Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina on behalf of VISIT NORTH CAROLINA
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Meeting Planner
September 2017-2020

INTRODUCTION

Visit North Carolina, a division of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, hereinafter referred to as "Visit NC" or “EDPNC” is seeking a highly qualified and competent meeting planning company, hereinafter referred to as “Meeting Planner” or “contractor”, to organize selected Visit NC meetings at no cost to the State. These generally include the annual Governor’s Conference on Hospitality and Tourism, hereinafter referred to as “Visit NC 365 Conference,” and other meetings or events as required.

The Visit NC 365 Conference is North Carolina's largest gathering of tourism industry leaders. Over the last three decades, the Conference has grown to an attendance of more than 500 participants who find the seminars, workshops, networking opportunities and social functions informative, enjoyable and productive. Representing a wide variety of backgrounds, the majority of participants include destination management organizations, regional tourism associations, accommodations, attractions, advertising agencies, economic development companies and various media companies. Other stakeholders include publishing firms, trade publications, technology providers and universities. The Conference is typically held between February and April. The 2018 Conference will be held at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

From time to time, the Meeting Planner may be asked to assist with the planning and execution of other special events at the discretion of Visit NC’s Executive Director.

BACKGROUND

As a part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the mission of Visit NC is to unify and lead the state in developing North Carolina as a major destination for leisure travel, group tours, meetings and conventions, sports events, and film production. Visit NC develops and executes effective marketing programs to accomplish these goals for the benefit of the tourism industries; the economy; and the citizens of North Carolina. Ultimately, Visit NC seeks to create jobs and protect existing jobs in the tourism industry by attracting visitors to the state.

The objective of Visit NC 365 Conference is to provide a powerful and substantive program that prioritizes the sharing of ideas, defines common issues and fosters collaborative relationships. The Visit NC 365 Conference attempts to address the needs of the many diverse segments of the tourism industry in North Carolina. The Visit NC 365 Conference incorporates a full-scale tradeshow and silent auction into its programming, which individually seek to assist delegates in networking and relationship building.

The Visit NC 365 Conference is planned and executed at no cost to Visit NC or the State. All expenses for the Visit NC 365 Conference are paid from revenues generated by the Visit NC 365 Conference, including all meeting planner fees and expenses, based on a budget approved annually by Visit NC.

From time to time, the Meeting Planner may be asked to assist with the planning and execution of other special events at the discretion of Visit NC’s Executive Director.

SCOPE OF WORK

Scope of Work for Conference

1. Conference Planning
A Planning Committee will be established which will comprise representatives from Visit NC, Meeting Planner, host hotel, and host CVB to oversee the successful coordination and execution of the Visit NC 365 Conference.

Meetings with Visit NC and/or Planning Committee will be held as appropriate.

Visit NC and Planning Committee will develop program content and select speakers. Meeting Planner will assist with all details of planning as appropriate.

When appropriate, Visit NC will advise Meeting Planner of Governor’s participation (as well as Council of State members, Legislators and other VIPs) for logistics planning.

Meeting Planner will be responsible for creating a detailed agenda and timeline in consultation with the Visit NC.

Meeting Planner is responsible for working with Visit NC staff to create and maintain a project calendar.

2. **Budget & Finances**
   - Meeting Planner will work with Visit NC to create a budget based on conference history and specific needs for each conference.
   - Meeting Planner will collect all registration fees on behalf of Visit NC and the Visit NC 365 Conference.
   - Meeting Planner will collect all sponsorship and exhibitor monies on behalf of Visit NC and the Visit NC 365 Conference.
   - Meeting Planner will be responsible for bill reconciliation and payment of all invoices.
   - Meeting Planner will be responsible for financial reporting to Visit NC with supporting bank documentation.

3. **Promotion**
   - Visit NC will develop the logo and theme used in all promotional materials.
   - Meeting Planner develops promotional plan and design, and layouts for promotional materials as appropriate.
   - Visit NC will promote the Visit NC 365 Conference through existing promotional channels (NewsLink, industry meetings, and visitnc365.com Web site).
   - Visit NC is responsible for sending e-blasts specific to the conference to previous conference attendees and current registrants.

