



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS #17-1106 **SELECTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENCY**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Randolph County Tourism Development Authority (RCTDA) is requesting proposals from qualified Public Relations agencies. If you are interested in assisting RCTDA with the provision of such services, please prepare and submit a statement of your agency's qualifications in accordance with the procedure and schedule outlined in this RFQ. RCTDA intends to qualify the agency that (a) possesses the professional, artistic, and technical capabilities to provide the proposed services, and (b) will agree to work under the compensation terms and conditions determined by RCTDA.

II. BACKGROUND

RCTDA is a public authority governed by the terms of special legislation granted by the N.C. General Assembly on July 28, 1997 as House Bill 337, *An Act to Authorize Randolph County to Levy a Room Occupancy and Tourism Development Tax* under the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act. The mission of the RCTDA is to unify and lead the County in developing the Heart of North Carolina as a family-friendly, affordable, and strategically located destination serving the leisure and business travel, group tour, meetings, and sports and recreational tournament markets.

Board members, appointed by the Randolph County Board of Commissioners, act as voting members of the Board with full authority and responsibility to determine policies, procedures, and regulations for the operation of the RCTDA in accordance with the Guidelines for Occupancy Tax Uniform Provisions; assist with the monitoring of the RCTDA's financial health, programs, and overall performance; and provide the Executive Director with resources to meet the needs of the annual destination marketing plan and program of work.

Randolph is the 11th largest county in North Carolina, and has the 19th highest population in the state. The cities and towns of Archdale, Asheboro, Franklinville, Liberty, Ramseur, Randleman, Seagrove, Staley and Trinity are located within Randolph County with Asheboro being the county seat. Asheboro is approximately 70 miles from Raleigh, the state capital, and from Charlotte, the state's largest city.

Randolph County is a part of the Piedmont Triad region, an 11-county area whose central location puts it within 90 miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and within 200 miles of the Atlantic Ocean to the east. The County sits in the middle of the Eastern Seaboard, within 500 miles of half of the nation's population and largest markets. The region is united by the Piedmont Triad International Airport, interstate highways, a score of colleges and universities, and a rich cultural life.

Although Randolph County is a part of the largest metropolitan area located entirely within North Carolina, it is still small-town living at its best - close enough to larger cities to be easily accessible, but small enough to escape such urban problems as traffic congestion and increasing crime rates.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

Proposers are advised that contact with anyone besides the authorized contact person is forbidden, and is grounds for elimination from the selection process.

RCTDA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals submitted and to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors or omissions. A submission of the proposal indicates acceptance by the Agency of the conditions contained in this RFQ, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between the RCTDA and the Agency selected. The RCTDA may modify, supplement, or amend the provisions of this RFQ as deemed necessary or appropriate by and in the sole judgment of the RCTDA.

IV. TERM OF ENGAGEMENT

A one (1) year contract will be issued with the option to renew subject to satisfactory negotiation of terms and the concurrence of the RCTDA Board of Directors.

V. NATURE OF SERVICES

A. Overview

RCTDA is seeking the services of a Public Relations (PR) agency and/or sole practitioner to work on a renewable fiscal year cycle. Qualifications must focus on the individual or individuals who will be handling the PR work; credentials of other agency teammates are not relevant. Only individual(s) doing the pitching should be mentioned by name. Resume/vita for individual(s) is required. Please provide links to all individual(S) LinkedIn and other social media accounts.

B. Scope of Services

RCTDA seeks a comprehensive proposal that describes the full process necessary to create and implement all facets of the Public Relations objectives outlined in the RCTDA's Destination Marketing Plan & Program of Work, as follows:

- Craft a positive public image elevating Heart of North Carolina brand awareness with news and travel media, managing all external communication activities including media relations, public affairs, community awareness and advocacy, and reputation management.
- Support RCTDA staff in their collaboration with appropriate communications and public relations representatives in municipalities and local organizations county-wide to ensure consistent brand and quality-of-life messaging.
- Work with partner and stakeholder Public Information Officers as directed by Executive Director to develop communication objectives for promoting arts and entertainment, breweries and wineries, distinctive shopping, golf, history and heritage, local dining, museums and attractions, outdoor fun, parks and recreation, sports and racing, festivals and special events, and the Seagrove potteries to news and travel media.
- Use a proactive media outreach program to generate earned media with an emphasis on relationship-building and targeting to ensure the brand message is conveyed in editorial, broadcast, online placements, and others as deemed relevant by Agency.
- Engage in building strong relationships with relevant television, print, radio, and online media to help build credibility in the travel industry.
- Attend quarterly meetings with local area media to assist Executive Director in update on the latest programs and initiatives, and the state of the tourism industry in Randolph County.
- Assist Executive Director in promoting positive impact of tourism through public awareness initiatives and press releases detailing travel figures specific to Randolph County.
- Attend meetings and events as necessary with RCTDA staff.

Public Relations Strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Assist RCTDA staff as requested serving as liaison and coordinating agent between RCTDA and travel media.
- Conceptualize and create content for RCTDA marketing materials – copy, editorials, presentations, etc. as it relates to travel media.

- Develop, distribute, and catalog all RCTDA press releases and media announcements.
- Develop public relations opportunities for RCTDA staff with local, regional, state, national, and international targeted trade/industry media.
- Manage and monitor all public relations and media interactions with, and coverage of, the RCTDA.
- Assist RCTDA staff in the development of content for pitch sheets, advertorial insertions, social media content, annual travel guide production, and other media-related campaigns as requested.
- Utilize Meltwater Public Relations Pro Suite for press release distribution, and to quantify PR impact and connect with influencers.

