

Request for Proposal Cover Page

Solicitation Issue Date: Tuesday, August 18, 2026			
Solicitation Closing Date: Monday, September 14, 2026		Solicitation Closing Time 2:00PM (EST)	
Issued By: Downtown Partnership of Baltimore			
Address: 20 S Charles St #6th FL Baltimore, MD 21201 Telephone Number: 410-244-1030			
DPOB is a non-profit organization in Baltimore, MD founded in 1983 and exempt from all state, federal and local taxes.			
Responses must be received on or before Monday, September 14, 2026 , by 2:00 PM (EST).			
Electronic Responses: Please submit your Proposal to bidbidders@dpob.org referencing “Graphic Design and Creative Services 2026” in the subject line.			
For questions/information, please email tboston@dpob.org referencing “Graphic Design & Creative Services 2026” in the subject line. Questions/information must be emailed no later than Friday September 4, 2026 . All questions received by the Q&A closing date will be answered within Five (5) business days and will be made available to all respondents. Please limit your file size to less than 25mb and no more than 15 pages in total. Please note that all questions must be submitted in writing during the established Q&A period outlined in this RFP to ensure that all respondents have equal access to information.			
Questions sent to bidbidders@dpob.org or any other email address will not be answered as this email address is not monitored on a regular basis. Do not copy any other person, doing so may subject your proposal to disqualification.			
DPOB reserves the right to waive informalities or irregularities, to reject any or all proposals received, to accept the proposal deemed best for the organization, and/or request new proposals if necessary.			
Any objection to the above conditions must be clearly indicated in the proposals.			
In compliance with this RFP and to all the conditions imposed herein, the undersigned offers and agrees to furnish the services in accordance with the attached signed proposal or as mutually agreed by subsequent negotiation.			
VENDOR IDENTIFICATION			
Company Name:			
Address:			
Telephone:			
Email:			
Federal ID:			
Print Name	Title	Authorized Signature	Date

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Graphic Design & Creative Services

Downtown Partnership of Baltimore / Downtown Management Authority

1. About the Organization

The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB) has been building a better Baltimore for over 40 years. We are the convener and connector for downtown's progress bringing together residents, businesses, civic organizations, and government to make the urban core a place where people want to be.

DPOB operates as two entities working together for all of downtown's neighborhoods. The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore is a nonprofit organization responsible for marketing, events, economic development, advocacy, and community outreach across the broader downtown area. The Downtown Management Authority (DMA) is Baltimore's oldest and largest business improvement district, focused on delivering clean, safe, green, and hospitality services within the 106-block downtown core. Together, these two entities give DPOB a broader and more powerful set of tools to serve the full downtown community.

Our vision is for downtown Baltimore to be the economic and creative heart of the region in a dynamic city center where residents, businesses, and visitors thrive together. Our mission is to steward and a clean, safe, and thriving urban core, collaboratively enhancing the vitality of all of downtown's unique neighborhoods.

DPOB's work is guided by four strategic priorities: transforming the physical environment and overall experience of downtown; advancing financial sustainability and resource development; strengthening organizational effectiveness; and fostering collaborative leadership.

These priorities are reflected in the organization's day-to-day work, including operating the Clean Sweep Ambassadors, Downtown Baltimore Guides, and Park Stewards programs; supporting small business growth through the Downtown BOOST Program and other grant initiatives; and producing signature events such as the Charles Street Promenade, Courthouse Market, Baltimore Restaurant Week, and the annual State of Downtown Baltimore.

In addition, DPOB provides leadership in advocacy efforts, alley improvement projects, capital investment initiatives, and other collaborative efforts that enhance the vitality, economic growth, and long-term success of the downtown community.

2. Purpose

DPOB is seeking a qualified graphic design partner(s) to provide creative services that support place branding, public-facing communications, member engagement, event promotion, user journey experience, and storytelling through cohesive, high-quality visual design and brand-driven marketing materials. The selected creative partner will help strengthen DPOB's visual identity and bring Downtown Baltimore's stories, programs, initiatives, and experiences to life through compelling, strategic, and audience-focused design.

The ideal partner will demonstrate expertise in brand development and management, print and digital design, event marketing, environmental graphics, user-centered design, and visual storytelling, with the ability to translate DPOB's mission and vision into engaging creative assets and experiences that enhance awareness, improve audience and member engagement, foster community connections, streamline user interactions across touchpoints, and elevate the Downtown Baltimore experience.

