



Regional Planning Commission (RPC)

Agency Branding and Communication Project

Volume I

Submitted To:

Ms. Joan Rupp
RPC Contracts Administrator
Regional Planning Commission
10 Veterans Memorial Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70124

Submitted By:

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Reference: State Project No.: PL-80-36-25
RPC Task: D-1.25
Agency Branding and Communications Project
Regional Planning Commission (RPC)
Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Dear Ms. Joan Rupp,

On behalf of the Blackberg Group, I am pleased to submit our proposal in response to New Orleans Regional Planning Commission request for a Branding and Communications Project. We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the RPC to develop new branding and an accessible messaging strategy. We are confident that our team's extensive branding experience in government spaces will contribute meaningfully to the success of the RPC's mission.

At Blackberg, we specialize in purposeful branding solutions for public and private sector clients. We have developed a proven record of accomplishment in executing effective strategies that resonate with diverse audiences and drive measurable results. We embody a service-first approach with a team of branding, communications, and design experts who exhibit grit, authenticity, and respect. Our approach will be rooted in the metrics of increasing public awareness of the vital work that the RPC does for the New Orleans community.

Blackberg has received and reviewed all documents, including the base solicitation to this opportunity provided by the government or referenced in solicitation documents. We agree with all terms, conditions, and provisions included in the solicitation—taking no assumptions, conditions, or exceptions with any of the terms and conditions of this RFP. This proposal is valid for 120 calendar days following submission.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Leanne Reisz'. The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Leanne Reisz
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1.0 Executive Summary

The New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (NORPC or RPC) plays a vital role in regional multi-parish planning for transportation, economic development, and environmental matters. The oversight of a diverse group of eight parishes, as well as acting as the federally designated metropolitan planning organization is a large undertaking that requires intentional communication with the public as well as clear and concise messaging. Safeguarding and planning for the New Orleans area's growth and development for current and future generations. Strategic goals include developing a messaging strategy that clearly explains the RPC's role in the community, a visual identity, an accessible style guide, brand resource center, and thorough training for staff and other internal stakeholders. To accomplish these goals, the RPC requires a comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible re-branding approach and a messaging strategy that effectively communicates the RPC's benefits to all stakeholders. The branding must build awareness and trust among all New Orleans residents, policymakers, and stakeholders through concise and inclusive messaging and branding. In conjunction, it must engage diverse communities through culturally competent, multi-lingual outreach and an engaging brand presence.

The RPC requires a rebranding process that builds public trust and buy-in. A brand that resonates with diverse audiences. The RPC brand must also remain relevant and adaptable as technology, environmental factors, and community engagement evolve. Our unique value proposition lies in our ability to blend data-driven insights, engage diverse audiences and to create future-ready branding systems that are not only visually compelling, but also purposeful, highly functional and accessible. We take a research-first approach—ensuring that branding, messaging, and digital platforms resonate with diverse audiences. By prioritizing communication through interactive surveys and workshops, Blackberg involves internal stakeholders in shaping the RPC's new identity. The use of WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility, multi-language support, and inclusive outreach ensures that public programs reach and serve all communities equitably. Additionally, we understand the importance of simplifying complex information through purposeful branding, clear messaging for specific audiences, and multi-channel engagement.

For the RPC, Blackberg will be a strategic partner to help transform the agency's branding into a seamless, user-friendly experience that educates, informs, and empowers the public to engage with the RPC's planning processes. It is essential for the RPC to be seen as a strong, unified identity with valuable resources. The refresh will align and strengthen the multiple programs and activities under one clear parent brand identity. Through our collaborative approach, we will ensure the final brand with messaging and visual identity system meets the RPC's objectives, aligns with messaging branding and accessibility standards, and delivers lasting impact.

2.0 Company Overview

Blackberg Group (Blackberg) is a Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) and Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) specializing in strategy, operations, communications, and organizational effectiveness. At Blackberg, strategic prowess meets creative ingenuity to redefine the future of public service. We tackle challenges head-on, turning them into opportunities. Simultaneously, we embrace bold creativity—incorporating fresh perspectives into every endeavor. Blackberg was founded with a single purpose—empowering a diverse team of experts to generate positive and sustainable outcomes for the betterment of organizations.

With deep expertise in branding, marketing, website development, and community engagement, we specialize in crafting accessible, user-centric brand experiences that drive awareness, inclusivity, and long-term impact. At Blackberg, our communications experts are dedicated to mastering this art, ensuring your message not only reaches but also resonates with your audience. Communication is the lifeline of your brand—it defines your identity, conveys your values, and builds lasting relationships with your stakeholders. We are committed to not just delivering your message, but also enhancing your narrative, fostering engagement, and driving growth to leave a lasting impression.

Blackberg’s in-house Creative Studio experts have over 20+ years of experience in the industry. Our diverse group of award-winning designers are fluent in developing accessible and comprehensive brands to reach targeted audiences. Our designers have applicable certifications (Adobe Certified Professional: Graphic Design & Illustration in Illustrator, Adobe Certified Professional: Visual Design in Photoshop, Adobe Certified Professional: Print and Digital Publications in InDesign, and Adobe Certified Professional: Visual Design). All designers are trained in creating the highest level of ADA compliant documents for government and commercial creative contracts across a variety of industries including museums, health care, transportation, education, and innovation. In addition to brand strategist and graphic designers, Blackberg’s Creative Studio hosts illustrators, videographers, social media experts, photographers, event planners, web designers, and web developers who are available to provide enhanced multimedia brand awareness via social media campaigns, publications, newsletters, paid media placement, website development, event planning, and emerging interactive technology. Our team is dedicated to design and aesthetic excellence, ensuring that every piece of content we produce is not only visually stunning but also strategically aligned with your goals.

Our experience includes full lifecycle communications planning, research, branding, campaign development, implementation, and evaluation to advance stakeholder awareness, education, and engagement with health care products, services, and programs. For the Veterans Health Administration, Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning, this support included the development of a comprehensive brand family of multiple parent and child programs and offices, more than 30 national integrated outreach campaigns, fostering more than 40 external partnerships, executing 18 annual events (100-500 attendees), and establishing a full-service creative studio for 25 diverse health care programs. To educate stakeholders and manage program change, we followed our six-pronged communications strategy and planning lifecycle.



Figure 1: Blackberg’s Communications Strategy and Planning Lifecycle. Blackberg's unique method of setting goals, identifying stakeholders, strategizing outcomes, developing tactics to reach brand stakeholders, managing strategic communications timetables, and monitoring outcomes and adjusting to new information ensures brand recognition and success.

A third party conducted a service-maturity assessment of Blackberg’s services in nine categories of strategic communications. A rating above “90” is “outstanding”, and it is the highest possible score. Blackberg scored above 90 in all nine categories with an average score of 95.5. This is evidence that Blackberg’s technical proficiency is extremely high across all areas relevant in supporting the re-brand of NC DNCR and additional multimedia capabilities, as needed (RFP 5.4). The details of the assessment are in Figure 1, next page.

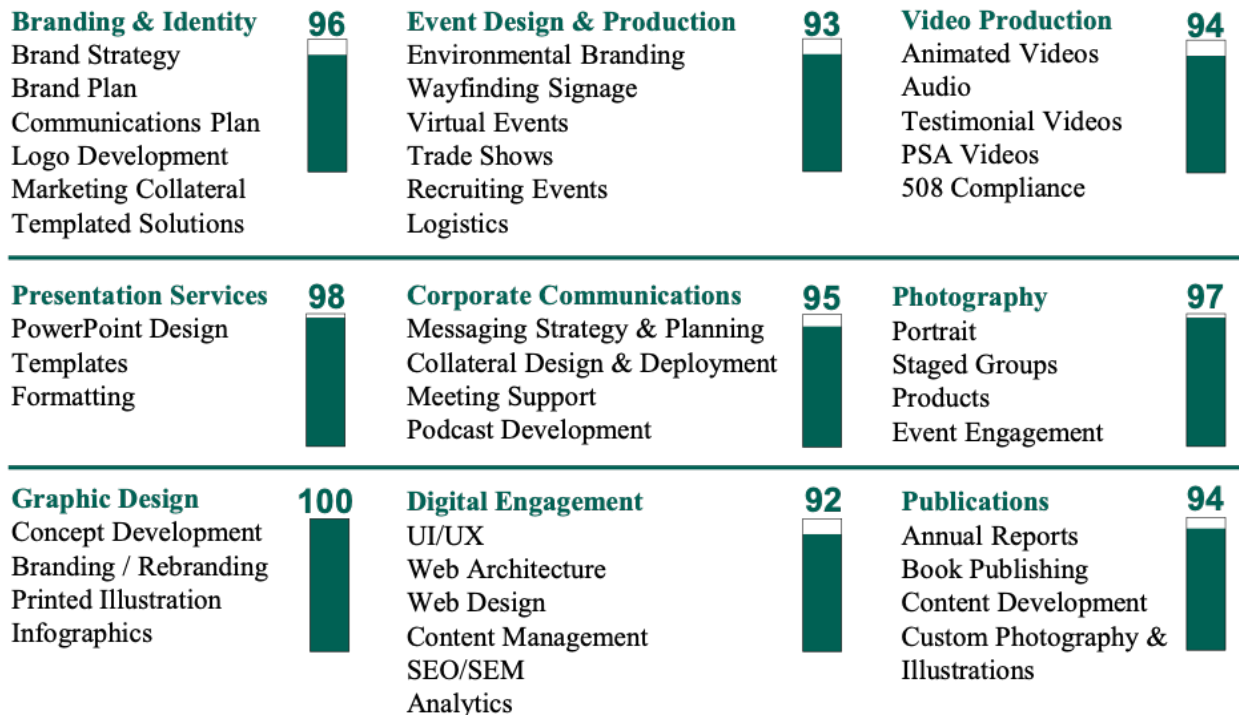


Figure 2: Service-Maturity Assessment. Blackberg's proficiency in strategic communications is at the highest possible level in nine categories.

Blackberg Key Strengths	Benefits to the RPC
<p>Creative Studio & Branding: Blackberg is home to an award-winning team, experienced in developing cohesive brand identities for the public sector and ensuring consistent digital, print, and photo assets. We have extensive experience in multi-lingual branding and accessibility-first design, ensuring full compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA, and ADA standards. In 2024, our team delivered five (5) brand identities and trained internal staff on its usage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Public Trust and Recognition. When people can easily identify and recognize an agency's brand, they know where to find reliable information, especially during crises. • Expanded Reach and Engagement. Multi-lingual and accessible design and content can improve search engine optimization (SEO) performance, increasing visibility in various markets. • Award-Winning Public Sector Partner. Blackberg has been trusted to carry health care and public service information to Veterans across the nation, crafting compelling and accessible visuals that have garnered multiple accolades.
<p>Web Development and Digital Experience: Extensive experience in designing and developing highly accessible, mobile-optimized websites for government agencies. Successfully implemented content management systems (CMS) with intuitive workflows, robust analytics tools, and interactive engagement features that enhance usability and long-term scalability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Website: A fully accessible and WCAG 2.1 AA-compliant website that meets the needs of all users, including those with disabilities. • CMS Training: CMS implementation that allows the RPC to manage content independently. • Seamless System Integrations: including Google Analytics, CRM tools, and compliance tracking systems. • Proven reliability and scalability, ensuring the website remains effective long-term.

<p>Marketing and Community Outreach: We have demonstrated success in executing large-scale, multi-channel marketing campaigns that effectively engage historically underserved populations. Our team is skilled in paid media placement, grassroots outreach, and targeted digital campaigns—leveraging data-driven insights to optimize audience engagement and awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded program awareness among historically underserved communities through data-driven marketing approach that maximizes outreach and engagement. Multilingual, audience-tailored campaigns that improve accessibility and clarity. Proven track record of increasing community engagement through state agency partnerships.
<p>Content Strategy and Messaging: Deep expertise in developing clear, inclusive, and audience-specific messaging for public programs. Successfully crafted and deployed SEO-driven, multilingual content strategies that simplify complex policies while ensuring broad accessibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity in communication, making complex policies more accessible to all residents of New Orleans. Multilingual content strategies that reach a broader audience. Improved digital discoverability through search engine optimization (SEO) best practices. Content tailored for accessibility using plain language principles, easy to understand visuals, and culturally competent messaging.
<p>Project Management and Compliance: Blackberg has demonstrated expertise in managing complex, multi-phase government projects, while ensuring all deliverables meet budget, timeline, and compliance requirements. We have expertise in stakeholder coordination, risk mitigation, and iterative feedback processes—ensuring seamless project execution from research through implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent project management tools using <i>Monday Dashboards</i>, delivering real-time updates and automated reminders to key stakeholders. A vendor with 100% on-time and on-budget project delivery, minimizing disruptions. Strong stakeholder engagement, ensuring alignment with the RPC’s objectives. Full regulatory compliance, mitigating risks associated with accessibility, data security, and public sector guidelines.

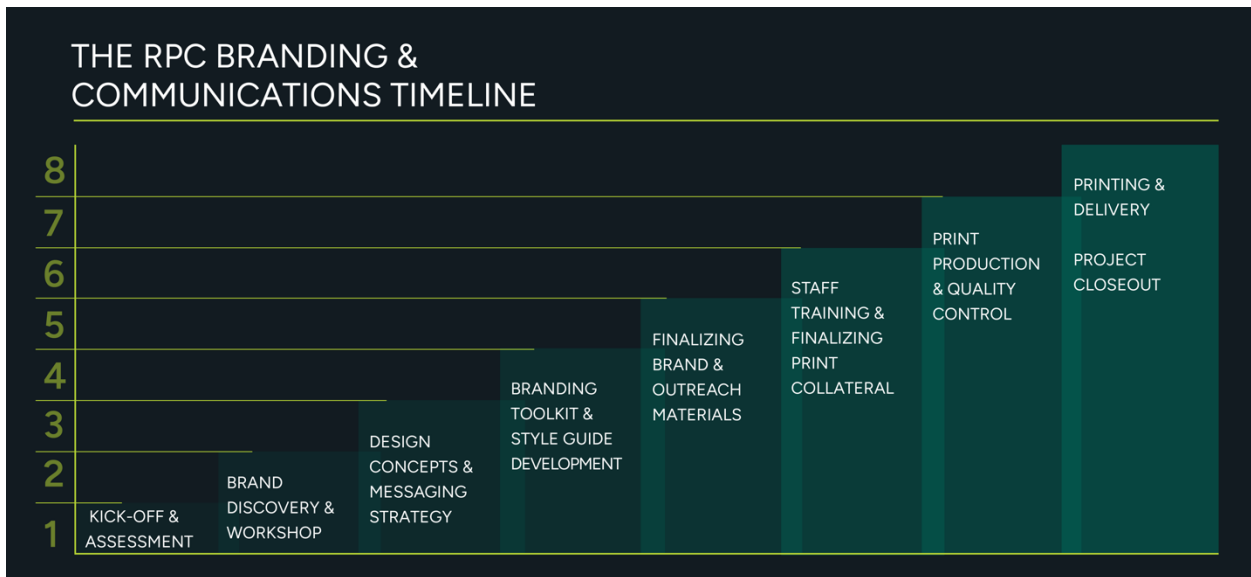


Figure 3—RPC Branding and Communications Timeline.

3.0 Tasks and Deliverables

3.1 Task One—Project Management and Schedule

Understanding. Blackberg staff hold decades of experience working with state and federal clients and we understand the importance of collaboration, clear communication, and setting standards and expectations. We will organize a kick-off meeting to take place within two weeks of receiving notice from the RPC to proceed. Prior to the kick-off, Blackberg will prepare an overview of the

project and its goals, a tentative meeting schedule for regular check-ins and proposed dates of trainings and workshops, a task breakdown with a list of all tasks and activities, a chart of task assignments—assigning specific tasks to key members of the Blackberg team, a timeline for completion of tasks, as well as a comprehensive project schedule.

Technical Approach. Blackberg will approach this kick-off as a strategic planning session with the RPC. To ensure that our strategic planning sessions are effective and productive, Blackberg uses the Weave Methodology—a systematic participatory process for strategic planning designed to actively engage participants, promote critical thinking, and employ an optimal mix of the RPC’s purpose and goals. This approach integrates the industry-leading Framework for Sustainable Development (FSSD) with strategic process design principles and dialog-based methodologies. The Weave comprises five overlapping phases for strategic planning, depicted below.

