

RIVER PARISHES

TOURIST COMMISSION

RFP

Creative/Advertising/Marketing, Public Relations, Project Development and Strategic Planning Agencies

Date of Issue: Monday, September 2, 2019

Deadline: Friday, September 20, 2019 by 4:30 PM

The River Parishes Tourist Commission (RPTC) is requesting proposals for creative, advertising, marketing, public relations, project development, and strategic planning agencies of record.

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to select qualified vendors to plan, coordinate, and administer marketing and advertising, manage public relations, develop specific projects, and provide strategic planning services.

Overview

The prospective vendors responding to this RFP will be an individual, a firm, company or corporation possessing relevant experience and expertise. Local firms are encouraged to apply. Supporting documentation must thoroughly describe how the firm or agency has executed similar contracts and their related expertise to accomplishing the scope of work.

Proposals should be submitted on a component basis. The submitter shall list the components they would like to be considered for on their cover page. The components are:

- Component 1 – Creative (Advertising, Marketing)
- Component 2 – Public Relations
- Component 3 – Product Development
- Component 4 – Strategic Planning and Brand Analysis

Firms submitting for Component 4 cannot submit for the other components.

Timeline

Time is of the essence. The marketing agency chosen will need to have the capacity and staff for a thorough onboarding process and agency transition to occur in mid-October.

About the River Parishes

The River Parishes are comprised of St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. James Parishes. New Orleans Plantation Country, the current brand of the RPTC, showcases Louisiana's most majestic historic mansions along the east and west banks of the Mississippi River. Nestled among these timeless, stately plantations are trails of Creole and Cajun heritages fused

together creating a distinct Southern culture. Out here roots go deeper in New Orleans Plantation Country, like its ancient Oaks whose branches span throughout the region, presenting a blend of unique architecture, outdoor leisure, intriguing spirituality, appetizing cuisine, and the history of slavery. For more information, visit www.VisitNOPC.com.

The River Parishes Tourist Commission was established in 2001 to oversee occupancy tax funds collected by area lodging facilities. The RPTC, comprised of a 9-member board, utilizes occupancy tax funds to strategically market the region, its accommodations and offerings to potential visitors. The RPTC's primary goal is to increase tourism and overnight visits to the River Parishes' lodging facilities.

Scope of Work

The scope of work is designed to outline the responsibility for effectively authoring and managing the River Parishes Tourist Commission's advertising and marketing strategy, public relations, product development, and strategic planning. Firms submitting for Component 4 (Strategic Planning and Brand Analysis) cannot submit for any other component.

Scopes of Work for each component being considered include; but, are not limited to the following:

Component 1 – Creative (Advertising, Marketing)

1. Creation of research-based strategies and recommendations
2. Development of an annual marketing plan to encompass all forms of advertising
3. Facilitate media planning and buying
4. Integration of appropriate research programs and analytical tools to measure and report on the impact of executed media strategies and tactics
5. Frequent and regular communication with RPTC staff and other partner agencies (product development and public relations)
6. Client management with in-person meetings, regular conference calls and face-to-face presentations at quarterly commission meetings
7. Conduct ongoing evaluations of current programs and new media opportunities
8. Determine an efficient and effective media mix of online and print advertising and recommend appropriate media to pursue
9. Provide monthly analytics (ads, website, and social media), current trends, market developments and optimization recommendations
10. The agency will be required to facilitate a consistent brand and message to all partners and ensure alignment among the partners for a cohesive messaging effort.

Component 2 – Public Relations

1. Creation of research-based strategies and recommendations
2. Development of an annual public relations plan

3. Facilitate public relations events and press familiarization tours
4. Integration of appropriate analytical tools to measure and report on the impact of executed public relations strategies and tactics
5. Frequent and regular communication with RPTC Staff and other partner agencies (product development and creative)
6. Client management with in-person meetings, regular conference calls and face-to-face presentations at quarterly commission meetings
7. Develop a crisis communications plan
8. Provide management and advice during crisis and emergencies at the direction of RPTC Executive Director
9. The agency will be required to facilitate a consistent brand and message to all partners and ensure alignment among the partners for a cohesive messaging effort.

Component 3 – Product Development

1. Creation of research-based strategies and recommendations
2. Develop product from idea to launch. This may include budget, research, media, video production, website, brand, signage, partner engagement, launch event, ongoing maintenance and annual updates.
3. Integration of appropriate research programs and analytical tools to measure and report on the impact of executed media strategies and tactics
4. Frequent and regular communication with RPTC Staff and other partner agencies (product development and creative)
5. Client management with in-person meetings, regular conference calls and face-to-face presentations at quarterly commission meetings
6. Determine an efficient and effective media mix of online and print advertising and recommend appropriate media to pursue for product launch and implementation
7. Develop monthly analytics
8. The agency will be required to facilitate a consistent brand and message to all partners and ensure alignment among the partners for a cohesive messaging effort.

