



Request for Proposal (RFP) – Destination Narrative Development

1. Introduction

Visit Oakville (VO) is an incorporated, not-for-profit, destination marketing organization (DMO). It is led by a volunteer [Board of Directors](#) and aims to drive economic impact through storytelling, curating visitor experiences, and advocating on behalf of Oakville's tourism industry.

Visit Oakville is seeking submissions from marketing/PR firms with experience in destination narrative development who can collaborate with VO to create a compelling narrative that:

- encapsulates Oakville's unique identity.
- resonates with residents and industry partners.
- increases intent to visit.
- and supports our mission to make people fall in love with Oakville.

Visit Oakville invites submissions by December 1, 2023, to rebecca.edgar@visitoakville.com.

2. Background

About Oakville

Oakville is a lakeside town in Southern Ontario, located off the busy QEW corridor between Toronto and Niagara Falls. It is bordered by Mississauga to the east, Burlington to the west, Milton to the north and Lake Ontario to the south. Its lakeside, including harbours in the downtown and Bronte areas, as well as numerous parks, trails and attractions are popular with visitors.

Oakville's population is just over 200,000, and while being large enough to be considered a city, it remains the Town of Oakville. Traditional neighbourhoods like Bronte Village and Old Oakville maintain a quaint small-town feel while the town overall offers all the modern amenities and conveniences of a larger city. As with most municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, Oakville is experiencing rapid growth.

Oakville consistently ranks as one of the best places to live, raise a family and retire, as well as the safest region in Canada and a welcoming place for newcomers to Canada.

Oakville welcomes over two million people each year. While many visitors are day-trippers and/or here to see friends and family, there are various other reasons people visit Oakville.

a) Sports

Oakville has a strong sporting culture with supporting facilities. It was known as the long-time home of the Canadian Open at Glen Abbey. In recent years, Oakville has hosted high-profile Hockey Canada, Curling Canada, and Skate Canada events. Oakville has some of the largest sport organizations in Canada, including the Oakville Crusaders Rugby Club, Oakville Soccer Club, Oakville Rangers and Hornets hockey clubs, Skate Oakville, baseball, softball, lacrosse and more.

b) Business

Oakville boasts a vibrant business community. It is home to three Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) that are destinations in their own right. The town is home to notable corporate head offices such as Ford Canada, PwC, and Siemens Canada. The Oakville Chamber of Commerce is a hub for local business and is a supporter of tourism.

c) Events

Multi-day events like the RBC Canadian Open, Oakville Latino Festival, Ribfest, Kerrfest and TD Summer Music Series, have traditionally drawn people to town and are more likely to drive overnight stays. With Oakville's proximity to Toronto and easy access to highways and the GO Train and competitive hotel pricing, events in the city can also draw overnight visitors to Oakville.

d) Attractions

Oakville is home to a variety of attractions. With its shops, restaurants and heritage district with the Oakville Museum, scenic parks and the Oakville pier, Downtown Oakville is often the heart of the visitor experience. Oakville is also home to Glen Abbey Golf Club, iFLY Toronto, Bronte Creek Provincial Park, Oakville Galleries, Sixteen Mile Sports Complex, and the Oakville Centre for Performing Arts.

e) Accommodations

There are currently ten hotels in Oakville, and some short-term rentals on sites like Airbnb. Bronte Creek Provincial Park offers seasonal campsites and the Residences at Sheridan College provide a moderate-priced summer alternative. All short-term accommodations (STA) renting for less than 28 days require a license and are regulated by Municipal bylaw. There is no full-service or four-star property.

3. Scope of Work

An essential first step to helping visitors fall in love with Oakville is establishing a genuine, place-based destination narrative that will resonate with them on an emotional level. The narrative should be firmly rooted in research, including background research, consultation with community and industry partners, a review of destination best practices, and target audience testing of narrative themes.

The project should consider and build upon the research and recommendations of Visit Oakville's strategic plan and visitor experience assessment. Visit Oakville's brand guidelines should also be considered. Interested parties can email rebecca.edgar@visitoakville.com for access to both of these documents.

Although there is no "single story of Oakville," it is important to keep the main narrative simple so that it can be easily and effectively shared. Narrative development should consider Visit Oakville's strategic common threads:

- Welcoming to everyone
- Sustainability in tourism
- Collaborative
- Data-backed decision-making
- Embracing technology
- Love for Oakville

The selected firm will work with Visit Oakville's destination narrative task force and/or staff, including a kick-off meeting and scheduled updates throughout the project timeline.

In the RFP submission, the firm should detail its approach and work-plan for the project. Any elements not identified here but which the firm considers necessary to complete the project should be identified with a rationale.

4. Deliverables

The selected firm will be expected to deliver the following:

- A research summary including identification of Oakville's unique selling points/narrative themes, and relationship to target visitor personas.
- Presentation of the main narrative that captures the essence of the town and supports Visit Oakville's mission to make people fall in love with Oakville.
- A narrative strategy with recommendations for adapting the narrative to tell stories in different and nuanced ways. It should include:
 - Messaging, channels, visuals, etc. that enhance the narrative's engagement and appeal and resonate with target audiences.
 - Tactics to communicate the narrative to partners (residents, businesses, investors, etc.) and engage them in sharing/building on the narrative.

