



north carolina



visitnc.com

2023 Visit NC Marketing Communications RFP Questions and Responses

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2023 Visit NC Marketing Communications RFP Questions and Responses

PROPOSER QUALIFICATIONS

How many agencies will be invited for this specific RFP and, of those agencies, how many are selected to present?

How many agencies have you invited to pitch for this opportunity?

As Visit NC is funded by public tax revenues, the RFP opportunity is open to any firm that would like to propose for any of the components detailed in the RFP. There is no fixed expectation at this time as to how many firms will be invited to present in person.

Is Visit NC looking for NC-based agencies or a NC-specific team?

Will any preference be given for NC-based agencies?

Are you looking for an NC-based agency partner or are you open to out of state?

The firms do not have to be located in the state, but may need to have at least one dedicated employee/account lead based in North Carolina. (The PR agency will not be required to have a North Carolina office or employees.) There is no preference given for a NC-based firm.

In your decision making process, what role does a North Carolina presence play? How do you prioritize NC home base versus outside perspective?

A North Carolina presence would allow Visit NC to extend its in-state team at times, having an agency partner attend meetings or presentations, travel to partners, etc. An outside perspective is always respected and treated no differently than an in-state one.

Can you clarify exactly which components of the scope will require at least one account team member be in North Carolina?

See below:

- Creative/ Media/ Brand Identity (required)

- Social Media (required)

- Website Development

- Marketing Co-Op Program (required)

- Public Relations

- Trade Industry Relations/ Marketing (Film NC)

- Consumer Marketing and Industry Engagement (Outdoor NC Initiative) (required)

Is there a requirement or preference to have an office located in NC? This is something we would be glad to do, but just want to understand the thinking from your clients.

There is no requirement that firms be headquartered or have an office in North Carolina, and we welcome expertise and experience from any location. However, the firms selected to provide

some services in support of the Visit NC brand are expected to have at least a minimal staff presence (such as an account service representative) residing within the state (see above).

What is the expectation of the employee(s) living in North Carolina? Will this individual need to work near the Visit NC headquarters for weekly meetings

It is not required for the employee or employees to reside in the Raleigh/Durham area, as it is not likely there will be weekly in-person meetings after the initial startup period. However, in addition to working closely with the Visit NC team, that person or persons will be expected to develop a deep understanding of the state and to engage in person regularly with Visit NC partners in their communities.

Section 3.N: If a domestic out-of-state firm submitting for the creative/media/brand identity component does not have an account service team member located in North Carolina at the time of proposal submission but commits to setting up a North Carolina office and a qualified in-state account service representative(s) following an awarded contract, will this intention align with Visit NC's evaluation scoring criteria especially if the firm has demonstrated their ability to follow-through on a similar commitment for other destination marketing partners?

That intention would suffice.

Have you worked with communications agencies in the past, and if so, what worked well and what were the challenges in your previous partnerships?

We will discuss with the selected partners.

Are previous agency partners also submitting a proposal for this RFP? Are incumbent agencies also participating? Will the incumbent firm be participating in the RFP bidding process?

Is the incumbent agency in consideration for renewal?

Is the current agency incumbent participating in the RFP?

Yes.

Is there an incumbent PR and marketing partner for this campaign?

Is the current PR agency participating in the bid process?

Yes, both marketing and PR have incumbent agencies that will be bidding in this process.

Who are the current agencies serving Visit NC?

Can you please provide a list of the incumbent agencies providing services for each one of the components listed in the RFP?

Creative/ Media/ Brand Identity (Luquire)

Social Media (Luquire)

Website Development (Luquire)
 Marketing Co-Op Program (Luquire)
 Public Relations (J/PR)
 Trade Industry Relations/ Marketing (Film NC) (Luquire)
 Consumer Marketing and Industry Engagement (Outdoor NC Initiative) (Luquire)

Do you currently have a PR AOR? If so, why are you issuing an RFP?

See above for AOR. The current contracts up for each service have received increased funding for them and thus the desire to issue an RFP and ensure we are working with the best possible partners.

We currently work with another North Carolina destination marketing organization on media campaigns and website projects to drive out of state travel to that destination's region. Would this experience be viewed negatively as a conflict of interest, or positively, as relevant experience for the same state?

That relationship would not be viewed negatively by Visit NC.

Can firms submit a proposal for one of the sub-sections under Section 2 (in addition to the required strategic planning)? Is there a minimum number of sections that submitting firms are expected to meet?

Firms may submit a proposal for any of the components outlined in the RFP. There is no minimum number of components that any firm is expected to meet.

Is experience with your existing analytical programs (Arrivalist, Adara, Salesforce) required or preferred?

This experience is desirable but not required.

Due to the nature of our work, we are unable to share a full client list. Will you accept an extensive list of past case studies with relevant clients?

Yes, that is acceptable. However, Visit NC must be made aware of any potential conflicts of interest with current or future clients for which the firm is performing ongoing work.

Section 3.J: Understandably, the RFP notes that Visit NC prefers that the firm selected to develop and execute destination brand creative not represent a competing state tourism campaign for the duration of this contract. In this statement, do you solely define "competing state" as the surrounding states of SC, TN, GA, FL, VA, WV, and PA and/or the full South and Mid-Atlantic regions? Please confirm if agencies/firms with relationships with states residing in any of the following regions would be viewed as conflicts: West, Mid-West, Southwest.

Competing states that would represent a conflict of interest for an ongoing agency of record assignment would be tourism offices for the neighboring states of Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. State tourism offices outside of those five states are not considered competitive conflicts. Visit NC will make the final determination of any conflicts of interest, so please contact us if there is any question about a conflict of interest outside this response.

Please share the types of agencies that work on different parts of the account. Will you entertain all services being provided by one agency or is there a reason to have more than one agency?

Visit NC is open to all services being provided by a sole supplier but will entertain proposals for firms to respond to as little as one component of the RFP.

Do you have in-house agency capabilities, and will a newly selected agency be interfacing with inhouse media/creative or is this sourced to an existing agency of record?

Visit NC's in-house agency-type capabilities are extremely limited, and we rely heavily upon our marketing partners to plan and execute the entire program of work.

Please confirm that submissions for Public Relations and or Social Media will be considered without options for subcontractors listed for the other disciplines.

Yes, that is correct.

The RFP asks for examples/ case studies etc. to demonstrate our agency work - do these examples need to be of Tourism Offices/CVBs or can they be from singular companies, hotels, brands, etc?

These examples do not need to be from destination marketing organizations, or even from the tourism sector.

Is this RFP being conducted as part of a mandatory North Carolina timing process due to length of contract?

Is this a mandatory rebid?

No.

**What is the reason for this bid at this time?
What has you looking for a new agency partner?**

The five-year contractual period for services provided by the current agency of record concludes at the end of fiscal year 2023 (June 30). However, this is the first time that Visit NC has segmented the RFP for many of its marketing communications services into separate components and allowed firms to propose on one or more of the components. Additionally, a great deal has changed in the external environment since the last RFP for marketing

communications services was issued, and Visit NC believes it is important that the organization review all its options for marketing communications

What aspects of an agency partner are most critical to you?