3. Scope of Services

Proposals should describe the vendor's approach and capabilities across the following areas. DPOB does not prescribe a specific methodology and welcomes the firm's best thinking on how to achieve the objectives below.

Brand and Creative Development

- Develop creative concepts aligned with DPOB's brand identity, strategic priorities, and organizational goals.
- Create visually compelling designs that communicate Downtown Baltimore's energy, diversity, vibrancy, and sense of place.
- Provide creative direction and recommendations for campaigns, programs, events, and initiatives.
- Maintain consistency across all branded materials and communication channels.
- Support the evolution and stewardship of DPOB's visual identity while ensuring brand standards are upheld.

Marketing & Event Collateral

Design support may include, but is not limited to:

- Event flyers and promotional materials
- Posters and signage
- Digital advertisements
- Social media static and motion graphics
- Email newsletter graphics
- Website graphics and banners
- Eventbrite graphics
- Sponsorship and partnership collateral, including sponsorship decks, prospectuses, benefit guides, branded activation materials, recognition signage, and sponsor fulfillment assets
- Presentation decks

- Annual reports and impact reports
- Community outreach materials
- Print collateral
- Environmental graphics and wayfinding materials
- Branded merchandise and promotional items

Digital Design

- Create social media assets optimized for Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other platforms.
- Design website graphics, landing page visuals, and digital campaign assets.
- Develop templates that promote consistency, efficiency, and long-term usability.
- Create digital-first campaigns and promotional materials that support engagement and conversion goals.
- Design user-friendly digital experiences and visual assets that support audience navigation and interaction.

Member Engagement & User Journey Experience

- Develop creative assets that support member acquisition, onboarding, retention, and engagement initiatives.
- Design materials that enhance and streamline the member experience across key touchpoints, including email communications, event participation, sponsorship opportunities, and website interactions.
- Create visual frameworks and collateral that support member-facing programs, resources, and benefits.
- Collaborate with DPOB to map, evaluate, and improve the visual and user experience journey for members, stakeholders, visitors, and partners.
- Design user-centered communications and experiences that encourage participation, foster connection, and strengthen relationships with DPOB and Downtown Baltimore.
- Ensure visual consistency and accessibility across physical and digital touchpoints throughout the member and visitor journey.

Creative Collaboration

- Participate in creative planning meetings as needed.
- Collaborate closely with DPOB's marketing, communications, and stakeholder engagement teams.
- Provide recommendations on design trends, formats, accessibility standards, and industry best practices.
- Work within established timelines and production schedules while managing multiple concurrent projects.
- Contribute strategic creative insights that support organizational objectives, audience engagement, and overall brand growth.

Availability & Rapid-Response Support

- The selected creative partner should maintain a high level of responsiveness and flexibility to support DPOB's evolving marketing, communications, events, and organizational needs. While projects will generally be planned in advance, DPOB may occasionally require creative support on an accelerated timeline, including requests made approximately 24–48 hours before a required deadline.
- The selected partner should be prepared to accommodate reasonable short-notice requests when availability permits and communicate promptly regarding capacity,

timeline, and feasibility. DPOB may contact the selected partner directly by phone, email, or other agreed-upon communication method when time-sensitive creative needs arise. Vendors should identify their standard response time, typical turnaround times, and availability for urgent or expedited projects in their proposal.

4. Proposal Requirements

Interested designers or firms should submit a proposal including:

- Overview of the designer, agency, or studio, including years in business, location, and core service offerings.
- Description of relevant experience and areas of expertise, particularly in branding, marketing, event promotion, member engagement, and/or public-facing communications.
- Portfolio showcasing branding, event marketing, digital design, environmental graphics, user experience, and/or community-focused work.
- Description of the individual/firm's creative approach, project management process, and methods for incorporating stakeholder feedback.
- At least two professional references.
- Availability, communication, and estimated turnaround times, including standard response times, typical timelines by project type, availability for expedited requests, and the vendor's ability to accommodate projects initiated with approximately 24–48 hours' notice.
- Proposed pricing structure, including hourly rates, project-based rates, rush/expedited rates, and/or retainer options. Proposals should clearly identify what is included in each pricing structure, including revisions, meetings, production, and other applicable services.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Quality, creativity, and versatility of portfolio
- Relevant experience supporting nonprofit, civic, tourism, events, place-based, or community-focused organizations
- Understanding of DPOB's mission, audiences, and Downtown Baltimore
- Ability to create engaging, accessible, and brand-aligned visual communications
- Responsiveness, availability, flexibility, and ability to accommodate standard and time-sensitive deadlines
- Project management and communication approach
- Pricing structure, transparency, and overall value
- Overall fit with DPOB's marketing, communications, event, and organizational needs

