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**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

**CREATIVE AGENCY SERVICES**

Tourism Industry Recovery, II

ARPA FUNDS

**Proposals due on or before 12:00 p.m. CDT on 10/27/2023**

**INTRODUCTION**The Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, d/b/a **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** (“Bureau” or “**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**”), is charged with attracting and serving visitors by communicating and facilitating the **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** experience. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**’s multi-faceted sales and marketing approach includes local, statewide, regional, domestic, and international campaigns. The Bureau is searching for a marketing agency offering a strategic and creative approach based on sound research to create a campaign(s) that will increase awareness of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** as a travel and tourism destination and attract overnight visitors.

**ABOUT COASTAL MISSISSIPPI  
COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** is a political subdivision of the State of Mississippi governed by 15 Commissioners appointed by the Boards of Supervisors of Harrison, Jackson, and Hancock Counties with a fiscal year spanning October 1 through September 30.

The COVID-19 pandemic created significant disruption to businesses in the hospitality sector, including hotels, restaurants, and small businesses. Additionally, many tourist attractions experienced sharp declines in revenue and visitation.

**OBJECTIVE**

This Request for Proposals (RFP) aims to seek proposals from qualified **destination marketing publishers** who have a working knowledge of the tourism industry and can demonstrate the necessary experience to produce **a Visitors Guide** for **Coastal Mississippi’s** **leisure travel market**. Prospective respondents are to submit proposals for the publication's design, printing, advertising sales, and digital guide creation. Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the conditions outlined in this RFP. Although we intend to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work, **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** may terminate the negotiations if they are unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on all matters, including the scope of work and cost.

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** intends to contract with a qualified **agency or publisher** to support its continued recovery efforts, stemming from the negative economic impacts of COVID-19. Future projects undertaken by the selected agency or publisher that are enumerated or implied to fall under the scope of this RFP may be paid in whole, in part, or not at all by federal and state grants. The aforementioned grants may be currently awarded to **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** or may be awarded in the future. These funds may be used so long as it is deemed appropriate under the scope of the grant and meet the legal requirements of such. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** reserves the right to make these determinations on an as-needed basis, and any payments are not to be construed as a grant award unless explicitly stated to be such. Coastal Mississippi makes no warranties, express or implied herein, regarding grant awards in this RFP.

Further, in compliance with federal and state statutes, **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** encourages small, minority, and women-owned businesses to respond to this RFP. As such, this RFP will be placed on MS PTAP, the bureau’s website, placed in a newspaper of general circulation at the time of publication, and intentional outreach will be conducted in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.321 to ensure equal opportunity for all to respond.

*This RFP in no way commits* ***COASTAL MISSISSIPPI*** *to award a contract, to pay any costs in preparation of a proposal, or to contract for the goods and services offered. Although COASTAL MISSISSIPPI intends to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work,* ***COASTAL MISSISSIPPI*** *may terminate the negotiations if they are unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on all matters, including the scope of work and cost.*

**GOAL**

Through the Visitors Guide, Coastal Mississippi aims to reach critical audiences with content that resonates with them, build awareness and interest in our brand, encourage visits to the Coastal Mississippi website, and ultimately drive visitation to our destination.

The high-end publication will highlight Coastal Mississippi’s three counties and 12 cities. The publication will be attractive, inviting, and easy for visitors. The guide must make a striking first impression with high-quality photography and print production standards. The guide will be a mix of photography and editorials with simple, short stories, articles, and sidebars and will provide fresh material and standard items such as maps and listings. The publisher is responsible for developing all editorial/copywriting for the guide and fact-checking.

The Visitors Guide is Coastal Mississippi’s primary publication for potential and actual visitors, families, couples, multi-generational, corporate groups and, meeting planners, and attendees. It should include information for local travelers and tourism-related businesses, including but not limited to dining, shopping, outdoor recreation, hotels, gaming, and arts and culture.

**TARGET AUDIENCE DETAILS**

As our marketing efforts grow in scale, so do our efforts to connect with travelers that represent significant and enduring growth opportunities for Coastal Mississippi. We will continue to monitor universal changes in traveler sentiment and behaviors; however, the primary focus will be on the Experiential Travelers Audience.

