

**STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA  
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM / TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA  
711 E WELLS AVE  
PIERRE SD 57501-3385**

**The South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota Request for Proposals for  
Brand Management, Creative Services, Events & Activations, Marketing, Marketing &  
Consumer Research, Media Purchasing, Print Services, Public Relations, and Social Media  
Management**

**PROPOSALS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN:  
February 13, 2026 (by 5:00 PM CST)**

**RFP #:** 25RFP15823

**STATE POC:** James D. Hagen

**Email:** James.Hagen@TravelSouthDakota.com

**READ CAREFULLY**

FIRM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ TYPE OR PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NO: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP (9 DIGIT): \_\_\_\_\_ FAX NO: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

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**PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION**

CONTACT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NO: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX NO: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **1.1 PURPOSE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**

The South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota seeks the professional services of a marketing agency, with strong preference given to an agency with experience in tourism marketing, to work as a collaborative partner in the development of marketing campaigns, brand management, creative services, marketing & consumer research, media purchasing, public relations, event management, print services, and activations to promote The Mount Rushmore State as a premier travel destination regionally, nationally and globally. The purpose of this RFP is to identify the most qualified agency (or agencies) to carry out all aspects of the South Dakota Department of Tourism's / Travel South Dakota's marketing objectives. Dozens of resources are available at [SDVisit.com](https://www.sdvisit.com) to learn more about Travel South Dakota and to inform a thoughtful and strategic RFP submission, including our [Brand Standards](#) book, [2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#), [past marketing campaigns](#), [monthly travel indicators dashboard](#), [research & reports](#), [press releases](#), and more.

### **1.2 ISSUING OFFICE AND RFP REFERENCE NUMBER**

The South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota is the issuing department for this document and all subsequent addenda relating to it, on behalf of the State of South Dakota. The reference number for the transaction is **RFP #25RFP15823**. This number must be referred to on all proposals, correspondence, and documentation relating to the RFP.

### **1.3 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

RFP Publication – **December 16, 2025**

Deadline for RFP questions – **January 16, 2026 (by 5:00 PM CST)**

Responses to questions due from Tourism – **January 30, 2026**

RFP proposal submission deadline – **February 13, 2026 (by 5:00 PM CST)**

Review & scoring of submissions – **February 20, 2026**

Notification of invitation to oral presentations – **February 27, 2026**

Potential oral presentations (Pierre, SD) – **March 11-12, 2026**

Potential agency site visits – **Week of March 23, 2026**

Notification of anticipated award – **March 30, 2026**

## **1.4 SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL**

All proposals must be completed and received by the South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota by the date and time indicated in the Schedule of Activities.

Proposals received after the deadline will be late and ineligible for consideration.

**An original and ten (10)** identical copies of the proposal shall be submitted. All proposals must be signed, in ink, by an officer of the responder, legally authorized to bind the responder to the proposal, and sealed in the form intended by the respondent. Proposals that are not properly signed may be rejected. The sealed envelope should be marked with the appropriate RFP Number and Title. Proposals should be addressed and labeled as follows:

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL #25RFP15823**

**PROPOSAL DUE: February 13, 2026**

**James D. Hagen, Secretary  
Travel South Dakota  
711 E Wells Ave  
Pierre SD 57501  
605-773-3301  
James.Hagen@TravelSouthDakota.com**

No proposal shall be accepted from, or no contract or purchase order shall be awarded to any person, firm or corporation that is in arrears upon any obligations to the State of South Dakota, or that otherwise may be deemed irresponsible or unreliable by the State of South Dakota.

## **1.5 NEWS & SOCIAL MEDIA RELEASES**

Offeror shall not issue news or social media releases or make any statement to the news or on social media platforms pertaining to the subject of this RFP, proposals, or contracts resulting therefrom without the prior written approval of the South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota. The offeror is bound to this clause from the time the RFP is issued until the time the contract has expired.

## **1.6 INCURRING COSTS**

The South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota will not be responsible for any costs incurred by the offeror to prepare its proposal. Proposal and business development costs will not be included in the cost basis of services provided to the South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota. This includes any costs

associated with traveling to oral presentations in Pierre, S.D., should the offeror be chosen to present.