4. **Registration**
   - Visit NC sets registration fees, provides VIP lists, approves barters, etc.
   - Meeting Planner, in conjunction with Visit NC, sets timeline for registration opening date, registration closing date, early-registration discount and cancellation fees.
   - Meeting Planner collects registration fees, processes and confirms registrations.
   - Meeting Planner produces rosters, lists, name badges and other Visit NC 365 Conference materials from registration lists.
   - Meeting Planner provides real-time registration lists to Visit NC throughout the registration period.

5. **Speaker Contracts**
   - Visit NC will conduct a search for and choose all speakers. After Visit NC decides on a speaker, Visit NC will give all relevant contact information to the Meeting Planner.
   - The Meeting Planner shall be responsible for negotiating the contract with all speakers. Once the contract is negotiated, the Meeting Planner will be responsible for signing the contract and reimbursing all appropriate fees and expenses, including travel.
   - The Meeting Planner shall not be permitted to take a commission on speaker fees in excess of $5,000.
   - Meeting Planner collects audio visual and handout requirements for presentations, biographies and pictures (head shots) for the Web site, program and other conference materials.

6. **Audio Visual Requirements**
6.1. Visit NC and Meeting Planner will determine AV requirements based on needs for the Visit NC 365 Conference.
6.2. Meeting Planner, in conjunction with Visit NC and the host hotel, will select an appropriate AV provider.
6.3. Meeting Planner will contract with and pay associated fees to the AV provider for the Visit NC 365 Conference.
6.4. Meeting Planner will consult with the AV provider before and manage the on-site execution of the Audio Visual component of the Visit NC 365 Conference.

7. **Food and Beverage Coordination**
7.1. Meeting Planner will select appropriate meal and break menus for the Visit NC 365 Conference in consultation with Visit NC, host hotel and appropriate sponsors.
7.2. Meeting Planner will be responsible for working with hotel staff to ensure food and beverages are available and on time for breaks and meals and to communicate any schedule changes that affect the time of breaks and meals.

8. **Transportation**
8.1. Meeting Planner secures motorcoach transportation for attendees to Visit NC 365 Conference events as required.
8.2. Meeting Planner develops transportation plan for speakers and VIP guests as required.
8.3. Visit NC staff will be assigned to execute transfer schedule for speakers and VIP guests.
8.4. Visit NC assigns staff members with state owned vehicles to provide for transfers to the airport.
8.5. Meeting Planner oversees transfer operation to ensure successful completion—checking arrival and departure times, and making adjustments as needed.

9. **Signage**
9.1. Meeting Planner will, in consultation with Visit NC and the host hotel, develop the signage plan for the Visit NC 365 Conference.
9.2. Visit NC will approve signage plan and design of all signage.
9.3. Meeting Planner will incorporate all conference themes and logos into the sign design.
9.4. Meeting Planner is responsible for getting the signs printed and delivered to the hotel.
9.5. Meeting Planner will ensure proper distribution and displaying of signage at the hotel.

10. **Printed and Promotional Materials**
10.1. Meeting Planner will coordinate and produce printed materials for the Visit NC 365 Conference including but not limited to the program, attendee and sponsor lists, handouts, name tags, signage (as indicated above), and bags. (Frequently, many of these items are sponsored and will require Meeting Planner to coordinate with the sponsor on these items.)
10.2. Visit NC will review and approve all printed materials prior to production.

11. **Special Events**
11.1. The Meeting Planner will coordinate with the host the organizing, planning and financing of events hosted by the host hotel, host CVB, and/or the future host hotel.
11.2. Meeting Planner will allocate adequate space for a silent auction based on information provided by the Visit NC.
11.3. Visit NC is responsible for notifying organizations that coordinate a golf tournament, silent auction or other special event that occurs during the Visit NC 365 Conference but is not sponsored by Visit NC of the space and/or time that is being allocated to them.
11.4. The Meeting Planner shall receive no commission on the silent auction, golf tournament nor any other special event not sponsored by Visit NC.

