**CARROLL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (CCDA)**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

Professional Services For Destination Marketing: Including but not limited to

Web, Social Media, PR, Video, Podcast, Environmental Design, Media Buys, Service Vendors

Tourism Industry Recovery, II

**Proposals due on or before 3:00 p.m. CST on .March 15, 2024**

**OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to seek qualified agencies to support the CCDA’s strategic communications for destination marketing: advertising and production, digital media, and public relations. Qualified agencies will have a working knowledge of the tourism industry.

CCDA’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 Carroll County as a premier destination in Mississippi for leisure travel at the national, regional, and local levels. As the CCDA’s agency, the selected firm will be responsible for assisting in the development and support of CCDA’s destination marketing: advertising and production, digital media, website management, photography/videography, driving tour apps and public relations campaigns incorporating the theme “A Road Trip Through Carroll County.” The agency must be able to provide strong insight and message development to assist with niche campaigns.

The CCDAintends 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 the CCDA 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 CCDA’s intent to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work, the CCDA 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 following:

* Work in conjunction with the CCDAstaff to conduct a marketing program to attract visitors from primary target markets.
* Develop and execute creative concepts, strategies, and tactics, as part of the agreed upon strategy and target markets, including but not limited to:
  + Social Media Marketing
  + Website and App Marketing and Management
  + Photography and Videography for website, social media, billboards, regional print ads, etc.
  + Management of Media Marketing, Service Vendors

**ABOUT CARROLL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION**

CCDA’s Tourism Committeeprovides guidance and support for the following existing tourism sites: Towns of Carrollton, North Carrollton, and Vaiden, Cotesworth Center, and the three [3] Mississippi John Hurt sites.

**DESTINATION WEBSITES:**

CarrollCountyMS.org

VisitCarrolltonMS.com

CotesworthCenter.org

MississippiJohnHurtFoundation.org

**DESTINATION BACKGROUND & STATE OF ECONOMY**

CCDA is geographically located in the central section of Mississippi. It is bisected by MS Highways 82, 17, 35. Its population is approximately 10,000. Carroll County has two county seats: District 1 - Carrollton [formed in 1834 has a current population of 216 people] and District 2 – Vaiden [formed in 1860 has a current population of 754 people]. The other incorporated town is North Carrollton [formed in 1899 has a current population of 407].

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

**TARGET AUDIENCE DETAILS**

Because of the location of Carroll County and the trend in tourism for shorter driving times, our target markets include areas within a single day’s drive. These include but are not limited to Memphis, Tennessee; Birmingham, AL; New Orleans, LA; Little Rock, AR; and the states of Kentucky, Texas, and the rest of Mississippi. Secondary markets include Georgia and North Carolina. These markets have been chosen not only because of their physical location but also because many of the early Carroll County settlers came from Georgia and North Carolina. In later years, descendants of those settlers migrated west and eventually ended in Texas.

Carroll County is a rural county. Agriculture remains a major source of income. However, until Carroll County gains more recognition as a tourism destination, farmers are not interested in investing in agritourism. On the other hand, Carroll County [especially the Carrollton-North Carrollton area] has many historic sites that tourist are interested in visiting. Carrollton has been described as the quintessential 19th century town. Sixty-seven sites in the town are in the National Register of History Places historic district. The annual Carrollton Pilgrimage showcases some of these sites each year. Just north of Carrollton sits the home the US Senator J. Z. George. Before the Senator purchased the property, it was a stagecoach inn on the Memphis/Holly Springs/Carrollton/Vicksburg or Jackson route. The property remained in the family until 2010 when the house, library, a few other buildings and five acres were sold to the Cotesworth Center Foundation. Today, visitors come from all over the US to visit the home and learn about Mississippi history. Because of the appearance of Carrollton and Cotesworth, they have been used as movie locations for movies such as The Reivers starring Steve McQueen and The Help starring Viola Davis and Emma Stone. This is another reason tourists come to Carroll County.

Carroll County is also part of three Mississippi trails. Music enthusiasts flock to Carroll County to see where Mississippi John Hurt lived, played ,and was buried. The three sites associated with this early bluesman are marked with Blues trail markers and are visited by followers from all over the world. Other Carroll County musicians such as Mack Allen Smith, the King of Rockabilly, have also left their mark on the music world and are on the Country Music Trail. Carrollton is also on Mississippi’s Writer’s Trail, honoring Carrollton native Elizabeth Spencer.

Carroll County, with its historic architecture, music, and literature, draws enthusiasts and leisure travelers who find memories of days gone by in Carroll County.

**AVAILABLE FUNDS**

**BUDGET:** CCDA will fund this contract at a maximum of $170,000. 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. CCDA reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.

**BILLING:** CCDA limits invoicing to one invoice per month. Each invoice should be on agency letterhead and include the month 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.

**METRICS, REPORTING & EVALUATION**

Monthly reports should be received by 3rd of the succeeding month. Reports should overview of KPIs such as clicks, CPC, CTR, view time, spend, etc. Reports should highlight top-performing campaign tactics as well as those areas performing less than desirable. Key insights and major action items should also be included in all reports.

**OFFICIAL CONTACT**

CARROLL COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION 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.

TIMELINE

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

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| RFP available to agencies. | Feb 27, 2024 |
| Final day to submit questions regarding this RFP. | March 4, 2024, by 3:00 p.m. CST |
| Questions answered | March 8, 2024, by 3:00 p.m. CST |
| **Proposals due by 3:00 p.m. CST.** | **March 15, 2024, by 3:00 p.m. CST** |
| Proposals evaluated by RFP committee. | March 21, 2024 |
| Agencies under consideration will be interviewed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted during this time frame as needed. | March 22-26, 2024 |
| Agency selected, and contract negotiations begin. | March 29, 2024 |
| Work begins for a limited duration, decided in contract negotiations. | April 5, 2024 |

**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 number 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 CCDA.
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 CCDA.
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: Although CCDA’s fiscal year begins July. 1 and ends June. 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 CCDA. CCDA 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 CCDA and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any CCDA 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. CCDA may waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submittals.
5. CCDA 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 CCDA'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 CCDA 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 contract that will be executed and to ensure that all responsibilities and obligations are properly addressed.
8. By executing a signature on the submittal, 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**

CCDA 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 CCDA, taking into consideration the criteria set forth in this RFP. Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, CCDA will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected. CCDA’s evaluations of proposals are confidential and as such, CCDA 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 CCDA 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 CCDA employees.

**STANDARD CONTRACT**

Following is a copy of CCDA’s standard contract 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:

Carroll County Development Association

c/o Pamela Lee

PO Box 561

Carrollton, MS 38917

Electronic submissions should be provided in PDF format and sent to pamela.lee79@gmail.com with the subject line: "RFP: 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. CCDA 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.

Pamela Lee, CCDA Tourism Chairman, with any questions by February 1, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. CST at Pamela.lee79@gmail.com. No calls, please.