



Request for Proposal: Agency of Record

COSTI is seeking an Agency of Record — a reputable, dynamic, forward-thinking full-service agency, to elevate our brand presence and extend our impact across diverse linguistic and cultural communities; a visionary collaborator to provide ongoing support, guidance and consultation. Together, we'll expand COSTI's reach, promote our services and programs and ensure that information is accessible to all. Our goal is to boost our brand positioning and enrich our digital footprint to foster consistent and impactful engagement with our stakeholders and clients.

We are pleased to invite qualified agencies to submit a proposal outlining their approach supporting COSTI's strategic objectives.

About COSTI

COSTI is a not-for-profit agency serving newcomers and all those in need of the services offered by COSTI. For more than 70 years, COSTI has focused on what truly matters—our clients and our community. We are dedicated to being responsive and adaptive to the evolving needs of our diverse clients. In this spirit, we have adopted an integrated, holistic approach that encompasses settlement, housing, employment, language and skills development, mental health and social services. We also work with more than 350 partners, ensuring we support clients with the most appropriate and effective services and supports.

This one-stop-shop approach enables our clients to embrace COSTI as a community, where they can access a comprehensive range of programs and services available in more than 60 languages. Through this model, we help our clients accelerate their settlement journeys toward fulfilling their needs and aspirations.

To learn more about COSTI's mission, vision and values, [strategic plan](#), programs, and key initiatives, please visit the [website](#).

THE SELECTED AGENCY WILL IMMEDIATELY ENGAGED IN:

1. A Brand Refresh and
2. Development of a New Website



1: Brand Refresh

We are seeking a creative and strategic approach to redefining our brand story and brand identity. This includes revising our brand story, brand identity, visual elements and brand messaging in alignment with our value proposition, our mission and values.

SCOPE OF SERVICES AND DELIVERABLES

Analyze COSTI's brand presence and position, its brand identity, including visual elements and messaging.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing brand in alignment with COSTI's value proposition in communicating our mission and values, services and programs.

Deliver concepts for testing with internal and external stakeholders, including diverse cultural and linguistic communities.

The selected agency will deliver:

- Statistically significant information based on research to inform COSTI's brand refresh.
- A new /revised brand story-short and long.
- Revised visual identity based on the brand refresh to advance a progressive, unified, and cohesive look to all COSTI's materials in various formats for multiple applications.
- A clear and compelling messaging framework that aligns with COSTI's value proposition and communicate COSTI's mission, vision and impact.
- Detailed and accessible brand standards and usage guidelines to drive brand consistency when used by all COSTI offices and departments.
- Clear and accessible information on programs and services and agility to register for programs and communicate with COSTI.
- A proposed brand refresh campaign strategy (***execution not included in this scope of work***) that incorporates the insights gained from concept testing. Campaign to include a comprehensive social media tactical approach.

The brand standards and usage guidelines must include, but are not limited to:

- All final brand logo files, typography, colour palette and other visual elements for use in print, digital assets and collateral.
- Integrated imagery and complementary design elements, typography, and colour schemes.
- Brand identity template files for business cards, #10 envelopes, letterhead, email signature and presentation deck, including creative brand applications for ads, marketing collateral, including social media iconography, marketing booths and signage.
- Detailed guidelines on how offices, affiliated organizations and partner organizations will integrate the new brand elements.



IMPORTANT: Revised brand messaging must be accessible, inclusive of diverse communities, avoid exclusionary language. Many of COSTI's clients are **not** native English-speaking.

All communication materials must incorporate AODA principles, making them accessible, easily digestible and relatable for all audiences.

By implementing this comprehensive brand refresh strategy, our goal is to ensure our organization becomes a beacon of accessibility, demonstrating our commitment to serving all members of our diverse community.

Accessible Colour Scheme

Redesign our visual identity with an accessible colour scheme that meets contrast and readability standards, ensuring our content is easily perceivable by everyone.

Community Engagement

The selected agency must engage with our diverse community as part of the brand refresh exercise; secure feedback, insights and input in a statistically significant way to inform the refreshed brand and to ensure it genuinely reflects COSTI's value proposition and the organization's commitment to accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Training and Resources

Provide resources and training on brand refresh and brand psychology to COSTI's marketing and communication team, COSTI's senior leadership team and COSTI's Board of Directors. Provide training to COSTI's marketing and communication team on accessibility best practices, including creating accessible documents and web content.