What are the most important attributes Visit NC is seeking in an agency partner?

Open and clear communications (“Radical Candor”), project management, creative thinking and sound execution.

For the required financial statements, are you open to receiving those documents in a password-protected email, separate from the proposal package? That is our standard practice for sharing that information.

Yes, that is acceptable.

We also need to make a statement about the request for financials. We are a privately held small company. We don’t release our financials. What has sufficed when this type of request is made is a letter from our corporate accounting firm stating that they’ve reviewed our financials to date and in their opinion we are financially stable. Please let us know that this will work in this situation.

Yes.

DECISION PROCESS

Who is the decision-making committee?

Who are the primary decision makers for this RFP?

Wit Tuttell, Executive Director

Scott Peacock, Tourism Marketing Director

Katie Bailey, Tourism Marketing Manager (lead marketing agency liaison)

Heidi Walters, Director of Partner and Industry Relations (Outdoor NC initiative lead)

Margo Metzger, PR Director

Marlise Taylor, Tourism Research Director

Guy Gaster, NC Film Office Director

Chris Cavanaugh, Magellan Strategy Group (marketing consultant)

A representative from the North Carolina Travel & Tourism Board

Will the winner be selected based on the point system laid out in the scorecard? Or is that just one metric that will be considered when awarding the work?

The point system outlined in the RFP will be the sole basis for the award.

TIMING

Section 4: Cost: Outlines the \$14M annual budget for next two fiscal years beginning July 2023. This contract will be awarded in February for July 1 start. Is there an expectation that any work begins before July?

Is July 1st the anticipated start date for a selected agency to begin new work?

July 1, 2023 is the anticipated start date for all firms selected as part of this process. No deliverables for any component of the RFP are expected before July 1. However, planning meetings in anticipation of the start of work for Visit NC may occur before July 1.

When will the contract be awarded?

The selection decision is intended to be made by March 1, 2023. However, final contract negotiations may still occur after that date.

Is there an intended date that Visit NC would want new creative to begin going live?

That decision will be made in consultation with the selected marketing communications firms.

The contract begins on July 1, 2023. How long is the current media plan running?

Current media plan is running on a calendar year, so Jan. 2023 through Dec. 2023.

Do you have a calendar of initiatives or key milestones to work into our approach? Are there any key cities or messages that need to be weighted heavier than others both overall or at certain times of the year?

That will be made in consultation with the selected marketing communications firms for all assignments.

BUDGET AND SCOPE OF WORK

Is Visit NC open to suggestions on how to change the current split outlined in the RFP? More weight towards PR, social, etc.?

Yes. This will be determined for future budget years by staff in consultation with its external partners as part of Visit NC's annual planning process.

Is the printed visitor guide something the selected creative agency would also be expected to complete with an additional estimate/budget?

The printed visitor guide is not part of the scope of work included in this RFP.

What portion of your budget do you expect will be allocated to international travelers?

We spend approximately \$1M on marketing to international visitors. Creative would be approximately 10% of that.

You mention domestic marketing plans for use in international campaigns. Is that to be handled by the agency as well, or how do you market internationally?

It could be handled by the agency. In addition to having dedicated representation in three markets, we market with Travel South USA and Brand USA.

There was a mention of attracting people internationally. How high does this rank in terms of your priorities? Do you envision some of the media budgets being invested internationally?

No- only as part of purchases through Travel South or Brand USA.

Approximately what percentage of efforts would be focused on driving domestic vs. international visitation?

The opportunity for international visitation to North Carolina is, of course, subject to numerous external environmental factors, and has not been a high priority in recent years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Visit NC generally works through its marketing partners in international markets to drive international visitation and participates in international travel market shows to build awareness and intent to visit. Additional investment in international markets will be determined in consultation with those marketing partners.

Are the out-of-pocket costs for Visit NC's outside research and analytics partners, subscriptions, and contracts (e.g., Arrivalist, SMARInsights, Salesforce, Zartico, etc.) supported within or separate from the \$14 million Visit NC budget? What is the research budget for the current fiscal year?

The Visit NC research budget is between \$400,000 and \$600,000 annually and is separate from the marketing budget.

From the \$14M budget (2 years), can you provide an estimate of the ratio of fee to out of pocket? Are the actual ratios of the 2021 and 2022 fee to OOP ratio public record / able to be shared?

For the \$8,600,00 media budget, do you have an expectation of how the budget is divided between hard media costs and agency fees to manage media?

**Can you provide a percentage of focus between consumer and trade media?
For the \$14MM budget table, can you provide any more specificity as to the nature and volume of deliverables in the non-Media line items in order to help us more accurately estimate agency time and fees.**

What does your current media budget look like per platform?

Regarding budget breakdown for various services and agency fees included within each. Please know that the figures outlined in this RFP are to serve as an example, but not be considered actual/final. Visit NC's total annual operating budget is set by the NC State Legislature on an annual basis. Therefore, the amounts dedicated to the scope of work and all segments within this RFP can change annually as well. Visit NC will sit down and review the financial arrangement and necessary budget considerations with each agency/vendor annually even though the full contract is a five-year term.

Is the structure/breakout of the components outlined in the scope of work the way the work has been structured/managed in the past ... or is this approach new?

The Outdoor NC program scope is new, as is the breakout of services as a whole. In the past all services were to be bid on holistically (all or nothing).

Can you share how the components in the scope of work have been managed in the past - how many agencies have been involved and what agencies have been responsible for which components of the SOW?

The programs have mostly been managed by a single agency of record partner, and they have contracted with other agencies on an as-needed basis. This RFP is the first time Visit NC has requested responses for standalone marketing components.

Are the media, creative, website, social media, and public relations budget comprehensive of all Visit NC brands (i.e., Film NC, Outdoor NC)? Or is it expected that those items are specific within the respective budgets (i.e., Film NC budget of \$330,000 - does this include media for Film NC)?

Media, Website, Social Media and PR budgets are comprehensive of all brands.

Agency Services, Creative and Production for Film NC and Outdoor NC are within those respective budgets.

Please share in general terms what is typically included in the \$330,000 Film NC budget listed on page 9 and whether it includes both pass-through net costs (e.g., promotional media), materials and compensation?

See above.

Does the \$270,000 budget line itemed for the Outdoor NC Initiative include net media/out-of-pocket costs in addition to the services outlined on page 4?

See above.

Are all costs for industry relations listed on page 3 (in-state partner requests, tourism conference materials, annual report, strategic plan materials) included in the \$14 million?

Yes.

FILM NC

How many TV and movie productions are you looking for annually in North Carolina?

There is no target number with regard to number of projects because overall capacity within the state can dictate this and we our top priority are scripted series, which have a longer period of production; as such, we tend to focus on the amount of spending by the projects annually rather than number of productions.

What film commission campaigns do you most admire? Which do you feel do the best job, and why?

Utah has done a very good job of both promoting their state from a film recruitment standpoint as well as further promoting the economic benefits within the state that the film industry brings—all of this while having a very uniform look and feel in their materials and messaging. Also, Georgia's ability to have a unifying logo (the flying peach) for everything from film to business recruitment and development to tourism is also inspiring.