#### **1.7 CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, INELIGIBILITY AND VOLUNTARY EXCLUSION – LOWER TIER COVERED TRANSACTIONS**

By signing and submitting this proposal, the offeror certifies that neither it nor its principals is presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation, by any federal department or agency, from transactions involving the use of federal funds. Where the offeror is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, the bidder shall attach an explanation to their offer.

#### **1.8 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

The State of South Dakota requires that all contractors, vendors, and suppliers doing business with any State agency, department, or institution, provide a statement of non-discrimination. By signing and submitting their proposal, the offeror certifies they do not discriminate in their employment practices with regard to race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, ancestry, national origin or disability.

#### **1.9 CERTIFICATION RELATING TO PROHIBITED ENTITY**

For contractors, vendors, suppliers, or subcontractors who enter into a contract with the State of South Dakota by submitting a response to this solicitation or agreeing to contract with the State, the bidder or offeror certifies and agrees that the following information is correct:

The bidder or offeror, in preparing its response or offer or in considering proposals submitted from qualified, potential vendors, suppliers, and subcontractors, or in the solicitation, selection, or commercial treatment of any vendor, supplier, or subcontractor, is not an entity, regardless of its principal place of business, that is ultimately owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by a foreign national, a foreign parent entity, or foreign government from China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Cuba, or Venezuela, as defined by SDCL 5-18A. It is understood and agreed that, if this certification is false, such false certification will constitute grounds for the State to reject the bid or response submitted by the bidder or offeror on this project and terminate any contract awarded based on the bid or response. The successful bidder or offeror further agrees to provide immediate written notice to the contracting executive branch agency if during the term of the contract it no longer complies with this certification and agrees such noncompliance may be grounds for contract termination.

#### **1.10 RESTRICTION OF BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL**

For contractors, vendors, suppliers, or subcontractors with five (5) or more employees who enter into a contract with the State of South Dakota that involves the expenditure of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) or more, by submitting a response to this

solicitation or agreeing to contract with the State, the bidder or offeror certifies and agrees that the following information is correct:

The bidder or offeror, in preparing its response or offer or in considering proposals submitted from qualified, potential vendors, suppliers, and subcontractors, or in the solicitation, selection, or commercial treatment of any vendor, supplier, or subcontractor, has not refused to transact business activities, has not terminated business activities, and has not taken other similar actions intended to limit its commercial relations, related to the subject matter of the bid or offer, with a person or entity on the basis of Israeli national origin, or residence or incorporation in Israel or its territories, with the specific intent to accomplish a boycott or divestment of Israel in a discriminatory manner. It is understood and agreed that, if this certification is false, such false certification will constitute grounds for the State to reject the bid or response submitted by the bidder or offeror on this project and terminate any contract awarded based on the bid or response. The successful bidder or offeror further agrees to provide immediate written notice to the contracting executive branch agency if during the term of the contract it no longer complies with this certification and agrees such noncompliance may be grounds for contract termination.

#### **1.11 CERTIFICATION OF NO STATE LEGISLATOR INTEREST**

Offeror (i) understands neither a state legislator nor a business in which a state legislator has an ownership interest may be directly or indirectly interested in any contract with the State that was authorized by any law passed during the term for which that legislator was elected, or within one year thereafter, and (ii) has read South Dakota Constitution Article 3, Section 12 and has had the opportunity to seek independent legal advice on the applicability of that provision to any Agreement entered into as a result of this RFP. By signing an Agreement pursuant to this RFP, offeror hereby certifies that the Agreement is not made in violation of the South Dakota Constitution Article 3, Section 12.

#### **1.12 MODIFICATION OR WITHDRAWAL OF PROPOSALS**

Proposals may be modified or withdrawn by the offeror prior to the established due date and time.

No oral, telephonic, telegraphic or facsimile responses or modifications to informal, formal bids, or Request for Proposals will be considered.

