 24-member board made up of City of Minneapolis staff and elected officials, the CEO of Meet Minneapolis and local arts, attractions, restaurant, retail and business and non-profit leaders. The MTID governance committee is a separate committee that is overseen by the board. There are some members that sit on both the governance committee and the board. However, day-to-day programs are overseen by Meet Minneapolis.

There are no shared funds or general brand considerations beyond what has been previously outlined.

Are there board members or stakeholders outside of the RFP process who have opinions about the approach to this (creatively, media-specific, PR needs, etc.)?

There are no shortage of opinions, however, our key stakeholders have planned touchpoints incorporated into this process.

Questions About Approval Process

- **What will be the process for approvals? Will the selected agency partner work directly with a small marketing/client team? When will the nine-member governance committee be brought in for reviews and decision making?**
- **What is the approval and governance process for brand, campaign and media investment decisions with the MTID committee?**
- **Who holds final approval authority for brand, creative, and media decisions, and what is the anticipated review and approval process?**
- **Who owns brand guidelines enforcement and final compliance approval?**
- **Who is going to be responsible for making the decision?**

Meet Minneapolis will serve as the final approval/decision makers, in alignment with a general brand creative direction that is supported by the MTID governance committee.

The Meet Minneapolis has a core team of the Senior Marketing Manager (day-to-day), Senior Director of Marketing and SVP of Destination Branding and Strategy. Other team members will be included in key kickoff, onboarding or briefing meetings.

As a new entity, the MTID governance committee has partnered with Meet Minneapolis for their destination marketing expertise. However, we know that marketing campaigns are most successful when they have internal buy in. For that reason, a marketing task force subcommittee and Meet

Minneapolis staff will be evaluating agency RFPs. We anticipate providing one selected brand concept to the governance committee for their approval as a creative direction.

Meet Minneapolis owns brand guidelines enforcement and final compliance approval.

Is there a preferred meeting cadence (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly)?

We anticipate meeting weekly or bi-weekly as we get started, particularly during onboarding, strategic development, and initial campaign planning phases when collaboration will be most intensive.

Once we're in a steady-state rhythm, meeting cadence will be determined based on what's needed and can be flexible. Some periods may require more frequent touchpoints - such as during campaign development, pre-launch, or performance optimization - while others may need less. We value efficiency and don't believe in meetings for the sake of meetings.

What's most important is that we maintain open communication, have clear expectations about when we need to connect, and can adjust the cadence as the work demands.

Do you have a formal process for engaging and communicating with stakeholders? If so, could you please describe it?

Yes. Meet Minneapolis maintains regular communication cadences with internal leadership (weekly) and the MTID governance committee (currently weekly), with board and executive board oversight (approximately bi-monthly).

TEAM & STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

Questions about local presence

- **What qualifies as having employees in the Minneapolis–Saint Paul region, and are there minimum local staffing expectations for the AOR team?**
- **Operational Localism: Regarding the requirement for a local presence, how do you define this operationally – does it require a physical office with creative staff, or is a hybrid model with local account leadership sufficient?**
- **What has been the experience interacting with agencies outside of Minnesota? Does this agency need to be local?**

Local presence is a nice-to-have, not a requirement. We have worked with marketing and research organizations without presence in Minnesota. A majority have had a Minnesota office, which has been a mandatory requirement in the past.

However, for this RFP, we do not have minimum local staffing expectations or require the agency to maintain a physical office in the Minneapolis–Saint Paul region. We're open to agencies from anywhere, including those with fully remote teams or hybrid models.

That said, we do expect key meetings - particularly strategic planning sessions, creative presentations, and major milestone reviews - to be conducted in person in Minneapolis. The agency should be prepared to travel here for face-to-face collaboration with our team or key presentations.

Does Meet Minneapolis maintain any direct vendor or media partner relationships that the agency will need to accommodate?

No.

Are there other agencies or internal teams the media AOR will coordinate with regularly?

The AOR will work closely with Meet Minneapolis's marketing team, primarily the Senior Director of Marketing and Senior Marketing Manager. We have some project partners for select programs of work but do not currently have other agency relationships that would require regular coordination.

The RFP emphasizes a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion across team composition and audience engagement. Could you share how Meet Minneapolis defines success in this area for this partnership, particularly as it relates to campaign impact versus agency structure?

Inclusion is a core value of Meet Minneapolis. It's critical this work reflects and resonates with the diverse communities that make up Minneapolis and the audiences we aim to attract, and that members of our communities are reflected in the tone, storytelling and audience engagement. We expect diverse insights are incorporated into research, concepting and execution.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

[Agency Selection Process Questions](#)

- **How many agencies do you anticipate selecting for presentations? Do you envision there being an assignment to accompany that presentation?**
- **How many agencies do you anticipate participating in this selection process?**
- **How many agencies are being invited to the second round?**
- **How many agencies will you be reviewing, and what characteristics will distinguish the partners who advance in the process?**

We anticipate selecting 3-5 agencies for Round 2 finalist presentations. Finalists will receive a presentation assignment and will be offered a stipend to support their preparation.

There are a few areas where you ask for creative samples and work in questions #2, #4 and #7. Can the same case study or creative example be used for all questions, if applicable to what you're looking for?

Yes, the same case study or creative example can be used across multiple questions if it's truly applicable to what we're looking for in each.

We recognize that strong work often demonstrates multiple capabilities - strategic thinking, creative execution, and measurable results. If you have a case study that effectively addresses the criteria in questions #2, #4, and #7, we welcome you to reference it across those responses rather than forcing artificial variety.

That said, we do want to see the breadth of your capabilities. If you have distinct examples that better illustrate different aspects of what each question is asking for, we'd appreciate seeing that range. The goal is to understand how you think and work, not to create unnecessary constraints on how you present your best thinking.

Are there any file size or type requirements we should be aware of in submitting our response?

No.

Are there any format requirements other than a PDF file emailed to Katie?

No.

A NOTE ON PARTNERSHIP

This Q&A reflects our commitment to transparency - and our belief that the right agency partner will come prepared with a clear point of view, not just answers to our questions.

Minneapolis has culture, grit, beauty, and a story that most of the country hasn't heard yet. The establishment of the MTID represents a sustained, long-term investment in this city's competitiveness as a destination. The goal of this work is to remind potential leisure travelers and meeting planners - and reveal to others - why Minneapolis belongs at the top of their list.

We are looking for a partner who understands the difference between work that fills a brief and work that moves a market. It's one who sees a complex audience, real stakes, and room to do something bold and defensible, and gets excited about it.

We're ready to take creative risks grounded in real insight, back them with meaningful investment, and build something that lasts longer than a campaign cycle. We want a partner who matches that energy - one who reads this and sees not a checklist, but a chance to do meaningful work that makes a difference.

If that's you, we can't wait to hear from you.