

**VISIT RIDGELAND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:
WEBSITE DESIGN / SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE**
Tourism Industry Recovery, II



Proposals due on or before **5:00 p.m. CDT on MARCH 13, 2023**

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Request for Qualification (RFQ) is to seek qualified agencies to redesign, maintain, and support Visit Ridgeland's website. Qualified agencies will have a working knowledge of the tourism industry.

Visit Ridgeland'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 Ridgeland as a premier destination in the Gulf South for leisure travel at the national, regional, and local levels. As the DMO's website agency, the selected firm will be responsible for assisting in the development and support of Visit Ridgeland's website to maximize communications efforts aimed at key markets.

Pulling on the look and feel of a new brand (launching concurrently with this website), develop a website that highlights the vibrancy of the destination and specific attributes that make it compelling to visit. The agency must be able to integrate/connect with Visit Ridgeland's social media channels, CRM system, and other owned websites.

Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland's intent to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work, Visit Ridgeland 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:

COMPONENT A: REDESIGN / RESPONSIVE WEBSITE:

- **PRIMARY GOAL:** Enhance the organization's credibility as a source for visitors through a fully responsive, robust and easy to navigate website.
- **Website Functionality Requirements:**
 - Must be mobile responsive and designed to work across browsers and devices, including in areas with low bandwidth.
 - Content/blog featured (new content added regularly)
 - Must include a banner at the top for alerts / updates

- Engagement tactics and lead generation
- Video/motion
- Integrate with CRM system, Threshold 360, trip planning tools, Newsletter platform, and social media accounts.
- Implementation of Facebook Pixel across site
- Archived content on the existing website needs to be cleaned and migrated into the new CMS.
- Auto-generated site map
- Key metadata and other standard content promotion and indexing technologies
- SEO Optimization
- Google Analytics / Google Tag Manager / Google Search Console support
- Quality assurance of new site, including a beta testing period and a means by which (internal/beta) users can report on glitches, and user experience
- Accessible to blind or limited-vision users. We are open to the vendor's recommendation to ensure the site is as accessible as possible to all.
- ADA Compliant (AA Minimum)
- GDPR Compliant
- Specific Issues / Desires:
 - Website should have an easily navigable experience, leaving them inspired to visit destination.
 - Overall, the new design should be bold, engaging, inspiring, clean, and smart.
 - Links to share content via email and social media on every page
 - Creation and implementation of branded short link URL
 - Ability to feature content on all main landing pages
 - Implementation of uniform image size for individual listings and featured content
 - Functional "search" feature
 - Ability to directly link to external related content from bloggers, influencers, and media outlets, rather than having to copy and paste it on to the site and use a hyperlink option.
 - Would like a recommendation on linking Yelp / Trip Advisor / Google Business reviews for restaurants, hotels, or attractions.
 - Like many DMOs, local events are an issue to promote. We've tried to tackle this problem for years through forms, manually entering data, etc., and we continue to chase down accurate information. In our mind, this is a two-fold – featured/signature events + smaller, one-off events. We are interested in allowing partners access to post their own events, but with a "screening" step to ensure integrity of the postings. We would like a specific recommendation from the proposer on how to handle events moving forward.
 - Likewise, having the capability for new businesses to submit updated / new information for their listing would be helpful. We currently manually input updates.
 - Develop a "tagging" system so that users can follow breadcrumbs to other relevant/suggested content. Should include blogs, attractions, and events minimally.
 - A fully designed/functional digital map of specific visitor trails with links to partner websites.
 - Accommodate multimedia (video, photo slideshows, podcasts) across page types

- Freedom to make content and design changes in-house without additional fees, including banners, campaign creative, additional pages, menu links and functionality of those links within existing menus, etc. This is paramount.
- Freedom and ability to add additional site functionality (within reason) in-house.
- An open-source CMS is preferred. It should be easy to manage by the small in-house team.
- Site migration plan.

COMPONENT B: ANNUAL SUPPORT / MAINTENANCE:

- PRIMARY GOAL: Establish the most efficient processes for all aspects of the website and social media including support, maintenance, and reporting.
- Annual Support & Maintenance will include:
 - Hosting
 - Monthly reporting
 - Site testing
 - Maintenance
 - Technical Support (Including, but not limited to, platform technical enhancements, compliance enhancements, and security enhancements.)
 - Staff training. The vendor should include recommendations for ongoing website maintenance (metadata, image sizes, etc.) and troubleshooting following the site's launch.
 - Ongoing customer service post-launch
 - Recommended updates
 - Goal development
 - Google Analytics / Google Tag Manager support, as needed from notifications / alerts.