While there remains room for growth within the Experiential Traveler audience, we see an opportunity to expand the definition and diversify of the audience by better understanding the multicultural makeup and focusing on how to reach and connect with all who wish to visit.

**CORE EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELER**

Those traveling with friends, partners, or solo. Frequent travelers seeking new travel experiences off the beaten path.

**FAMILY EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELER**

Traveling with family, young and old. Seasonal travelers who are seeking out travel experiences that build stronger bonds.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND REQUIREMENTS**

The **Visitors Guide** should meet the following criteria:

* Create a little to no-cost visitor’s guide that could be a potential revenue generator for Coastal Mississippi
* Provide accurate, current, and comprehensive information about Coastal Mississippi’s three counties and 12 cities in a visually appealing, user-friendly manner
* Create an easy way for audiences to interact with Coastal Mississippi tourism-related businesses by containing all contact information, including telephone number, email address, and website address
* Effectively market the region as a travel destination, including tourism-related businesses, attractions, recreation opportunities, history, and other assets
* Include area maps that assist visitors through Coastal Mississippi
* The final publication must be compatible with the Coastal Mississippi website and fully downloadable
* Ad placement with approval of Coastal Mississippi’s marketing director
* Guide must point visitors to destination website

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** wishes to employ an outside agency or publisher with destination marketing experience to produce a **Visitors Guide** for consumer distribution. The agency should recommend an overall **strategy and layout** to clearly position **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** to visitors as an affordable and attractive open destination for those who enjoy traveling, specifically in its top drive markets and fly markets. It will be imperative to ensure that this scope of services adheres to any changing public health guidelines and is conveyed in an informed manner. The selected agency’s responsibilities will include the following:

* Minimum quantity:
* Format size: Would like two options proposed, 8.5” x 11” and a version no smaller than 6” x 9”
* Stock: Recommend stock for front and back cover, interior pages
* Pages: Minimum 48 pages + 4-page cover
* Text: Content provided by publisher with Coastal Mississippi’s approval
* Photography: Provided by publisher with Coastal Mississippi’s approval, Coastal Mississippi with share images with photo releases when available
* Development: Kick-off meeting to review layout and develop project timeline, milestone meetings to ensure project timeline and delivery
* Clear, concise, collaborative, and easily accessed communications by selected publishers with Director of Marketing and Marketing Managers as needed to keep projects on target and on time
* All edits at the discretion of Coastal Mississippi before final approval

**ADVERTISING SPECIFICATIONS**

* All advertising sales, outreach, and communications will be handled by the publisher
* The potential publisher must submit a proposal rate card and specify a plan for guaranteed gross advertising sales
* Advertising rates, increases, and discounts must be reviewed by Coastal Mississippi
* Advertisers must come from Coastal Mississippi’s three coastal counties: Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson
* The Visitors Guide will contain information pertaining to a variety of different audiences including:
  + Potential visitors to Coastal Mississippi
  + Current visitors seeking more detailed information
  + Group travel planners
  + Residents of Coastal Mississippi
  + Event and sports tournament planners
  + Local and regional businesses

The size and scope of the project may be altered as progress develops, or comparable or better solutions may be available.

**DESIGN AND WRITING GUIDELINES**

The Visitors Guide should be welcoming, attractive, AND CREATED BY A MEMBER OF THE PUBLISHER’S PROFESSIONAL STAFF. The final version of the design should be a collaborative effort between the publisher and Coastal Mississippi, incorporating elements that effectively represent the brand and image desired by Coastal Mississippi through a consultative development process. The publisher must adhere to the existing Brand Standards & Style Guide.