Examples of **potential** products: Andouille Trail, 1811 Slave Revolt Trail, River Parishes Film Commission, River Parishes Riverboat Cruise Terminal, Spring/Fall Concert Series

Component 4 – Strategic Planning and Brand Analysis (cannot submit for other components)

1. Review of existing tourism assets, including 2019 DestinationNEXT Survey results
2. Focus Groups and interviews with local stakeholders to determine current market
3. Identify current visitor markets
4. Identify demographic profile of the current visitor
5. Identify current reasons visitors are coming to the River Parishes
6. Identify target/growth markets and visitor segment
7. Research various destinations against which our area should compare and benchmark itself.

8. Analyze the effectiveness and sentiment of the current brand and related advertising campaigns.
9. Identification, evaluation and prioritization of any key product or infrastructure deficiencies in the area. This evaluation should provide recommendations for making the best use of current infrastructure and identifying what additional/new infrastructure is needed. The goal would be for the RPTC and officials with the three parishes to use this information to prioritize the types of products our area needs, ones that require additional investment.
10. A comprehensive inventory of major existing and planned tourism amenities and product in the River Parishes that could be leveraged for the tourism industry. This inventory should include the amenity name, description, address and discussion as to how it could be better leveraged to attract visitation to the destination.
11. Comparisons with similar destinations that have been successful in bringing multiple communities together to grow tourism.
12. Present an overall comprehensive strategic plan, RiverRegion2030, for the destination that includes the following:
 - a. Industry & Current Product Description and Assessment
 - b. Stakeholder and Regional Engagement Plan
 - c. Business Development and Partnership Plan
 - d. Visitor Experience Assessment and strategies
 - e. Tourist Infrastructure Investment Plan
 - f. Monitoring/Evaluation Framework to include Annual Plans and 5-year updates
 - g. Industry, Niche, and Product Development Strategies and Phased Guidelines
 - h. RiverRegion2030 Implementation Plan
 - i. Recommendation for destination's brand direction and logo

Agency requirements:

To be considered, responding agencies should have at a minimum (but not limited to) the following capabilities:

1. Budget management and reporting (ALL components)
2. Market Research (ALL components)
3. Experience with travel & tourism industry (ALL components)
4. Creative development and execution in all media (print/digital) (ALL components)
5. Social media campaign planning (Components 1/2/3)
6. Website strategy and development (Components 1/3)
7. Public Relations experience to include crisis and emergency (Component 2)
8. Product development from idea to execution (Component 3)
9. Strategic Planning experience (Component 4)
10. Brand development and analysis experience (Component 4)

Agency Information:

Please answer the questions below within your proposal to provide us with insight into your firm's capabilities, operations and strategy. Unless specified, information requested applies to ALL components.

1. Please tell us about your agency, team and background detailing in-depth your firm's experience in DMO marketing, communications, or strategic planning services.
2. How many full-time employees do you have & how many would be assigned to RPTC's account?
3. Describe your media planning, buying strategy and process. Briefly describe your in-house creative capabilities. (Component 1 only)
4. Describe any services that are outsourced or would be outsourced on the RPTC's account.
5. Describe what market research would be performed and how often during the contract period.
6. How does your creative team work with accounts?
7. How does your creative team solicit input?
8. What role would RPTC staff play in the development of a campaign?
9. Describe how your agency communicates and maintains dialogue with clients.
10. How do you track the relationship between creative efforts and lead generation and conversion?
11. How do you measure success?
12. Describe what reporting you would do to the RPTC and how frequently.
13. Include a list of standard agency hourly rates for all activities.
14. Provide three tourism industry clients (at least two current) with contact information & samples of work.
15. Please detail established advertising, communications, or hospitality industry relationships (speaking specifically of relationships that can be leveraged for the benefit of RPTC)
16. Provide three case studies, preferably relevant to a destination such as the River Parishes.
17. Disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

Timeline/Milestones

1. September 3, 2019 – RFP published
2. September 9-13, 2019 – Pre-submission calls available
3. September 20, 2019 – Proposals due by 4:30 p.m.
4. September 26, 2019 – RPTC RFP committee reviews proposals
5. October 3, 2019 – RPTC board special meeting, recommendations reviewed
6. October 7-11, 2019 – Interviews scheduled for finalists
7. October 16, 2019 – RPTC full board meeting, contracts approved

Budget

Component 1: The River Parishes Tourist Commission annual budget for FY 19-20 is \$225,000 for advertising buys and placements. The budget includes all campaign elements, including planning, agency fees, production, technology, paid media, etc. The media budget for FY 20-21 is expected to be near \$300,000.

Component 2: The Public Relations Budget for FY 19-20 is \$25,000. The Public Relations Budget for FY 20-21 is expected to be \$30,000.