- Key performance indicators.

Visit Oakville Project Team

This project is being undertaken by a Visit Oakville task force comprised of staff and board members:

- Rebecca Edgar, Executive Director, Visit Oakville
- Christa Poole, Marketing & Communications
- Amrita Sidhu, Director
- Charles Shifrin, Director
- Clint Israel, Director

The project team will be available to provide guidance and feedback to the firm. Other staff or board members will be consulted if required. The Executive Director will be project lead.

5. Proposal Requirements

Interested firms are requested to submit proposals that include the following:

- Your understanding of the project needs.
- An outline of your approach to the project and methodology the firm intends to follow in developing the narrative (including research methods, stakeholder engagement and content creation).
- Proposed workplan and schedule outlining key milestones and deliverables and estimated project duration.
- Expectations of Visit Oakville – what you need from us to be successful.
- Description of your company profile, project lead and team members.
- Examples of similar projects including references.
- Budget before HST (include all anticipated costs including research/content development, visuals, and any other related expenses).

Shortlisted candidates may be required to make a short (20-30) presentation to the project team.

6. Selection Criteria and Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Relevance and creativity of Approach
- Demonstrated Expertise and Experience
- Alignment with Visit Oakville's Common Threads and Mission
- Quality of Previous Work

- Budget suitability

*See full chart below for details.

Consultant selection will be the sole responsibility of Visit Oakville and will be undertaken at the sole discretion of Visit Oakville in accordance with its selection criteria.

Proposals may be eliminated from consideration at Visit Oakville’s discretion for any reason, but at a minimum, including but not limited to:

- The RFP/REQUESTED OUTLINE is incomplete.
- The proposal is not responsive to the objectives and requirements of this RFP.
- There is evidence of financial instability of the firm or team.
- The RFP is inconsistent with Visit Oakville’s policies or requirements.
- A conflict of interest exists.

Evaluation:

	Evaluation Criteria:	Weighting:
1.	Description of the firm, project team and structure • Company overview as it relates to scope of work. • Identification of project lead • Team members and their experience	10
2.	Project Experience • Demonstrate your firm’s experience with brand development (narrative/storytelling) with three examples of projects	15
3.	Project Approach and Work-plan • Summarize understanding of needs • Provide a work-plan of tasks and activities that will be undertaken to complete this project • Describe roles and responsibilities of team	25
4.	Schedule of tasks and activities • Schedule • Approximate timing for meetings with Visit Oakville team	10
5.	Project Costs and Fee Schedule • Total fee with separate costs for disbursements, mileage, markup on sub-consultants, excluding HST • Expect staff time and fees by staff assignment, task, and activities	20
6.	Presentation (presentations may be required of short-listed proponents only)	20

7.	References	PASS/FAIL
8.	TOTAL	100

7. Timeline

The draft schedule is negotiable based on the successful firm's feedback and proposed workplan.

Task:	Date:
Issue RFP	November 1, 2023
Proposal submission Date	December 1, 2023
Project evaluation	December 4-15
Firm selection and Notification	By December 20, 2023
Project Phase	
Kick off meeting	By January 12, 2024
Stakeholder consultation	January/February/March, 2024
Present Narrative & accompanying materials	Week of March 25, 2024

8. RFP Submission Guidelines

The proposal must:

1. Be submitted electronically and should not exceed ten pages in length, not including work samples.
2. Be accompanied by a cover letter and/or an email signed by an authorized representative of your organization certifying the accuracy of all information contained in the submission and acknowledging your firm's offer of services according to the terms of this RFP.
3. Be submitted no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, December 1, 2023, to rebecca.edgar@visitoakville.com.

Any inquiries regarding this RFP should be directed to Rebecca Edgar at rebecca.edgar@visitoakville.com.

9. Negotiable Terms

Visit Oakville may enter negotiations with the highest-ranking consultant and, failing successful negotiations, enter into negotiations with the next highest ranked consultant until *Visit Oakville* concludes successful negotiations and a consultant has been selected.

Visit Oakville may use the negotiations process to negotiate any aspect of a proposal, the agreement, or both, that are reasonably required to reflect the terms of the proposal and the goods, services and service levels required by *Visit Oakville*.

During the negotiations process, *Visit Oakville* may request the consultant to submit various pricing options to allow for any additions, deletions, or adjustments that *Visit Oakville* may require. It is not the intent of *Visit Oakville* to negotiate lower pricing nor is it the intent of *Visit Oakville* to allow for new or significantly altered proposals, but rather to ensure *Visit Oakville* has the flexibility it needs to arrive at a final Agreement.

Visit Oakville reserves the right to negotiate modifications to any proposal with the consultant, without obligation to communicate, negotiate, or review similar modifications with other consultants.

Notwithstanding any negotiations between *Visit Oakville* and a consultant, the proposals of all consultants will remain valid and irrevocable until the expiration of the Irrevocable Time Period.

Visit Oakville looks forward to receiving submissions from qualified firms that can help articulate and celebrate the unique identity of our town through a compelling and engaging destination narrative.

We thank you for your interest.