**PRICING PROPOSAL**

Pricing proposals must contain any and all costs that would be invoiced to Coastal Mississippi for the performance of these services. All advertising contained within the publication shall be in good taste, non-offensive, and appropriate for all audiences. The proposal should contain:

* Total project cost
* Any additional costs/charges (such as travel expenses) must be clearly defined in the proposal
* Payment terms must be clearly defined
* Stated ratio of content to advertising
* File delivery/deadline to the printer
* Quality of paper/binding method
* Terms of delivery
* Advertising rates and ad sizes
* Ad sales and approach
* Mailing costs of guides

**AVAILABLE FUNDS**

**BUDGET:** **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** is seeking a no-cost or low-cost print publication that may potentially generate revenue for the organization. This award will be based on creative design, production, account management fees, and out-of-pocket expenses for Coastal Mississippi. This budget will be implemented in phases over a 12-month period. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.**

**BILLING: COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** will pay monthly. Invoices must be dated and received by the 20th day of the month for payment in the following month. Invoices should be on letterhead from the selected agency and include the month(s) for which payment is due as well as **details of work completed with appropriate back-up from third parties** at the mutually agreed upon rate(s) or amount in the executed contract and all back-up including detailed invoices, contracts, or subscriptions from third party or contracted vendors.

**OFFICIAL CONTACT**

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** requests the proposer designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal. **(Attachment 1).**

**TIMELINE**

This tentative timeline may be altered at any time at the discretion of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| RFP available to agencies | October 5, 2023 |
| Final day to submit questions regarding this RFP | By 5:00 PM CDT October 19, 2023 |
| Questions answered | By 5:00 PM CDT October 20, 2023 |
| **Proposals due by 12:00 p.m. CDT** | By 12:00 PM October 27, 2023 |
| Proposals evaluated by RFP committee | October 30 – November 13, 2023 |
| Agencies under consideration will be interviewed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted during this time frame as needed | November 16-20, 2023 |
| Agency selected, and contract negotiations begin | November 30, 2023 |
| Work begins for a limited duration, decided in contract negotiations | December 1, 2023 |

**SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES**

Your response to this RFP must be submitted in the following format and labeled accordingly:

**A. Statement of Qualifications –** Provide a written statement of your agency’s qualifications for providing the work as described in the Scope of Work

**B. Tourism Experience –** Provide a written statement of your involvement in the tourism industry, specifically with DMO clients, industry memberships and resources

**C. Organization, Ownership, and Management**

1. Name, address, and telephone of the entity that will be contracted with and all trade names to be used
2. Name, address, and telephone numbers of the organization’s principal officers and other owners

**D. Organization’s Structure and Experience**

1. Organizational chart of company, including any subcontractors who will work with **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**
2. Total number of employees including full-time, part-time and contract workers
3. Summary of employees who will work on the account including their name, title, a short summary of their qualifications and their main role in working with **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**.
4. Hours of operation that staff will be available and any satellite offices
5. Experience as it relates to **creative content, print layout, messaging, print publishing, print distribution, and ad design**. No more than **three** relevant case studies should be provided, including project goals with measurable KPIs and results. Creative work should be included for each case study.

**E. Client Information**

1. Current clients in descending order of size
2. List your two most recent past clients and reason for termination
3. List any travel/tourism clients and their current status

**F. Account Gain and Loss**

1. Indicate if the agency has had a contract terminated for non-performance over the last five years with either litigation determining the agency at fault or no litigation due to inaction on part of the organization.
2. List of accounts gained over the last two years and why your organization was awarded the work.
3. Three references that are current accounts with contact names, email and phone numbers

**E. Conflict(s) of Interest -** The proposer must declare and provide details of any actual, potential, or perceived conflict(s) of interest.

**F. Certification Form** – Certification Form (**Attachment 2**) must be signed and accompany all RFP Response submissions.

**G. Budget -** Please provide a proposed budget based on the balance of FY24 and a full year for creative layout, production, creative account management, and out-of-pocket expenses. Note: Although **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**’s fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30; please base your proposed budget on the 12-month period.

**CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

1. Submittals in response to this request and respondents' participation in the process shall be at no cost or obligation to **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** reserves the right to, at any time, abandon or terminate its efforts to contract for any or all of said services without any obligation to any respondent.
2. Responses to this request and other materials submitted shall become the property of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** personnel or staff after this request has been advertised, except to ask questions as specified below under "Respondent Questions." Such contact will be considered cause for disqualification.
4. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** may waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submittals.
5. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** reserves the right to reject any submittal if the evidence submitted by, or investigation of, such respondent demonstrates that such respondent or its subcontractors, in **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** 's opinion, is not properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the Contract or to complete the Work enumerated or implied to fall under the scope of work thereof.
6. All applicable laws, ordinances, and the rules and regulations of all governmental authorities having jurisdiction shall apply to the Contract throughout. Further, all legal matters shall be adjudicated by the state courts of competent jurisdiction in Harrison County, Mississippi, and shall comply with all relevant federal and state laws, regulations, and ordinances.
7. This Contract is being funded in part or completely through a grant provided to **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** by the State of Mississippi as part of its ARPA State and Local Fiscal Relief Fund (SLFRF) allocation received from the U.S. Treasury Department. The SLFRF program places numerous obligations on recipients and subrecipients, which flow down to successful respondents. Each respondent is cautioned to carefully review the *Standard Terms and Conditions,* which are a part of the sample contract, and to ensure that all responsibilities and obligations are properly addressed.
8. By executing a signature on the submittal, the respondent certifies that:
   1. Neither the respondent nor any of its team members, is currently debarred from submitting proposals or entering into contracts issued by any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi or the Federal Government.
   2. No Federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the respondent, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
   3. If any funds other than Federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, respondent shall complete and submit Standard Form LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

**EVALUATION & SELECTION**

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** will establish a committee to evaluate and rate all proposals based on the criteria prescribed. Bids will be opened by an Officer of the Board of Commissioners, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Director whose department the RFP falls under and will report the results thereof to the Board of Commissioners.

**SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 1**

Proposals meeting all requirements of the RFP will be evaluated by a review committee and ranked based on the following selection criteria. Top agencies will be chosen for Step 2.

* Tourism Industry Experience 15%
* Qualifications to execute the plan of work, including costs of services 60%
* References from past clients 10%
* Evaluation of prior work 15%

**SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 2**

The top two (2) agencies will be invited to present their suggested framework in person or via video conference.

The following criteria will rank presentations:

* Agency’s expertise in diverse but cohesive strategies for driving tourism demand 60%
* Ability to illustrate return on investment for suggested strategies 25%
* Suggestions to address current and forecasted traveler sentiment 15%

**SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 3**

A contract will be awarded to the organization whose proposal is the most advantageous to COASTAL MISSISSIPPI, considering the criteria set forth in this RFP. Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** is a political subdivision of the state of Mississippi and therefore must comply with Title 25, Chapter 61 of Mississippi Code. As such, **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** will not provide any additional documents outside of this RFP and the attachments named herein without a formal public records request being submitted.

After awarding the contract, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** and the selected agency to define better, elaborate upon, and update the agency’s final Scope of Work and General Terms and Conditions. For the selected agency, an employee will be designated as your contact and will coordinate any materials needed or questions answered with all other **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** employees.

**STANDARD CONTRACT**

Following is a copy of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**’s standard contract template to be referenced for this proposal. By responding to this request, the respondent is asserting its intent to accept the terms and conditions contained therein unless exceptions to the contract are provided as part of the respondent's submittal.

**DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS**

Please submit two (2) hard copy responses and a digital version of the proposal on a hard drive or USB drive. All proposals should include a clear, concise narrative. The proposal format is open to presentation style but must include the aforementioned items.

Printed submissions must be marked "**RFP: Visitors Guide**" and delivered to:

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**

Attn: Kendra Simpson, Marketing Director

2350 Beach Boulevard, Suite A

Biloxi, Mississippi 39531

Submittals received in any manner not specifically set forth above shall not be accepted or considered. Submittals received after the deadline will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the submittal is received by the specified deadline. The delivery date and time will be recorded upon receipt. **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** will not be responsible for late or incomplete responses due to mistakes or delays of the respondent or carrier used by the respondent or weather delays. **A postmark will not be considered proof of timely submission.**

**QUESTIONS**

Note that all answers regarding questions and requests for clarification for this RFP will be responded to publicly on the **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** website consistent with the aforementioned schedule to ensure that all respondents have the same information. No calls, please.