

UNION SQUARE PARTNERSHIP

April 12, 2024

Union Square Partnership District Management Association, Inc. Public Relations Services RFP

Questions & Responses

1. **Do you have a specific audience that is most important to you to reach? Can you please confirm if it's beyond prospective residents and employers? Who are USP's primary audiences, and how would you rank them in terms of importance? Can you share more insights into the demographics and target audience that we should focus on?**
 - A. USP has multiple audience segments, including key decision makers across civic leadership, business and real estate; local stakeholders such our Board of Directors and other community members who partner with us to advocate for the community; Union Square's local resident and worker community who experience Union Square as a lifestyle; and the general public, from local to international, who may visit Union Square to enjoy everything the district has to offer. We don't rank them in terms of importance, as each audience is important to one or more components of achieving our mission to make Union Square the pre-eminent live-work-play neighborhood in New York City.

2. **Are there are peer organizations whose PR efforts you admire and would like to emulate? What competitors or other BIDs do you feel are doing a good job with their PR efforts?**
 - A. We seek to be in the peer group with the place management organizations locally and nationally, whether they are other business improvement organizations or privately-held office or industrial campuses that invite the public in for shopping, leisure activities and other recreation.

3. **Are there any milestones or major announcements that you anticipate over the coming months? Are there any upcoming BID milestones or anniversaries we should be aware of?**
 - A. Please see list of calendar or events and programming included in the RFP.

4. **Who are USP's primary spokespeople? Who are the key spokespeople at Union Square Partnership?**
 - A. USP's Executive Director Julie Stein and Board of Director Co-Chairs Jen Hensley and Bill Abramson.

5. **What have been the biggest challenges for the public relations effort thus far? Were there any pain points with previous agencies that the new agency can address? Are there specific news**

outlets or media publications you've struggled landing coverage in the past? What are some of the main challenges the BID has experienced with PR and media exposure? With previous agencies, what has been successful? What hasn't worked?

A. Any challenges are consistent with the experience of all players now trying to get noticed in a shrinking media landscape.

6. Typically, our firm works on a monthly retainer model rather than hourly rates. Is it acceptable to provide budget in a monthly retainer form?

A. Please see description in RFP Section 2.6. USP is seeking a fee schedule for a fixed monthly fee. USP is asking for the hourly billable rate of each staff member assigned to the contract to evaluate how the account would be staffed and as backup for how the monthly retainer fee was determined.

7. What is the anticipated annual budget for this campaign? Can you share any budget guidance for this engagement? Even a budget range would be helpful to ensure what we propose matches the resources available. As we ideate big ideas, are there any incremental budget constraints?

A. Respondents should propose the budget required to successfully deliver the services requested in the scope. USP reserves the right to request a best and final offer from respondents, potentially for a set budget, after reviewing proposals.

8. Will the selected PR agency be responsible for speechwriting?

A. From time to time, the selected firm will be responsible for speeches, hearing testimony and talking points for panel discussions or similar.

9. Can you identify the level of editorial writing that was done by the previous agency last year?

A. From time to time, the selected firm will be responsible for written work product for editorials, advertorials, and blog posts.

10. What level of event staffing will be required by the PR agency?

A. From time to time, the selected firm will be asked to attend USP events to be available for media in attendance. From time to time, the selected firm will want to attend USP events such as Board Meetings and the Annual Meeting to deepen its familiarity with USP's work and build relationships with key stakeholders.

11. Can you work with a firm based outside of NYC, as long as we maintain a staff presence in the city?

A. The selected firm will need to have local staff presence sufficient to cover the account on a regular basis, including spontaneous on-site media relations staffing needs such as breaking news and/or crisis communications. Please see RFP for evaluation criteria, including demonstrated experience within with New York City non-profits that interact with government agencies, local elected representatives, and other community-based organizations. Please also see requirements for PASSPort registration by the time the contract commences.

12. What are your goals for this campaign in terms of media coverage?

A. Respondents should suggest the goals for media coverage to meet USP's public relations ambitions as outlined in the RFP.

13. Have you worked with a PR agency before? If so, what types of results did they achieve?

A. Yes, USP has consistently contracted with a PR agency over many years.

14. Who is the primary contact for this proposal?

A. USP Executive Director Julie Stein

15. How do you measure success?

A. We measure success by achieving our goals as outlined in the RFP.

16. Do you have key news outlets or media publications you're looking to target? What are the priority outlets to target for media coverage? Are there any media outlets that PR should avoid?

