



Michigan Theater Foundation

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Visual Brand & Strategic Marketing Plan

Project Brief & Timeline:

[The Michigan Theater Foundation](#) seeks a strategic partner to lead the creative process of establishing a fresh, comprehensive Visual Brand for the organization. The ideal partner will have a demonstrated understanding of developing effective visual brands for nonprofit and/or corporate clients.

The scope of work should include Discovery sessions with project stakeholders, design and execution of a comprehensive collateral kit, a complete style guide, and a strategic marketing plan for introducing the new brand to the community. In addition to the Visual Brand needs of the overarching organization, the scope of work may include opportunities for rebranding or refreshing existing MTF sub-brands such as the [Cinetopia Film Festival](#).

Submissions are now open until **Friday, February 11th** with a partner to be selected by **Friday, February 25th**. The Michigan Theater Foundation will kick-off Discovery Sessions with their selected partner on **Tuesday, March 1st, 2022**, with the goal of introducing the new brand in **September 2022**.

Who We Are:

The Michigan Theater Foundation is a non-profit organization focused on protecting the historic Michigan Theater and State Theatre located in the heart of downtown Ann Arbor. The Michigan and State serve as the community's year-round auditoriums for live events and cinema presentation and film culture, promotion, including the presentation of the [Cinetopia Film Festival](#).

The Michigan and State are dedicated to film exhibition, providing a 365-day a year film program to over 7,100 paying members and attracting nearly 350,000 patrons annually. Presented across the Michigan's historic Main Auditorium and Screening Room, the State's four theaters, and our Virtual Movie Palace, film themes commonly include classic, contemporary, foreign, documentary, student, American independent, experimental, and silent-era films accompanied by the restored [1927 Barton Theater Pipe Organ](#).

The Michigan Theater Foundation is one of the few cinema exhibitors in the country with union projectionists that present films in a wide range of celluloid and digital cinema formats including 16mm, 35mm, and 2K and 4K digital formats in theater spaces with state-of-the-art sound systems. Films projected at the Michigan are often preceded by an organ concert. A multitude of University of Michigan departments and cultural clubs, and many local area non-profit community groups, who use the historic Main Auditorium for a variety of live events. A handful of local film festivals also call the Michigan Theater Foundation home, including the Ann Arbor Film Festival, the Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival, and the Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival.

The Michigan is also home to live on-stage performances, such as the Not Just for Kids series of children's theater productions, the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, the University of Michigan's University Musical Society, the Ark, Live

Nation Worldwide. Internationally known musical artist and theatrical performers regularly appear at the historic Michigan Theater.

This combination of community service, media arts, and performance programs is arguably unparalleled anywhere in diversity, quality, and scope—especially for a market the scale of the Ann Arbor area—allowing the Michigan Theater Foundation to carry out its mission to bring diverse people together to build community, enhance understanding, and advance public storytelling and the arts, as we protect these two historic theaters.

Learn more about the Michigan Theater’s near 100-year history [here](#).

Key Audience(s):

As a nonprofit with a customer-centric business model, the Michigan Theater Foundation caters to multiple key audiences simultaneously. Below are the **four** key audiences for the organization:

Moviegoers: In addition to movie lovers of all ages, this demographic also includes [Michigan Theater Foundation Members](#) and Art House film connoisseurs residing throughout Southeast Michigan.

Ann Arbor and Southeast Michigan Community: The Michigan Theater and State Theatre are major cultural anchors for Ann Arbor and the wider region of Southeast Michigan and are often venue destinations for various local and touring events. This audience includes U of M students and faculty; community volunteers; arts & culture enthusiasts; lifelong learners; seniors; veterans; and families; plus, collaborative partner organizations like [The Ark](#) and [Live Nation](#).

Donors and Members: From Individual gifts, large and small, to members of the [Towsley Society](#) and our general membership program – donors and members play a key role in the success of the Michigan Theater Foundation and greatly shape the organization’s outreach efforts. Learn more about the many ways donors can contribute [here and members may join here](#).

Sponsors: Individual and corporate sponsorships are also a driving force to the Foundation’s operational success. The Michigan Theater Foundation offers a slew of sponsorship benefits and incentives to attract and retain program sponsors throughout the calendar year. Learn more about sponsorship opportunities [here](#).