2. Website Development

SCOPE OF SERVICES AND DELIVERABLES

The selected agency will be responsible for designing, developing and launching a new website that reflects COSTI's refreshed brand and provides an intuitive and user-friendly experience for our diverse audiences.

User Experience (UX) Design must be integrated and reflected with the selected agency conducting user experience research and testing. This includes creating user personas, journey mapping, conducting usability tests, and ensuring the website's design focuses on providing a positive and intuitive user experience.

Varying types of webpage templates should be created for use by COSTI.

The new website must meet or exceed WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) standards, providing accessible content and functionality, including text-to-speech features, alt-text for images, and clear navigation for screen readers.

The new website will be in English and must include a **sustainable** translation toggle feature.

The new website must be:

- Built on the WordPress platform (*PHP + HTML + JS + CSS programming language with COSTI's brand theme built using the same language*), have a custom theme with a modular system and there should be **no** hardcoded layout.
- Mobile responsive with cross-platform compatibility.
- Customizable to accommodate analytic tools, a content management system (CMS), and custom plugins or integrations with other tools, e.g., Microsoft Click Dimension, Mailchimp, or other CRM systems for lead nurturing.
- Secure with robust security features to protect the website and user data; this includes SSL certificates, regular security audits, and compliance with data protection regulations.

SEO Optimization

Optimize COSTI's online content for search engines using effective taxonomy, relevant keywords, meta descriptions, meta-tagging and structured data.

Ensure all multimedia content, such as images and videos, are appropriately labelled and indexed for search engine accessibility.



Monitoring and Adjustment

Regularly assess the influence of COSTI's rebranding efforts on accessibility through surveys, feedback mechanisms, analytics, and SEO metrics. At certain intervals, additional monitoring and evaluation will be required to adapt to new initiatives and address issues effectively.

Make necessary adjustments to enhance accessibility in a sustained and continuous manner. Monitor and track optimization and activity as aligned with key performance indicators (KPIs). Provide quarterly reports of the above.

Deliver a back-end interface suitable for our team to add, update, and maintain content on the website in a streamlined and simplified manner.

Documentation

The selected agency must provide comprehensive documentation on the website's architecture and functionalities.

Training

The selected agency must train COSTI's marketing and communication team as well as identified members of COSTI's IT department, to effectively manage and update the website.

Maintenance

The selected agency must provide details of how they will handle updates, bug fixes and potential scalability for future enhancements such as AI integration.



3. Brand Management Consultation

The selected agency will support COSTI with ongoing guidance and consultation to ensure COSTI's brand is effectively managed across all communication channels. This includes offering strategic advice on maintaining a cohesive brand presence and positioning.

Proposal Content

To assist us in the evaluation process, we request that your proposal address the following key points:

Name and Background

Include complete name and contact information. If any work is subcontracted to another party, please provide the same information for all firms and indicate who will be the lead firm.

Relevant Experience

Detail your agency's experience in successfully leading branding, rebranding, and/or brand refresh efforts, website development projects and providing brand management consultation, particularly within the not-for-profit sector and reaching diverse, cultural and linguistic communities whose first language may not be English.

Share a portfolio showcasing your current work emphasizing branding, brand refresh and website development.

Share relevant experience with international audiences/brands.

Diversity Statement

COSTI believes that diverse and inclusive teams lead to better outcomes.

Describe your firm's efforts to recruit, retain, promote and support people of colour and indigenous people. What is your firm's commitment to racial equity and justice? How has your firm showcased a commitment to diversity regarding clients, pro bono work, and hiring practices? How has your firm demonstrated a commitment to support causes of equity and justice for different marginalized groups?



Approach and Methodology

Outline your proposed approach and methodology for the brand refresh, website development, and brand management consultation. Provide insights into your creative process and strategic thinking.

Collaboration and Communication

Describe how your agency fosters client collaboration throughout the project and your communication processes to ensure a transparent and efficient working relationship during and after completion.