12. **Hotel/Convention Center Liaison**
12.1. Meeting Planner will act as primary hotel/convention center liaison (contact, planning, logistics, etc.).
12.2. Meeting Planner will have authority to sign banquet tickets, etc., on behalf of Visit NC and handle direct on-site logistics during the Visit NC 365 Conference.
12.3. Meeting Planner will be charged with on-site execution of the contracts.
12.4. Meeting Planner and Visit NC staff will participate in pre-conference meetings with hotel, convention center staff and other planning meetings, as appropriate.

13. **Venue Sourcing and Contract Negotiations**
13.1. Visit NC will work with Meeting Planner in selecting venues for future Visit NC 365 Conferences.
13.2. Meeting Planner is responsible for negotiating the contract with the host hotel and/convention center. Visit NC gives final approval before the contract is signed.
13.3. Meeting Planner contracts directly with the host hotel and/or convention center for future Visit NC 365 Conferences on behalf of Visit NC.
13.4. If the Visit NC 365 Conference is cancelled by Visit NC, the Meeting Planner will be responsible for paying any and all cancellation fees from the Visit NC Conference account established and maintained by the Meeting Planner. In the case that there are not enough funds in the account to pay cancellation fees in full, Visit NC will be responsible for paying the difference.

14. **Support for Visit NC During Conference**
14.1. Visit NC staff is expected to be utilized in frontline interaction with attendees at Visit NC 365 Conference.
14.2. Meeting Planner will outline needs for staff, prior to the final preconference meeting. (transportation, registration and others)
14.3. Meeting Planner is responsible for exhibit space set-up, preparation of all registration materials and flow of meeting.

15. **Cancellation or Postponement of Conference**
15.1. In the event that the Conference is cancelled by Visit NC, the Meeting Planner is responsible for paying any and all cancellation fees from the Visit NC 365 Conference account established and maintained by the Meeting Planner.
15.2. In the case that there are not enough funds in the Visit NC 365 Conference account to pay cancellation fees in full, Visit NC will be responsible for paying the difference.

16. **Sponsorship and In-Kind Donations**
16.1. The Meeting Planner is responsible for collecting all sponsorship money.
16.2. The programs, conference folders, conference bags, name badge holders and centerpieces have been in-kind sponsorships in previous years. Because the Meeting Planner is directly responsible for securing these items and providing the content for the program, the Meeting Planner shall be permitted to take a commission on the value of the donation. The value shall be assessed by the sponsor.
16.3. The Meeting Planner shall not be permitted to take a commission on the cost of any receptions, events, entertainment or other goods or services organized by an entity other than Visit NC. This includes, but is not limited to: meals and receptions, entertainment, golf tournament, silent auction and closing event.

17. **Post-Conference Reports**
17.1. The Meeting Planner will provide a final financial statement and wrap-up report no later than twelve weeks after the Visit NC 365 Conference or once all monies have been collected and expenses paid.

**Compensation**

Meeting Planner will receive compensation based on a percentage (37%) of the total expenses (exclusive of the Meeting Planner compensation) of the tourism Visit NC 365 Conference, to be paid exclusively from meeting revenues. Meeting Planner will receive direct payment from Visit NC for special events as authorized by the director.
QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for this contract, the meeting planner’s business must:

Demonstrate the ability to plan successful meetings of a similar size and scope and demonstrate ability to work successfully with the state’s tourism industry.

Additionally, the planner must:
1. Have prior experience with state government contracts.
2. Employ or contract with at least one (1) Certified Meeting Planner (CMP).
3. Generate a portion of its annual revenue from off-site meeting planning.
4. Have annual meeting planning revenues in excess of $1 million.
5. Be located within a 50 mile radius of Visit NC’s office

Business Profile
1. Company Name
2. Address
3. Contact Name
4. Phone Number
5. Toll-free Phone Number
6. Fax Number
7. E-mail and Web Address
8. When and where company was founded
9. Is the company public or private
10. Average industry experience of company personnel by functional type (project managers, meeting planners, on-site travel staff, etc.)
11. List three (3) references of accounts where you have provided meeting management services within the past one (1) year. Include:
   a. A current long-term customer.
   b. A current customer whose program was implemented within the past eighteen (18) months.
   c. A former customer that terminated your company account within the past eighteen (18) months for reasons other than consolidation.