C. Qualifications

Should have:

- strong social presence across at least one social media platform, with Twitter being the preferred outlet because of its role in reaching and researching media;
- minimum of five (5) years PR pitching experience; and
- landed national, regional, and local placements for clients within the last 12 months, and offer a list of at least five (5) of those placements that includes background on how the placement was landed – including the Agency individual(s) and client’s role in the process.

Must have:

- valid driver’s license and US passport for travel by vehicle and air;
- a minimum of five (5) years of PR experience in the travel and hospitality industry; and
- experience working with or for a DMO in North Carolina and/or the Southeastern US.

VI. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A. General Requirements

Proposers must demonstrate skill and expertise in the areas of marketing and public relations.

B. Administrative Requirements

The proposal shall include the following:

- A title page showing the request for proposal’s subject; Agency’s name, address, email, and telephone number of the contact person responsible for answering questions regarding the RFQ; and the date of the proposal.
- Table of contents listing all attachments.
- Transmittal letter – a signed letter of transmittal briefly stating the proposers understanding of the work to be done, the commitment to perform the work on a timely basis, a statement of why Agency believes itself to be the best qualified to perform the engagement, and a statement that the proposal is a firm and irrevocable offer for 30 days.

- The number of years Agency has been in business under the present name.
- The number of years Agency has been under the current management.
- Any judgments, claims or suits within the last three years in which Agency has been adjudicated liable for professional malpractice. If yes, please explain.
- Whether Agency is now or has been involved in any bankruptcy or re-organization proceedings in the last 10 years. If yes, please explain.
- Location(s) from which services will be performed.

C. Submission of Proposals

To be considered, six (6) copies of your sealed proposal must be received by Tammy O’Kelley, at the address listed below. This RFQ is issued by the RCTDA. Any inquiries, clarifications, or interpretations should be directed in writing to:

- Tammy O’Kelley
Randolph County Tourism Development Authority
145-B Worth Street
Asheboro, NC 27203
Mobile: (336) 465-0637
Email: tammy.okelley@heartofnorthcarolina.com

Responses to inquiries that affect the content of this RFQ will be provided in writing to all recipients of the RFQ through an addendum that will be posted on the County of Randolph’s website at:

- <http://www.co.randolph.nc.us/purchasing/bid.htm>

Agency must provide the following in proposal submission:

- Background on Agency individual(s) experience with desk visits and face-to-face interactions with media – please include experience developing press conferences, media events, FAM tours, and other media gatherings where clients are promoted.
- List of professional memberships and accreditations in relevant professional or media organizations and timeframe of involvement.
- List of experience working with Visit North Carolina and/or any state tourism PR entities.
- List of five national, regional, and local placements for clients within the last 12 months including background on why outlets were targeted, how the placement was landed, and the PR pro and client’s role in landing the pitch; email communications, pitch sheets, etc., may be attached.
- Outline of Agency individual(s) crisis PR experience.
- List of all entities Agency individuals(s) are working for presently, and upcoming projects within the next year to ensure there are no conflicts of interest.
- Agency individual(s) example of written copy using keywords to support search engine optimization (SEO) including the SEO keywords and how they were used.

- List of PR software programs Agency individual(s) has worked with including any particular software proficiencies and preferences.
- List of Agency individual(s) media reporting; if possible, include a representative media report shared with a client in the last year.
- Brief outline of Agency individual(s) experience working with web, SEO, social media providers, or digital marketing professionals/influencers; explain how individual(s) PR role can supplement our existing work on these channels.
- In 500 words, explain why working on this account is appealing; and outline Agency individuals(s) approach to planning and executing a PR program for us.

It is the responsibility of each Proposer to inquire about any aspect of the RFQ that is not fully understood or is believed to be susceptible to more than one interpretation.

The RCTDA will accept only written inquiries regarding the RFQ to the above address until Monday, November 13, 2017 at 4:30 P.M. All times listed are understood to be Eastern Standard Time unless otherwise noted. The RCTDA’s interpretation of the RFQ shall be controlling in all cases.

Proposals should be mailed, or hand delivered to the address shown above, marked as “Public Relations Agency RFQ #17- _____”. It is the sole responsibility of the Proposer to ensure that their submission reaches the RCTDA office by the designated date and hour indicated above.

D. Submission Deadline

Monday, November 20, 2017 at 4:30 PM

E. Proposal Calendar

Date	Description
11/06/17	Issue date
11/13/17	Final date for written questions
11/17/17	Final date for addenda posting
11/20/17	Deadline for submitting RFQ proposals
11/27/17	Marketing Committee Meeting to review RFQ proposals
11/28/17	Clerk to the Board distributes recommended RFQ to RCTDA Board of Directors
11/29/17	Board of Directors e-vote on RFQ recommendation
12/01/17	Anticipated Agency award date
12/04 – 12/08/2017	RCTDA/Agency contract negotiations
12/15/2017	Anticipated Agency start date

VII. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The RCTDA Marketing Committee (Committee) will review and consider the proposals submitted. The Committee will consider the following factors:

- Relevant experience of Agency and individual(s) named in the proposal, including professional qualifications, specialized experience and technical competence, reputation of individual(s) for working in an efficient, effective, proactive and ethical manner
- Ability to advise and represent the RCTDA in an efficient and effective manner.
- Any other factors relevant to the determination of which proposer should be selected.

VIII. PROPOSAL FORM

A. Addenda Acknowledgements (if applicable) – Each proposer is responsible for determining that all addenda issued have been received before submitting a proposal.

Addenda	Date Issued	Date Proposer Received
“A”		
“B”		
“C”		

B. Submitted By

Company Name	
Company Address	
Telephone	
Representative (print name)	
Signature of Representative	
Email Address	

Date Submitted	
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Thank you in advance for your response to this RFQ.

Sincerely,



Tammy O'Kelley
Executive Director – RCTDA