ABOUT VISIT RIDGELAND

Visit Ridgeland is a research-driven destination marketing organization with annual collections of approximately \$2 million, derived from the collection of a 1% lodging and restaurant tax on the gross proceeds from hotel overnight room rental and restaurant purchases. Visit Ridgeland was created to be the voice of tourism driving economic growth of leisure and business travel, special events, competitive sports and meetings while providing support for the Ridgeland Tourism industry and its brand story.

DESTINATION WEBSITE: www.visitridgeland.com

DESTINATION BACKGROUND & STATE OF ECONOMY

Visit Ridgeland is geographically located in the central/capital section of Mississippi. Its population is approximately 25,000.

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.

TARGET AUDIENCE DETAILS / VISITOR PROFILE

Audience Overview

- Average Annual Household Income: \$70,700
- Median Income: \$58,200
- Median Age: 47 years old
- Average Travel Party Size: 2.5
- Average Travel Party Size of Leisure: 2.8
- Average Travel Party Size for Business: 2.0
- Average Nights Spent: 2.8

Top Feeder States:

- Alabama
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Louisiana
- Missouri
- Tennessee
- Texas

Top Landing Pages:

- Things To Do
- Restaurants
- Themed Itineraries
- Events
- Event / Meeting Planners

AVAILABLE FUNDS

BUDGET: Visit Ridgeland will fund this contract at a minimum of \$50,000.00. This budget is based on creative production and fulfillment, strategy execution, website maintenance, support, and training, account management fees, and out-of-pocket expenses. This budget will be implemented in phases, with year one requiring the largest amount of production. Visit Ridgeland reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.

BILLING: Visit Ridgeland 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 cchapman@visitridgeland.com and lcoats@visitridgeland.com.

OFFICIAL CONTACT

Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland and will be funded through federal ARPA dollars for Mississippi Tourism Recovery, II.

RFP available to agencies.	FEB. 13, 2023
Final day to submit Notice of Intent to Bid & questions regarding this RFP	MAR. 3, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Questions answered	MAR. 6, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Proposals due by 5:00 p.m. CDT.	MAR. 13, 2023, by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Proposals evaluated by RFP committee.	MAR. 14 - 15, 2023
Agencies under consideration will be interviewed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted during this time frame as needed.	MAR. 20 - 22, 2023
Agency selected, and contract negotiations begin.	MAR. 24, 2023
Work begins for a limited duration, decided in contract negotiations.	APRIL 3, 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 Visit Ridgeland.
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 Visit Ridgeland.
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 Visit Ridgeland's fiscal year begins Oct. 1 and ends Sept. 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 Visit Ridgeland. Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any Visit Ridgeland 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. Visit Ridgeland may waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submittals.
5. Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland'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 Visit Ridgeland 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

Visit Ridgeland 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.

- Identified Needs & Provided Solutions [40%]
 - Quality, relevancy, and probability of implementation.
- Relevant Experience [25%]
 - Experience with developing and implementing related services.
- Description of Proposer / Qualifications of Key Personnel [15%]
 - Prior staff experience and skillset.
- Budget Estimate [20%]
 - Services are provided in relation to the fee charged.

SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 2

A contract will be awarded to the organization whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to Visit Ridgeland, taking into consideration the criteria set forth in this RFP. Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, Visit Ridgeland will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected. Visit Ridgeland's evaluations of proposals are confidential and as such, Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland 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 Visit Ridgeland employees.

STANDARD CONTRACT

Following is a copy of Visit Ridgeland'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:

Visit Ridgeland
Chris Chapman, President/CEO
1000 Highland Colony Parkway, Suite 6006
Ridgeland, MS 39157

Electronic submissions should be provided in PDF format and sent to cchapman@visitridgeland.com 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. Visit Ridgeland 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 your questions about this RFP to both contacts below by March 3, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. No calls, please.

Chris Chapman

President/CEO

cchapman@visitridgeland.com

Katie Coats

Director of Marketing & Public Relations

kcoats@visitridgeland.com