It appears that initiatives specific to Film and Outdoor are the only ones with separate and distinct line item budgets assigned to them. The scope for Outdoor is spelled out in some detail in Section 2. What is the corollary scope for Film?

See above.

What type and volume of deliverables typically have been required to support Film NC?

Website assistance, annual and/or bi-annual brochure/marketing piece for sales calls and/or trade shows, assistance in coordinating personal touch marketing items to studio contacts, potential in editing video assets obtained from productions to further promoting why North Carolina is a good choice for other productions to come and film, and serving as an advocate for ways to incorporate film tourism elements into the overall Visit NC direct-to-consumer marketing plan.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

What PR activity has been your biggest success in the last few years?

As a result of its proactive, robust, and comprehensive public relations plans, and working alongside its local partners, Visit NC has experienced success in gaining exposure for its partners in a wide range of media. There is truly no single PR activity that has been more successful than another.

Who is the key spokesperson for the destination?

Who will be the main spokesperson/people for this effort?

The Executive Director of Visit NC, currently Wit Tuttell, is typically the main spokesperson.

Can you please share the key performance indicators that you measure and your YoY PR goals for 2023?

- Number of Media Hosted
- Total Circulation of Earned Media Placements
- Number of Partners Attending Main Media Functions (New York City, Atlanta, and Charlotte or Other Target Market Media Missions)
- Number of Counties Covered by Visiting Media
- Number of Stories in Identified “Top 110” Media Outlets
- Number of Responses to Reactive Media Leads Resulting in Visit NC Media Placements

If you had three ideal message points you would like to see in each piece of coverage, what would they be?

These will be discussed with the selected firm.

What is your biggest PR priority in the coming year?

This will be discussed with the selected firm.

How many in-person events do you envision the PR Agency supporting annually? Can you clarify if the PR Agency will be responsible for coordinating the event logistics and production or only supporting through media relations?

In an average year, the PR Agency works in concert with Visit NC to support the following in-person events. With the exception of the regional media missions, event logistics are handled by Visit NC.

- 1 in-state media reception
- 4 regional media missions
- 3-4 group media familiarization tours
- 1 statewide tourism conference

Is there a separate budget for photography/videography, media visits, influencer fees, media travel, or is it included in the noted Public Relations budget of \$400,000?

Is there an additional budget for press trip costs?

Should the Agency provide an estimated budget for press and influencer travel costs outside of the monthly retainer?

The PR agency shall provide reasonable projections of upcoming program and travel expenses on at least a quarterly basis in collaboration with Visit NC on budget management.

Do you currently employ a media monitoring service for press clippings? If so, will the Agency have access to this account to obtain secured media placements/clippings?

If you do not have a media monitoring service for press clippings, can the Agency charge monthly for this out-of-pocket expense outside of the monthly retainer?

The PR agency must provide media monitoring service and press clippings as part of the monthly retainer.

How many journalists do you wish to host in North Carolina annually? Is there a preference for group or individual trips?

Should influencers (non-paid & paid) fall under the PR scope?

How many influencers does North Carolina wish to host in-destination annually?

Do you pay for influencers' fees? If so, is there an additional budget for their honoraria?

What specific areas/agency services are most important when selecting a PR partner?

What does PR success look like?

How have you measured PR in the past?

Name a PR initiative that moved the needle for your business.

Name a dream placement – outlet and headline.

Please describe past programming (e.g., mainly media bureau pitching, brand activations to generate news, etc.).

All of the above will be discussed with the selected PR partner.

CO-OP AND PARTNER PROGRAMS

Does the co-op program exist already or is this something that would start with the activation of the work in this RFP? Is that to say that NC counties pay into this pool and are tiered based on investment? To what extent would investment levels from co-op programs need to correlate to marketing spend / creative portrayal of the counties invested?

The current Visit NC partner programs can be found here:

<https://partners.visitnc.com/partner-programs>. Future partner programs will be determined in consultation with the firm selected to provide core creative and media for Visit NC. Participation in these programs by local partners is voluntary, although Visit NC attempts to make many of these programs available at costs that are attractive to as many participants as possible.

Who has been the best co-op partner and why?

This information will be reviewed with the selected partner.

What number of co-op marketing partners from Tier 1 and Tier 2 have you had in 2022?

This information will be reviewed with the selected partner.

Which co-op marketing programs are most in demand by the partners and which ones need more promotional support?

This information will be reviewed with the selected partner.

What elements of the partner program have the most momentum currently? Why do you think that is?

This information will be reviewed with the selected partner.

Can you outline how the co-op marketing process works and if there are challenges scaling ideas effectively?

Co-op considerations are taken into account with the overall brand paid media buy, plus owned channels and opportunities (digital, social, web, etc.).

Is there a budget allocation to the management of the co-op marketing program – Component Six of the RFP?

Section 2, Item 27: What was the most recent annual budget for the Partner & Co-Op Program?

The budget for management of the marketing co-op program is taken out of the overall media budget.

Which section of scope of work do these programs & publications (partner programs) fall under? Are they the partner co-op programs? What is the vendor's responsibility? Creative, publications & distribution, and/or sponsorship sales & tracking?

Yes, partner co-op programs as well as media (buying). The vendor will be responsible for overall program development, offerings, sales, and tracking. Creative, media buying, and social media agencies/vendors will provide that aspect of the program.

Can you provide additional clarification on how management of the partner and co-op marketing program is currently funded? Is this funded through the overall media budget, a portion of participating partner costs or another means of funding?

See above.

CURRENT BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

How have partner mindsets, needs and engagement shifted since the pandemic?

First, the economic recovery from the pandemic has been uneven at times across parts of the state. Some destinations, particularly those in the mountains and along the coast, have boomed while others, especially in the Piedmont, have been slower to recover and are only now seeing a full return of meetings and conventions and business travel while international travel to North Carolina remains sluggish. Second, partners are feeling a great deal of uncertainty about the next year or two given continued fears of a recession and weakening consumer confidence.

And finally, the capacity for future growth is sharply reduced in many places due to continuing labor shortages and much higher costs for building and operations.

What do you consider your biggest challenge in attracting tourism to North Carolina?

What are the biggest barriers to driving out-of-state visitors to North Carolina?

What has been your biggest marketing barrier to date?

Neighboring states and those in competition with North Carolina for visitation have historically invested more money in destination promotion. While North Carolina possesses an abundance of tourism assets and strong local partners, and Visit NC currently has the largest budget for destination promotion in its history, the state is traditionally at a disadvantage relative to other states.

What destinations do you consider your primary competitors today when someone is considering NC?

Who do you consider your biggest competitor(s)?

What states/destinations does Visit NC consider as primary and secondary competitors?

Competition varies by destinations and regions within the state. Coastal destinations in North Carolina are more likely to compete with other coastal destinations, especially those in Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. North Carolina's mountain destinations are more likely to compete with neighboring states (Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia). And competition for events, meetings, and conventions can come from almost anywhere.

