

**TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENCY SERVICES

Tourism Industry Recovery, II



Proposals due on or before 5:00 p.m. CDT on APRIL 7, 2023.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to seek qualified public relations agencies to support *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE*'s strategic communications, media relations, and public relations priorities. Qualified agencies will have a working knowledge of the tourism industry.

TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE's desired partner will have the capacity to provide strategic counsel and direction, actively share and promote the destination's message, amplify successes, and position Tishomingo County as a premier destination in North Mississippi area for leisure travel at the national, regional, and local levels.

As the DMO's agency, the selected firm will be responsible for assisting in the development and support of *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE*'s public relations and media efforts to maximize communications efforts aimed at key domestic reporters and media outlets. The agency must be able to provide strong media and public relations strategic insight and message development to assist *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE* with proactive campaigns and reactive approaches related to topics including but not limited to travel news, travel trends, marketing initiatives, issues impacting travel, and more.

TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE intends to contract with a qualified agency to support its continued recovery efforts, stemmed from the negative economic impacts of COVID-19. This contract will be funded through federal ARPA dollars for Mississippi Tourism Recovery, II.

This RFP in no way commits TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE to award a contract, to pay any costs in preparation of a proposal, or to contract for the goods and/or services offered. Although it is TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE's intent to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work, TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE may terminate the negotiations if they are unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on all matters including the scope of work and cost.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected agency's responsibilities will include the below:

- Tell the story of *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE*'s marketing and strategies, programs, successes and opportunities to media across the country and around the globe.
- New branding and logos for Tishomingo County and each individual town (Iuka, Tishomingo, Burnsville, and Belmont)
- Redesign www.tishomingofunhere.org and help with each individual town's website design or redesign and possible setup
- Ensure awareness, understanding, and support of Tishomingo County's tourism economy.
- Build engagement, trust, and advocacy through strategic communications.
- Develop and maintain a targeted media list
- Proactively pursue positive stories and respond to inquiries - targeting all forms of media: broadcast, digital, podcasts, print, etc. (consumer lifestyle and travel, travel/meetings trade outlets) as appropriate for each opportunity.
- Strongly position *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE* executives and directors/leadership in industry.
- Identify industry trends to help shape messaging.
- Enhance the organization's credibility as a source for visitors.
- Develop communications strategies to support Brand USA's programs and initiatives and promote the ways in which Brand USA promotes DMOs globally.
- Strengthen domestic public relations efforts.
- Vet *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE* media calls, as needed.
- Draft news releases, messaging documents, talking points, FAQs, media Q&As, etc.
- Crisis & Issues Support
- Provide media training for executives and senior staff, as needed.
- Establish working relationships with influential media, including bloggers, travel writers, and influencers.

ABOUT TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE

TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE is a research-driven destination management and marketing organization with annual collections of approximately \$40,800, derived from the collection of a 2% lodging tax on the gross proceeds from hotel overnight room rental and a small percentage of small tax from each individual town in the county.

DESTINATION WEBSITE: www.Tishomingofunhere.org

DESTINATION BACKGROUND & STATE OF ECONOMY

TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE is geographically located in the northeast section of Mississippi. Its population is approximately 18,850.

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

AVAILABLE FUNDS

BUDGET: *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE* will fund this contract at a minimum of \$75,000. This budget is based on creative production, strategy execution, media planning and placement (both online and offline), media placement fees, account management fees, and out-of-pocket expenses. This budget will be implemented in phases over a three-year period, with year one requiring the largest amount of production. *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE* reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.

BILLING: *TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE* limits invoicing to one invoice per month. Each invoice should be on letterhead from the selected agency and include the month(s) for which payment is due as well as detail of work completed at the mutually agreed upon rate(s) or amount in the executed contract.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO BID

The Notice of Intent to Bid (Attachment 1) is non-binding; however, it ensures the receipt of all addenda related to this RFP. Proposals will be accepted only from applicants who submitted a timely Notice of Intent to Bid. Notice of Intent to Bid must be emailed by the deadline below with the subject line "Intent to Bid: Advertising Agency and Production Services" to ferrin@tishomingo.org.

OFFICIAL CONTACT

TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE requests the proposer designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal. Please identify this point of contact on the Notice of Intent to Bid Form (Attachment 1).

TIMELINE

This tentative timeline may be altered at any time at the discretion of TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE and will be funded through federal ARPA dollars for Mississippi Tourism Recovery, II.

RFP available to agencies.	MAR 8, 2023
Final day to submit questions regarding this RFP.	MAR. 14, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Notice of Intent to Bid due by 5:00 p.m. CDT	MAR. 17, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Questions answered	MAR 17, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Proposals due by 5:00 p.m. CDT.	APRIL 7, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Proposals evaluated by RFP committee.	APRIL 8-14, 2023
Agencies under consideration will be interviewed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted during this time frame as needed.	APRIL 17-19, 2023
Agency selected, and contract negotiations begin.	APRIL 26, 2023
Work begins for a limited duration, decided in contract negotiations.	MAY 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 firm’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 TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE.
2. Total number of employees including full time, part time and contract workers.
3. Short history of the company, especially as it relates to work in the tourism sector.
4. 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 TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE.
5. Hours of operation that staff will be available and any satellite offices.

6. Experience as it relates to messaging, ad design, and placement strategy. 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 declining order of size.
2. Name your two most recent past clients and reason for termination.
3. Name 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 a full year of activities, strategy execution, account management, out-of-pocket expenses, and estimated costs related to hosting media that correspond to those detailed in your proposal. Note: 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 TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE. TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE 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 TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE 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. TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE may waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submittals.

5. TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE 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 TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE's opinion, is not properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the Contract or to complete the Work contemplated therein.
6. All applicable laws, ordinances, and the rules and regulations of all governmental authorities having jurisdiction shall apply to the Contract throughout.
7. This Contract is being funded through a grant provided to TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE by the State of Mississippi as part 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 respondent. Each respondent is cautioned to carefully review the *Supplemental 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, respondent certifies that:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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

TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE will establish a committee to evaluate and rate all proposals based on the criteria prescribed (Attachment 3).

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

Top agencies will be invited to present, in person or via video conference, their suggested framework.

Presentations will be ranked by the following criteria:

- 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 determined to be the most advantageous to TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE, taking into consideration the criteria set forth in this RFP. Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected. TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE'S evaluations of proposals are confidential and as such, TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE is unable to respond to any questions and/or requests for information as to why a company was not selected.

After awarding the contract, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE and the selected agency to better define, 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 TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE employees.

STANDARD CONTRACT

Following is a copy of TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE'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 your responses in hard copy and electronic format. All proposals should include a clear, concise narrative. Proposal format is open to presentation style but must include the aforementioned items.

It is advised, but not required, to submit five printed proposals (5).

Printed submissions must be marked "RFP: Public Relations Agency Services" and delivered to:

TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE
c/o Ferrin Rainey Calvert
1001 Battleground Dr
Iuka, MS 38852

Electronic submissions should be provided in PDF format and sent to ferrin@tishomingo.org with the subject line: "RFP: Advertising and Production Agency Services." Proposals may not be faxed.

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. TISHOMINGO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION DBA: TISHOMINGO COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE 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 request for clarification for this RFP will be responded to publicly consistent with the schedule below to ensure that all respondents have the same information.

Email Ferrin Rainey Calvert, Tourism Director, with any questions by March 14, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. CDT at ferrin@tishomingo.org. No calls, please.