Creative Challenges:

- 1.) **Lack of Primary Brand:** While the various MTF offerings such as Memberships; Towsley Society; the historic Michigan Theater and State Theatre all have some level of unique identifier or visual brand support – the Michigan Theater Foundation as an overarching organization does not. The organization is eager to define and launch a true brand identity that speaks to their key audiences (see above) while also enhancing or refreshing the established visual brands housed underneath the MTF flagship.
- 2.) **Contemporary vs. Historic:** Another challenge will be finding a balance between establishing an innovative contemporary organizational image while continuing to emphasize the historic preservation of our buildings. In addition, we present the latest releases as well as culturally significant classic films. The ideal brand for the Michigan Theater Foundation will need to represent both contemporary and historic worlds to effectively represent the full mission of the organization.

- 3.) **COVID:** As with everything, COVID continues to shape day-to-day operations and communication needs for the Michigan Theater Foundation. While this should not directly impact the process of defining and establishing a new Visual Brand, we do anticipate a continued need for flexibility and open communication to ensure a safe and timely project throughout the collaboration process.

Communication Channels:

In addition to print, radio, and digital advertising, the Michigan Theater Foundation also harnesses the following communication channels to connect and engage with our audiences. All are areas with room for growth.

Facility Signage & Marquees: Both the historic Michigan Theater and the State Theatre use their prominent marquee presence in Downtown Ann Arbor to advertise upcoming events, shout-out to sponsors, etc. Additionally, both theaters possess poster cases and supplemental physical signage throughout their facilities for promotional messaging. Some of the poster signage should migrate to digital displays.

Pre-Show Slides & Video: Both theaters also create and control the pre-show slides and video reels before each screening. This and other moving image branding and marketing needs to be cleaned up and expanded.

Direct Mail: This channel is harnessed primarily by Development for engaging donors, members and prospects through acquisition and renewal campaigns.

Email Marketing: We use the Email Marketing tool, EMMA, to connect with our subscribers, members, and volunteers to promote upcoming events and special offers. This too needs a more robust moving image presence.

MTF Blog: Our internal staff creates regular blog content to highlight upcoming movies and give more context to program offerings. This includes the weekly radio broadcast of Cinema Chat with Russ Collins and WEMU host David Fair. Again, moving image branding and marketing in this area needs to be expanded.

Scope of Work:

Budget Total = \$50,000 - \$75,000

All proposal submissions should include a high-level breakdown of costs and planned deliverables associated with the Visual Brand & Strategic Marketing Plan services requested.

Also, all submissions are welcome to include an optional \$15,000 - \$25,000 in proposed add-on services to consider such as website design, branded video creation, ad buys, etc. (**Please note:** This \$15,000 - \$25,000 is to be treated as an optional addition to the \$50,000 - \$75,000 budget and is not a guarantee in the planned scope of work.)

Project Stakeholders:

Russ Collins | Executive Director and CEO

Alicia Pani | Director of Development

Sarah Escalante | Director of Programming & Communications

Ellen PutneyMoore | Director of Sponsorship & Head of Member Experience

Becky Heldt | Project Coordinator & Assistant to the CEO

Pamela Mohar | Communications Coordinator

Submission Process:

The Michigan Theater Foundation will kick off Discovery Sessions with their selected partner on **Tuesday, March 1st, 2022**, with the goal of launching the new brand in **September 2022**.

To be considered: Proposals must include a breakdown of costs and expected deliverables; a list of project team members with bios; appropriate samples or case studies from portfolio; and an overview of creative process with proposed project timeline to meet our September 2022 goal.

To submit your proposal: Email a digital copy of your proposal with the requested supplemental materials (see above) to bheldt@michtheater.org no later than 5pm on **Friday, February 11th**. Please include "RFP Submission" in the subject line.

Selection Timeline:

Monday, January 10th | RFP Announced

Thursday, January 20th | Follow-Up Questions Due by 5pm

Friday, January 28th | MTF Answers Released

Friday, February 11th | Proposals Due by 5pm

Wednesday, February 16th | MTF Submission Review Completed

Thursday, February 17th | Proposals Selected for Presentation Announced

February 21st – 24th | Proposal Presentations

Friday, February 25th | Proposal Selected

Tuesday, March 1st | Discovery Session & Project Kick-Off w/ Selected Partner