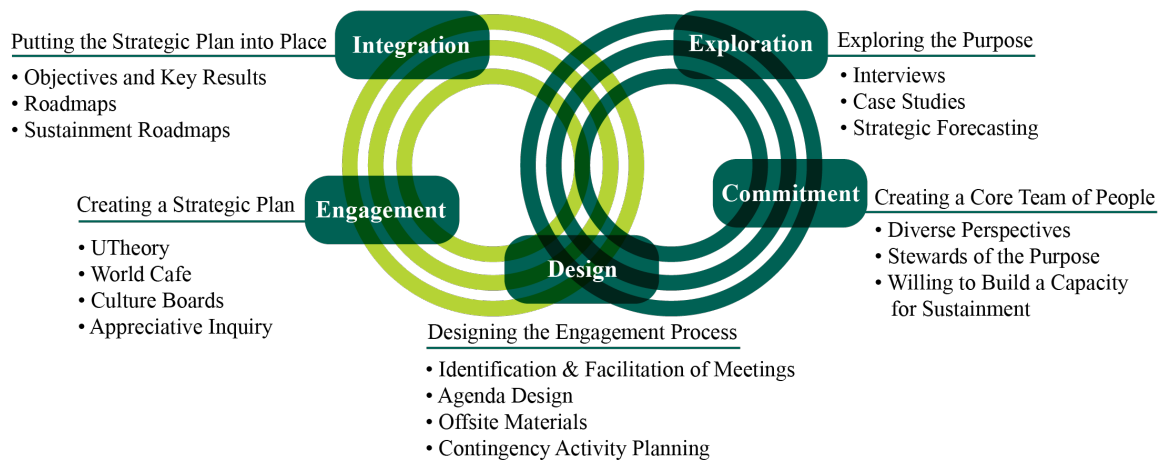


Figure 4: The Weave—Strategic Planning Approach. Blackberg leverages The Weave Strategic Planning approach to facilitate communications and marketing planning sessions—ensuring clear objectives, innovative ideas, and clear processes are captured through collaborative engagement.

Blackberg Successful Implementation: Project Management and Scheduling

Blackberg supports the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (OHIL) with a wide array of communications and creative deliverables, including the planning and facilitation of their quarterly leadership offsite and annual marketing kick-off meetings. Using The Weave Strategic Planning Approach, we created the first-ever OHIL unified Marketing Plan, Operating Model, and FY24-26 Strategic Plan. These deliverables unify OHIL’s four program offices and their portfolios, creating consistent messaging across channels that further OHIL’s programmatic goals. Blackberg was able to effectively collaborate with 20+ OHIL leadership across diverse workstreams and understand their unique objectives. Insights gained from these meetings allowed our integrated marketing and creative teams to develop deliverables that captured OHIL’s unique brand identity and advanced OHIL’s overarching mission.

3.2 Task Two—Brand Audit/Assessment of Existing Marketing Materials

Understanding. Blackberg will conduct a thorough brand audit and assessment of existing marketing materials by collaborating closely with the project manager and senior staff. The process will involve gathering information from each programmatic area within the RPC, environmental, transportation, and economic development, reviewing website content and analytics, and analyzing existing branding materials and visual assets. Additionally, we will evaluate recurring planning and report documents, as well as outreach reports from previous projects, and examine

the current outreach policies outlined in the agency's Public Participation Plan. Using this data, Blackberg will perform a brand audit and follow up with a SWOT analysis to evaluate the current brand perception and outreach performance. The analysis will focus on identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, ultimately pinpointing areas where improvements can be made to enhance the brand's overall impact and outreach efforts.

Technical Approach. Blackberg employs a **9-step approach to brand auditing**. This comprehensive approach helps to ensure a well-rounded and thorough assessment of the brand's current state, providing valuable insights for future improvements.

- **Step 1: Objectives and Scope.** We begin the audit process by clarifying the purpose, and deciding which materials and areas will be assessed.
- **Step 2: Collect and Review.** We then compile all relevant marketing materials including brochures, websites, social media content, advertisements, reports, presentations, logos, and visual assets for a review of the messaging, tone, visuals, and consistency.
- **Step 3: Analyze Website and Digital Presence.** Starting with reviewing website messaging, user experience (UX), and content for consistency, we then analyze website performance data (traffic, engagement, bounce rates) to assess effectiveness. Then we review all other social media and digital platform content and engagement metrics.
- **Step 4: Stakeholder and Audience Interviews.** We interview internal teams, including staff and leadership, to understand their perceptions of the brand, and gather external feedback from the public on their perception of the brand and its published materials.
- **Step 5: Assess Visual Identity.** Blackberg evaluates visual assets like logos, color schemes, typography, photography and videography style, and any other assets being used. We also analyze how well the visual identity resonates with the target audience and supports brand recognition.
- **Step 6: Perform SWOT Analysis.** Our team conducts a SWOT analysis to determine areas where marketing materials excel and where they can be improved. We also identify new opportunities for growth or areas where we can leverage new platforms or emerging trends. Then we analyze external factors that may impact the brand's effectiveness like shifting market trends.
- **Step 7: Evaluate Outreach and Engagement Effectiveness.** Blackberg reviews past outreach efforts, campaigns, and engagement metrics to assess success. Then we review how the current market aligns with outreach and public participation strategies outlined in any relevant plans.
- **Step 8: Improvement Recommendations.** Based on the analysis, we then provide actionable recommendations for optimizing the brand's messaging, visual identity, digital presence, and outreach strategies.
- **Step 9: Brand Assessment Report.** This document summarizes our findings and key insights from the audit and SWOT analysis. We then develop a roadmap for addressing weaknesses and capitalizing on opportunities to strengthen the brand.



Figure 5: VHA Innovation Experience (iEX) Event Branding. Blackberg graphic designers are experts in creating cohesive and memorable branding for government clients, including for iEX, an annual event that focuses on innovation in the veteran health care space. A brand style guide was developed and utilized to create a broad range of products, including exhibit banners, signage, agendas, stage graphics, print and digital event guides, web sites, and web graphics.

Blackberg Successful Implementation: Brand Audit and Assessment of Materials

Developing a visual identity for iEX, a three-day annual event hosted by Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) Innovation Ecosystem (IE), involved crafting a cohesive and memorable brand presence that reflected the event's innovative nature and mission within VHA IE. Our team began by analyzing the event's goals, previous branding, and target audience, and working closely with the client to determine a branding strategy and framework that informed the design of a unique visual language that communicated both professionalism and forward-thinking energy. This included a thoughtfully chosen color palette, custom typography for readability and impact, and imagery that conveyed innovation and community. We also created adaptable logo formats and developed a comprehensive suite of design elements for all materials, from stage graphics and signage to digital assets like social media graphics and emails. By ensuring visual consistency across all touchpoints, we created a strong, recognizable brand that reinforced iEX's mission and values while enhancing the attendee experience and solidifying the event's position in the Veteran health care space.

3.3 Task Three—Brand Discovery Activities

3.3.1 Task 3A: Brand Discovery Survey

Understanding. Blackberg will lead a brand discovery survey with staff and board members to gather key insights for shaping the messaging strategy and branding elements. The survey will guide participants in brainstorming and refining essential concepts such as the RPC's mission, core values, responsibilities, defining key terms, and identifying target audiences. This collaborative process will ensure that the messaging strategy accurately reflects the organization's identity and effectively connects with its intended audience.

Technical Approach. To develop and distribute the brand discovery survey, Blackberg will follow a structured approach to ensure it captures meaningful insights from staff and board members. We will collaborate with key stakeholders to ensure survey questions align with the RPC's goals and the scope of the audit. Then the survey is designed to encourage open, thoughtful responses with a mix of question types (multiple-choice, Likert scale, open ended) focused on core areas of the RPC's messaging priorities. The survey will be distributed to staff and board members via personalized email invitation and will be hosted on a digital platform for ease of use and collection. To ensure a high response rate, Blackberg pre-determines a timeline for responses and will send out reminder emails before the survey deadline. We monitor responses in real-time, ensuring that all participants have access to field questions and technical issues. Once the deadline has passed, Blackberg will analyze the data, identifying key themes, patterns, and insights that will help inform the messaging strategy and branding components. This process allows our team to efficiently gather relevant information and use it to refine and strengthen the RPC's messaging strategy moving forward.

3.3.2 Task 3B: Brand Discovery Workshop

Understanding: To host a successful in-person brand discovery workshop, Blackberg will carefully facilitate a collaborative and structured meeting that draws from the insights gathered in the brand discovery survey and aligns with the project goals. The workshop will be designed to help the selected participants, as directed by the project manager, develop a cohesive and impactful brand identity that reflects the agency's goals and values. During the workshop, we will discuss mission, vision, and values, RPC's stakeholders and their behaviors and interactions with the brand, brand personality and tone of voice, and the brand's visual identity. We will work to develop key messaging points, integration and implementation of the new brand strategy, as well as how to visualize data sets that RPC reports on and tracks.

Technical Approach. Pre-event Communications: Blackberg will send out pre-event materials, including an agenda and background information on the purpose of the workshop. This ensures participants come prepared with the necessary context and can think critically about the brand identity.

Workshop Setup: On the day of the event, Blackberg will set the tone with an introduction, explaining the workshop's purpose and the specific objectives. The facilitator will encourage an open, creative, and collaborative environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. The workshop will follow a carefully planned agenda, ensuring all activities are relevant to the brand development process and that each step builds upon the next.

Workshop Methods: Blackberg will lead participants through the findings of our **SWOT analysis** assessing the current brand's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This exercise will help participants evaluate the brand's existing position, identify areas where the brand excels, and uncover opportunities for improvement or expansion. It will also highlight external threats that need to be addressed in the messaging and tactics.



Figure 5: Blackberg SWOT Process. Blackberg uses a special SWOT analysis process. This analysis informs the development of a comprehensive brand identity framework by highlighting areas to leverage for growth, addressing weaknesses, and understanding external factors that could impact the brand. The result is a strategic, well-rounded brand identity that aligns with both internal capabilities and market opportunities.

In the next step, Blackberg will guide participants through a **brand laddering exercise**, which involves asking a series of questions to help uncover the deeper meaning and emotional connection behind the brand. This process will help participants articulate the brand’s core values, its mission, and the aspirational elements that drive its identity. It will help move from the functional aspects of the brand to the emotional drivers that resonate with the target audience. Our team will then introduce the **brand personality framework** to help participants define the human traits that best represent RPC’s brand. This exercise allows participants to think of the brand as a person with specific characteristics (e.g., friendly, authoritative, innovative) that should resonate in all communications. Understanding the brand’s personality will guide decisions about tone, messaging, and visual identity.

Together, these methods help Blackberg create a comprehensive understanding of the brand, leading to a well-rounded identity that includes core messaging, emotional connections, and a clear personality. By integrating the survey findings with these in-person workshop exercises, Blackberg will help ensure that the final brand identity aligns with both internal perceptions and the agency’s goals, creating a powerful and unified presence.

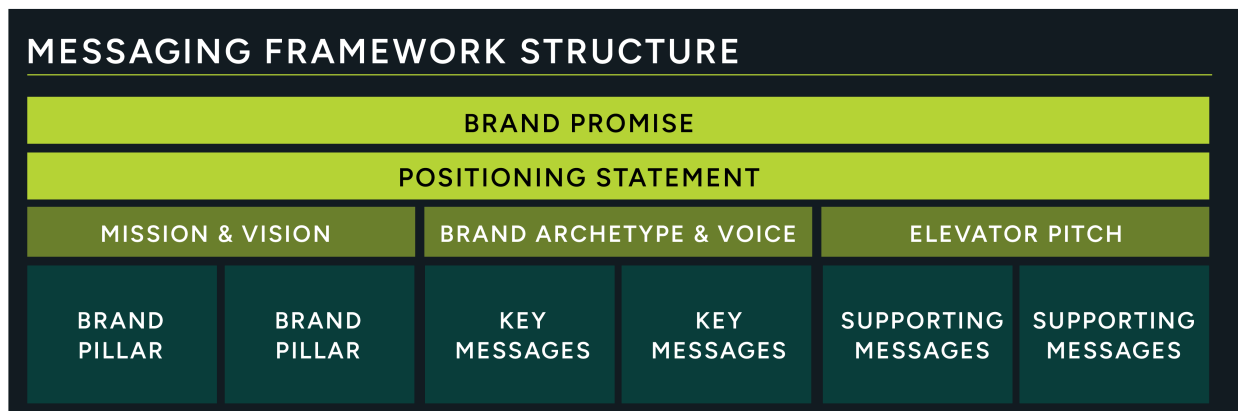


Figure 6: Blackberg Branding Framework Process. Blackberg’s unique combination brand laddering, the brand personality framework, and SWOT analysis work together by providing a holistic approach to developing a brand’s

identity. Together, these tools ensure that the brand identity is strategically aligned with market realities, emotionally compelling, and accessible to its target audience, leading to a well-rounded and memorable brand.

The **SWOT analysis** provides a grounded understanding of the current brand’s landscape, identifying what works and what doesn’t, which is the foundation for all subsequent exercises. **Brand laddering** will take those findings from the SWOT analysis and go deeper into understanding RPC’s essence, or what makes it unique, its core values, and how it connects with its audience on an emotional level. This step is essential for understanding not just what the brand represents but why it matters. The **brand personality framework** will then take the emotional and functional aspects revealed in the laddering exercise and define how those elements should be communicated. By identifying the personality traits that best align with the brand’s mission and values, this step ensures that the brand’s voice and tone are consistent across all touchpoints.

Post-workshop Activities: After the workshop is concluded, Blackberg will send a follow-up **summary document** explaining the key outcomes of the workshop and next steps. This will include any final thoughts on the brand’s messaging, tactics, and new ideas generated during the session. The findings from the brand discovery survey will be integrated into the workshop discussions, allowing participants to compare their internal insights with the survey data, ensuring a balanced and informed approach to brand development.

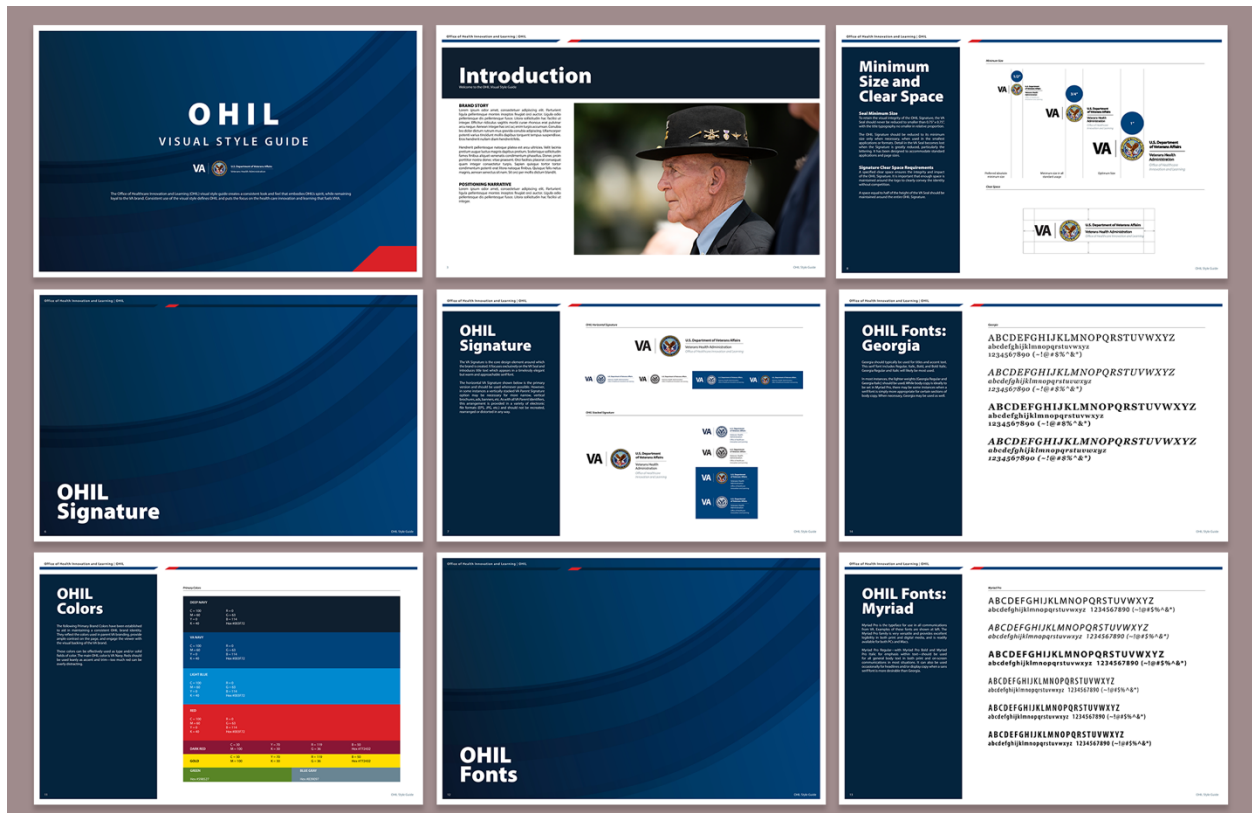


Figure 6—Blackberg Sample Branding for VHA OHIL.

