

Request for Qualifications

Project Goal

Downtown Salisbury, Inc. (DSI), is soliciting proposals from experienced and qualified marketing firms

The selected consultant will work closely with staff to produce marketing materials for downtown Salisbury, events within staff, and other materials related to downtown and included in the RFQ.

Project Summary

Downtown Salisbury is special and unique because it blends historic character with a wide range of experiences often found in larger cities—yet it still feels welcoming and distinctly local, offering something for every age and culture while preserving the town’s small-knit charm. Salisbury is host to year-round gatherings and major signature celebrations like the Cheerwine Festival, and Bell Tower Green has become an epicenter for downtown recreation, events, and celebrations. Even as we strive to maintain this lively downtown energy, we’re pushing forward economic, tourism, and development growth so visitors keep choosing Salisbury now—and long after the next chapter begins. With major momentum projects underway, including a new streetscape project, the upcoming restoration of the Empire Hotel, and the opening of a new city event and meeting space, Downtown Salisbury is positioned to grow as a place people visit, meet, and return to during and after the phased renovation.

Objectives and Scope of Services

1. OVERVIEW:

Downtown Salisbury, Inc. (DSI) seeks qualifications from experienced marketing agencies to serve as its strategic marketing partner through a major downtown renovation period and beyond. The selected agency will develop and implement comprehensive, coordinated marketing initiatives that strengthen the Downtown Salisbury brand, increase tourism and visitation, support local businesses affected by phased street closures, promote downtown events and visitor experiences, and maintain public confidence in downtown’s vitality during construction while positioning Salisbury for long-term growth after the renovation is complete. DSI is seeking a collaborative partner with expertise in destination/place-based marketing, tourism-focused communications, economic development and investment promotion, and digital media—including strategy, creative development, content planning, and day-to-day execution—as well as an influencer marketing program designed to expand reach, drive visitation, and highlight downtown’s attributes through authentic creator partnerships.

2. SCOPE:

The selected agency will provide a full range of marketing and communications services, including but not limited to:

Strategic Marketing

- Develop an annual marketing strategy aligned with DSI's strategic goals.
- Identify target audiences and marketing priorities.
- Recommend campaign themes and promotional opportunities.
- Establish measurable performance goals and reporting metrics.
- Meet regularly with DSI staff

Brand Management

- Maintain and strengthen Downtown Salisbury's brand identity.
- Ensure consistent messaging across all communication channels.
- Develop messaging for residents, visitors, businesses, investors, and stakeholders.

Digital Marketing

- Plan and manage digital marketing campaigns.
- Create and manage social media content.
- Develop paid digital advertising campaigns.
- Optimize email marketing efforts.
- Monitor and answer social media comments/messages

Creative Services

- Graphic design for print and digital materials.
- Photography and videography coordination.
- Influencer and other collaborations.
- Development of promotional assets.
- Event marketing collateral.

Analytics & Reporting

Provide regular monthly reporting on:

- Campaign performance
- Website analytics
- Social media metrics
- Advertising performance
- Email marketing performance
- Return on investment
- Recommendations for improvement

DSI can provide branding guide.

Timeline

The Request for Qualifications will be released on **August 26, 2026**.

Submissions are due by 4pm on September 25, 2026.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
August 26, 2026	Request for Qualification released to public.
September 4, 2026	Submission of Written Questions. Companies are permitted to submit written questions to clarify this RFQ by 4:00 pm, via email to Claire Karriker at ckarr@salisburync.gov
September 11, 2026	Response to clarification questions provided to all parties by DSI.
September 25, 2026	Submissions due via email to Claire Karriker at ckarr@salisburync.gov
October 9, 2026	Evaluation. The Evaluation Committee will assess each submission and conduct evaluation activities with Companies. Evaluation activities include follow-up questions, and shortlisting of Companies. If needed, interviews will be conducted during this time to include a detailed presentation of the Company's proposed solution and response to any questions proposed.
October 23, 2026	Selection notification will occur, at which time a contract will be negotiated between the two parties. Final approval of any contract will be taken to the Downtown Salisbury, Inc Board.