Financial Profile
1. How large is the meeting planning division of your company in terms of personnel and annual revenue? Provide a description of types of staff (meeting planners, administrative staff, account managers, etc.).
2. Please provide your company’s annual sales/revenue for the following years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>OFF-SITE MEETING PLANNING</th>
<th>REVENUE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 2014</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 2016</td>
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Customer Base
1. Total number of active customers serviced by your company in 2016.
2. Total number of meetings managed in 2016 by type (off-site and on-site).
3. List your top (4) customers, % of sales, and services provided.
4. What type(s) of meetings does your company specialize in servicing?

Organization
1. Please provide your company’s mission statement.
2. Provide any management and/or organizational changes that your company has undergone in the past two (2) years.
3. What impact have these changes had on your business operations, especially with respect to service capacity or types of meetings handled?
4. Provide a list of services provided by your company, inclusive of services in addition to meeting planning (group air, production, etc.). Provide a brief description of and % sales by such services.
5. Of the above services, are all services provided by your company’s employees or contracted? Please list any contracted services.
6. What is your company’s employment rate of turnover?
7. How does your company procure services from 3rd party suppliers?
8. How does your company manage 3rd party suppliers?

**General Service Questions**
1. Detail how your company would provide logistical meeting management services, emphasizing key elements for ensuring service quality.
2. Describe how your company would ensure performance standards are met or exceeded, including how your company will measure such service level agreements and what types of reports will be available with respect to these measurements.
3. Describe a challenging meeting your company has planned, developed and implemented, emphasizing and describing in detail any innovative and creative ideas incorporated, challenges overcome, and value-added activities associated with this meeting.
4. Describe meeting planning experience and tenure of meeting management planners who would be assigned to this meeting.
5. Provide an organizational chart of your company, outlining your account management and customer service organization.
6. What steps is your company taking to ensure that it is continually growing with respect to its ability to provide value-added activities in connection with meeting management solutions?
7. Describe any additional experiences that would explain and support why choosing your company as a meeting management supplier would provide an advantage.
8. Provide an example that clearly demonstrates your company’s flexibility to respond to last-minute changes, budget cuts, attendee changes, logistics issues and contingency plans.

**SAMPLE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**
While the Visit NC 365 Conference program is subject to change from year to year, the format remains essentially the same:

**Pre-Conference Meeting**
2pm – 4pm on the day Prior to Opening Day

**Opening Day**
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  Setup of Silent Auction
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  Setup of Exhibitor Marketplace
1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.   Various educational sessions
12:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.  Conference Registration and On-Site Registration Opens
12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  Silent Auction Opens
3:00 p.m.             Check-in at host hotel
6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  Opening Reception & Dinner (sponsored by host hotel)

**First Day**
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.  Breakfast Buffet (sponsored)
8:00 a.m. – Noon      Conference and On-Site Registration
7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  Exhibitor Marketplace
8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.  Welcome and Opening Comments
8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.  Keynote General Session
9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Refreshment Break (sponsored)
10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. General Session: Legislative Panel Update
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Winner’s Circle Luncheon (sponsored)
1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Concurrent Sessions
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Refreshment Break (sponsored)
3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Concurrent Sessions
4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Refreshment Break (sponsored)
4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Keynote General Session
6:30 p.m. Reception and Dine Around

Second Day
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Breakfast Buffet or plated Keynote Breakfast (sponsored)
7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Silent Auction Final Bidding
8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Visit NC Update (may be seated breakfast)
9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Refreshment Break & Room Check-Out (sponsored)
10:30 a.m. – Noon Keynote General Session
12:30 p.m. Luncheon (sponsored by host of the next Conference)

EVALUATION

Evaluation Criteria – 100%
- Demonstrated experience in managing similar meetings and provide services requested (40 percent)
- Familiarity with North Carolina’s tourism industry, including key personnel at tourism authorities, attractions and a working knowledge of the mission and operations of Visit NC (40 percent)
- References from clients for which similar services have been provided (10 percent)
- Cost (10 percent)

SELECTION PROCESS/KEY DATES/OTHER

Interested parties should send 4 printed proposals to Dana Grimstead at Visit North Carolina, 15000 Weston Parkway, Cary, NC 27513 by August 11, 2017. Proposals received past that date may not be considered.