Blackberg Successful Implementation: Brand Discovery Activities

Blackberg’s creative team was tasked with developing a brand identity for Veteran Health Administration's Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (VHA OHIL). The goal of the exercise was to position VHA OHIL as the center of innovation within VA. Utilizing VA’s standards for branding and creative materials as a guiding document, we lead OHIL stakeholders through a brand workshop where we did a series of exercises to determine the visual style and voice of OHIL. We then worked closely with OHIL leaders to design creative materials and build a toolkit to be used throughout the programs. A style guide was developed and distributed throughout VHA OHIL, and training was conducted with stakeholders to ensure the branding was applied consistently across all platforms and communications streams.

3.4 Task Four–Initial Design Concepts

Understanding. Building on the insights gathered from the brand discovery activities, Blackberg will deliver 2-3 initial design concepts for feedback and refinement that reflect the newly defined brand identity. These concepts will include logo designs, icons, typography, and color schemes tailored to RPC program and core planning documents, as well as concepts for infographics and data visualizations. Blackberg will present these initial design concepts, along with alternative options, to the project manager and senior staff for review and approval before moving forward with the subsequent tasks. Additionally, Blackberg will provide a draft list outlining the branding materials and templates included in the branding toolkit, specifying file formats for each item to ensure RPC staff can easily access and use them. Lastly, Blackberg will identify which branding collateral will be printed, such as brochures, flyers, posters, banners, and business cards, in alignment with the scope outlined in Task 9, ensuring that the materials are ready for distribution and promotion.

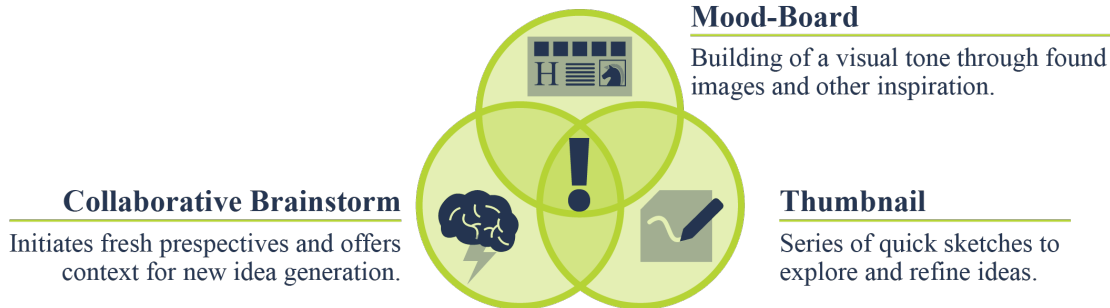


Figure 7: Blackberg’s Ideation Method. Blackberg leverages three ideation techniques in unison to craft products that resonate with specific audiences, align to WHB goals, and stand out among peers in the market.

Technical Approach. Using the information from the brand discovery survey and workshop as a strategic guide, our creative team uses our **Blackberg Ideation Method** to determine a creative direction. This method uses three interactive modalities to combine creative ideation and market research—collaborative brainstorming, mood-boarding, and thumbnailing. The unique combination of these methods allows our creatives to view the problem from the perspective of RPC and its audiences. This frame of reference guides the creative process and ensures a well-rounded and effective approach. From here, our creative team incorporates equity principles to ensure that our creative solutions are diverse and accessible to audiences of varying cultural backgrounds and abilities. We further measure our creative materials against those that already exist in the market to ensure that our solutions are unique, memorable, and tailor made with the audience in mind.

Based on research, the creative team develops initial proofs to illustrate the direction, which are presented to RPC with an explanation of the concept. We maintain a collaborative process, refining the designs based on RPC feedback until the direction is approved. This process will result in a document outlining a strategic design approach and initial design concepts as well as concepts for branding toolkit components.



Figure 8: Branded Collateral and Support Materials for Innovation Ecosystem. Blackberg developed a full suite of marketing collateral and support materials for VHA Innovation Ecosystem.

Blackberg Successful Implementation: Initial Design Concepts

Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE) required a full suite of branded materials, marketing collateral, and support materials to ensure its branding was consistently applied through all programs and communications channels. Blackberg’s creative team developed a broad range of products including one-pagers, editable PDFs, PowerPoint templates, email signatures, e-newsletters, business cards, event support materials, workbooks, standing banners, email banners, letterhead, long-form documents, maps, web pages, iconography, etc. These items were created for five different programs within IE, as well as IE level branded pieces (Figure 8).

3.5 Task Five—Develop Final Branding Materials

3.5.1 Task 5A: Branding Toolkit

Understanding. Properly marketing RPC’s mission and purpose, events and activities is vital to the program’s continued growth and success. Using the approved creative direction our creative team will develop a branding toolkit that will ensure the consistent application of the RPC’s brand throughout marketing materials and across platforms. The keys to audience engagement through marketing materials are diversity and accessibility. Blackberg’s creative development approach emphasizes multi-cultural branding, visuals, and stories—ensuring RPC resonates with diverse audiences, especially those that speak languages other than English. Blackberg’s team has 5+ years of experience providing clients with high-quality, culturally sensitive translation services to promote inclusion and increase accessibility to key information. These clients have included the U.S. Department of State and USAID, and the translated content has been used in large-scale

applications, website content, promotional videos, social media content, and advertising campaigns. In coordination with a trusted professional translation services partner, Blackberg follows a multi-step development and quality assurance process to create accessible, translated materials that faithfully translate the meaning of the original content.

Technical Approach. Blackberg’s creative approach is highly beneficial to RPC’s objectives because it combines a detailed understanding of RPC’s needs with strategic design and marketing tactics. By creating a consistent and accessible branding toolkit, we ensure that the public has a consistent experience with the brand across all platforms and in print. Our creative team takes all of the information gathered during the discovery and initial design concept phases to design and develop a full brand toolkit. The toolkit will include the following pieces:

Deliverable	Description	Print or Digital
Logo Suite	Blackberg will develop a full suite of logos for RPC including multiple colorways, lockups, file formats, and in all appropriate color spaces.	Digital
Infographics	We will create a plethora of infographics that simply communicate complex concepts so that they are accessible to the community, and easily editable for future updates.	Digital
Photography Library	Blackberg’s team of photographers will create a photography bank for RPC that includes an array of aerial images of landmarks and key transportation assets with at least five images from each parish. The library will also include multiple images of each region to convey the work of RPC. There will be a minimum of 100 images in the library that are 100% owned by RPC.	Digital
Iconography	Our team of illustrators will prepare an icon library of over 30 vector based unique-to-RPC icons, for team use.	Digital
Illustrations & Renderings	Blackberg’s team of illustrators will work with the RPC team to determine a comprehensive list of illustrations and RPC asset renderings for use. These illustrations and renderings will be provided in multiple appropriate formats.	Digital
Templates	We will provide a comprehensive set of editable branded templates for RPC to include PowerPoint presentations, Excel spreadsheets and tables, standard reporting templates, memos, stage zero report templates, letterhead, digital newsletter headers and footers, one-pagers, email signatures, editable social media posts, project web pages, etc.	Print + Digital
Promotional Swag	Designs for promotional “swag” items will also be included. These items will be decided on in tasks three and four.	Print
Brochures & Flyers	Digital and ready-to-print brochures and flyers will also be included in the toolkit.	Print + Digital
Posters & Banners	The toolkit will also include physical proofs of posters and banners, previously decided on in tasks three and four.	Print

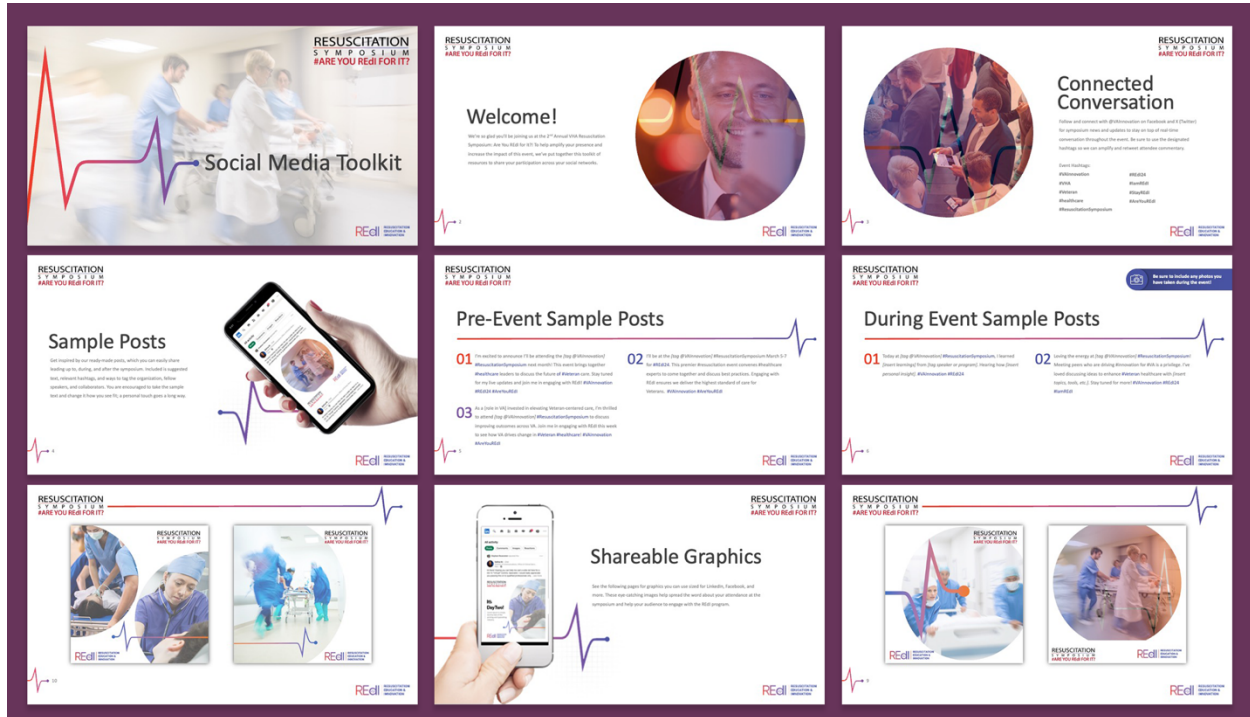


Figure 9: Style Guide Created for REdI. Blackberg developed the visual identity for one of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) SimLEARN’s vital training programs, REdI. The design focused on clarity, professionalism, and urgency, creating a memorable and consistent experience across all materials. Our team built a toolkit of branded products, including signage, presentations, digital assets, and printed materials, to ensure a unified and impactful presence throughout the event.

3.5.2 Task 5B: Style Guide

Understanding. Blackberg will develop a comprehensive brand style guide for RPC by creating a consistent and cohesive visual identity across all of RPC’s communication channels. This will include clearly defining the use of the RPC logo, color scheme, typography, and iconography for various media such as websites, social media platforms, print materials, and presentations. The guide will ensure that all printed materials comply with accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and adhere to legal and copyright requirements. Additionally, Blackberg will establish detailed guidelines for creating and printing promotional items like brochures, posters, and booklets, providing print specifications such as paper type, weight, and printing techniques to ensure high-quality materials aligned with RPC's identity. The guide will also integrate a messaging strategy to effectively communicate RPC's role in regional planning and urban development, ensuring a unified voice for outreach campaigns and public engagement efforts.

Blackberg will establish a centralized resource for a uniform brand identity by creating a comprehensive branding toolkit for RPC. This toolkit will include templates for reports, presentations, and social media posts, ensuring that all materials produced by or for RPC are consistent and easily identifiable. Blackberg will also develop visual tools such as infographics, aerial photography, and illustrations to help convey complex urban planning concepts in a clear, accessible way. Through training and workshops, Blackberg will assist RPC staff in adopting key messaging and maintaining consistency in outreach efforts. The goal is to enhance RPC’s public-

facing materials, ensuring that constituents and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the agency's purpose while effectively engaging them in planning processes. By taking this strategic approach, Blackberg will help RPC communicate its mission and initiatives with clarity and impact.

Technical Approach. To create the style guide Blackberg will take a structured approach, following a series of strategic steps to ensure a comprehensive and cohesive document. Here's how Blackberg would approach this project:

Step 1: Document Structuring

- Blackberg will create a clear and structured outline for the brand style guide, breaking it into easily digestible sections. These sections will cover everything from visual identity to messaging strategy and legal considerations. Each section will have clearly defined rules and guidelines, accompanied by practical examples and visuals.
- The following sections will be included:
 - Introduction, brief overview of the RPC brand, mission, and purpose.
 - Logo usage guidelines
 - Color palette and usage guidelines
 - Typography
 - Imagery and visual elements including photography style, icons and graphics, as well as image sourcing a licensing protocol
 - Brand Voice and Messaging
 - Digital and Online presence guidelines, web design, social media recommendations, and content creation guidelines
 - Print materials and collateral including print specifications and suggested finishing
 - Legal and copyright considerations
 - Branding toolkit guidelines
 - Review and update process would include a system for version control as well as guidance on how the style guide will be reviewed and updated as the RPC brand evolves

Step 2: Design and Content Creation

- Blackberg's design team will develop the guide, including the visual representation of logos, typography, colors, and images.
- The content team will develop a writing framework to explain the purpose and usage of each section, ensuring that the tone and language are clear and concise.
- The document will be created as a digital asset (PDF) to allow for easy distribution and updates.

Step 3: Legal Compliance and Review

- Blackberg will work with RPC's legal team to ensure that all copyright, trademark, and accessibility requirements are clearly addressed within the guide.
- Any terms or clauses concerning licensing of images or third-party content will be reviewed and incorporated into the guide, ensuring the RPC stays compliant.

Step 4: Feedback and Revisions

- Once the draft of the style guide is completed, Blackberg will present the document to RPC’s internal team for feedback, ensuring all required components are covered.
- Based on feedback, Blackberg will revise to ensure the guide aligns perfectly with RPC's needs and expectations.

Step 5: Finalization and Training:

- The final version of the style guide will be distributed in both digital and printed formats, with a focus on accessibility and clear navigation.
- Blackberg will conduct training sessions or workshops for RPC staff to help them understand how to use the style guide effectively in their work (further explained in task eight).



Figure 10: Style Guide for VA Immersive. Collaborating with VA’s Strategic Initiatives Lab, we developed branding strategy, a logo, color palette, and visual style guide, as well as collateral that captures the program’s dynamic, forward-thinking vision. Our creative work with VA Immersive was recognized with a 2024 MarCom Honorable Mention Award for excellence in branding.

Blackberg Successful Implementation: Develop Final Branding Materials

Blackberg's creative team was tasked with developing branding for the VA Immersive program, which is focused on advancing the adoption of immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) across the VA. Collaborating with VA’s Strategic Initiatives Lab, we developed a logo, color palette, and visual style guide, as well as collateral that captures the program's dynamic, forward-thinking vision. Our creative work with VA Immersive was recognized with a 2024 MarCom Honorable Mention Award for excellence in branding, underscoring our commitment to delivering compelling and high-impact visual experiences.

3.6 Task Six–Develop Messaging Strategy

Understanding. To develop a messaging strategy for RPC, Blackberg will follow a structured approach that aligns with the agency’s goals while ensuring the message resonates with all stakeholders and communities. The messaging strategy and subsequent **messaging strategy**

document will be built on insights derived from the brand discovery activities and crafted to enhance the RPC's trust, relationships, public buy-in, and overall perception, and will be developed in conjunction with the style guide. Our communications experts and UI/UX engineers will create a detailed document outlining how to successfully integrate the RPC's new messaging strategy into their website. This will ensure that external stakeholders have a consistent experience with the new branding across all platforms.

Technical Approach. By addressing individual elements of the messaging strategy, Blackberg will help RPC develop a comprehensive strategy that not only strengthens the agency's brand but also builds lasting relationships with stakeholders, increases public engagement, and fosters a deeper understanding of RPC's role and impact in the community.