Current comp set:

West Virginia

Tennessee

Virginia

Georgia

South Carolina

Pennsylvania

New York

Florida

What are the most common days of the week for a stay - and/or can you provide occupancy by day of week?

Because so much visitation to North Carolina is driven by leisure travel, Friday and Saturday continue to have the highest occupancy across much of the state. However, as meetings and conventions and business travel return to North Carolina, some destinations within the state will see higher occupancy on weekdays.

Can you provide recent data for the specified categories, specifically:

- **Arrival Lift – as measured by Arrivalist**
- **Advertising ROI – as measured by SMARInsights**
- **Number of users to the Visit NC family of websites**

- **Total number of co-op marketing partners from Tier 1 and 2 counties**
- **Partner satisfaction ratings (average)**
- **Any other relevant metrics**

These metrics will be provided to marketing communications partners upon selection.

How do colleges and universities currently play into your tourism strategies? Is this approach working?

North Carolina's colleges and universities are important assets to the state and generate significant visitation on their own. However, they are not currently part of Visit NC's business strategies.

As "Partner satisfaction ratings" is a key KPI for Visit NC, what are some of the main areas of focus to improve on Visit NC's current ratings with partners?

Driving value to partners through our overall projects/scope of work, be it our co-op programs, research, facilitating conversations, and idea and knowledge sharing, etc.

The 5th bullet point references "Partner satisfaction..." is this a reference to co-op marketing partners from tier 1 and 2 counties ... or any Visit NC marketing partner?

Any marketing and PR partner, regardless of county tier designation.

What are the biggest misconceptions around NC that you've encountered?

This will be discussed with the selected partner.

Where do you see opportunities on social & .com and how are they used today in your broader channel strategy?

This will be discussed with the selected partner.

What would you like to be remembered as, five years from now? A trailblazer? An innovator? A _____?

Our long-term goal is to be the #1 destination on the East Coast (excluding Florida) both in-terms of visitation and mindshare.

Can the average spend/night data be provided by day of week?

We do not have daily average spending data.

What is the "higher spending" per trip goal?

What is the desired increase for "longer trips" over the current trip average?

There is no specific goal. It would vary by destination within the state, length of stay, party size, etc. It is important to balance increased spending between higher prices and larger demand.

Can you share any current data or metrics to provide further context about the business problem you hope to solve with the selected marketing/communications agency?

This will be discussed with the selected partner.

Can you share any quantitative or qualitative data on the effectiveness of current or past strategies in addressing your primary marketing goals?

Prior marketing effectiveness studies can be found here:

<https://partners.visitnc.com/marketing-studies>

What key initiatives or products are you launching in the next 1-2 years?

Evolving the Outdoor NC Initiative to be direct to consumers

Website Redesign/Build

TikTok/short-form videos

We have Visit NC strategic foundation information, but what kind of strategic foundation work is available for the Visit NC family of brands (e.g., prioritized audience targets, personas, audience decision journey maps, brand positioning, value proposition)?

This will be discussed with the selected partners.

Regarding goal #2 (Drive and grow traveler interest in North Carolina destinations for more frequent, higher spending, longer trips), is there an interest in specific tactics to highlight luxury travel within the state (i.e., higher priced room nights, more affluent audience would then follow)?

Yes, the luxury travel market is a growth opportunity for the state.

Do you measure overall awareness of NC as a destination on an ongoing basis, and if so, what's the trendline on that awareness over the last few years? (General awareness, not advertising awareness / ROI)

We have recently begun annual awareness studies and measure "familiarity of a destination for a leisure visit". In 2021 familiarity with NC was 68% in primary and secondary markets. In 2022, familiarity with NC was 64% (this included several test markets in addition to primary and secondary).

Do you measure consideration of travel to NC and, if so, what's the trendline on consideration over the last few years? If you don't measure those, does your experience tell you the primary challenge is awareness of NC or active consideration of choosing NC as a destination?

Our most recent studies measured preference and consideration for a state for a leisure visit within a comp set. Awareness is higher in core markets and repeat visitation is high. A goal is to increase awareness in secondary and new markets.

Assuming that 2023-24 planning is under way, what do you see as the role of a (potential) new agency in shaping the program for the next year?

A new campaign/concept and a portion of the media buy and overall content plan will be in place and underway on July 1 when any new agency takes over. Thus any new agencies will be expected to execute on the plan already made, adding their own strategies, tactics and ideas as seen fit.

What are your top three issues/opportunities regarding your current marketing efforts that you would like to solve for in 2023?

This will be discussed with the selected partners.

Where do you currently see the most opportunity to drive visitors to NC?

This will be discussed with the selected partners.

How does your marketing of more popular tourist destinations currently balance out with driving people to newer places they may not know about? Is that balance working?

It is still evolving, particularly as travelers return to some of the destinations that were more popular prior to the pandemic.

What is Visit NC proudest of or most pleased with in marketing efforts in the last three years?

We are most pleased with COVID recovery efforts. We executed a program where partners could run co-op ads in our campaign for safe travel during COVID and the Get Back to A Better Place campaign that assisted with tourism recovery. It was a great example of promoting the state's brand while giving the partners a great platform where they could promote their individual destinations and assets.

What has been your biggest marketing win to date?

Any time we win a Mercury Award is special because that means we have done something better than any other state tourism office in the nation. When we won in 2019 for "Firsts That Last," we bested the Pure Michigan and Travel Oregon campaigns in the finals for best branded and integrated marketing campaigns by larger state organizations. That was special because they both have much larger budgets than we do. But winning last year for our COVID recovery marketing efforts was probably the biggest win because the program involved all assets of the staff and meant so much to our partners.

What have been the most successful campaign, CRM, and conversion tactics thus far?

That seems to change every year. Our most successful campaign ever from an ROI perspective was the "Get Back to A Better Place" campaign that generated \$354 in visitor spending to every

\$1 of media investment. It also had a 44% recall rate among travelers in target markets. Our other important success measurement is the number of partners participating in our co-op programs and how much they invest. That shows that our programs bring value to them. We expect to generate some \$2 million in partner investment each year from more than 150 different partner organizations across the state.

Are there peers or other organizations whose communications/social media efforts you admire?

Looking at other States or other destinations, what tourism campaigns do you most admire?

Are there other states, cities, or countries you feel have done best in class work?

What marketing comms programming / campaign do you admire? Why?

What *tourism* comms programming do you admire? Why?

There are many. But the programs that we look to that are both very well-run and very similar to our offerings are typically Travel Oregon, Visit California, Colorado Tourism, and Pure Michigan.

Are leisure travelers still your sole focus apart from supporting CVBs as they market to business/convention travelers?

Yes.

Have you seen any notable shifts in the origins of your feeder markets for overnight leisure visitors this year or would you still rank your feeder markets as follows: NC, VA, GA, SC, FL, PA, NY, MD, OH and lastly, TN?

Top states of origin in 2021 were(in order) NC, VA, SC, FL, GA, PA, NY, TN, OH, and TX. These are the typical top markets every year.

With the goal of maximizing economic vitality statewide, does the budget need to be equally distributed to each of the state's three regions – Piedmont, Coast, and Mountains – or can the investment allocations be strategically weighted based on performance for each region?