Project Timeline

Provide a high-level timeline for each project, identifying critical milestones for the brand refresh and website development projects. Provide mitigation steps for possible missed milestones.

Budget Proposal

Provide a comprehensive budget proposal (line-item budget), including a breakdown of costs associated with each project and any additional fees for ongoing consultation.

Client References

Provide at least three client references, particularly those from not-for-profit organizations, to showcase your agency's success in similar projects. Briefly describe the scope of your work for the identified references, the year the work was completed and a contact name and telephone/email for each of the references provided.

Presentation

Bidding agencies are encouraged to prepare for an invitation to present their proposal and portfolio.

Information on Additional Services

Please provide any information on additional services that you believe would be pertinent and align with COSTI's mission, vision, and values.

How to submit

Proposals must be submitted via email to Karen Traboulay at karen.traboulay@costi.org by 11:59 p.m. EST on **May 31, 2024**.



EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Proven Expertise and Knowledge of COSTI's Target Audiences

- Thought leadership and strategic council
- Awards and industry standing
- Demonstrated knowledge, skills and experience in branding design for diverse, cultural and linguistic communities, not-for-profits, website development, social media experience and brand management
- Appropriateness of fee structure and pricing model

Demonstrated Quality of Creative Campaigns

- Awards and industry standing
- Example of campaigns and high-level results

Sophistication and Reach of Research Capabilities

- Types of quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Access to targeted audiences

Demonstrated Sophistication of Online Media Capabilities

- General market knowledge
- Platform/Operating System updates implications and mitigation efforts
- Programmatic best practices
- Tagging best practices
- Measurement and reporting best practices
- Targeted segment(s) expertise
- Demonstrated knowledge of current trends in targeted segments digital media behaviours and habits
- Demonstrated ethnic digital media thought leadership and quality of strategic media recommendations
- Target audiences in-language platform and vendor capabilities as applicable.
- Process and capabilities
- Trafficking time
- Reporting

Demonstrated Sophistication of Offline Media Capabilities

- General market/industry/sector knowledge
- Demonstrated knowledge of current trends amongst targeted audience's offline media behaviour and habits.



Commitment to Accessibility, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- Board/Executive
- Working Team

Collaborative Partnership & Relationship Management

- Knowledge and interest in COSTI's business, adaptability to processes
- Agency's willingness to collaborate with COSTI and with other partner agencies, as necessary.

Understanding COSTI's Value Proposition

- Clear understanding of COSTI's current brand perception in the marketplace, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Effectively communicate COSTI's unique positioning, offerings and benefits to its target audiences.
- Clear understanding of COSTI's competitive landscape, identify competitor positioning, messaging strategies and areas for differentiation to inform strategic recommendations.

Budget:

- No volume commitments, work will be conducted on a project-by-project basis.

Please note:

- ❖ Agencies that work directly or indirectly with competitors of COSTI will not be considered.
- ❖ While this RFP calls for a single full-service agency, the evaluation process may reveal that leveraging the strengths of more than one bidding agency could enhance the effectiveness of completing the required projects.

Questions regarding your submission may be directed to Karen Traboulay at karen.traboulay@costi.org.

Please direct all inquiries to Karen Traboulay **only**. Please **do not** contact any COSTI Board members or COSTI staff; failure to comply may result in disqualification.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to reviewing proposals from agencies that share our commitment to advancing our organization's mission through effective branding and communication.



APPENDIX:

The successful agency must consider and respond to the following questions:

1. What experience do you have within the accessibility space regarding accessible branding and website creation?
2. How does your solution help the COSTI marketing and communication team reach its accessibility goals?
3. Can you provide a detailed accessibility roadmap with delivery timelines?
4. Do you provide an accessibility statement?
5. What is your proposed technology stack, and why is it the most suitable for this project?
6. How will you deliver a back-end interface suitable for our team to add, update, and maintain content on the website in as streamlined and simplified a manner as possible?
7. Do you have a documented and implemented process for reporting and tracking accessibility issues?
8. How do you test for accessibility? Do you have accessibility testers in-house, or do you hire outside accessibility consultants?
9. Do you rely on activating a special "accessibility mode," a "lite version," or accessing an alternate interface for accessibility?
10. What reporting formats and types do you offer?