

American Pecan Promotion Board

Request for Proposal: Paid Digital Media Management

Overview

Pecans are America's only native nut, and one of the most nutrient-dense tree nuts on the market, yet for most consumers, they're a once-a-year, pie-adjacent afterthought. The American Pecan Promotion Board (APPB) exists to change that: to build year-round demand for pecans as a snackable, better-for-you choice that fits into how people actually shop and eat today.

That mission runs through paid media. We're looking for a digital media agency that can take full ownership of our paid media program across search, display, CTV, Amazon, Instacart, and retail media networks. Our agency partner is expected to bring the strategic rigor, testing discipline, and channel expertise to meaningfully outperform where we are today and take our program to the next level. That means testing that's rooted in real data, built on sound scientific methodology, and structured so conclusions are actually defensible.

This is an ecommerce focused paid media RFP only. Our creative, website, and other marketing workstreams are managed separately and are not in scope here.

Background

The American Pecan Promotion Board (APPB) is an agricultural commodity organization overseen by the USDA. Founded in 2021, APPB is made up of pecan producers (growers) and importers, and is dedicated to driving consumer demand for pecans through research and promotion efforts. APPB is funded by growers across 15 pecan-producing states: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas, as well as by importers from Mexico.

As a federally overseen checkoff program, APPB promotes American pecans as a category, not any single brand, grower, or product. Our paid media program must reflect that: we do not show favoritism toward specific brands, and any SKU or product-level segmentation in a campaign needs to be grounded in defensible performance data, not preference.

APPB doesn't own the point of sale. We don't operate our own checkout, and every conversion happens on a third-party e-commerce or retail media platform, retail media networks (e.g. Kroger, and other grocery retail media platforms), Instacart, and Amazon. We maintain a branded, customizable landing page on Instacart that we can point traffic to, but final purchase always happens on someone else's platform, not our own domain. This is a fundamentally different measurement and attribution environment than most consumer brands operate in, and it's a major factor in this RFP.

Scope of Work

The selected agency will:

- Manage all paid media channels, including Amazon, Instacart, paid search, programmatic, and CTV, and evaluate additional digital platforms as appropriate
- Provide ongoing weekly performance reporting and monthly performance analyses
- Meet with the client team weekly to review performance trends, discuss optimizations, and review the digital media roadmap
- Monitor performance with accurate, transparent reporting at all times
- Provide cross-channel and channel-level strategy, with ongoing monitoring and optimization to ensure campaigns perform to expectation
- Monitor digital media trends and proactively introduce new channels, or new products within existing channels, to continuously improve performance
- Provide strategic guidance on channel budget allocation in partnership with the APPB team
- Support U.S. digital activations (this program is U.S.-market only)

- Develop, maintain, and drive a creative testing roadmap, identifying the creative elements that drive performance by channel
- Develop, maintain, and drive a channel and channel-structure testing roadmap to continuously identify what combinations drive performance
- Provide ongoing raw data feeds and automated reporting outputs that support channel, unit/SKU, placement, audience, ad type, and ad level breakouts to integrate directly into internal data dashboards.

This scope list is not exhaustive. We're open to agencies proposing additional ecommerce channels, tools, or workstreams that would strengthen the ecommerce program.

Key Performance Metrics

Program success will be measured primarily against:

- Unit volume / sales
- Return on ad spend (ROAS)
- New buyer / new-to-category sales percentage, a secondary metric but weighted close to primary

Current Channels & Market

While our historical spend has been concentrated in Google/YouTube, Catalina, Instacart, and Amazon, our scope includes evaluating and executing programmatic and CTV activations where strategically justified. This program is to run in the U.S. market only. This is shared for context only, not as a model that must be followed and replicated. We want your independent point of view on the right structure and allocation to hit our goals.

Data & Platform Access

The selected agency will be granted direct access to our paid media platforms upon award. We are not able to provide prospective bidders with audit-level access to current channel accounts ahead of selection.

We can share high-level current performance context from our internal dashboards during the RFP process, but that visibility is limited to certain reporting levels. Agencies are welcome to submit written questions requesting additional context; note that as a USDA-overseen program, not all data can be shared externally due to data protection requirements we're required to follow.

What We're Looking For in Your Proposal

What we need to understand is your specific point of view on strategy and channel structure, why it's right for a checkoff program like ours, who will actually be doing the work and how deep that bench is, how your approach evolves over time through testing and iteration, and how the program you propose is genuinely built for us rather than a templated account plan.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Please explicitly disclose any active client relationships or representation of direct tree nut organizations, commodity boards, or major commercial nut brands (e.g., almond, pistachio, walnut, or cashew brands/associations). Describe how your agency manages potential conflicts of interest or category exclusivity.