No, budget considerations do not need to be intentionally weighted by region.

How would you weight the tactics / services in terms of priority? Which tactics do you typically lean in more heavily on / seen best conversion on etc.?

This will be discussed with selected partners.

RFP RESPONSE

If we submit for more than one component of the RFP, does the 50-page limit apply to each component or collectively? Meaning do we need to submit a comprehensive

response that covers all components we are bidding for, or can we submit separate responses for each?

Does the 50-page limit apply to the length of the proposal regardless of how many components an agency is choosing to respond to? Or does the page limit increase for those responding to multiple?

Section 4 Scope of Work to be Provided & Technical Approach/Section 6 Written Responses for Proposal: Should these responses be separate in our submission? We ask because there is a lot of overlap with outlining our approach in section 4 (scope/technical approach) and the specific questions asked in section 6 (section 6 is more about using examples to illustrate vs approach).

Should responses to each Component be submitted as separate proposals. For instance, Component One (creative, media, brand identity) be a document. And then submission for Component Four (website development) another separate submission. Each with up to 50 pages.

Subsection D: Is the Past Work Submissions section its own independent section, or is all past work we submit supposed to be connected specifically to the Components that we are pursuing in Section 6? If Past Work Submissions is its own section, can samples submitted in this section also be used in Section 6 to demonstrate our capabilities in each of the components we intend to pursue? If so, would we need to include those examples in both sections or simply refer the client back to the previous section in the response?

The 50-page limit applies to each specific component. Please submit separate responses for each component that you intend to propose. However, if the firm proposes on more than one component, it may reference basic information about the firm (that is not specific to a particular component) in one proposal rather than repeating information that would be identical for all components proposed. For example, if a firm wants to propose for both public relations and the website, it need not repeat information about the history of the firm, number of employees, location of offices, etc.

Corporate Background & Experience: How many references would you like? Can/should they be the same clients we refer to later in Section 6?

Please submit no more than three references. References may be from any past work. However, the references should be relevant for the work being proposed. If your firm is proposing for both public relations and the website, for example, references should represent each competency.

As part of our research for this proposal, are you open to us interviewing partners for insights?

Visit NC requests that its partners not be contacted at this time regarding the RFP.

Please confirm whether the response should only be emailed or must also be delivered to the offices of Visit NC in Raleigh.

Responses to the RFP should be sent via email only.

We are assuming that outlining our Technical Approach and “description of each task and deliverable” applies only to the specific Components (Components 1-7 outlined in section 6) of the assignment that we are pitching for, correct? In other words, you are not expecting a general description of our approach to managing the account, but rather a detailed description of our approach to fulfilling the tasks and deliverables for each component we want to be selected for.

Please confirm that the description of our Technical Approach and how we will fulfill tasks and deliverables (outlined in Section 4 above) is what you are requesting that we provide for each of the Components we plan to pursue in this section.

Yes, these are correct.

Can we include hyperlinks to web pages containing dashboard, video, digital and/or website examples within the actual proposal file that we will attach to the email?

Regarding the phrase “Relevant creative examples hosted online will not count against the (50) page limit” - does that mean we can provide any type of digital file transfer link (WeTransfer, Dropbox, Vimeo, URL, etc.) to share our creative work/content?

Yes, to both questions.

Section 7D states "speculative creative and media plans are not included as part of the presentation". Is this saying they are not required but ARE allowed if the agency chooses to provide?

Speculative creative and media plans are not allowed and will not be reviewed by Visit NC if they are submitted.

Section 4 states there is a 50-page limit to the response of the RFP, is this inclusive of the proposal content listed in Section 4 as well as the requests listed in section 5 and section 6?

Are sections 5 (past work submissions) and section 6 (written responses for proposal) to be included in the section 3 (proposal) deliverable? Or are those two sections beyond the 50-page limit proposal in section 3?

There is a limit of 50 pages total for proposals for each component being proposed.

Are employee bios/resumes to be included in the 50-page count or can they be provided via a link or as an appendix?

No, they should be included in the 50-page limit for each proposal.

ABOUT VISIT NC

What is the make-up of your team? What roles and responsibilities do you have in-house that will complement the work included in the RFP?

The Visit NC team includes 15 professionals who are engaged in a variety of activities to market the state as a destination, film location, and retirement location. A current listing of the names and titles of these professionals can be found at <https://partners.visitnc.com/visit-nc-contacts>. The Executive Director and the directors of each Visit NC department will work closely with all firms selected to perform work.

Do the Sports, Retire and Film brands currently live firmly under the Visit NC brand? Do the internal stakeholders and team for these brands align with those of the overall Visit NC brand?

Sports, Retire, and Film all have their own brand identities and internal stakeholders.

Can you share an organization chart that shows how the client-side team is structured to manage and execute the components outlined in the scope of work?

A staffing list can be found here. <https://partners.visitnc.com/visit-nc-contacts>.

What are your legal, compliance turnaround, and approval timelines typically for go to market assets, campaigns and content?

As quickly as possible/needed.

Can you share your current annual marketing plan?

No, but a high-level overview of components can be found here. <https://partners.visitnc.com/domestic-travel>

Who or what group is the final client decision maker?

See prior answers.

Under Section 2 / Industry Relations: what level of support and what deliverables are generally needed by partner state agencies?

This will vary depending upon the needs of the partner agencies.

What does the approval process look like, and will the selected partner have a day-to-day contact(s)?

Who are your key decision-making stakeholders on this engagement, for the various sites and workstreams?

See prior answer/staffing list.

It appears this is a 5-year contract (July 2023 - July 2028). However, the annual budget included in the RFP for \$14m looks like it only applies for the next 2 years. If awarded, how would budgets be determined for the following 3 years that this contract applies to?

As stated in the RFP, Visit North Carolina's budget is determined by and voted on/approved annually by the NC State Legislature during the annual state budgeting cycle. Therefore the total amount is subject to change annually.

What is the size, location, and make-up of your internal IT / technology teams, and how would they engage on this assignment?

Visit North Carolina has an in-house Salesforce administrator, but no other in-house IT/technology team members or functions.

Are there contracted service bureaus, consortiums or offshore representatives involved in international marketing? If so, what are some of those entities?

Currently we are contracted with Reach Global in Canada, Lieb Management in German-speaking Europe, and Travel & Tourism Marketing in the UK.

SOCIAL MEDIA

What are your biggest pain points with the current social media landscape?

Algorithm changes.

What has been the most significant barrier to success on social media?

Constant algorithm changes.

Please provide a list of social media handles relevant to item 34 in the RFP's Scope of Work section.

What social media accounts are currently live and active for Visit NC?

Please provide a list of owned channels relevant to the RFP.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/visitnc/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/visitNC>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VisitNC>

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/visitnc/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/visitnc>

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@visitnc>

Is there an additional budget for social media ad spend or is that included in the \$600,000 social media budget noted?

Yes, the budget amounts shared are merely guideposts. Proposals should include what each firm feels is a necessary amount to complete the scope of work.

Is social advertising spend included in the social media line item or as part of media or creative?