A. We seek coverage in the relevant news outlets and media publications to meet our goals as outlined in the RFP and to reach our target audiences as answered in the Q&A above. Respondents may propose which outlets and publications are most appropriate and achievable for the scope of work.

17. From a messaging and positioning perspective, how do you balance the messaging? Does "work" or "play" take priority?

A. Our mission is to position Union Square as the pre-eminent live-work-play(-learn) neighborhood in NYC. None takes priority, the messaging needs to be customized when reaching each of the target audience segments as described above in the Q&A.

18. Do you have partnerships (either retail or impact related) that you prioritize?

A. USP works with a wide variety of partners to execute on our mission. These partners vary from season to season and year to year, although we have long-standing partnerships with the members of our Board of Directors.

19. Is support of your annual events (Summer in the Square, Harvest in the Square) part of the scope?

A. Yes.

20. How many agencies are participating the RFP?

A. This is a public RFP available on our website.

21. Are there any topics not outlined in the brief that you think an incoming PR agency needs to know to be successful?

A. The RFP contains the key information for respondents to develop a proposal.

- 22. For Union Square Partnership’s annual flagship moments, where do opportunities exist for improvement?**
- A. USP is continuously evaluating and enhancing our seasonal and flagship offerings to respond to changing times, especially in a post-pandemic world. Respondents may propose any ideas that they have.
- 23. Outside of the flagship moments included in the RFP, what other cultural moments during the year would PR support and add the most value?**
- A. Respondents should propose any additional moments that they believe PR support would add value outside of what USP included in the RFP.
- 24. Are there any citywide laws and regulations that may impact Union Square Partnership over the next 12 months?**
- A. USP and our district will be impacted by any changes to citywide laws and regulations the same as any other business improvement districts. Respondents may advise if they are aware of any particular changes on the horizon that USP will need to navigate with the selected agency.
- 25. Are there any new businesses opening in the next 6-12 months that we should be aware of as a potential news hook?**
- A. USP cannot share any non-public information.
- 26. Can you elaborate on the unique challenges and opportunities associated with the district that we can consider when developing tactics?**
- A. Please see the RFP document. Respondents may include in their proposals their own insights into other anticipated challenges and opportunities that inform their proposed PR tactics.
- 27. Can you share any historical data as it relates to the evolution of Union Square Partnership? Specifically looking for retail, hospitality, and real estate data, along with any visual materials and partnerships that we might have access to?**
- A. Please see the [publications section of our website](#) for this information.
- 28. Historically, how much have you relied on individual business participation for campaigns, and should we focus creative thinking around ideas that include a low lift from businesses? Are there any guardrails that we should keep in mind pertaining to working with local businesses?**
- A. USP enjoys working with local businesses to help tell the story of the district while lifting up those businesses themselves. These businesses may come with their own PR team, but more often they rely on the support that USP can provide for this joint storytelling.
- 29. Are there any public spaces that we are allowed/not allowed to take over as part of an initiative?**

- A. Working with the Parks Department, USP is able to activate Union Square Park within certain constraints. Working with the Department of Transportation and SAPO, USP is able to activate the pedestrian plazas in the district.

30. Can you provide insights into the competitive landscape or other organizations who operate in or adjacent to Union Square Partnership that we should consider when developing our strategy?

- A. USP provides a unique set of services within the boundaries of our contract with the City of New York via the Department of Small Business Services. We frequently work with our counterparts at other NYC Business Improvement Districts on partnerships, best practices sharing and media initiatives where there is alignment (e.g., joint Op-Eds).

31. Are there any previous PR campaigns/initiatives that have been particularly successful? Are there any that were challenging?

- A. USP has been very successful in telling stories related to real estate trends, public realm planning, civic thought leadership, hospitality, events, and tourism. Given the shrinking media landscape, it is increasingly difficult to find outlets for hyperlocal stories of particular interest to our district's residents.

32. What is the timeline for the USQNext Vision Plan?

- A. USP is seeking to make progress in the coming year to advance the project into the next phase of design.

33. What level of flexibility does Union Square Partnership have in terms of experimenting with nontraditional versus traditional PR tactics? Does Union Square Partnership have an appetite for leveraging talent and/or influencers to increase social engagement and media coverage for various initiatives, businesses, etc.?

- A. Respondents should propose any recommended tactics that they believe align with our organization's brand and mission and will be effective in achieving the goals outlined in the RFP.

34. What is the BID's relationship with Union Square Hospitality?

- A. Union Square Hospitality Group sits on our Board of Directors.