Please structure your proposal to address each of the following:

1. Strategic Approach

- Your strategic approach to cross-channel management; how you think about the full-funnel system, not just individual channel performance
- Your structural approach to your proposed key channels, ie Google, Amazon, Instacart, etc., and channel umbrellas like programmatic/CTV; we're less interested in a list of tactics and more in what specifically makes your approach outperform the general agency landscape in each of these areas
- Your approach to audience segmentation across channels; how you use our first-party data, third-party data, and channel-native data together, and how you determine which channels and audiences perform best at which stage of the funnel

- **Ad-Tech & Tool Stack:** Outline any proprietary or third-party ad-tech platforms, attribution software, audience data tools, or media management platforms required or recommended for this scope
 - Please explicitly detail any associated licensing, software, or technology costs outside your agency management fee

2. Testing & Optimization

- Your approach to creative testing and how results are leveraged
- Your approach to ongoing channel and channel-structure testing and how you determine whether a given channel, product, or structure is actually earning its place in the mix
- Current creative best practices your team has identified, and the data behind how you validated them
- Your overall testing philosophy: Walk us through a test you've ran highlighting the variable you isolated, how you controlled for external factors (seasonality, channel mix, audience, etc.), what variables do you assign as impactful to test and measure against to drive algorithm perform, and how you validated results then used them inform future decisions

3. Ongoing Management, Team & Communication

- Your ongoing channel management approach and cadence
- Client communication approach and team structure, who we'll work with day-to-day, and the experience/qualifications of the people actually assigned to our account
- We expect our agency partner to proactively own and lead our weekly meetings, coming prepared with a structured agenda, clear narrative on recent trends, identified performance drivers/draggers, and immediate optimization recommendations
- Agency partner should provide full transparency on channel management, including a shared strategic roadmap identifying project timelines past, current, and upcoming
- Please provide a high-level 30-60-90 day onboarding roadmap outlining key technical, strategy, and platform migration steps to ensure a seamless, fully operational transition by October 1, 2026 and expected performance through 90-days out

4. Reporting & Measurement

- Your reporting and measurement cadence
- What your dashboards actually look like, and to what drill-down levels (channel, audience, unit/SKU, placement, ad-level)
- How you approach measurement in a way that avoids over- or under-valuing any single channel or touchpoint
- We are looking for an agency that provides actionable, continuous insights: how does your team translate data into strategic decisions week-over-week?

5. Checkoff / Non-Owned Point-of-Sale Experience

- Your experience managing a checkoff program, co-op, or similar model where the client doesn't always own the point of sale, but conversion happens entirely on third-party platforms (Amazon, Instacart, retail media networks) rather than an owned checkout
- How that experience shapes how you'd structure measurement and attribution for us specifically, given that you're optimizing toward sales you can't directly instrument

6. Responsible Use of AI

We know AI is now part of how agencies work, and we're not looking for a team that avoids it, we're looking for one that uses it well. Tell us how your team incorporates AI into your process, where it genuinely makes the work faster or sharper, and how you make sure what lands on our desk still reflects real strategic and creative thinking rather than generic, AI-generated output.

7. Agency Profile, Team & Pricing

- Agency profile and overview of relevant experience
- Case studies or examples of similar paid media programs you've run successfully; checkoff, co-op, or multi-brand/multi-SKU programs are especially relevant

- Team members' qualifications and roles on this account
- We ask for full transparency on agency fee, media budget, and any other costs associated with this program. All pricing should be presented up front, with no expectation of increases after award

Note: our board makes the final vendor decision, so anything that helps bring your approach to life visually, such as sample dashboards, channel structure diagrams, or example creative testing frameworks, goes a long way.

Budget

Our typical annual digital media budget is approximately \$1.2M. Our fiscal year runs October 1 – September 30 with strongest performance in FYQ1 holiday period. Agencies should propose their own recommended budget allocation across channels based on their strategic point of view.

Engagement Term

Per USDA guidelines, all agency contracts are structured for one-year terms and will look to be renewed at the close of every fiscal year based on performance.

Proposal Submission Guidelines

Agencies should submit proposals by **September 11, 2026** to Serena Schaffner at sschaffner@eatpecans.com and Carl Sanders at csanders@eatpecans.com.

Questions & Clarifications

If you have questions about this RFP, scope, our current program, or anything else that would help you scope your proposal, please reach out to Serena and Carl at the emails above by **August 28, 2026**. We'll consolidate and distribute written answers to all participating agencies by **September 1, 2026** to keep the process fair and consistent across bidders.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Strategy and channel structure, the specificity and rigor of your cross-channel and channel-level approach
- Approach to measurement, including how you avoid over- or under-valuing any channel or touchpoint
- Understanding of checkoff programs and experience managing multiple brands/product lines beneath a single umbrella
- Strategic approach to channel x audience targeting on a cross-channel basis
- Approach to Amazon, Instacart, and retail media specifically
- Testing philosophy and evidence of past results
- Team qualifications, depth of bench, and communication approach
- Cost-effectiveness and transparency of proposed fee structure

Timeline

Timeline subject to change.

- RFP Issued: **August 24, 2026**
- Question Submission Deadline: **August 28, 2026**
- Written Answers Distributed to All Bidders: **September 1, 2026**
- Proposal Submission Deadline: **September 11, 2026**
- Finalist Presentations: **Week of September 14, 2026**
- Agency Selection: **September 25, 2026**
- Contracting & Onboarding: **September 30, 2026**
- Program Kick-off: **October 1, 2026**

Main Contacts

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