A firm proposing exclusively for the social media component should be anticipate placing social media advertising. It is expected, however, that firms will work collaboratively and strategically with one another.

Does the creative or media budget line item include photography/ videography and editing for social channels? Or are social assets pulled from the social media budget line item.

Yes it includes creative and media for social as well as other channels.

Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube are listed on your site. Does the social media budget line item cover all of these channels?

It covers all but YouTube.

Can you provide more clarity on what is expected of social media - management of channels?

Is there an expectation for the selected agency to manage Visit NC's social media accounts or to only provide the social strategy?

Is there a need for the new agency to manage your current social media channels or just lead the overall strategy and creative? Managing the channels would include posting, content monitoring, community management, etc.

The selected agency will provide social strategy and manage all accounts under the purview of Visit NC's marketing team.

Can you share goals/ expectations for cadence of posting, proactive engagement, live event coverage, channel growth, etc.?

What is the expected cadence and amount of posts per month? How much social media content is produced? With what frequency have you been posting social content?

We expect to maintain a steady cadence of posts and promotions in line with best practices in the industry while hitting social media benchmark guidelines. We also strive for utmost community engagement while growing our channels as a primary part of meeting and exceeding marketing goals.

The “Creative Agency” is required to create “internet” and “electronic” marketing materials, does that include social media? Is there an understanding or expectation of overlap here between perhaps wider marketing campaign creative and day-to-day social media? Would separate agencies be considered to cover social media vs internet/ electronic marketing?

We hope to maintain a consistent voice and brand throughout all our marketing and communications, either paid or organic. Regardless of agency share of work, we expect collaboration between the teams leading each marketing campaign.

Does social include fielding organic social engagement?

Yes.

Is there an influencer program in place? If not, has this been done before, or would you consider it?

Yes, we have a social media influencer program.

Can you provide more specificity about what social media materials we are to develop - or more examples of what typically has been done in the past?

The agency is expected to develop all social media materials across every platform.

Are there any social media monitoring or executional platforms being used that are owned by Visit NC, such as Hootsuite, Sprout Social, etc.?

No. The agency owns and manages social monitoring and scheduling platforms.

What is the current process for engaging stakeholders across the state to highlight their specific destinations within Visit NC social media content?

Our engagement with partners and stakeholders follows a holistic approach across our work and so there is no specific process for this type of engagement. It varies.

How much do you rely on UGC or influencer content creation for your social channels over agency produced content?

We use this type of content as appropriate.

What does the internal social media team structure look like currently within the organization? What roles exist internally, and where do agencies offer supplemental support?

How do the incumbent agency and Visit NC staff currently share responsibilities for organic social?

The agency handles all social media strategy and implementation with direction from the Tourism Marketing Manager and others.

EMAIL AND DATABASE MARKETING

Does email marketing management include list management and development and sending of all emails?

Yes.

The agency SOW includes managing the email database. Does Visit NC handle the content of the emails and email deployment or is that also included in the scope for the awarded agency?

Included in the SOW, the agency will take the lead with support from Visit NC staff.

Which platforms are you currently using to manage email?

What email marketing system is in use?

What program are you currently using to manage consumer-facing newsletters and the email database? Are you open to switching platforms if deemed appropriate?

What email platform is used? Is the email database segmented? If so, how?

Does Visit NC use Salesforce both for CRM and for email deployment?

Salesforce is used for both CRM and email.

Are they e-newsletters only or is there a printed version?

E-news only.

Where and how do you manage/maintain your email database for newsletters?

"Manage the e-mail database of potential visitors for the distribution of ongoing electronic newsletters." Is this a locally stored e-mail database, or is this information stored in a CRM somewhere? And if a CRM, which do you use?

Salesforce Marketing Cloud is the CRM.

What is the size of your existing email marketing database and is the list segmented?

How are individuals currently segmented, if any, in your email database?

How large is your email database?

The list is segmented, and database size and segmentation details will be shared with the selected firm once under contract. Current consumer newsletters offerings can be found here:

<https://www.visitnc.com/enews>

How often are you sending emails currently?

How many email distributions do you currently have?

How many consumer-facing newsletters are published per year?

What is your current data management practice? Do you have a DMP?

How are you currently capturing your email leads? Webform pop-up? List-purchase?

These details will be discussed with the selected firm during planning.

BRAND FAMILIES

Under brand family management, what are the specific needs for each of the brand families listed? Do they all use/have the same channels?

There are different channels for each brand.

Scope of work includes overall legal protection against copyright or trademark infringements, brand standards, and brand evolutions as needed.

Can you provide more specific information about the agency responsibilities and deliverables associated with managing the Brand Family entities?

Under the SOW 28-31: Please elaborate what “management” means as it relates to the brand families.

Are each of the Brand Family entities managed by different individuals on the client side?

Yes, see Visit NC staff list provided above.

When you talk about managing brand families, can you talk a little bit around the challenges at hand, today?

This will be discussed in consultation with the selected providers of services.

RESEARCH AND DATA

What are the main questions Visit NC is hoping to uncover answers to with research?

Visit NC already has a robust market research and tourism data program in place. Additional research proposed by partner firms will be determined on an ad hoc basis and in consultation with Visit NC staff.

Can we receive read-only access to any data and analytics or past performance reports?

This access will not be provided as part of the RFP process.

Seeing that monthly lodging reports stopped being posted in July 2020, how are you tracking visitation by week / month / across the year?

Monthly lodging data for hotels and short-term rentals is still being received; however, the data is no longer published on the Visit NC partner website.

Will a selected agency have direct access to systems such as Arrivalist and Google Analytics?

Yes, the selected agency will have access to research.

Will we be given access to Arrivalist and SMARInsights to be able to better monitor and optimize performance in real-time?

Yes, the selected agency will have access to research.

Will direct access to data be provided for agency-owned analytic and reporting tools, or will the winning agency be required to use existing Visit NC technologies?

Visit NC works closely with the agency of record in terms of analytics and reporting tools. While not required, the two teams are encouraged to use and be familiar with the same technologies.

What role might the agency selected play in interfacing with, managing or using any MarTech or AdTech tools and systems?

Visit NC's research and marketing teams work closely with the agency analytics team on all research interfaces.

What type of data does your research team supply agencies? If there are audience and performance reports, would you be able to share them?

All research at Visit NC is available to the agency of record and the two teams work collaboratively.

Will we have access to the full reports and data behind the 2021 NC Visitor and Regional Visitor Reports? Do either of the visitor research studies explore the emotions or psychographics around visit motivations and aspirations?

Upon selection, the agency of record will be able to work with the Visit NC research team to access data. We are improving and updating research on an ongoing basis and trip motivations are very important.

What existing technologies does Visit NC utilize for analytics, reporting, direct marketing execution, and automation?

What tools are Visit NC currently using for website data collection and analytics?

Visit NC uses a variety of technologies to measure, analyze and report. Arrivalist, Adara, Zartico, STR, AirDNA, KeyData, and Google Analytics are a selection of those technologies.

Have you conducted any audience research specifically related to the OUTDOOR NC initiative and the outdoor visitor?

