



City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: City of Duluth announces result of Tourism Marketing RFP process

BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer

City of Duluth announces result of Tourism Marketing RFP process

[DULUTH, MN] The City of Duluth's Request for Proposals (RFP) process to award a new two-year tourism marketing contract is complete, and the top-scoring respondent will be forwarded to the Duluth City Council at their regular meeting on Monday, December 9 at which time the finalist firm will be made public.

The RFP process garnered significant interest. "We had a total of 26 firms respond to this RFP, which is incredibly strong," said Dave Montgomery, City Administrator. "Three to five proposers are typical for a City RFP. We were impressed with both the variety of choice and expertise in our options."

The 26 respondents were vetted by a committee appointed by the City Administrator. The committee's charge was to review all 26 proposals and score them blindly based on a fair and impartial scoring matrix included in the RFP. A set of finalists was then invited to make presentations to the review committee. The six-person review committee was chaired by Tom Werner, Executive Director of the Duluth Airport Authority, and included a mix of community stakeholders, individuals with demonstrated marketing and tourism experience, and City of Duluth staff. Members were:

Tom Werner, Executive Director, Duluth Airport Authority

Elena Foshay, Director of Workforce Development, City of Duluth

Dan Hartman, Executive Director, DECC

Andrew Field, Financial Analyst, City of Duluth

Briana Johnson, Development Director, American Heart Association

Haley Hedstrom, Executive Director, Lake Superior Zoological Society.

"This process was apolitical and driven by both City of Duluth staff and community stakeholders with a broad spectrum of industry expertise," said Tom Werner. "The blind scoring process further ensured impartiality and fairness of the process."

"My sincere thanks to Tom Werner for leading this process. He is a leader known in this community for his integrity. He personally ensured a successful process," said Mayor Reinert. "My thanks as well to the rest of the committee. 26 proposals was a heavy lift and I appreciate their service to this important sector of our economy."

Proposals were evaluated blindly using a weighting scale that included factors like agency location, background, agency qualifications, and tourism marketing. The request for proposal process and scoring criteria are publicly available and can be found at <https://duluthmn.gov/media/yvzny02h/24-aa07-rfp-for-tourism-marketing-services-rebid.pdf>.

The highest-scoring firm will be presented to City Council at a committee-of-the-whole meeting tentatively scheduled for December 5. The council will vote to adopt a resolution awarding the tourism marketing services contract at their regularly scheduled meeting on December 9. The contract would take effect on January 1, 2025.

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