Blackberg will work with RPC to clearly articulate the agency's **mission and vision** in concise, compelling language. These statements will define the purpose of RPC, its long-term goals, and the role it plays in the community. The mission and vision will be developed to ensure they reflect RPC's commitment to regional planning, transportation, and economic development, while clearly defining its differences from MPO. Blackberg will ensure these statements are simple, memorable, and ready for use in all communication channels. We will also help RPC identify the **core values** that guide its decision-making and planning efforts. These values will be positioned to resonate with stakeholders, distinguishing RPC from other governmental agencies. By emphasizing these core values, Blackberg will ensure that RPC's unique role is clear to the public.

Using the mission, vision, and core values as a framework, Blackberg will create a succinct and impactful **elevator pitch** for RPC. This statement will quickly and concisely convey the agency's purpose, key initiatives, and its benefits to the community. Blackberg will work with RPC to **identify the key stakeholders** and communities RPC serves and **segment** these audiences and the tailored messaging that will be used for each based on specific concerns, needs, and interests. The messaging will be customized to ensure relevance, focusing on how RPC's work impacts and benefits each community, whether it's in terms of transportation, economic development, or environmental planning.

Our team will work to define a set of **key messages** that highlight RPC's unique value proposition and expertise. Key messages will include the benefits of collaboration, the importance of sustainable development, and how RPC's initiatives help create a better quality of life for all residents in the region. These messages will serve as the foundation for all communications, ensuring that RPC's value is consistently conveyed.

Blackberg will ensure that the messaging remains **consistent** across all RPC **communication channels**, including its website, social media, press releases, and public meetings. This will be accomplished by integrating the key messages into web copy and developing templates for social media posts and outreach materials. By maintaining consistency, Blackberg will help reinforce RPC's brand identity and messaging, ensuring that stakeholders receive the same clear and cohesive message across all touchpoints.

Working with RPC stakeholders, we will determine the appropriate **language and tone** of voice for RPC’s messaging, aligning it with both the brand identity and the preferences of the target audience.

Blackberg will collaborate with RPC to develop a framework for **addressing complex planning issues** by combining our expertise in clear communication and innovative design. We will create a user-friendly platform that simplifies intricate planning concepts using straightforward language and intuitive visuals like infographics and illustrations. The framework would focus on breaking down complex issues into digestible components, ensuring that key messages are easily understood by a wide audience.

We will also develop a guide for **inclusivity and diversity** by prioritizing the integration of diverse voices and perspectives throughout the planning process. The guide will highlight the agency's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment, ensuring that all messaging and planning materials reflect the varied needs and experiences of different communities. This will include using language that resonates with diverse groups, actively seeking input from underrepresented populations, and designing materials that are accessible to people from different backgrounds.

Blackberg will create **adaptable messaging** by developing a flexible content strategy that ensures core messages remain consistent across different communication channels and formats while being tailored to the specific needs of each platform. They will craft a central message that can be easily modified in tone, length, and style depending on the format—whether it’s concise for social media posts, more detailed for press releases, accessible for website content, or engaging for public presentations. By considering the audience and platform characteristics, such as the visual elements for social media or the formal tone for press releases, Blackberg will ensure the messaging resonates effectively across diverse communication touchpoints, maintaining clarity and engagement.

Blackberg Successful Implementation:

Blackberg has developed messaging for VHA OHIL’s front office as well as each of seven sub-organizations. Development of this messaging ensures alignment between OHIL and the larger VA enterprise, as well as consistency among each individual program office. This spans day-to-day deliverables as well as 18+ annual events. Our team achieves this by developing a comprehensive messaging hub for each program that ties back into the overall communications strategy of VHA OHIL—including audiences, key messages, and supporting evidence.

3.7 Task Seven—Develop Supplemental Outreach Materials

Understanding. Blackberg will create supplemental outreach materials by building on the completed branding toolkit and messaging strategy to ensure everything stays consistent with the established vision. We will design a range of materials, like brochures, flyers, banners, and handouts, to help RPC engage with stakeholders at events such as tabling, workshops, open houses, and public forums. These materials will be designed to clearly communicate key messages in a visually appealing and accessible way, reflecting the brand’s identity while speaking to a wide variety of audiences. Once developed, these materials will be printed and produced as part of Task 9, ready to support RPC’s outreach efforts and spark meaningful conversations with the community.

Technical Approach. Blackberg’s approach to each of these items will focus on creating effective, accessible, and engaging materials that meet the specific needs of RPC’s outreach efforts. Blackberg will design concise and informative **fact sheets and brochures** that clearly convey RPC’s mission, programs, policies, and key regional planning concepts. These materials will be structured to provide essential information quickly and in an easily digestible format. By focusing on clarity and visual appeal, these brochures will ensure stakeholders and the public can access vital details about regional trends and planning efforts in a straightforward manner.

For **educational presentations**, Blackberg will create engaging and informative content tailored to schools, community groups, and other organizations. The presentations will be designed to raise awareness about urban planning, urban design, sustainability, and RPC’s role in shaping the region’s future. Using clear visuals, interactive elements, and simplified explanations, these presentations will be accessible to various audiences, from students to local community leaders, fostering a deeper understanding of complex planning topics.

Translation and Accessibility: Blackberg will ensure that all outreach materials are **available in multiple languages** and formats to reach a broad, diverse audience. This includes creating translated versions of printed materials and ensuring digital content is fully accessible, including compatibility with screen readers and compliance with ADA standards. The goal is to ensure that every community member, regardless of language or ability, can access and engage with the materials effectively. Blackberg utilizes a comprehensive translation model to ensure that all materials are translated with the meaning of the original content intact.

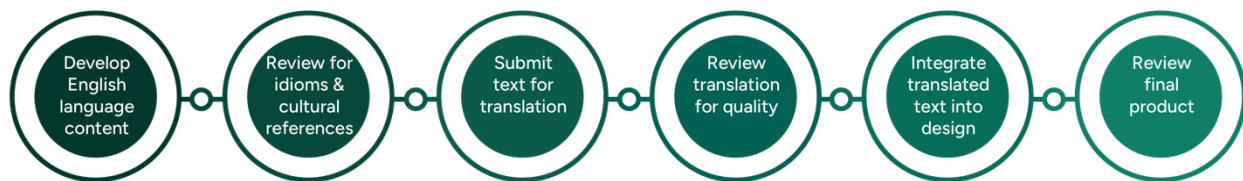


Figure 11: Blackberg’s Comprehensive Translation Model. Our team leverages a six-step process to ensure products are translated with the meaning of the original content intact.

Blackberg will develop a comprehensive checklist and guide for staff to help facilitate outreach meetings efficiently. This guide will provide clear instructions for conducting a standard outreach meeting, including step-by-step directions, templates for materials, and best practices for engaging with the community. The **“meeting-in-a-box”** kit will ensure staff members have everything they need to run successful outreach sessions, from setting up to following up, with all necessary materials and tools included for smooth execution.

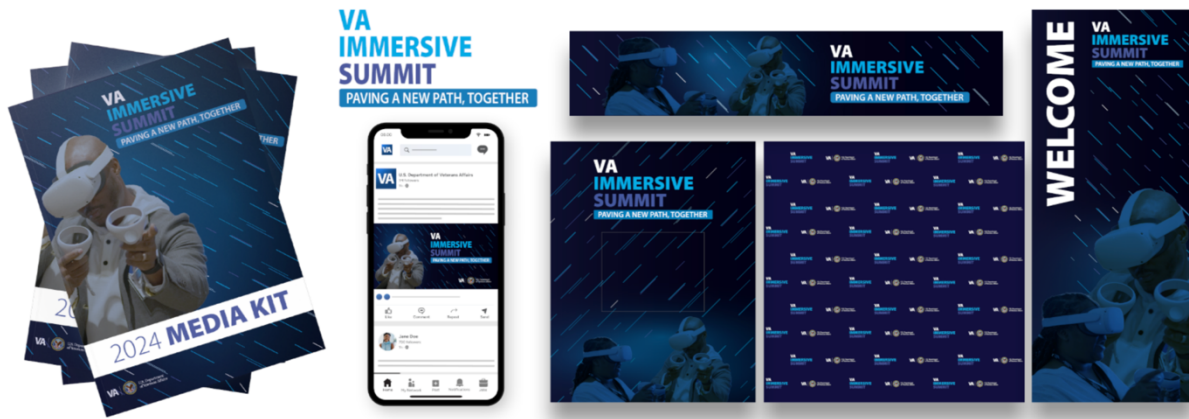


Figure 12: VA Immersive Summit Outreach Materials. Blackberg creates all marketing materials and event graphics for the VA Immersive Summit. The goal of the event is to provide foundational information about immersive technologies, like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), sometimes collective called extended reality (XR) to transform Veteran health care. Blackberg created a social media campaign, Media Kits, event signage, step-and-repeat photo opportunity banners, as well as printed brochures, flyers and event swag.

Blackberg Successful Implementation:

Blackberg’s creative team has developed marketing materials and event graphics for the Immersive Summit, for the last two years. The goal of the event is to provide foundational information about immersive technologies, like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), sometimes collective called extended reality (XR) to transform Veteran health care. Blackberg created a social media campaign, media kit, event signage, as well as printed flyers. The technology focus of the VA Immersive Summit required Blackberg designers to create an appropriate tone for the event. We achieved this by developing custom motion graphics for the stage. This work earned Blackberg Group a MarComm Award Honorable Mention in 2024.

Blackberg’s team also brings 5+ years of experience providing clients with high-quality, culturally sensitive translation services to promote inclusion and increase accessibility to key information. These clients have included the U.S. Department of State and USAID, and the translated content has been used in large-scale applications, website content, promotional videos, social media content, and advertising campaigns. In coordination with a trusted professional translation services partner, Blackberg follows a multi-step development and quality assurance process to create accessible, translated materials that faithfully translate the meaning of the original content. This includes a six-phased process (depicted in figure 11).

3.8 Task Eight–Staff Training

Blackberg will facilitate staff training, either in-person or virtually, by planning and hosting a comprehensive session focused on the effective use of the branding materials, including the branding toolkit, style guide, and supplemental outreach items. The training will provide RPC staff with clear guidance on how to properly implement and apply the branding elements across various communication channels. Additionally, Blackberg will ensure that RPC is fully equipped to deliver the messaging strategy effectively, offering practical insights and strategies for engaging stakeholders and the public. Through interactive exercises and detailed explanations, the training will empower RPC staff to confidently use the materials and deliver consistent, impactful messaging that aligns with the agency’s goals.



Figure 13: Mission Daybreak Updated Branding Team Training. Mission Daybreak focuses on bringing together veterans, researchers, technologists, advocates, and health care providers to advance suicide prevention solutions, came to Blackberg Group with an established brand. However, was not fully compliant with the VA's branding standards. Our creative team was tasked with refining the existing brand to bring into compliance with these strict guidelines while maintaining the integrity of the program's visual identity. We identified non-compliant attributes and established a brand style guide that outlined the necessary visual adjustments, including color palettes, typography, and logo usage.

Blackberg Successful Implementation: Innovation Ecosystem Staff Training

Mission Daybreak focuses on bringing together veterans, researchers, technologists, advocates, and health care providers to advance suicide prevention solutions, came to Blackberg Group with an established brand. However, was not fully compliant with the VA's branding standards. Our creative team was tasked with refining the existing brand to bring into compliance with these strict guidelines while maintaining the integrity of the program's visual identity. We identified non-compliant attributes and established a brand style guide that outlined the necessary visual adjustments, including color palettes, typography, and logo usage.

Additionally, we created a suite of marketing materials and digital assets that aligned with the updated visual identity, ensuring consistency across all platforms and fostering a more professional and recognizable presence. Through this process, we helped Mission Daybreak strengthen its visual identity, ensuring it effectively communicated its important message while adhering to VA branding standards.

Blackberg trained the Mission Daybreak staff on utilizing the updated branding by first providing an overview of the rebranding process and explaining the importance of adhering to VA standards while preserving the program's core identity. They walked the staff through key visual updates, including the revised logo, color palette, typography, and visual assets, highlighting the need for consistency across all platforms. The training included a detailed review of the brand style guide, emphasizing the correct use of logos, typography, and color schemes, with practical exercises that allowed staff to apply the new branding to social media posts, presentations, and printed materials. Additionally, staff were taught to ensure consistent brand messaging across digital and physical platforms, with a focus on empathetic, professional, and clear communication. The team also engaged in a Q&A session to address any concerns, and ongoing support resources were provided to ensure continued adherence to

the updated standards. Feedback was encouraged to refine the process, ensuring that the staff felt confident in using the updated branding effectively across all materials.

3.9 Task Nine—Print Production

Blackberg will deliver a **detailed memo outlining the printing specifications, budget, timeline, quality control, vendor selection, and distribution plan** to ensure the successful production and delivery of all branding collateral. After determining the required quantity and size for each printed item, Blackberg will collaborate with the RPC project manager to finalize these details based on anticipated demand, distribution, and budget considerations. The memo will include technical specifications for each printed item, such as paper type, weight, finishing, printing technique, colors, and binding, all subject to RPC’s approval. Blackberg will also outline the budget and timeline for the entire process, ensuring alignment with any upcoming outreach initiatives. Before finalizing orders, the proofing process will be conducted, including reviewing digital proofs and creating physical samples for RPC approval. To maintain high standards, the memo will include quality control measures for the printing process, ensuring the final products meet RPC’s expectations. If the printing is outsourced, Blackberg will select a reliable vendor that meets the project’s quality, timeline, and budget requirements, and that is available for future printing needs. Finally, the distribution and delivery plan will consider shipping costs and ensure timely delivery of all printed materials. Physical proofs of all materials will be provided, followed by the final printed branded materials once approved.



Figure 14: VHA 2024 State of Innovation Report. Blackberg graphic designers created the 80+ page annual report for VHA OHIL. The publication followed VA style guidelines and was distributed in print and online with full 508 compliance. The report won a Platinum MarCom Award for excellence in design.

Blackberg Successful Implementation:

When tasked with coordinating printing services for the **VHA OHIL State of Innovation Report**, Blackberg quickly identified significant challenges with VHA’s previous printing vendor. For years, VHA had relied on a local Washington, D.C. printer who lacked the capability to efficiently produce high-quality, **100-page perfect-bound books** at a scale of 2,000+ copies. The limitations of this vendor resulted in numerous production issues, including **ink smudging, inconsistent binding, and frequent delays in delivery**—all of which compromised the report’s professional presentation. Additionally, the printer’s outdated workflow posed obstacles; they lacked an online proofing system, making final approvals cumbersome, and they preferred native design files over **PDF/X-1a**, the industry standard for print production. These inefficiencies made it clear that a more capable print partner was necessary to uphold VHA’s reputation for excellence.

Melissa Miller, Blackberg’s **Creative Director, who has over 20 years of publication printing experience**, immediately recognized these gaps in service and took the lead in finding a better solution. Leveraging her extensive industry knowledge, she vetted multiple professional printers and ultimately identified a **veteran-owned, large-**

scale publication printer that was not only equipped to handle the project’s technical demands but also aligned well with VHA’s mission. From the outset, this new print partner demonstrated a level of professionalism and quality control that was previously missing. Their use of an **online proofing system** allowed Blackberg’s designers and VHA’s editorial team to efficiently review and approve final proofs in real time, reducing errors and improving accuracy before the report went to press.

Throughout the process, Blackberg maintained close collaboration with the printer, ensuring every step—from file preparation to final delivery—met the highest standards of **print quality, durability, and precision**. By coordinating this transition, Blackberg not only secured a superior printed product for the **State of Innovation Report** but also established a scalable, **reliable print workflow** for future publications. The result was a polished, professional report that reflected the innovation and impact of VHA OHIL’s work, delivered **on time and without production issues**—a stark contrast to previous years.

4.0 Timeline

This timeline ensures that the RPC’s branding and messaging strategy is thoroughly developed, reviewed, and implemented, allowing sufficient time for feedback and revisions at each stage. The project concludes with a full set of printed materials and fully developed training for staff on the use of the new branding.



Figure 15: Blackberg’s Proposed Timeline for Tasks and Deliverables. An eight-month project timeline to accomplish the deliverables outlined in the SOW, including key milestones and deliverables for each task. This timeline assumes a well-structured flow of work with appropriate time for review and approval.

5.0 Conclusion

At Blackberg, we are committed to supporting RPC’s branding and outreach efforts throughout the entire process and beyond. With a structured timeline of deliverables spanning eight months, we will kick off the project with a comprehensive plan, followed by a brand audit, SWOT analysis, and brand discovery activities. Our approach includes developing the final branding toolkit, style guide, and messaging strategy by month four, followed by engaging outreach materials and staff

training by month six. By month eight, all printed materials will be delivered and ready to support RPC's initiatives.