Yes, we have conducted several outreach surveys to visitors, residents, and DMO partners over the last 2 years.

How frequently do you re-field and update the Visitor Profile and Marketing research studies featured on the partner website?

Visitor profile studies are performed annually and other marketing studies are performed very regularly.

Should primary research considerations and budgets (i.e., audience or segmentation research, concept or creative testing, advertising impact research) be included in the proposal or will all research be directed and funded outside of this budget by Visit NC?

Concept and creative testing should be included. Other research is separate.

Please list any primary research projects that Visit NC conducted and used in 2021-2022 to inform marketing decisions. Do you feel these are still relevant?

Visit NC performs annual visitor profile studies and economic impact studies. In addition to tracking arrivals, lodging state (hotel, shared & rental), and other visitor data, there are a variety of marketing and media KPIs used to inform marketing decisions.

Does Visit NC or the incumbent agency have any active contracts with research partners including projects releasing now or already in progress that Visit NC will want the awarded agency/firm to strategically use and to build upon?

Yes, across a variety of different providers.

What do you currently view as your primary source for measuring awareness?

SMARInsights

This section asks that we outline any primary marketing research that we would propose if awarded the account. Can you provide a summary of the types of research you have conducted in the recent past, beyond what is available on your website, so that we have an idea of what exists that we might build upon and/or where there might be gaps in the research you've typically conducted.

Visit NC performs annual visitor profile studies and economic impact studies. In addition to tracking arrivals, lodging state (hotel, shared & rental), and other visitor data, there are a variety of marketing and media KPIs used to inform marketing decisions. An annual awareness and effectiveness study is performed as well as other marketing research on an ad-hoc basis.

Have you leveraged focus groups or user-testing to test and evaluate creative output in the past? If so, what are some of the high-level learnings you discovered?

Not recently.

SWEEPSTAKES

Can you tell us a little more about the expected agency's role in sweepstakes management for Visit NC?

How is legal handled for sweepstakes?

Who is responsible for sweepstakes fulfillment?

What software systems does Visit NC use for managing its current sweepstakes and organic social platforms?

Concepting, necessary registration/filing, and legal matters and execution/fulfillment.

How many sweepstakes do you run per year?

Three to five.

Can you provide an example of a successful sweepstakes and why it was successful?

These vary by strategic objectives and are used tactically in a variety of ways.

WEBSITES

Can we please view a copy of the monthly reporting for the VisitNC.com website?

This information will not be provided during the RFP process.

Are the websites identified being maintained as is or rebuilt?

Once an agency partner for the Component Four is selected, is your intent to maintain the existing VisitNC.com website or to potentially redesign it? If redesign is an option, do you have a CMS preference and a timeline in mind?

Do you foresee a redesign/rebuild for all of your sites in the near-term, or do you anticipate a longer maintenance period for these?

"Lead Visit NC in the development and enhancement of technology-based strategies and programs...." The RFP references development and "managing" of the properties - is the

expectation that we are just providing refreshes to or maintenance of websites, or is the expectation that creating a new site/sites is part of the RFP?

A complete redesign is expected using Salesforce CMS, and the timeline is to begin in 2023.

What CRM, if any, are you using for partner listings?

What is your governing CRM platform? Is that the same as or different than your email platform?

Which ESP/CRM do you presently integrate on the websites?

Salesforce CMS.

Can you elaborate on 'Product Databases'? What are the products and how many databases exist? What type of databases are used in relation to the products?

This is the database of listings on VisitNC.com.

What platforms are they built on?

What platform is www.VisitNC.com built on?

What platforms are the Visit NC family of web assets built on?

What other website related technology platforms are in use? What integrations are necessary?

Please describe the current technology stack of the existing VisitNC.com website.

What are the technology platforms that the websites are built on? Are they all hosted in the same place? Initial findings are that the tech stack varies between website properties.

The current websites are built upon custom, proprietary platforms. However, Visit NC wants the sites rebuilt and will depend upon recommendations for a future platform from the selected provider.

When you think about VisitNC.com, what are the high-level mandates that the site needs to deliver on, for travelers and for partners?

Are you facing any challenges from your current analytics ecosystem to meet the needs of Visit NC and/or its partners to accurately monitor, visualize performance, and make informed decisions from data?

How has Visit NC changed since creating www.VisitNC.com and what about this site is no longer working for Visit NC that the awarded Website agency will be challenged to solve?

How do you presently manage website releases, from a staffing and Project Management perspective?

The responses to these will be discussed in consultation with the selected partner.

Would we be long-term partners in maintaining the web infrastructure associated with work, or do you have an existing in-house or third-party resource?

Long-term partners.

What would you consider to be your most significant challenges as pertains to your technical infrastructure and CMS implementations?

This will be discussed in consultation with the selected partner.

Do you anticipate an opportunity to consolidate (1) some of the websites, or (2) the technical platform/infrastructure on which they were built?

Yes.

Which website integrations, data sources, (custom or other) plug-ins, custom databases or systems, ingestions, incoming/outgoing feeds should be taken into consideration?

This will be discussed in consultation with the selected partner.

Do you anticipate the need for translation/localization for other markets, or are those covered through the various Brand USA / Visit the USA properties?

TBD. Currently handled by Brand USA but as the Visit NC website evolves and is redesigned, it could be considered.

"Determine appropriate and cost-effective methods for hosting the website" - does this mean that hosting of the sites will move elsewhere, and we are responsible for managing the hosting?

Yes, that is correct.

You mention "keyword search optimization" - is this responsibility tied specifically to the initial design and development of the site(s) or is SEO an ongoing responsibility of the agency across all sites?

Ongoing responsibility across all sites.

Is there one set of stakeholders/decision makers for all the websites, or are there separate sets of stakeholders for each web property?

Separate for each web property.

How has the website development budget been allocated across the various websites? Is most of it in support of VisitNC.com?

Yes, a majority of the budget supports the largest site which is VisitNC.com

PAID MEDIA

Do you see paid media as primarily supporting peak travel times and/or growth / bridge seasons? If both, what's the relative importance?

Growth and bridge seasons are the primary focus for paid media.

What are your biggest pain points with the current paid media landscape?

What do you feel have been the biggest wins / successes in your paid media program?

Where have you seen the most success?

Which media channels across traditional and digital have you invested heavily in the past? Are there specific paid media channels or platforms actively in place?

What would be your primary KPI for paid media? (Leads vs. traffic vs. awareness)

Is there a percentage of each stage in the marketing funnel that you would ideally like to be recommended or already know this?

These will all be discussed in consultation with the selected partner.

OUTDOOR NC

How specifically are you measuring success for Outdoor NC?

Partner buy-in and behavior change by residents and visitors in the outdoor spaces.

Does the \$270,000 Outdoor NC budget include the media buy to support this campaign or are there funds allocated from the \$8.6M media budget?

Is the expectation that the agency selected for the Outdoor NC work would plan and buy all supporting media?

Yes, as needed.

Can you provide additional detail on how the Outdoor NC agency would integrate and collaborate with the AOR agency regarding creative strategy and media services?

The Outdoor NC agency would be in charge of all creative and strategy for the campaign. They would need to work with the AOR for assets needed and website upgrades.