Once all the proposals are reviewed, interviews will be likely scheduled with finalist companies.

Decisions made and contracts planned to be awarded in September 2017. The actual contract terms shall prevail and be binding over the general expressions of intention stated in this document

Contract Term
The term of this contract will be for a period of three years beginning on September 1, 2017 with the EDPNC option to renew for two additional one year periods. The final contract will be in a form acceptable to the EDPNC. The specifications set forth herein may be part of a final contract, at the option of EDPNC. A review of contractor performance shall be conducted annually by the EDPNC. Visit North Carolina may option to continue the contract for another 2 years upon annual review without issuing another RFP. The contract will be conditioned upon N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143C-6-8 and other terms deemed necessary or proper by VisitNC/EDPNC in its sole discretion.

Performance and Default
If, for any reason, the Meeting Planner shall fail to fulfill in timely and proper manner the obligations under the contract, Visit NC shall thereupon have the right to terminate the contract by giving written notice to the Meeting Planner and specifying the effective date thereof. In that event, all finished or unfinished deliverable items under this contract prepared by the Meeting Planner shall, at the option of Visit NC, become its property, and the
Meeting Planner shall be entitled to receive just and equitable compensation for any satisfactory work completed on such materials. Notwithstanding, the Meeting Planner shall not be relieved of liability to Visit NC for damages sustained by Visit NC by virtue of any breach of this agreement, and Visit NC may withhold any payment due the Meeting Planner for the purpose of setoff until such time as the exact amount of damages due to Visit NC from such breach can be determined.

In case of default by the Meeting Planner, Visit NC may procure the services from other sources and hold the Meeting Planner responsible for any excess cost occasioned thereby and any damages caused. Visit NC may require a performance bond or other acceptable alternative performance guarantees from the Meeting Planner without expense to Visit NC.

In addition, in the event of default by the Meeting Planner under this contract, Visit NC may immediately cease doing business with the Meeting Planner, immediately terminate for cause all existing contracts Visit NC has with the Meeting Planner, and de-bar the Meeting Planner from doing future business with Visit NC. Meeting Planner will indemnify and hold EDPNC harmless from Meeting Planner’s negligence or intentional wrongdoing.

Upon the Meeting Planner filing a petition for bankruptcy or the entering of a judgment of bankruptcy by or against the Meeting Planner, Visit NC may immediately terminate for cause, this contract and all other existing contracts the Meeting Planner has with Visit NC, and de-bar the Meeting Planner from doing future business.

The contract shall be governed by North Carolina law and the exclusive process to resolve claims under the contract shall be private Arbitration under the Commercial Arbitration rules of The American Arbitration Association, with Arbitration to be conducted in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Equal Opportunity
The EDPNC is an Equal Opportunity employer. The successful contractor(s) will be chosen without regard to race, gender, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, sexual orientation or any other criteria protected by the applicable law of North Carolina.

Termination
The EDPNC/Visit NC may terminate the contract at any time by 60 days notice in writing from the EDPNC/Visit NC to the Meeting Planner. In that event, all finished or unfinished deliverable items prepared by the Meeting Planner under this contract shall, at the option of Visit NC, become its property. If the contract is terminated by Visit NC as provided herein, the Meeting Planner shall be paid for services satisfactorily completed, less payment or compensation previously made. The expected term of this contract will be three years. Meeting Planner performance will be reviewed annually by VisitNC. VisitNC/EDPNC may terminate for any reason upon 60 written days notice and immediately in the event VisitNC/EDPNC’s contract with the Department of Commerce is terminated.