

RRP Rubric for Proposed Project*

SME Request: Provide examples of other long-term shared marketing and branding programs, especially ones that serve competing communities. Advise how to maintain long-term funding for marketing and branding, including justifying municipal contributions, and/or sustaining membership-based merchant organization. Advise on best approach for shared marketing - top-down with shared professional service provider coordinating marketing or coordinated bottom-up approach with individual merchants conducting outreach but with consistent messaging and branding.

Project Title	Shared marketing and branding program
Origin	RRP Advisory Committee
Location/Census Tract	Manchester-by-the-Sea and Essex Downtown
Budget & Sources of Funding	Low budget (Under \$50K)
Timeframe	Short term - Planning and Implementation in 6 to 12 months, followed by ongoing maintenance
Risks	Low Risk. Lack of long-term stable funding for marketing and branding updates
Key Performance Indicators	Total sales in person, total sales online, online engagement (number of subscribers/followers, responses, and website traffic), niche market sales, and number of new customers
Partners & Resources	Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Historic District Commission, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, traditional media.
Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts	Due to the COVID-19 social distancing requirements, there was a major decline in downtown foot traffic of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea. It forced an increased dependence on eCommerce, forcing businesses to change operation models and explore ways to reach and expand their customer base. However, many businesses faced a hard time adapting to the digital world because of a lack of information, expertise and technological support. COVID-19 spurred increased collaboration between the

	<p>Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea and local businesses, including promotion of businesses on the Town website.</p> <p>The Essex Merchant Group has had a long-term shared branding and marketing effort that was successful in increasing customers in the downtown. The marketing effort was supported, in part, by funding allocated from the Town of Essex's meal tax revenues. Due to budget shortfall in Essex, however, the amount of funding being allocated to the Essex Merchant Group was reduced. The loss of funding from the Town combined with the inability of some member businesses to afford the cost of membership in the organization due to COVID impacts has led to uncertainty about the ability of the Essex Merchant Group to continue funding shared marketing.</p> <p>A business survey, conducted in March/April 2021 by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD), revealed that 45% of the business respondents in Manchester-by-the-Sea are interested in shared marketing/advertising initiatives. About 27% of the businesses expressed interest in setting up an online store or channel and 18% wanted to receive training on the use of social media. The survey showed that 28% of businesses in Essex are interested in shared marketing/advertising initiatives. About 6% of the businesses expressed interest in setting up an online store or channel and 22% wanted to receive training on the use of social media.</p> <p>The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce received funding for the Cape Ann Comeback Grant which includes shared marketing efforts. However, participants in the grant recognize that funding will be insufficient to sustain long-term efforts.</p>
Action Item	<p>A co-marketing/branding program would encourage shopping both online and in person in the downtowns. It would also allow businesses to collaborate and build a brand value for the town. The next steps involve working with the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Town of Essex, local businesses, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, and residents to improve and expand shared marketing platform(s) for all downtown businesses.</p>

Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide marketing efforts.● Analyze existing tools and skills to build and/or improve a shared marketing platform (website/portal).● Interview stakeholders to understand their needs and objectives.● Set up a shoppable landing page and social media accounts for businesses.● Appoint a Program Manager to coordinate with the Town and the businesses, develop weekly/monthly content, and plan campaigns.● Track online engagement and total sales.● Conduct a customer survey to create more awareness and engagement.● Report updates to the Town and partners.
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