However, branding is not a one-time task—it is a living entity that requires ongoing maintenance and adjustments. As public feedback and new information emerge, Blackberg is eager to continue working with RPC to monitor, update, and refine its branding and messaging. Our ongoing collaboration will ensure that RPC's brand evolves to meet the dynamic needs of the community and remains consistent, effective, and impactful in fostering sustained trust and public buy-in.

MODIFIED DOTD FORM: 24-102

RPC TRANSIT PLANNING REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS **(RFP)**

PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE CONSULTANT SERVICES

Please read carefully, as this form differs from Standard Form DOTD 24-102. **Subconsultants should respond only to questions 1-9 and 16-19, and these responses should be labeled by firm and included as attachments to of the Prime's submittal.**

ANY CONSULTANT FAILING TO SUBMIT ANY OF THE INFORMATION REQUIRED ON THE DOTD FORM 24-102, OR PROVIDING INACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE DOTD FORM 24-102, MAY BE CONSIDERED NON-RESPONSIVE.

Prime consultant should enter the firm name in the footer at the bottom of this page. (It will carry over to subsequent pages.)

1. Contract title as shown in the advertisement	Agency Branding and Communications Project
2. Contract number(s) as shown in the advertisement	State Project No.: PL-80-36-25 RPC Task: D-1.25
3. Prime consultant name (as registered with the Louisiana Secretary of State where such registration is required by law)	Blackberg Group, LLC
4. Prime consultant? (Y/N)	Yes
5. Consultant mailing address	762 52 nd Street Norfolk, VA 23508
6. Consultant physical address (existing or to be established, if location is used as an evaluation criteria)	762 52 nd Street Norfolk, VA 23508
7. Name, title, phone number, and email address of consultant's contract point of contact	Leanne Reisz, Executive Vice President, 502-500-8767, leanne@blackberggroup.com
8. Name, title, phone number, and email address of the official with signing authority for this proposal	Leanne Reisz, Executive Vice President, 502-500-8767, leanne@blackberggroup.com
9. This is to certify that all information contained herein is accurate and true, and that the team presently has sufficient staff to perform these services within the designated time frame. By submitting this proposal,	

<p>proposer certifies that it is not engaged in a boycott of Israel and it will, for the duration of its contract obligations, refrain from a boycott of Israel. Proposer also certifies and agrees that the following information is correct: In preparing its response, the proposer has considered all proposals submitted from qualified, potential subcontractors and suppliers, and has not, in the solicitation, selection, or commercial treatment of any subcontractor or supplier, refused to transact or terminated business activities, or taken other actions intended to limit commercial relations, with a person or entity that is engaging in commercial transactions in Israel or Israeli-controlled territories, with the specific intent to accomplish a boycott or divestment of Israel. The proposer also has not retaliated against any person or other entity for reporting such refusal, termination, or commercially limiting actions. RPC reserves the right to reject the response of the bidder or proposer if this certification is subsequently determined to be false, and to terminate any contract awarded based on such a false response.</p>	<p>Signature (shall be the same person as #9): <i>Leanne Reisz</i> <hr/> Date: March 22, 2025</p>
<p>10. If a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) is participating in the project team, indicate which firm(s) are DBEs and their percentage of the contract. If a firm is not certified as a DBE in Louisiana, please indicate the state where they are certified.</p>	<p><u>Firm(s)</u>: N/A <u>Firm(s)</u> <u>%</u>:</p>

11. Firm(s) Size:

For all firms that are part of this team, indicate the approximate number of personnel to be committed to this contract, by DOTD Job Classification and the total number of personnel within the firm that could provide support, if needed. If a specialized job classification is required and not included on the DOTD job classification list, specify “Other (xxxx)” and include the classification title inside the parentheses. The DOTD Job Classification(s) to be used can be found at the following link:

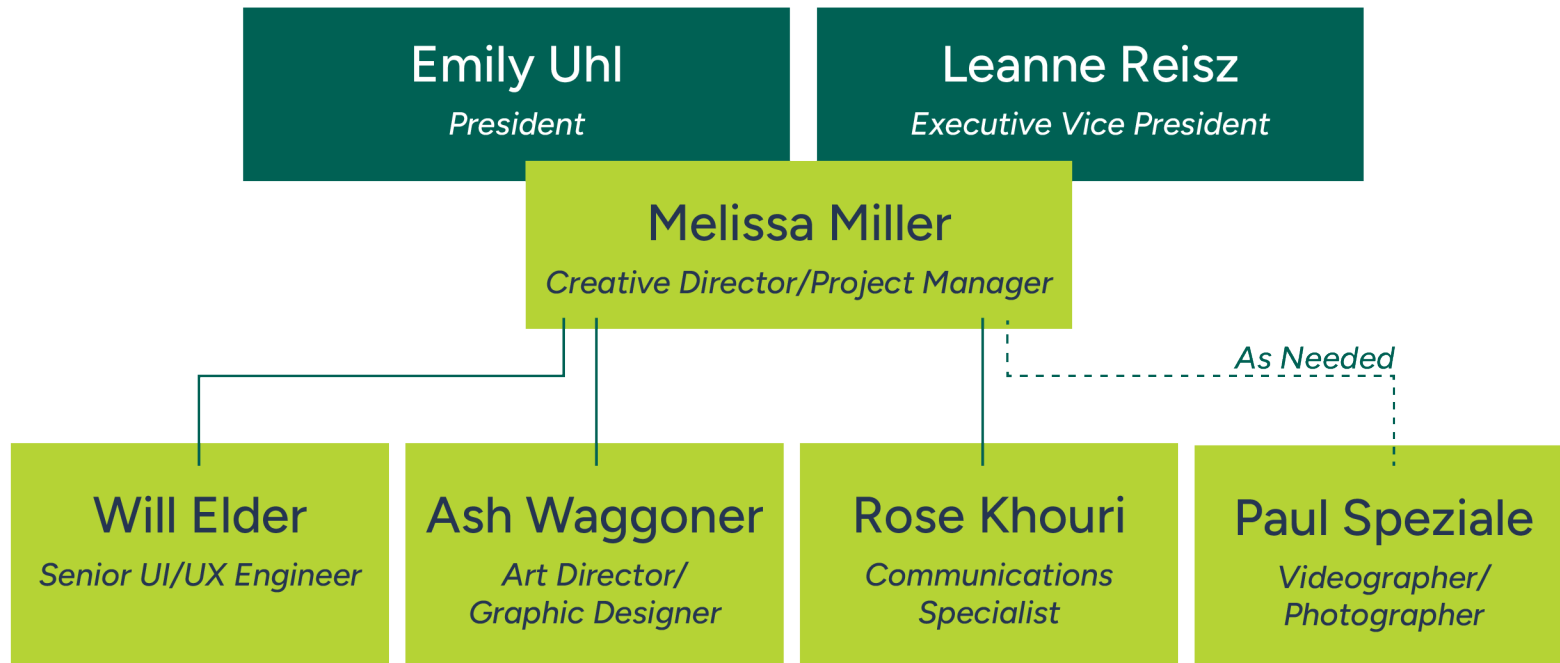
http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov/Inside_LaDOTD/Divisions/Engineering/CCS/Job_Qualification/Job%20Classifications%20with%20Descriptions.pdf

(Italicized examples are provided, please delete and replace):

Firm name	Sub or Prime	DOTD Job Classification	Number of personnel committed to this contract	Total number of personnel available in this DOTD Job Classification (if needed)
Blackberg Group, LLC	Prime	Other Project Manager/Creative Director	1	1
Blackberg Group, LLC	Prime	Other Communications Specialist	1	3
Blackberg Group, LLC	Prime	Other Senior Graphic Designer	1	3
Blackberg Group, LLC	Prime	Other Web Developer	1	2

12. Organizational Chart:

Provide an organizational chart showing all prime consultant and sub-consultant (if applicable) personnel assigned to the contract, area of project responsibility for each, and reporting lines for the purposes of this contract. Note that all personnel included are expected to contribute to the conduct of the project, and any significant future changes to the chart must be pre-approved by the RPC Project Manager.



13. Proposal Narrative

Describe the methodology by which the project team proposes to undertake this study, organized by the tasks and sub-tasks described in the scope. This narrative should be in sufficient detail to demonstrate that the project team understands the expectations of the scope and has the knowledge and expertise to successfully meet those expectations. Innovative and/or cost efficient approaches to conducting tasks are welcome, provided they do not compromise the quality or intent of the study. The narrative must not exceed ten (10) pages, including graphics. Any pages beyond the first 10 will be disregarded.

Proposal Narrative for Task 1: Project Management and Schedule

Blackberg proposes a structured and comprehensive methodology to manage Task 1 effectively, focusing on collaboration, clear communication, and strategic alignment with the RPC's goals. Our approach ensures that the project stays on schedule, meets all deliverable expectations, and fosters productive interaction between the consultant team and RPC staff. This methodology includes a strategic planning session, the development of detailed work breakdown structures, the assignment of specific tasks, and the creation of a transparent and adaptable project schedule.

Task Breakdown and Initial Planning

Upon receiving the Notice to Proceed from the RPC, Blackberg will initiate Task 1 with a **kick-off meeting** within two weeks. This meeting will serve as an opportunity for both Blackberg and RPC staff to align on the project's goals, milestones, and expected outcomes. We will prepare for this meeting by providing a detailed agenda and a **briefing document** summarizing our understanding of the project's objectives and scope.

By approaching the project in this manner, Blackberg ensures that there is clarity from the outset and that all project activities are aligned with the client's goals. We recognize that effective communication and transparency are essential for successful project management.

Blackberg's extensive experience with large-scale projects, particularly with the **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)** Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (OHIL), underscores our capability to manage complex initiatives. For OHIL, Blackberg led the development of a unified **Marketing Plan, Operating Model, and FY24-26 Strategic Plan**. The successful integration of these deliverables demonstrated our ability to manage and coordinate large teams, balance multiple priorities, and meet high expectations. We utilized the **Weave Methodology** to ensure that OHIL's diverse leadership was aligned, and that creative and marketing teams were able to deliver results that advanced OHIL's mission.

By applying similar strategies and methodologies to this project, Blackberg will ensure that RPC's objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. Our hands-on approach and expertise in communications, project management, and strategic planning guarantee that all tasks will be completed on time, within budget, and to the highest standard.

Proposal Narrative for Task 2: Brand Audit/Assessment of Existing Marketing Materials

Blackberg proposes a comprehensive approach to conducting a **brand audit** and **assessment of existing marketing materials** for RPC, ensuring that every aspect of the brand's identity, outreach, and communications is evaluated. This will help us identify both the strengths and weaknesses of the current materials, as well as uncover opportunities for improvement. Our approach includes gathering and analyzing a range of internal and external data points to create a well-rounded understanding of the current brand perception and outreach effectiveness. Using this information, Blackberg will conduct a detailed SWOT analysis that will inform actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing RPC's overall brand impact.

One example of Blackberg's expertise in brand auditing and marketing materials assessment is our work with the **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)** for their annual **iEX (Innovation Experience) event**. For this project, we conducted a thorough brand assessment, reviewed previous event branding, and worked closely with the VHA team to design a new visual identity that aligned with the event's innovative and forward-thinking mission.

We developed a cohesive branding strategy that included a unique logo, color palette, typography, and imagery to create a consistent and professional look across all event materials, including signage, print and digital guides, and web graphics. By applying a comprehensive brand audit and design process, we were able to create a visual language that resonated with the target audience and reinforced the event's mission within the veteran healthcare space. Through a similar approach for RPC, Blackberg will ensure a thorough and impactful brand audit, providing valuable insights that will enhance the agency's outreach and marketing efforts. By following this detailed methodology, Blackberg will ensure a thorough and actionable brand audit that provides valuable insights to guide the RPC's marketing and outreach strategy.

Proposal Narrative for Task 3: Brand Discovery Activities

Task 3A: Brand Discovery Survey

Blackberg will lead a **Brand Discovery Survey** to gather key insights from staff and board members to inform the development of RPC's messaging strategy and brand components. The survey will help identify the foundational elements of RPC's identity, such as its mission, core values, key terms, and target audiences. The goal is to establish a shared understanding among stakeholders, ensuring that the final branding accurately reflects RPC's purpose and resonates with its intended audience.

Technical Approach:

To develop and distribute the brand discovery survey, Blackberg will implement the following steps:

1. **Collaborative Design:** We will work closely with the project manager and senior RPC staff to ensure the survey questions align with the organization's goals and address areas critical to shaping the branding elements (e.g., mission, values, target audiences).
2. **Survey Distribution:** The survey will be distributed via personalized email invitations and hosted on a digital platform, ensuring accessibility and ease of use. We will encourage broad participation by setting a response timeline and sending reminder emails to maximize response rates.
3. **Survey Content:** The survey will include a mix of question types (multiple-choice, Likert scale, open-ended) focusing on:
 - Core concepts related to RPC's mission, values, and responsibilities.
 - Key terms, concepts, and definitions that should be part of RPC's messaging.
 - Identification of RPC's key target audiences.
4. **Data Analysis:** Blackberg will monitor responses in real-time and conduct a detailed analysis once the survey is complete, identifying key themes and patterns. These insights will be used to refine and inform the development of RPC's branding and messaging strategy.

Task 3B: Brand Discovery Workshop

Following the survey, Blackberg will organize and facilitate a **Brand Discovery Workshop** to further refine and solidify the brand identity. The workshop will focus on developing a comprehensive brand strategy, integrating the insights gathered from the survey. Participants will engage in discussions and activities to define RPC's mission, vision, values, target audiences, and brand personality, and to brainstorm visual identity elements such as logos, color palettes, and messaging.

To ensure a productive and collaborative workshop, Blackberg will use a structured approach, broken down into several key phases:

1. **Pre-event Communications:**
 - Blackberg will distribute pre-event materials, including an agenda and background information, to ensure all participants are prepared and aligned on the workshop's objectives.
 - Participants will be encouraged to review the survey results prior to the workshop, ensuring they can contribute effectively during discussions.
2. **Workshop Setup and Facilitation:**
 - **Introduction and Objectives:** At the beginning of the workshop, Blackberg will set the tone by introducing the purpose and goals of the session. We will encourage an open, collaborative, and creative environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their ideas.
 - **Agenda Structure:** The workshop will follow a structured agenda, ensuring all critical topics are covered and the discussion flows logically from one topic to the next.

3. **Brand Framework Methodology:**

Blackberg employs a unique combination of frameworks and exercises that ensure all aspects of RPC's brand are thoughtfully developed. These include:

- **SWOT Analysis:** We will review the findings of the **SWOT analysis** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to understand the current state of the brand and to identify areas where RPC can leverage strengths or address weaknesses.
- **Brand Laddering:** This exercise will help participants uncover the deeper emotional connection behind the brand and articulate RPC's core values, mission, and aspirational elements.
- **Brand Personality Framework:** By identifying human traits that best represent RPC's brand (e.g., friendly, authoritative, innovative), we will ensure the brand's tone and messaging resonate with audiences and reflect the organization's identity.

4. **Post-Workshop Activities:**

After the workshop, Blackberg will compile and deliver a **Post-event Summary Document** that summarizes the key takeaways, emerging concepts, and actionable next steps. This document will integrate the insights from the survey and the workshop discussions, ensuring a cohesive and informed approach to developing RPC's brand identity. The summary will outline:

- Finalized mission, vision, and values.
- Refined brand personality and tone of voice.
- Key messaging points and strategies for integration across communication channels.
- Visual identity ideas and next steps for design development.
- Recommendations for visualizing data effectively.

By leveraging these structured and collaborative activities, Blackberg will guide RPC through a thoughtful and engaging brand discovery process, ensuring that the resulting brand identity is aligned with the agency's goals and resonates with its target audiences.

Proposal Narrative for Task 4: Initial Design Concepts

Task 4: Initial Design Concepts

Building upon the insights gathered from the brand discovery activities (survey and workshop), Blackberg will develop initial **design concepts** that reflect the refined brand identity of RPC. These concepts will cover a range of branding elements, including logos, icons, typography, color schemes, and design templates for RPC's program and planning documents. Additionally, we will create concepts for infographics and data visualizations to help communicate complex information effectively.

Blackberg will present multiple alternatives for each design concept to the project manager and senior staff for feedback and approval. The objective is to ensure that the concepts align with RPC's identity and goals, and resonate with the target audiences. Once approved, these initial concepts will serve as the foundation for subsequent tasks.

Additionally, Blackberg will provide a draft **branding toolkit** that outlines the components of the toolkit, including descriptions and file formats. We will specify which branding collateral will be printed (e.g., brochures, flyers, business cards) and which will be created digitally, in alignment with the broader goals of Task 9. This ensures that all deliverables are well-defined, practical, and ready for distribution or promotion as needed.

