

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

Twelve Days of **FUN** Ending Labor Day

Request for Letters of Interest from Advertising Agencies and Individuals

Introduction

The Minnesota State Fair is seeking to partner with a dynamic and innovative Minnesota advertising agency or group of individuals or agencies to help us achieve our strategic marketing objectives through creation and execution of our annual advertising campaign. We are inviting letters of interest (LOI) from agencies and individuals who are interested in being considered for a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

About the Minnesota State Fair

One of the most cherished end-of-summer traditions in the region, the Great Minnesota Get-Together welcomes more than 1.8 million guests annually to a world-class showcase of food, entertainment, agriculture, competition, shopping, rides, exhibits & more. Perennially popular are the 1,600 food items; Grandstand Concert Series; 900 free entertainment shows; craft brews and Minnesota wines; livestock competitions; Mighty Midway and Kidway; horse shows; baking, fine arts, crop art, talent, 4-H and FFA contests; nearly 1,000 shopping vendors; hundreds of how-to demonstrations and educational exhibits; a fireworks show each evening; and more. The Minnesota State Fair is financially self-supporting and does not receive any government appropriation. The fair is always 12 days ending Labor Day. Upcoming dates are Aug. 22 to Sept. 2, 2024; Aug. 21 to Sept. 1, 2025; and Aug. 27 to Sept. 7, 2026.

About Our Marketing and Advertising

The State Fair's marketing, branding, communications and guest services strategies are led by the marketing & creative division, a team of seven full-time staff people. This division works year-round on the State Fair's overall brand image, graphic design, institutional messaging, media relations, social media content, marketing and advertising, promotions, website and app development, community relations and guest services programs, among other responsibilities.

The goal of this RFP process is to find marketing and advertising partners to collaborate with State Fair staff to build on our well-established, prominent and much-respected brand image. The partners will contribute through creative perspectives, innovative strategies, high-quality execution and well-managed campaign planning to help us achieve our marketing, messaging, community engagement and business objectives.

In particular, partners will focus on the annual advertising campaign to promote the State Fair event. Traditionally, our annual paid campaign is primarily executed June through August. Most of the paid campaign typically ends just before or during the State Fair dates, as earned media and organic social media efforts take over, led by State Fair staff. In 2023, total impressions of our paid campaign reached 90 million; earned media publicity value exceeded \$100 million.

Extensive reach, impressions and awareness of fair dates are important campaign goals. We also place a high priority on messages of generating joy, being the destination for celebration, bringing people together and strengthening connections, showcasing what's amazing about our state, embracing and reflecting the full community, enriching traditions, and providing an exceptional experience at a great value, among others.

At its core, the Great Minnesota Get-Together needs to be exactly that – a gathering for all of Minnesota. With evolving community demographics throughout the state and increasingly fragmented media consumption, we are challenged with how to most effectively and efficiently reach new and returning fair guests with messages that resonate while reflecting the State Fair brand.

For the past 20+ years, we have partnered with a coalition of outside specialists who have worked as an extension of our internal team. As is good business practice, we are taking the opportunity to explore the potential to expand our advertising partnerships.

Purpose of the Letter of Interest

Our goal is to identify a partner or set of partners who have the experience, expertise and creativity to assist the Minnesota State Fair in our advertising and marketing efforts, namely:

- Campaign strategy, concept, design and planning
- Creative development and production of TV, radio, social media and digital video ads; artwork and copy for static digital, out-of-home and print advertising
- Media buying and trafficking of any/all of the above
- Market research

We are open to working with multiple agencies or individuals on various components of the annual campaign. At present, we are planning to work with selected agencies/individuals on campaigns promoting the 2025 and 2026 State Fairs.

Based on the LOIs received, we will select a shortlist to participate in the full RFP process.

Information to Include in the Letter of Interest

1. Agency/Individual's Background and Relevant Experience
 - Overview
 - Description of core competencies and areas of expertise
 - Which component(s) bulleted in the above "Purpose of the Letter of Intent" section are you most interested in?

- Examples of how agency/individual has successfully worked with similar clients and industries, especially in the areas noted in the previous bullet. How are these examples relevant to working with the Minnesota State Fair?
2. Agency Interest and Strategic Vision
 - Why would your agency/you like to partner with the State Fair?
 - What would you bring to the table in a partnership with the State Fair? What distinguishes you and your perspective, approach and expertise?
 - What is your perception of the State Fair brand and the State Fair’s marketing and advertising efforts? How can your agency/you help build on or improve this?
 - What is one specific challenge you believe the State Fair brand and the fair’s marketing and advertising is/will be facing? How would your agency/you help address that?
 - What are 10 words you’d use to summarize the State Fair brand?
 3. Contact Information
 - Contact details for the primary point of contact at the agency.

Submission Details

- Letter should not exceed three pages in length and an additional up to three pages of examples or supporting materials. Content beyond the three-page letter and three pages of accompanying materials will not be reviewed. Only materials that can be sent via email will be accepted.
- All letters must be received via email by 4:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.
- Please submit your LOI via email to ads@mnstatefair.org with the subject line "Letter of Interest - Advertising RFP."
- Questions: ads@mnstatefair.org or Christine Noonan, 651-288-4400
- We encourage early submission to avoid any glitches with technology, email, etc. The State Fair is not responsible for any issues that may have prevented your LOI from being received by the deadline.

Next Steps

- Receipt of letters will be acknowledged within 48 hours with a return email.
- Agencies/individuals selected to participate in the RFP process will be contacted by Oct. 15, 2024. All those submitting letters will be notified of their status by Oct. 15, 2024.
- The RFP and more details, including budget and project scope, will be shared by Oct. 21, 2024. At this time, we anticipate that proposals will be due Dec. 6, 2024.
- Meetings with finalists may be scheduled in early January with selections made by the end of January. We then hope to have kickoff meetings in mid-February.

We appreciate your interest in partnering with us and look forward to learning more about your work. Thank you!