6. Contract Terms

- The selected vendor(s) will be engaged on an **as-needed, project-based basis**. DPOB will request creative services as projects, campaigns, events, and organizational needs arise.
- Each project assignment will be confirmed through a written scope of work, including project deliverables, timeline, and associated fees prior to beginning work.
- There is no guarantee of a minimum number of projects, hours, or compensation during the contract term.
- The initial contract term will be one (1) year, with the option to renew upon mutual agreement.
- Work will be assigned based on DPOB's needs, available budget, project fit, and vendor availability.
- All final approved work products created under this engagement become the property of Downtown Partnership of Baltimore.
- Vendor must maintain confidentiality of non-public organizational information.
- Additional services outside the agreed scope of a project require prior approval and may require a revised estimate or separate agreement.

6.1 Service Levels & Turnaround Expectations

Because DPOB supports time-sensitive campaigns, events, programs, and public-facing communications, the selected vendor is expected to provide responsive and reliable creative support throughout the contract term.

Unless otherwise agreed upon in a project scope:

- Standard projects: Initial concepts or first-round designs should generally be provided within 3–5 business days of receiving a complete project brief and required materials.
- Time-sensitive projects: Projects identified as urgent may require turnaround within 24–48 hours, subject to vendor availability and project complexity.
- Major or complex projects: Projects involving multiple deliverables, extensive revisions, environmental graphics, large-format production, or significant creative development will be assigned mutually agreed-upon timelines.
- Communication: The vendor should acknowledge project requests within one business day and promptly communicate any scheduling, capacity, or production concerns.
- Urgent requests: DPOB may contact the vendor by phone, email, or other agreed-upon communication method for time-sensitive needs. Vendors should identify their availability for urgent requests and any applicable expedited or rush fees in their proposal.
- Revisions: Each project scope will identify the anticipated number of revision rounds. Additional revisions or changes outside the approved scope may require additional fees.

6.2 Establishment of Vendor Pool & Work Distribution

- **Establishment of Pool:** This Request for Proposals (RFP) is intended to establish a qualified pool of pre-vetted graphic design firms and professionals. Admission into this pool indicates successful vetting but does not represent an exclusive contract or a promise of employment.
- **Discretionary Utilization:** DPOB reserves the right to select and utilize any firm within the established pool at its sole discretion, pleasure, and convenience.
- **No Sequence or Order:** There is no predetermined order, rotation, or numerical sequence dictating how or when firms will be selected for assignments.
- **Project Matching:** Work will be distributed on a case-by-case basis depending entirely on project fit, creative alignment, budget availability, and vendor capacity at the time of the request. DPOB retains the absolute right to award projects to any pool member or to source services outside the pool if necessary.

7. Proposed Pricing & Compensation

- Proposals should provide a transparent pricing structure that may include hourly rates, project-based fees, retainer options, and expedited/rush rates. Vendors should identify applicable rates for design, creative direction, production, revisions, meetings, and other services included within the proposed scope.
- For project-based pricing, vendors are encouraged to provide estimated fees for commonly requested deliverables, such as flyers, social media graphics, digital advertisements, presentation decks, event signage, sponsorship materials, environmental graphics, and campaign packages.
- Any rush or expedited fees associated with projects requiring a 24–48 hour turnaround should be clearly identified in the proposal.

8. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted by September 14, 2026 to binders@dpob.org with “Graphic Design & Creative Services 2026” in the subject line. Late submissions will not be considered. DPOB reserves the right to request follow-up presentations, negotiate with one or more firms, or decline any or all proposals received.

Questions regarding this RFP may be directed to tboston@dpob.org with “Graphic Design & Creative Services 2026” in the subject line no later than September 4, 2026. Responses to questions of general interest will be shared with all who have expressed interest.