Strategic Design Approach:

Using the feedback from the brand discovery activities, Blackberg's creative team will develop initial proofs that align with RPC's goals and brand identity. Each design direction will be accompanied by a clear explanation of how it connects to the brand's mission, values, and target audience. We will also present alternative design options to ensure RPC has a variety of concepts to consider.

Proposal for Task 5: Develop Final Branding Materials

Task 5A: Branding Toolkit

Creating and maintaining a consistent brand identity is essential for the RPC's growth and public engagement. Blackberg will design a comprehensive **branding toolkit** that ensures the consistent application of RPC's brand across all marketing materials and platforms. The toolkit will enable RPC to effectively communicate its mission and goals to diverse audiences in both internal and external contexts.

Blackberg emphasizes the importance of **diversity and accessibility** in all brand materials. With a focus on multi-cultural branding, visuals, and inclusive language, Blackberg will ensure that the toolkit resonates with diverse audiences, including those with limited English proficiency. This is achieved by leveraging our extensive experience in providing high-quality, culturally sensitive translation services for clients such as the U.S. Department of State and USAID.

Our approach will combine strategic design with practical, accessible tools. The toolkit will include a wide range of materials designed to be flexible and extensible for various internal and external uses. Each branding element will be developed with the goal of ensuring ease of use and consistency. Blackberg will also undertake a **proofing and quality control process**, ensuring that all print-ready materials meet the RPC project manager's expectations. This process will include reviewing digital proofs, creating physical samples, and ensuring final products meet desired standards.

Task 5B: Style Guide

Blackberg will develop a **comprehensive style guide** for RPC that ensures uniformity in visual and messaging elements across all channels. This guide will serve as the central resource for maintaining a cohesive and consistent brand identity. The style guide will not only cover visual identity elements like logos, typography, and color schemes but will also establish clear guidelines for online presence, print materials, promotional items, and accessibility compliance.

Key considerations include ensuring compliance with **ADA accessibility standards** for printed materials and digital content, as well as **legal and copyright regulations** for all RPC materials. By developing this comprehensive suite of branding materials and guidelines, Blackberg will ensure that RPC has a unified, professional brand identity across all platforms, enhancing its public engagement and communication efforts. This consistency will help RPC effectively communicate its mission and vision to its stakeholders and the general public.

Task 6: Develop Messaging Strategy

Blackberg's approach to developing a messaging strategy for RPC will ensure that the agency's mission, vision, and values are effectively communicated to diverse stakeholders. The strategy will be rooted in insights from the brand discovery activities, allowing RPC to build stronger relationships, enhance public buy-in, and improve the overall perception of the organization. The goal is to create clear, accessible, and impactful messaging that resonates with various audiences while aligning with the RPC's brand identity. By developing these elements, Blackberg will help RPC effectively communicate its purpose, initiatives, and value to the community, fostering trust, engagement, and a deeper understanding of its mission.

Task 7: Develop Supplemental Outreach Materials

Building on the completed branding toolkit and messaging strategy, Blackberg will create a variety of supplemental outreach materials to help RPC engage effectively with its stakeholders. These materials will be used at events such as tabling, workshops, open houses, and public forums, enabling RPC to communicate its mission, values, and key initiatives in a visually compelling and accessible manner. The goal is to provide materials that are informative, engaging, and consistent with the agency's established brand identity, while addressing the diverse needs of the community. Once developed, these materials will be printed and produced as part of Task 9.

Blackberg's approach will focus on the creation of practical, clear, and visually appealing outreach materials. These materials will meet the specific needs of RPC's community engagement and outreach efforts, ensuring that messages are effectively communicated to a wide range of audiences. By creating these outreach materials, Blackberg will help RPC engage effectively with its community, raise awareness about urban planning and RPC's role, and ensure accessibility and inclusivity in its public outreach efforts.

Task 8: Staff Training

Blackberg will plan and facilitate a comprehensive training session for RPC staff, focusing on the effective use of the branding materials and the delivery of the messaging strategy. This training will ensure that RPC's team is fully equipped to apply the branding toolkit, style guide, and supplemental outreach materials across various communication channels. The session will also cover how to effectively communicate the messaging strategy to stakeholders and the public. By providing practical insights, clear guidance, and interactive exercises, Blackberg will empower RPC staff to consistently deliver RPC's messaging in a compelling and professional manner.

Blackberg will take a hands-on, interactive approach to the training process, ensuring that RPC staff not only understand the branding materials but also gain the confidence to apply them in real-world scenarios. The training will be designed to be accessible and engaging for all staff members, providing them with the tools and knowledge to effectively use the branding materials and communicate the agency's message.

Training Presentation and Exercises

The presentation will be structured to explain each component of the branding materials and messaging strategy clearly and concisely. Visual aids will be included to demonstrate the use of various branding elements, such as logos, color schemes, and typography. Real-world examples of the messaging strategy in action will be shown, highlighting how these materials can be applied effectively in different scenarios.

Interactive exercises will allow staff to engage directly with the materials, applying the concepts learned to create their own mock-up outreach materials or communication strategies. These exercises will encourage active participation and reinforce the skills learned during the session. By the end of the training, RPC staff will have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively utilize the branding materials and communicate the agency's message with consistency and confidence. This will ensure that RPC's outreach efforts are aligned with the agency's goals and that staff members are well-equipped to engage with stakeholders and the public.

Task 9: Print Production

Blackberg will coordinate the production of all printed branding collateral, including brochures, flyers, posters, banners, booklets, and other promotional materials, in collaboration with the RPC project manager. This task will ensure that printed materials meet the required quality standards, budget constraints, and distribution needs, while also adhering to copyright laws and accessibility standards in compliance with ADA requirements. Blackberg will oversee the entire printing process, from specifying print details to vendor selection, proofing, quality control, and ensuring timely distribution.

Blackberg will take a structured approach to ensure all printed materials are delivered on time and to the highest standards. The process will involve detailed planning and close collaboration with RPC to guarantee that the printing specifications align with the project's needs, objectives, and timelines.

1. Print Specifications

Blackberg will create a detailed memo outlining the technical specifications for each printed item. These specifications will be tailored to the desired size, format, and quantity, taking into account factors such as anticipated demand, distribution channels, and the project budget. All of these details will be submitted to the RPC project manager for approval before moving forward with production.

2. Budget and Timeline

Blackberg will prepare a comprehensive memo detailing the budget for the entire print production process, including:

- **Cost Breakdown:** A detailed breakdown of costs for printing, paper, finishing, and any additional services required (e.g., design or logistics).
- **Timeline:** A clear timeline outlining the steps for proofing, printing, and delivery. This timeline will ensure that the final products are delivered in time to support any upcoming outreach initiatives or events.

The budget and timeline will be subject to RPC's approval to ensure that both are aligned with their expectations and needs.

3. Proofing

Before proceeding with mass production, Blackberg will initiate a thorough proofing process to ensure accuracy and quality. This will include:

- **Digital Proofs:** Reviewing digital proofs of the materials to check for design accuracy, spelling, color, and formatting.
- **Physical Samples:** Creating physical samples of the materials (where necessary) for RPC approval before the final printing run. This step will help ensure that the materials meet the desired quality standards.

RPC will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the proofs to ensure full alignment with expectations.

4. Quality Control

Blackberg will develop and outline quality control measures to be followed throughout the printing process. This will ensure the final products meet the required standards in terms of:

- **Printing Quality:** Checking for color consistency, crispness of text and images, and overall print quality.
- **Material Integrity:** Ensuring the correct paper type, weight, and finishes are used as specified.
- **Packaging and Delivery:** Ensuring that materials are properly packed and protected during shipping to avoid damage.

A quality control checklist will be submitted to RPC for approval before mass production begins.

5. Vendor Selection

If outsourcing the printing process, Blackberg will conduct research to identify a reputable and reliable printing vendor. The selected vendor must:

- Be able to deliver high-quality prints that align with the specifications and timeline.
- Meet the project's budgetary constraints.
- Be capable of executing a contract with RPC for ongoing and future printing needs.

The vendor will be selected based on their track record of quality and reliability, as well as their capacity to handle the scale of production required for RPC's outreach efforts.

6. Distribution and Delivery

Blackberg will coordinate the distribution and delivery of the printed materials. This will involve:

- **Shipping Logistics:** Planning the most cost-effective and timely method of shipping the printed materials.
- **Delivery Timelines:** Ensuring that the printed materials are delivered according to the agreed-upon timeline, aligned with any upcoming RPC outreach initiatives.

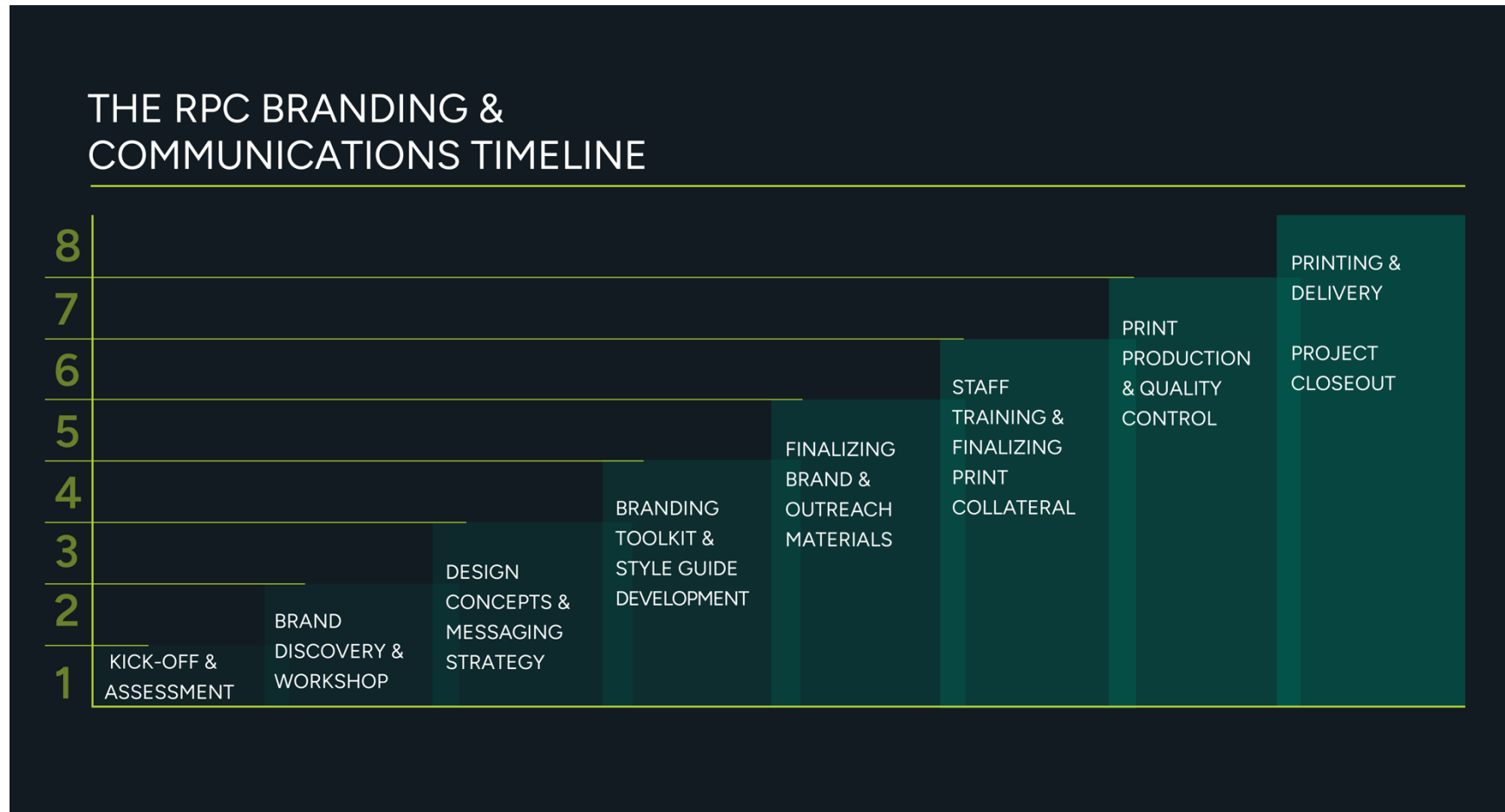
Shipping costs and delivery timelines will be outlined in the project's budget to ensure full transparency and alignment with RPC's expectations. By following this structured approach, Blackberg will ensure that all printed materials are of the highest quality, delivered on time, and aligned with RPC's branding and outreach goals.

At Blackberg, we are committed to supporting RPC's branding and outreach efforts throughout the entire process and beyond. With a structured timeline of deliverables spanning eight months, we will kick off the project with a comprehensive plan, followed by a brand audit, SWOT analysis, and brand discovery activities. Our approach includes developing the final branding toolkit, style guide, and messaging strategy by month four, followed by engaging outreach materials and staff training by month six. By month eight, all printed materials will be delivered and ready to support RPC's initiatives.

However, branding is not a one-time task – it is a living entity that requires ongoing maintenance and adjustments. As public feedback and new information emerge, Blackberg is eager to continue working with RPC to monitor, update, and refine its branding and messaging. Our ongoing collaboration will ensure that RPC's brand evolves to meet the dynamic needs of the community and remains consistent, effective, and impactful in fostering trust and public buy-in for years to come.

14. Project Schedule

A schedule shall be provided for all prime and sub-consultant tasks as described in the Section 13. The schedule should be in GANTT or a similar format. The proposed timeline must fit within the delivery requirements described in the project scope. Any future modifications to the proposed schedule must be approved by the RPC Project Manager.



15. Cost and Budget

Provide the proposed cost for conducting this study and producing the deliverables described in the scope. Include a budget that has line items, by firm, for labor (budget by personnel member is not necessary), travel, proposed profit, and other major costs associated with the narrative described in Section 13.

Task & Deliverable	Cost	Cost Per Task Area
Task 1. Briefing document detailing consultant’s understanding of project purpose, objectives, and outcomes	\$998.44	\$7,876.57
Task 1. Detailed task breakdown and project schedule with timeline and major milestones	\$2,884.38	
Task 1. Monthly progress reports and invoices	\$3,993.75	
Task 2. Detailed brand audit which inventories existing outreach, branding, and marketing material and practices (per RPC program area) and analyzes their effectiveness as well as areas for improvement	\$15,531.26	\$15,531.26
Task 3. Brand discovery survey	\$3,993.75	\$37,496.88
Task 3. Briefing document detailing results and findings of the brand discovery survey	\$5,990.63	
Task 3. Pre-event communications materials	\$3,993.75	
Task 3. Brand discovery workshop materials	\$11,537.50	
Task 3. Post-event summary document with findings, emerging concepts, takeaways, and actionable steps	\$11,981.25	
Task 4. Document outlining the strategic design approach and initial design concepts, branding toolkit components and proposed print collateral	\$2,662.50	\$2,662.50
Task 5. Physical proofs of all printed materials	\$1,996.88	\$60,571.26

Task 5. Full branding toolkit	\$37,385.32	
Task 5. Style Guidelines	\$21,189.06	
Task 6. Messaging strategy document	\$14,643.75	\$22,409.38
Task 6. Document outlining recommended web copy to integrate within the RPC's website	\$7,765.63	
Task 7. Digital copies of the fact sheets, brochures, and educational presentations, and a digital copy of the components of the "meeting-in-a-box" with note of the items needed for printing production	\$9,096.88	\$9,096.88
Task 8. Training agenda, presentation, and exercises	\$6,966.90	\$6,966.88
Task 9. Memo outlining printing specification, budget and timeline, quality control, vendor selection, and distribution and delivery plan	\$3,993.78	\$10,383.84
Task 9. Physical proofs of all material	\$4,060.35	
Task 9. Final printed branded material	\$2,329.71	
Total Cost	\$172,995.45	

Proposed Profit is anticipated to be 5-10%. We project a range to enable our team to flex additional resources in as needed. We do not anticipate a travel budget requirement at this time.

16. Staff Experience:

Résumés shall be provided for all personnel listed in Sections 12 of the proposal. Résumés of personnel not identified in Section 12 of the proposal should not be included and will not be evaluated. Résumés should be limited to 2 pages per person.