Component 3: The Product Development Budget will be determined by project scope.

Component 4: The Strategic Planning and Brand Analysis budget will be determined by scope.

Firm should submit a detailed budget listing all associated fees inclusive of all scopes of work and requirements contained within the component(s) being submitted.

Component 1: The selected Advertising/Marketing Agency must have the economic resources to pay expenses in advance of reimbursement from RPTC as well as the staff and administrative expenses itemized in the proposal (Budget). A letter from a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) must be provided stating that the Advertising and Marketing Agency has the economic resources to pay expenses pending reimbursement from RPTC and that the firm has sufficient working capital, positive net worth, and has or can obtain a line of credit for the line of work described and proposed.

Travel to and from the River Parishes and expenses incurred while in the River Parishes is the responsibility of the agency and are not reimbursable.

Contract Term

The selected agencies will be offered a one-year contract with an option by the RPTC to renew. (Components 1 and 2)

The selected agencies will be offered a project-based contract. (Components 3 and 4)

Independent Contractor Status

Contractor is an independent contractor, not an employee of the RPTC. Contractor and the RPTC agree to the following rights consistent with an independent contractor relationship:

- Contractor has the right to perform services for others during the term of this Agreement so long as there is no conflict of interest with RPTC.
- Contractor has the right to control and direct the means, manner, and method by which the services required by this Agreement will be performed.
- Contractor shall not receive any training from the RPTC in the skills necessary to perform the services required by this Agreement.
- Contractor is not eligible to participate in any employee pension, health insurance, vacation pay, sick pay, or other fringe benefit plan, if any, offered by the RPTC.

Insurance

Contractor will carry liability insurance and provide the RPTC with a certificate of insurance showing a minimum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) in liability coverage relative to any service performed by Contractor for the RPTC. If Contractor employs more than one person, contractor must also show proof of workers compensation insurance.

Submission Requirements

Proposals must address each item listed and provide specific details on how you will achieve these requirements.

Prospective service providers should submit six (6) printed copies of their proposal to the River Parishes Tourist Commission on or before Friday, September 13, 2019 at 4:30 PM.

Providers should also e-mail a digital copy of their proposal to buddy@visitnopc.com or include a PDF of their proposal on a USB flash drive submitted with the printed copies.

If selected as a finalist, proposer will prepare additional copies for full board. All submitted materials will become property of RPTC and will not be returned.

Proposals should be titled "RPTC Services RFP," and submitted to:

Buddy Boe, Executive Director
River Parishes Tourist Commission
671 Belle Terre Blvd
LaPlace, LA 70068

Questions, please call RPTC Executive Director Buddy Boe at (504)-487-2336.

Prospective vendors who are mailing proposals should allow normal mail delivery time to ensure timely receipt of their proposals. The RPTC is not responsible for any proposals that arrive beyond the deadline indicated.

Proposal Evaluation

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Insight and approach to development of a strategic advertising/marketing campaign (Comp 1), public relations strategy (Comp 2), product development (Comp 3), and strategic plan and brand analysis (Comp 4). **20 pts**
2. Knowledge and experience working with destination marketing organizations/tourism marketing. **20 pts**
3. Budget and cost of proposal. **20 pts**
4. Demonstration of passion and commitment to RPTC's mission. **10 pts.**
5. Demonstrated ability to develop innovative campaigns that utilize a mix of traditional and non-traditional media to engage audiences and achieve results. **10 pts**
6. Qualifications, experience and fit of staff that would be assigned to the RPTC team. **10 pts**

7. Knowledge of River Parishes tourism industry, especially knowledge of strengths and weaknesses compared to competitor markets. **10 pts**

Proposers not awarded the work outlined in this RFP will be notified by mail or email. The successful proposers will be required to sign a contract with the River Parishes Tourist Commission in which they accept responsibility for the performance of services as stated in their proposal.

After review of the submissions, the RPTC may request to meet with potential agencies prior to selecting a vendor.

Provisions

The River Parishes Tourist Commission assumes no responsibility and no liability for costs incurred relevant to the preparation and submission of the RFP by agencies or any other costs prior to issuance of a contract.

Upon participation, presentation and submittal of a proposal in response to this RFP, RPTC will own all of the ideas, intellectual property, concept boards and materials you share with us, whether you are eventually selected or not.

The RPTC also reserves the right to:

- Reject any and all bids;
- Waive any or all mandatory requirements, if no proposers meet one or more of those requirements;
- Cancel this RFP;
- Revise the amount of advertising and marketing funds suggested by this RFP;
- Amend this RFP as needed; and
- Not select a vendor or award a contract through this RFP process.

A contract between the River Parishes Tourist Commission and the selected individual or vendor will be subject to and be in accordance with all Federal, State, and local laws as may be applicable.

The River Parishes Tourist Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Minority and women-owned business enterprises are encouraged to submit proposals.