Who currently manages the Outdoor NC campaign?

Managed in house, but all creative has been done by the AOR to this point.

What is the expectation regarding partner engagement related to the Outdoor NC campaign?

Partner engagement is key to the success of the campaign

On your website, partnerships are broken down into categories (Trailblazers, Advocates, Statewide Supporters, Stewards and Patrons). Can you describe the working relationship with partners in each category? Does Outdoor NC distribute the same marketing materials to partners within each category?

All ONC partners have access to assets in our partner toolkit, but some of the co-op offerings differ by level of engagement.

Can you describe marketing tactics partners have used that were successful in promoting Outdoor NC's mission and the effectiveness of each?

Outdoor NC is a fairly new initiative, launching in 4/2021. Partners have been using our assets in the toolkit as well as their own. Social media, billboards, visitor guide messaging, and partnering with their local community partners.

What's the business relationship with Leave No Trace and the NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office?

Visit NC has a MOU with Leave No Trace and the NCORIO was housed in EDPNC prior to the director leaving.

We see that North Carolina State Parks and the Forest Service are among Statewide Supporters. How does Visit NC engage and align on sustainability goals and marketing materials with these agencies/organizations?

We work closely with the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (State Parks) and the NC Forest Service for messaging.

TARGET AUDIENCES AND COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

How would you describe the target audiences and audience segments?

What demographic, sociographic or psychographic data on current North Carolina visitors can you share with a selected agency?

Do you have more information on target audiences beyond the domestic / leisure travelers from out-of-state, international audiences for leisure travel, film production /film-inspired tourism, retirees 55+, amateur and professional sporting events, group travel and tour operators? Who are your most important audiences for this communications effort? How would you rank those audiences in terms of importance?

Is there a perception or sentiment shift you feel is needed with any target audiences?

If you have repeat visitor data, what is driving consumers to return to NC?

Which inbound markets are the most important ones for tourism to North Carolina for Domestic Travel? For International Travel?

Which travel segments bring the most visitors to North Carolina?

Can you provide more details on your key target or if there is a most valuable consumer currently (e.g., residents to advocate visits, business travelers, young travelers etc.)?

All of the above data on target audiences will be available to selected agencies.

FEE PROPOSAL

Is the cost proposal scoring based on a calculation from the lowest-priced proposal?

No. Scoring will be based upon assessment of the value provided to the client by each proposal.

Can you provide more information or context as to what constitutes an “open-ended” compensation proposal?

Visit NC strives to minimize unanticipated costs and “nickel and diming” by its marketing communications partners wherever possible. Examples include billing for the cost of postage or overnight delivery, copies, telephone, etc. The usual cost of doing business should be included in the fee proposal.

Should out-of-pocket costs be included as part of the annual budget?

Yes, please include wherever possible.

Our agency has moved to a value-centric scoping methodology that steps away from rate cards. If we are able to provide a clear costing structure that highlights outputs over hours, will that satisfy the cost proposal requirements?

Yes, this is acceptable.

Our firm works on a monthly retainer model, as opposed to day rates or hourly fees. Is it acceptable to provide a monthly retainer fee for the cost proposal?

Yes, this is acceptable.

Section 2, Item 15: What has been the established commission percentage allowed for media placement?

There is no established commission structure.

CREATIVE PRODUCTION

Are production costs such as payment for on-air talent, camera crews, location permits, etc. included in the \$3M creative fee or is that billed separately to Visit NC?

External out-of-pocket expenses for production should be billed at cost to the client.

Can the amount of creative deliverables be quantified for a typical year of activity? For example, how many different broadcast spots are typically produced within one year?

Deliverables depend on annual budget and creative needs. This varies year over year.

How many separate campaigns are developed each year on average?

One for the overall brand and one for Outdoor NC specifically.

Within a campaign, what is the usual media mix and number of executions?

When it comes to production budget, are there any mediums that you prefer to put more money towards over another (e.g., TV/video, print, photography)?

Given continual changes in media, business conditions, and strategy (especially during the last few years), there is no longer a typical mix. Decisions on this will be made in collaboration with the selected firm.

What has been an average budget for out-of-house creative production costs in the past few years?

This will be discussed and determined in collaboration with the selected firm.

Are there any mandatory production considerations to keep in mind such as locations, talent, off-camera crew, etc. for the agency to keep in mind?

Try to hire as much in-state as possible, be it crew, talent, etc.

How many rounds of review are expected during creative development?

Two to three.

CREATIVE STRATEGY

Are there aspects of the current creative campaign that Visit NC wants to continue, or do you want a complete re-concept?

This will be determined in collaboration with the selected agency partner.

Do you have brand guidelines that you can share with us?

<https://partners.visitnc.com/brand-platform>

What do you want consumers to feel when they see the comms for Visit NC?

What would blending in with other destination marketing look like to you?

Are there enduring creative territories that have worked and should be sustained?

Do you feel the current brand expression is on point, or do you feel a shift is needed?

Are there references available for broadcast placements that ran in '22? Or any references of favorite past Visit NC creative?

These will all be discussed in consultation with the selected firm.

MISCELLANEOUS

What call center software is used?

What is the budget allocation for Call Center support? Where does that effort fall within the budget breakdown on page 9?

Visit NC call center services are not a component of the RFP.

Can we see examples of previous videos that were created to support the partner meetings? Is any additional support requested beyond assistance with the presentation?

There are no examples to share at this time, but the production and content is typically such that no special skill or talent above that of a typical agency capability is required.

How often do you experience issue / crisis? Please name examples.

What work have you done to prepare for issues / crisis? (e.g., have a crisis comms plan, appointed a team, set policies related to internal and external comms, crafted response templates for traditional and social media, etc.)

Hurricanes and other similar natural disasters are probably the most frequent crises experienced by the state and affecting the tourism industry. Crisis communications plans have been established and are in place.

One of your strategies is attracting out-of-state visitors with in-state media partnerships. Can you provide more detail on the types of in-state partnerships in place?

The most common is a partnership with the North Carolina Broadcasters Association for remnant spots.

**How many co-branding activations are you expecting annually?
Do you have any current brand or other partnerships in place?**

None at this time.

Are cross-platform data connected or stored in a central location (i.e., call center, website visitations, social media, marketing automation tools, paid media, events, etc.)?

Not at this time.

Can you please provide any examples where line item #50 might have applied in previous years? (*“For the purpose of responding to this RFP there will be times when assistance is needed beyond the scope of work and anticipated plans. Please elaborate on the firm’s willingness and capacity to assist the Visit NC team on endeavors not currently identified and a brief statement on what you believe differentiates you from the field of expected respondents in helping Visit NC meet those unplanned future endeavors.”*) Our teams are always prepared to react to shifting opportunities, but understanding the potential scope of these types of initiatives will impact how we cost and staff.

As noted above, hurricanes and other natural disasters often require the support of Visit NC marketing partners both pre-storm and post-storm in order to provide effective communications to visitors and those travelers planning a trip. Of course, unexpected growth opportunities can also occur which may require enhanced support to leverage.