Firm employed by Blackberg Group, LLC			
Name	Rose Khouri	Years of relevant experience with this employer	2
Title	Communications Project Manager	Years of relevant experience with other employer(s)	10

Degree(s) / Years / Specialization	University of Virginia, Darden School of Business, MBA Candidate Class of '27 University of Virginia, Graduate Certificate in Procurement and Contract Management American University of Beirut, Master of Arts, Middle Eastern Studies University of California, Santa Barbara, Bachelor of Arts, Middle Eastern Studies
Company: Blackberg Group, LLC	
Experience dates 01/23–Present	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities Experience and qualifications relevant to this study: Veterans Health Administration Lead Consultant / Project Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports VA clients attending, presenting at, or running booths at national conferences. Handles internal VA approvals, coordinates with event staff on behalf of clients, identifies strategic goals for each event along with metrics to track successes, reviews and updates outreach materials and booth supplies as needed, and writes speeches and creates slide decks for client presentations. • Works and travels with contract photographers to create photo libraries of key program visuals for client marketing campaigns. Works with contract videographers to identify human impact stories, create storyboards, coordinate with local VA teams and facilities, and capture touching stories that appeal to Veterans and the U.S. public. • Leads technical writing for a second contract under OHIL, translating concepts and user instructions directly from VA frontline clinician innovators into marketing materials for their ideas and designs being submitted to VA's Tech Transfer program. • Built the foundations for and launched VA's Office of Advanced Manufacturing's national awareness campaign, aimed at three key audiences: VA clinicians (primary clients), VA leadership (for continued funding and to advocate for the program's results), and Veterans/U.S. public (to share how VA is using taxpayer dollars to support Veterans). • Led the development of the OHIL Analytics Dashboard: a FedRAMP-certified PowerBI, which uses API from websites, social media, GovDelivery email campaigns, and earned media to generate real-time visual performance reports. • Leads quality control and quality assurance for all workstreams in OHIL, including the annual State of Innovation report, social media content, and VA blogs and newsletters. • Provides contract-wide trainings on the VA digital style guide and the VA Executive Secretariat style guide, which is used for reporting to Congress.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides trainings and guidance on Section 508 compliance, intellectual property regulation adherence, federal endorsement guidelines, and federal consultant regulations. • Leads the development of communication materials (such as reports, one-pagers, and social media content) and digital products (such as webpages, Microsoft Teams communities, and videos) that include highly technical concepts translated for public audiences. • Works with Blackberg web specialists to update and re-design web content for clients to make the sites more visually compelling, more informative, or easier for users to navigate.
Company: Leidos	
Experience dates 03/22–01/23	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Department of Transportation—Communications Specialist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led events for the Federal Highway Administration’s Saxton Transportation Operations Laboratory. Coordinated across DOT offices for large-scale joint events, including with the Office of the Secretary, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and the Office of the General Counsel. Coordinated the transportation and exhibition of heavy government research vehicles and equipment. Managed risk through a contingency plan. • Created dozens of new communications materials, all Section 508 compliant, including post cards, banners, slide decks, web content, social media content, and reports. • Edited research papers and articles written by Department of Transportation engineers and provided Section 508 compliance support. • Led trainings for engineers and other communications staff on Section 508 compliance and federal regulations relating to actual or perceived endorsement of commercial products, services, or brands.
Company: Amideast	
Experience dates 09/19–03/22	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Department of State, USAID—Communications Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed localized content to promote multiple U.S. Department of State exchange and English language-learning programs in the Middle East and North Africa, including videos, social media posts, and graphics. • Supported the development of a new brand identity and logo uplift, led the rollout of the new branding across 30+ social media pages run by 12 different country office. • Developed promotional content for a USAID scholarship program in Egypt. • Maintained intellectual property and trademark compliance in social media and on the Amideast website for major U.S. companies such as ETS (TOEFL, GRE, etc.) and the Project Management Institute.

Firm employed by Blackberg Group, LLC			
Name	Melissa Miller	Years of relevant experience with this employer	2
Title	Creative Director/Project Manager	Years of relevant experience with other employer(s)	9
Degree(s) / Years / Specialization		Master of Arts, Communication and Design, George Washington University – Bachelor of Arts, Fine Art, Hartwick College	
Discipline	Communications & Design	Certifications	
Company: Blackberg Group, LLC			
Experience dates 11/23–03/25	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities Experience and qualifications relevant to this study: Veterans Health Administration Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning – Creative Director		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates VHA OHIL communication products using the VHA OHIL branding visual identity system, designing a recognizable, trusted brand with a suite of creative assets that make programs more accessible and people-oriented across print, digital, event, multimedia, etc. • Delivers graphic design, media, and web content development services, including designing user experience of webpages, logos, press releases, brochures, fact sheets, handouts, posters, and annual program office publications. • Monitors 508 accessibility and quality control in all creative work projects. • Works with OHIL Executive Leaders to manage and produce ad hoc communication to reflect each program, considering brand evaluations and marketing strategy. • Oversees team to design, prototype, develop and update the websites to support all OHIL Programs. Coordinating adherence to OHIL brand standards, creating consistency in visual messaging, and improvement to the user experience). • Manages creative team to support production all visual elements required for VHA OHIL events, including environmental design, directional signage, agendas, booklets, social media, and web graphics to create a cohesive and targeted outreach marketing campaign. Strategizes with key personnel and internal/external stakeholders to determine pre-event advertising, create meeting graphics and post-event coverage. • Manages video capture and production efforts to promote VHA OHIL events, programs, interviews, and outreach plans, as needed. Determines visual goals, brand alignment with lighting and audio and lower-thirds or animation. • Leads strategic creative brainstorming, ideation, and concept development to address marketing, communications, engagement and organizational goals and ambitions. 		
Company: Washington Business Dynamics			
Experience dates 11/21–11/23	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Veterans Health Administration Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning – Creative Director		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages creative team to support production of all visual elements required for VHA OHIL events, including publications, environmental design, agendas, booklets, social media, and web graphics to create a cohesive and targeted outreach marketing campaign. Strategizes with key personnel and internal/external stakeholders to determine pre-event advertising, create meeting graphics and post-event coverage. • Highly skilled in the use of the Adobe Creative Suite (including InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator). • Monitors 508 accessibility and quality control in all creative work projects. • Works with OHIL Executive Leaders to manage and produce ad hoc communication to reflect each program, considering brand evaluations and marketing strategy. • Oversees team to design, prototype, develop and update the websites to support all OHIL Programs. Coordinating adherence to OHIL brand standards, creating consistency in visual messaging, and improvement to the user experience. • Leads strategic creative brainstorming, ideation, and concept development to address marketing, communications, engagement and organizational goals and ambitions.
Company: Melissa H Miller Designs	
Experience dates 06/14–11/21	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Owner, founder of creative studio, Creative Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversaw development of website and social media strategy for the Adaptation Fund at The World Bank. Created marketing plan, audience research, and creative content for outreach mission and goals. Created Adaptation Fund Annual Report in three languages. • Developed and implemented unified branding strategies for corporate clients, directing identity adherence across multi-channel materials, delivering on time and within budget. • Created logos and associated branded business suite of materials including letterhead, memo templates, brochures, flyers, publications, informational health posters, etc. • Summer 2021 publication of HR Magazine received a Tabbie Award for "Best Single Issue." Tabbies are awards given by the Trade Association Business Publications International.
Company: Imagination Agency	
Experience dates 06/16–07/20	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Senior Art Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led all creative for high-profile client projects, including award-winning publication redesign for the International Association of Interior Designers <i>Perspective</i> magazine. • Launched multi-million-dollar marketing program for Staples, developing and branding <i>Worklife</i> magazine from concept, pitch, win, and development based on persona marketing. • Created external audience web site with monthly animated video content and extended editorial to support thought leadership awareness efforts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with internal teams, content director, and project managers, to establish marketing and creative approaches for print, digital, and social media campaigns. • Established a D.C. office for Chicago-based agency with 100+ employees: hiring and managing creative staff, project management systems, and new business.
Company: Manifest LLC (Formerly McMurry/TMG)	
Experience dates 04/04–05/16	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Senior Art Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led creative direction and design production for multi-channel programs, publications including WebMD, Walmart, Walgreens, Medscape, and American Association of Justice. • Spearheaded creative marketing strategy for content program redesigns and relaunches for print publications, websites, and social media. • Creative Director for WebMD – creative lead for agency’s top client with \$15 million-dollar annual revenue: WebMD Magazine, WebMD App, and WebMD website. • Conceptualized, developed, and launch custom supplemental publications with advertising partners Walgreens and Walmart, addressing targeting audiences for wellness campaigns.

Firm employed by Blackberg Group, LLC			
Name	Ash Waggoner	Years of relevant experience with this employer	2
Title	Art Director/Graphic Designer	Years of relevant experience with other employer(s)	19
Degree(s) / Years / Specialization		Associates of Applied Arts: Graphic Design, Art Institute of Dallas, 2008	
Company: Blackberg Group, LLC			
Experience dates 10/23–03/25	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities Experience and qualifications relevant to this study: VHA OHIL, Art Director		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works directly with OHIL client to conceptualize and design OHIL’s yearly longform publication, the State of Innovation Report (SOI). This is a months-long process that includes working closely with content writers, photographers, project owners, and project managers to procure original photos, illustrations, academic articles, and other information used to build the publication. • Conceptualizes, designs, and implements cohesive branding for OHIL’s five core programs and its numerous agencies. Implementation of this branding includes building and maintaining brand guidelines, creating collateral, and communicating regularly with the client about brand identity. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates event collateral for more than 12 high profile VHA events throughout the year. Each event involves creating dozens of projects including videos, banners, email, social media graphics, booklets, one pagers, agendas, workbooks, signage, and table tents.
Company: Washington Business Dynamics	
Experience dates 11/22–10/23	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Veterans Health Administration Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning – Senior Designer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked directly with OHIL client to conceptualize and design OHIL’s yearly longform publication, the State of Innovation Report. This was a months-long process that included working closely with content writers, photographers, project owners, and project managers to procure original photos, academic articles, and other information used to build the publication. • Conceptualized, designed, and implemented refreshed branding for VHA OHIL’s Innovation Ecosystem. This process included working directly with the Innovation Ecosystem client to decide on a direction for the visual identity, presenting to the larger team to achieve group approval, collateral design and dissemination, writing, and designing a set of brand guidelines, and education to staff for guideline adherence. • Created event collateral for more than 12 high profile VHA events throughout the year. Each event involved creating dozens of projects including videos, banners, email, social media graphics, booklets, one pagers, agendas, workbooks, signage, and table tents.
Company: 31st Force Support Squadron, United States Air Force, Aviano Air Base, Italy	
Experience dates 01/19–05/21	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Lead Graphic Designer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed the Aviano Air Base’s monthly publication in Adobe InDesign. This publication reached over 4,000 active-duty service members, civilians, and Italian local nationals to inform them of upcoming events and activities on the base. • Oversaw a team of four graphic designers and managed project workflow. • Managed the department’s print shop, which produced hundreds of marketing materials, dry mounted signs, banners, booklets, large format prints, and the base’s monthly publication. • Developed logos and brand standards for each of FSS’s eighteen on-base facilities. • Developed social media and digital marketing campaigns for clients.
Company: BNL School Pictures	
Experience dates 02/16–07/18	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Lead Graphic Designer

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with owner and core personnel to conceptualize, design, and implement updated branding for BNL and its sister company G&B Photography. • Worked with owner and core personnel to conceptualize, design, and implement updated branding for BNL and its sister company G&B Photography. • Oversaw implementation of new branding and created brand guidelines to ensure cohesive identity across marketing campaigns. • Worked closely with sales team to develop new collateral and successful marketing campaigns. • Wrote copy for marketing and advertising pieces. • Performed high level photo retouching and editing. • Created and maintained hundreds of complex picture day flyers in multiple languages. Working directly with a team of translators to ensure the language was correct and in adherence to our internal cultural sensitivity standards.
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Company: Premium Passport and The A-List

Experience dates 02/10–01/14	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Graphic Designer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked simultaneously with dozens of clients and salespeople to design four (4) unique quarterly publications in Adobe InDesign. • Conceptualized, designed, and disseminated marketing campaigns, both digital and print. • Created a company-wide standard for client intake and communication. • Used color theory and typography to create logos and branding for clients. • Designed client landing pages, motion graphics, marketing collateral, advertising campaigns, and e-marketing campaigns.

Firm employed by Blackberg Group, LLC

Name	Will Elder	Years of relevant experience with this employer	2
Title	Senior UI/UX Engineer	Years of relevant experience with other employer(s)	18
Degree(s) / Years / Specialization		Bachelors of Science, Computer Science, Google UX Design Certificate	

Company: Blackberg Group, LLC

Experience dates 09/23–03/25	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities Experience and qualifications relevant to this study: Veterans Health Administration Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (VHA OHIL) – Senior UI/UX Engineer
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively collaborated with OHIL program stakeholders and project managers to define project scope, objectives, and deliverables. Translated stakeholder requirements into detailed, actionable plans and tasks using Monday.com, fostering a sense of shared ownership and ensuring clarity and alignment throughout the project lifecycle. • Offered comprehensive technical guidance and support to the development team, empowering them to adhere to industry best practices and standards. Oversaw architectural decisions to ensure alignment with project technical requirements, thereby enhancing the quality and scalability of the final deliverables and instilling confidence in their work. • Proactively monitored key performance indicators (KPIs) and project metrics to assess success and identify improvement opportunities. Compiled and delivered detailed progress reports to stakeholders, outlining project status, resource utilization, and strategic recommendations for future improvements, thereby ensuring a continuous improvement process. • Designed responsive layouts that adhered to the Office of Health Information and Learning (OHIL) branding guidelines. Ensured that all digital products were visually consistent and aligned with organizational branding standards, enhancing the overall user experience. • Developed responsive websites with a focus on eliminating layout bugs and ensuring cross-platform compatibility - using latest front-end framework technology. Conducted thorough testing to guarantee that all web interfaces functioned seamlessly across different devices and browsers, contributing to a high-quality user experience.
Company: Quorum Analytics, LLC.	
Experience dates 11/21–09/23	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Senior Front-End Developer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with front-end developers to build a component library and Storybook that aligned with the design system, ensuring consistent styling across product lines. • Managed the agile development process from design and user testing through development and QA. • Created and managed Business Process Flows and Approval Flows using Power Automate, enhancing business workflows. • Led, mentored, and empowered a team of Junior and mid-level developers while shaping how the team and roles were structured within the larger organization. • Implemented capacity and roadmap planning processes that increased roadmap stability and improved accuracy delivery estimates for releases.
Company: Roll20.net	
Experience dates 11/18–11-21	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Senior UI/UX Engineer

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and customized SharePoint applications to meet client-specific needs. • Integrated SharePoint Online with Office 365, improving collaboration and productivity. • Created and maintained Power BI reports, providing insights into business operations.
Company: eBizAutos	
Experience dates 10/16–11/18	Contract role(s) / brief description of responsibilities: Senior UI/UX Engineer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed and implemented workflows using Power Automate, automating routine tasks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created custom add-ins using JavaScript within the Office Add-in Framework. • Provided support and training for end-users on Office 365 and SharePoint functionalities.

17. Firm Experience:

Identify the team’s project experience **most relevant** to the scope in the advertisement. The projects should be limited to a total of 5, If more than 5 projects are identified, all projects identified after the first 5 will not be evaluated. Include no more than one page per project. Projects identified shall only include work performed by firms on the team. The projects identified do not need to have been RPC projects. RPC staff may contact the contracting entity to discuss project performance.

Project name	West Palm Beach VA Medical Center–Medical Media Graphic Design Services		Firm responsibility (prime or sub?)	Prime
Project number	36C24825P0532	Owner’s name	Jose L. Torres Andujar	
Project location	Remote / West Palm Beach VA Medical Center	Owner’s Project Manager	Jose L. Torres Andujar	
Owner’s address, phone, email	7305 N Military Trl, West Palm Beach, FL 33410 Jose.torresandujar@va.gov 561-422-8262			
Services commenced by this firm (mm/yy)	01/25	Total consultant contract cost (\$1,000’s)	347,512.78	
Services completed by this firm (mm/yy)	01/29	Cost of consultant services provided by this firm (\$1,000’s)	347,512.78	

Describe the project including the firm’s role and members involved. (Highlight staff to be used in this proposal.)

The West Palm Beach VA Medical Center is a general medical and surgical facility located in West Palm Beach, Florida, serving Veterans across South Florida and the Treasure Coast. The center offers comprehensive healthcare services, including primary care, emergency care, surgery, mental health services, and specialized programs such as a Blind Rehabilitation Service and a Community Living Center. Additionally, it operates outpatient clinics in Port St. Lucie and six contractor-operated community-based outpatient clinics in Boca Raton, Delray Beach, Fort Pierce, Okeechobee, Stuart, and Vero Beach, ensuring accessible care for Veterans in these regions.

