Experience Grand Rapids, the Convention & Visitors Bureau is requesting a proposal for professional services pertaining to the facilitation and development of a strategic plan with emphasis on reclaiming its brand position and business that may have been lost or diminished due to COVID-19. The primary goal is to regain this status and the resources needed to stay ahead of our competitive set.

Grand Rapids, Michigan’s second largest city is located on the Grand River about 40 miles east of Lake Michigan. The city is the metropolitan hub of West Michigan and recognized for its celebrated arts and culture, outdoor recreation, food, and craft beverage scene, including being recognized as Beer City USA.

The County of Kent hospitality community employs over 24,000 people and the economic impact of tourism for the county is over $1 billion. There are over 100 hotels representing approximately 10,250 hotel rooms in the county, including three hotels, two of which are 4-diamond properties, connected to the award-winning DeVos Place (convention center). There are 12 hotels within walking distance of our convention campus, totaling 2,500 rooms. The year 2019 was the best year in Grand Rapids history for hotel performance with regards to occupancy and hotel room revenues and prior to the pandemic, 2020 was expected to surpass those record attainments.

Experience Grand Rapids is a 501c-6 private, not-for-profit corporation governed by a 33-member board of directors. The organization had a staff of 32 full-time employee’s pre-pandemic and now employs 20. The annual budget approved for 2020 was a record $11.7 million. However, and due to projected revenues losses, the current 2021 budget is $6.8 million.

The organization’s primary stakeholders are its hotel partners; 80% of funding is derived from a “voluntary” hotel room assessment (4% of total room revenue). Additional funding is secured through public dollars with a portion of the 5% county levied lodging excise tax, a “lump sum” contribution from the City of Grand Rapids and contractual agreements with the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (visitor services) and the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention and Arena Authority. The organization does have a membership base, but a small percentage of revenue is realized through this source. To gain further insight into the organization, we ask that you visit our national award-winning website at [www.ExperienceGR.com](http://www.ExperienceGR.com).

Additionally, please find attached our 2021 Business Development Plan and a Destination Asset Study Executive Summary that was commissioned in 2016.

As we continue emerge from the pandemic, this project is to provide an opportunity for the organization’s staff, board, stakeholders, and community leaders to engage in a course of action designed to assess and identify the key elements necessary to guide the organization’s future direction and necessary business decisions. By clearly identifying the organization’s vision, mission, values and strategic intent the organization better articulates its purpose with regard to meeting the needs of its stakeholders and the community at large and as such, will meet the aforementioned goal of emerging post-pandemic as the leader in amongst our peer set.

This proposal should outline the multiple processes to facilitate a Board Member/Community Stakeholder vision, mission, values alignment process, as well as the final development of a staff/board aligned Strategic Plan. In addition, we ask that you present your proposed fee structure for all costs associated with this project.

Our board of director’s has requested that this plan be completed and presented for approval by September 21, 2021. As such, we ask that you provide a proposed timeline to meet this directive.

Your firm has been selected as a recipient of this request due to your past history of projects with destination marketing organizations, as well as other entities. We ask that you include a list of clients with your proposal, with contact information for each.

All proposals should be directed to attention of Doug Small electronically or through traditional mail service no later than May 10, 2021. Correspondence should be directed to one or both of the following addresses:

Doug Small

President & CEO

Experience Grand Rapids

171 Monroe Ave., NW

Suite 545

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-460-2623

[dsmall@experiencegr.com](mailto:dsmall@experiencegr.com)

In advance, thank you for your proposal and interest in this exciting and crucial element to the future success of our organization and the Greater Grand Rapids community.

Sincerely,

A picture containing text, sitting

Description automatically generated

Doug Small

President & CEO