The work associated with this project will commence as soon as possible after the contract award.

Response Submission Requirements

Responses from interested consultants must be received at the Downtown Salisbury, Inc. no later than **4pm on September 25, 2026**. They should be emailed to ckarr@salisburync.gov as a **PDF attachment**.

The project and budget will be managed by the DSI. An award is anticipated in **late October**.

By the submission deadline, respondents shall submit, by e-mail PDF attachment:

- A. A cover letter expressing the consultant /firm's interest in the contract, and identification of the specific individual(s) who will perform the work, including identifying the Project

Manager. Inclusion of summary of current projects for individuals listed is appreciated. Any sub-consultants expected should also be listed.

- B. The expected approach to be taken toward fulfillment of the contract and specific deliverables.
- C. A description of the capabilities and experience of the personnel who would work on this contract and summary of why the consultant is well-qualified to conduct this work. At least two specific project/contract examples of similar size and scope shall be provided. The examples shall include the following details: project name, organization receiving services, location, services provided, and length of time services were provided (length of Contract). Contact information for each organization should be included.
 - a. Copy of, or web link to, examples of work or other information illustrating the respondent's qualifications for performing the work outlined in this RFQ.
- D. Confirmation that the consultant can perform the work and their projected capacity for completing the work.
- E. Optional – additional recommended work elements not covered in this RFQ.
- F. A list of at least three references with email and telephone contact information.
- G. Submissions (items A-F above) should be no more than twelve (12) pages in length.

Evaluation Criteria

The consultant team is required to have expertise in all disciplines relevant to the Scope of Work summarized above. The use of sub-consultants is acceptable, but these sub-consultants must be identified in the submission made in response to this RFQ. Responses submitted by consultant firms and/or teams will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- A. Completion of all required items, forms and documentation listed within this RFQ. (10%)
- B. Demonstration of the consultant's/team's ability and experience in maintaining social media campaigns in a community comparable to Downtown Salisbury. (20%)
- C. The quality of the consultant's work plan/approach. (30%)
- D. Extent that techniques for proposed design/delivery of services are reasonable (e.g., demonstrated through past application on prior work listed in the response). (30%)
- E. Demonstrated availability of team members listed to conduct the actual study. (10%)

No Assignment

The successful consultant will be prohibited from assigning, transferring, conveying, subletting, or otherwise disposing of the contract or its rights, title, or interest therein or its power to execute such contract to any other person, company, or corporation without prior written consent and approval by Downtown Salisbury, Inc.

Ownership of Material

All rights, titles to and ownership of the data, material, and documentation resulting from this project and/or prepared for DSI pursuant to this RFQ shall remain exclusively with DSI except that consultants may reserve the right to preserve the integrity of deliverables so that they are not misrepresented or misused.

Access to and Retention of Records

In addition to terms stated elsewhere in the RFQ, DSI shall have access, upon demand, to any books, documents, papers, electronic documents and GIS layers produced by the consultant, which are directly pertinent to this contract, for the purposes of making audit examinations, excerpts, copies and transcriptions. All records must be maintained in compliance with North Carolina law.

Selection

DSI reserves the right, at the organization's sole discretion, to take any action affecting this RFQ that would be in the best interest of the organization including:

- To reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with any qualified source;
- To cancel in part or in its entirety this RFQ as is in its best interest;
- This solicitation in no way obligates the DSI to award a contract;
- DSI shall select a consultant and award a professional services contract to the prospective consultant whose response will be most advantageous to the DSI;
- The successful consultant will be required to sign a contract with the DSI in which they accept responsibility for the performance of services as stated in their proposal; and
- The selected consultant also agrees to remain in compliance with all applicable federal, state and local laws.

Please submit an electronic copy of your proposal to:

Submissions are due by 4pm on September 25, 2026.