The medical center's mission is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being. Its vision is to lead the future in delivering unparalleled health and well-being to the nation's Veterans. To achieve these objectives, the center focuses on strategic priorities such as enhancing access to high-quality care and services, ensuring ease of access and convenience for Veterans.

Blackberg collaborates with the VA West Palm Beach Medical Center to enhance their communications and marketing efforts. Collaborations often involve the development of materials like annual reports, vehicle wraps, and other promotional content to effectively convey the center's mission, services, and achievements to Veterans and the broader community.

Blackberg Group’s design team recently completed the **2024 Annual Report** for the West Palm VA Medical Center, delivering a visually compelling and meticulously structured publication that highlights the center’s achievements and impact. From the outset, the team collaborated closely with stakeholders to define the report’s tone and visual direction, ensuring it aligned with the center’s branding and communicated key messages effectively. Using Adobe InDesign, designers developed a clean, modern layout that balanced rich storytelling with clear data visualization, making complex information accessible and engaging for a diverse readership.

Adhering to a **strict 3-week production schedule**, the team implemented a structured workflow to maintain efficiency at every stage. This included an iterative design process with scheduled check-ins for feedback, ensuring that revisions were made promptly without disrupting the overall timeline. Precision in typography, color consistency, and hierarchical formatting played a crucial role in maintaining a polished, professional look while meeting 508-compliant and ADA accessibility standards for readability.

Creative problem-solving was essential in bringing the report to life. Designers leveraged custom infographics to distill statistics into digestible visuals, enhancing comprehension without overwhelming readers. Additionally, strategic image placement and thoughtful use of white space helped maintain a balanced aesthetic, ensuring the report remained visually appealing yet easy to navigate. The final product not only met the client’s expectations but also reinforced Blackberg Group’s commitment to delivering high-quality design solutions on deadline.

Project name	Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem (VHA IE) Program and Project Management		Firm responsibility (prime or sub?)	
Project number	36C10X23C0046	Owner’s name	Kristopher (“Kit”) Teague	
Project location	Remote / Washington, D.C.		Owner’s Project Manager	Kristopher (“Kit”) Teague
Owner’s address, phone, email	810 Vermont Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20420W Washington, D.C. 20420 Kristopher.teague@va.gov 650-690-6844			
Services commenced by this firm (mm/yy)	09/23	Total consultant contract cost (\$1,000’s)	\$4,902,518.10	
Services completed by this firm (mm/yy)	09/28	Cost of consultant services provided by this firm (\$1,000’s)	\$400,000	

Blackberg offers comprehensive program and project management, strategic planning, data analytics, quality assurance, process engineering, change management, and training for the VHA Innovation Ecosystem (IE). Our team is responsible for supporting IE’s three portfolios and two programs with their portions of the innovation lifecycle. Each year, we support more than 40 innovators in maturing, scaling, and implementing VA health care innovations. Additionally, we lead Lean Six Sigma workshops and Human Centered Design (HCD) trainings with frontline staff to refine their health care innovations.

Kick-Off Planning Meeting. Final Marketing Plan Blackberg provides general programmatic communications and marketing support related to OHIL and VHA IE and its portfolios as necessary to execute the overarching programmatic objectives. These responsibilities include scheduling and coordinating meetings, creating meeting agendas, taking meeting minutes, creating and tracking action items from meetings, data analysis, data tracking, advising with program support and implementation, and setting up new platforms for clients.

Creative Development and Internal Style Guide Prior to our team's partnership, the office's Innovation Ecosystem had undergone a lengthy logo creation process that had not been fully implemented. A main organizational logo had been established; however, the updated brand guide, branded business suite, and updated marketing collateral was incomplete. Blackberg graphic designers interpreted and implemented the established logos on initial communications such as letterhead, email signatures, and PowerPoint presentation templates. During this process, our team identified limits to the existing logo system and worked with government to modify the logo suite using Adobe Illustrator. With this refreshed Innovation Ecosystem and sub-program branding, we created a custom icon system that offered product versatility, a revised suite of one-pagers, refreshed PowerPoint templates, and suite of business materials. All changes were documented in a comprehensive revised Style Guide governing all subsequent materials.

Program Marketing Materials. Event Marketing Materials The Blackberg creative team supports a wide range of marketing initiatives and outreach events. VHA Innovation Experience (iEX) is an annual event produced by VHA to highlight cutting-edge innovations in veteran health care. This event brings together VA employees, industry leaders, veterans, and innovators to explore how technology and collaboration are transforming veteran care. iEX features keynote speakers, panel discussions, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities, allowing attendees to engage with the latest health care advancements. Additionally, iEX fosters collaboration between the public, private sectors, and the veteran community, with a focus on solving critical issues like improving mental health, reducing veteran suicide, and integrating advanced technologies like AI and XR into health care. Blackberg designers worked closely with the event planners and marketing team to create memorable branding, which was seamlessly integrated through retractable posters, printed event materials, social media, stage graphics and event recap videos.

Photography, Videography Formatting, and Archival System Blackberg ensures that our final multimedia products are edited to commercial-quality standards. The team develops closed captions for each video as a separate SRT file to ensure compliance with both Section 508 and VHA Digital's requirements. Our team is trained in a variety of editing platforms, including Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects, to deliver multi-media with clear value propositions and calls to action. Our editor creates the initial video using the script, storyboard, and IMAP. We then use Wistia—a secure, cloud-based platform for hosting and sharing videos—to facilitate reviews. Our editor submits the draft to our Quality Control Board, comprised of our creative director and project manager, which then uses a checklist to ensure consistent voice, visuals, accessibility, and program messaging. After this review, the client reviews the final draft video using

Wistia. Once approved, our videographers determine the appropriate video codec (frame rate, resolution, etc.) for the distribution channel(s). All final videos and b-roll footage are archived on VA Teams and backed up on Dropbox.

Reporting Requirements. We track and report implementation progress by organizing planning calls and meetings with key stakeholders (virtual or face-to-face when applicable), documenting action items, coordinating follow-up for completion, identifying risks or issues, and recommending mitigation strategies. Our approach ensures that projects are executed efficiently, with performance improvement metrics tracked, data analytics support provided, and weekly office hours available for implementation teams. We also offer guidance and technical assistance as needed.

Blackberg also produces a monthly status report outlining innovation efforts alignment with identified strategic objectives. The report encompasses all IE-sponsored innovation efforts and serves as an easy-to-read, visually appealing dashboard to summarize key information and impact/value propositions for multiple innovation efforts across the portfolios to allow for rapid executive-level consumption and decision-making. The report includes information such as project description, status and progress-to-date, projected outcome and associated timeline, successes and challenges, barriers/risks to include recommended mitigation strategies, data analytics, impact/value measures, strategic objective alignment, and any other category deemed necessary for assessing alignment and performance. All metrics are clearly defined and accompanied by a mechanism and method for standardized measurement. For select efforts that VHA IE leadership would like to showcase to a broader audience, Blackberg created visually pleasing PowerPoints that update leadership bi-monthly in a concise and digestible fashion.

Project name	Veterans Health Administration Innovation Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (VHA OHIL)–Communications, Marketing & Engagement BPA		Firm responsibility (prime or sub?)	Sub (38%)
Project number	47QRAA22D007W / 36C10X23A0023	Owner’s name	Kristopher (“Kit”) Teague	
Project location	Remote / Washington, D.C.	Owner’s Project Manager	Kristopher (“Kit”) Teague	
Owner’s address, phone, email	810 Vermont Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20420 Washington, D.C. 20420 Kristopher.teague@va.gov 650-690-6844			
Services commenced by this firm (mm/yy)	09/23	Total consultant contract cost (\$1,000’s)		\$14,535,480
Services completed by this firm (mm/yy)	02/25	Cost of consultant services provided by this firm (\$1,000’s)		\$5,523,482.40

Blackberg supports Strategic Communication, Marketing, and Engagement Services of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning (OHIL). OHIL is at the forefront of fostering the discovery and spread of grassroots innovations across VA; advancing clinical training and simulation that improves veterans' quality of care; advancing emerging healthcare technology in clinical practices; and providing veterans with equitable access to patient-matched advanced manufacturing technologies (such as 3D printing). Blackberg serves as a trusted partner that amplifies and unifies these diverse, yet uniquely vital, missions through a systematic, integrated communications program. This support requires a comprehensive understanding of OHIL's programs, stakeholders, messaging, political climate, and communications channels. Blackberg provides OHIL with a seasoned team with extensive communications, creative, and event management expertise, experience supporting every program under OHIL and a thorough management plan for executing exceptional services at scale.

Kick-off Planning Meeting. Prior to kick-off, Blackberg conducted a communications evaluation using an evidence-based evaluation methodology—performing an environmental scan, conducting a communications audit, evaluating communication performance, and facilitating stakeholder interviews and focus groups. We analyzed email marketing, social media, branding, website analytics, media monitoring, and survey feedback. For email marketing, our analysts used GovDelivery to assess email campaigns' frequency and performance, including the success of copy, open rates, clickthrough rates, and unique interactions. We then conducted social listening on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to determine the current reach, engagement, post frequency, and audience demographics. Our analysts used Sprout Social to analyze overall social media performance and tag individual posts for campaign performance tracking. Our baseline evaluation identified key areas for audience engagement improvement. In addition to assessing the historical quantitative performance, we evaluated the nomenclature, tone, and style consistency across platforms. Our team then implemented Google Analytics onto all web pages to determine website traffic, engagement rates, bounce rates, time on page, audience demographics, and user flows on the website.

Final Marketing Plan. Following our baseline evaluations and in collaboration with government, Blackberg crafted an office-level communications strategy and timeline with more targeted plans for each OHIL sub-program. We initiated this phase with a series of strategic planning calls and evaluation presentations to senior leadership. Based on their identified objectives, we conducted a needs assessment to determine existing gaps, and the tactics required to fill them. Our analysts also conducted A/B message testing through GovDelivery email campaigns and SurveyMonkey polls, as well as facilitated messaging workshops with stakeholders, to inform messaging. The final marketing plan incorporated a situational analysis, audience segmentation, messaging matrix, measurable objectives, tactics, and measures of performance. The plan also included supporting documentation, such as a SWOT Analysis, RACI chart, process maps, and standard operating procedures for more uniform communications practices. For more targeted campaigns, we developed tactical plans with milestones, dates, owners, and contingency plans, as well as mission statements and tactical roadmaps.

We cultivated in-depth understanding of stakeholders to ensure the appropriate messaging reaches and resonates with the intended audiences. For stakeholder assessments, we use our Target Audience Analysis Process (TAAP)—an analytical framework that produces audience personas and uncovers specialized audiences that may have yet to emerge. We use Google Analytics and Sprout Social to aggregate baseline audience information. Then our team uses search filters, Boolean searches, and statistical analyses to monitor current behavior, cognitive biases, psychographic data patterns, and driving motivators. We then develop models to forecast and test the scenarios in which the audiences' behaviors shift. We create audience profiles detailing demographics, psychographics, cognitive biases, drivers, interests, and media affinities.

We developed a three-pronged media outreach strategy based on the publication type, criteria, audience reach, and office priorities. The strategy spanned trade publications, op-eds, user contribution pieces, podcasts, regional media outlets, national publications, and thought leader speaking engagements. Once government approved, our team developed a messaging document to ensure cohesion across national outreach activities as well as developed media relations assets, including media kits, press releases, media lists, media advisories, media monitoring, media alerts, and media trainings. These public affairs activities resulted in VHA OHIL healthcare program placement in the Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, Harvard Business Review, Business Journals, trade publications, podcasts, and Veterans Service Organization publications.

We integrate these messaging tactics into a transparent timeline using our Master OHIL **Program Dashboard**. We leverage our deep understanding of VHA processes as we design timelines, keeping in mind publication cycles, VA News article limits, OPIA approvals, printing timelines, and more. We also evaluate ideal publication schedules tied to media cycles (e.g., slower news in fall), national observances (Mental Health Awareness Month, Veterans Day, etc.), and factors affecting distribution channels or audiences.

Once approved, we integrated the milestones into the OHIL Communications Campaign Plan draft for submission 90 days after award and the final 120 days after the start date. Our program manager also budgets anticipated labor, travel, and Other Direct Costs (ODCs) to include in our monthly Finance Report (*SOW 6.8*)—balancing cost-savings, timeliness, and impact.

Creative Development and Internal Style Guide Blackberg creatives utilize their understanding of the VA Style Guide branding guidelines to create customized business graphics to facilitate cohesive content distribution over a range of products for OHIL. The branded toolkits include 508-compliant **presentation templates, letterheads, booklets, flyers, brochures, business cards, infographics, and social media, web, or print graphics** as needed. The team also engages with events team members to provide comprehensive design packages for VHA Innovation Ecosystem events that include **electronic posters**, video and motion graphics, **slide decks, exhibit booth graphics, step-and-repeat banners, pop-up banner graphics**, event agendas, **certificates, and awards** as well as pre- and post-event communications such as **social media and email graphics**. At the request of leadership, the Blackberg creative team recently refreshed and updated the OHIL Brand Style Guide to include programmatic consistency.

Program Marketing Materials. VHA OHIL contracted Blackberg to deliver a range of program marketing design services, including program branding, web and social media content, event and signage graphics, marketing materials, presentation graphics, product design, custom and stock artwork, conceptual and typographic designs, custom illustrations, and print and digital publications. Our design team worked directly with the VHA OHIL Chief Officer, Deputy Chief Officer, program executive directors, and other government leaders to deliver these specialized services. We are adaptive and evaluate technical format nuances to deliver the best design product for client communications.

Photography, Videography Formatting, and Archival System. Our team currently captures and produces an **average of 100+ OHIL videos quarterly**. In 2024, our videographers also supported 56 OHIL events, producing post-event recaps, session recordings, livestreams, and testimonials. Additionally, the team captures still photographs at events and is skilled at improving the quality with digital manipulations. Blackberg is currently migrating a complete repository of OHIL communications business templates, SOPs, tools, process maps, and more to the OHIL Intranet site (**archival system**). These templates include branded assets (such as one-pagers, letterheads, meeting minutes, signage, and more for each program) as well as communications artifact templates. We store all OHIL photography on the public-facing VA Innovation **Flickr account for both internal stakeholders and external entities** (typically at events) to access and share with their audiences. We store videography in Microsoft Teams on the VA network and publish final content on appropriate VHA YouTube playlists.

Reporting Requirements. Blackberg uses two primary tools to manage OHIL communications products—**Monday.com** and **Sprout Social**. We first log every communications product—whether print, digital, or multi-media—in our project management system, Monday.com. Government may view all product timelines and statuses in a variety of views, including Gantt charts, Kanban boards, timelines, calendars, and workload levels. In conjunction, we use Sprout Social—a social media management platform designed to manage, schedule, and monitor analytics across OHIL’s social media accounts. This platform enables instant status updates, reporting metrics, scheduling, campaign tracking, and post tagging to monitor overall platform performance as well as program office specific content. We submit a monthly written communications report detailing all program analytics, lessons learned, and recommendations for the next phase of implementation. Key performance indicators and metrics are defined in the original communications plans with the opportunity for adjustment as needed.

18. Workload:

For all contracts where a contract was executed by the consultant and the contracting entity by the date the advertisement for this proposal was posted, list all work for which the firm is currently under contract and that are staffed by key personnel proposed for this study.

List only the portion of the fees attributable to your firm.

Project name	Client/Contracting Entity	Remaining Unpaid Balance	Estimated Time to Completion
Project and Program Management	Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem	Approximately \$81,000	10 hours/week through Sept 2025

**Note: Depending upon workload requirements, we have the ability to bring in additional team members from the Creative Studio to supplement support on the above contract.

19. Staffing Capacity:

Referencing Section 17 where appropriate (i.e., where key personnel would be working on multiple projects simultaneously) describe how your firm will ensure that sufficient staffing and capacity will be made available for the conduct of this project.

Blackberg has only one proposed personnel staffed at 10 hours/week on another contract. In the event RDS awards Blackberg the contract, we would explore whether an additional team member would be required to take over her workload on the existing contract. Blackberg has a full Creative Studio team with legacy knowledge of this existing client from which we can pull in surge support or replace personnel on this contract. Additionally, our creative processes are streamlined in a centralized project management dashboard, creating seamless hand-offs and robust knowledge management for staff transitions.

20. Sub-consultant information:

If one or more sub-consultants will be used, provide the name, address, point of contact and phone number for each. Otherwise, leave this section blank.

Firm Name	Address	Point of Contact and email address	Phone Number

(Add rows as needed)

Sections 1-9 and 16-18 must be completed separately by each subconsultant and included below.