#### **1.13 OFFEROR INQUIRIES**

Offerors may email inquiries concerning this RFP to obtain clarification of requirements. No inquiries will be accepted after the date and time indicated in the Schedule of Activities. Inquiries must be emailed to James D. Hagen at [James.Hagen@TravelSouthDakota.com](mailto:James.Hagen@TravelSouthDakota.com) with the subject line “**RFP #25RFP15823**”.

The State will respond to offeror's inquiries (if required) via email. In addition, all inquiries and the State's response will be posted on the state's e-procurement system. Offerors may not rely on any other statements, either of a written or oral nature, that alter any specification or other term or condition of this RFP. Offerors will be notified in the same manner as indicated above regarding any modifications to this RFP.

#### **1.14 PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**

The proposal of the successful offeror(s) becomes public information. Proprietary information can be protected under limited circumstances such as client lists and non-public financial statements. An entire proposal may not be marked as proprietary. Offerors must clearly identify in the Executive Summary and mark in the body of the proposal any specific proprietary information they are requesting to be protected. The Executive Summary must contain specific justification explaining why the information is to be protected. Proposals may be reviewed and evaluated by any person at the discretion of the State. All materials submitted become the property of the State of South Dakota and may be returned only at the State's option.

#### **1.15 LENGTH OF CONTRACT**

The services under this Agreement shall commence on July 1, 2026, and end on June 30, 2029, unless sooner terminated pursuant to the terms hereof. The State shall have the option to renew the agreement under the same terms and conditions, for two (2) one-year (1) year intervals. Notice of intent to renew shall be given by the State to the Vendor as mutually agreed upon prior to the end of the current contract term. If the notice of intent to renew is given, the Agreement shall renew unless terminated by either party pursuant to the Termination Provision of the Agreement.

#### **1.16 GOVERNING LAW**

Venue for any and all legal action regarding or arising out of the transaction covered herein shall be solely in the State of South Dakota. The laws of South Dakota shall govern this transaction.

#### **1.17 DISCUSSIONS WITH OFFERORS (ORAL PRESENTATION / NEGOTIATIONS)**

An oral presentation by an offeror to clarify a proposal may be required at the sole discretion of the State. However, the State may award a contract based on the initial proposals received without discussion with the offeror. If oral presentations are required, they will be scheduled after the submission of proposals. Oral presentations will be made at the offeror's expense.

This process is a Request for Proposal/Competitive Negotiation process. Each Proposal shall be evaluated, and each respondent shall be available for negotiation meetings at the State's request. The State reserves the right to negotiate on any and/or all components of every proposal submitted. From the time the proposals are submitted

until the formal award of a contract, each proposal is considered a working document and as such, will be kept confidential. The negotiation discussions will also be held as confidential until such time as the award is completed.



## **2.0 STANDARD CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Any contract or agreement resulting from this RFP will include the State's standard terms and conditions as listed below, along with any additional terms and conditions as negotiated by the parties:

- 2.1** The Contractor will perform those services described in the Scope of Work, attached hereto as Section 3 of the RFP and by this reference incorporated herein.

The Contractor's services under this Agreement shall commence on July 1, 2026, and end on June 30, 2029, unless sooner terminated pursuant to the terms hereof. The State shall have the option to renew the agreement under the same terms and conditions, for two (2) one-year (1) intervals. Notice of intent to renew shall be given by the State to the Vendor as mutually agreed upon prior to the end of the current contract term. If the notice of intent to renew is given, the Agreement shall renew unless terminated by either party pursuant to the Termination Provision of the Agreement.

- 2.2** The Contractor will not use State equipment, supplies or facilities. The Contractor will provide the State with its Employer Identification Number, Federal Tax Identification Number or Social Security Number upon execution of this Agreement.

The State will make payment for services upon satisfactory completion of the services. The TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT is an amount not to exceed \$ TBD. The State will not pay Contractor's expenses as a separate item. Payment will be made pursuant to itemized invoices submitted with a signed state voucher. Payment will be made consistent with SDCL ch. 5-26.

- 2.3** The Contractor agrees to indemnify and hold the State of South Dakota, its officers, agents and employees, harmless from and against any and all actions, suits, damages, liability or other proceedings that may arise as the result of performing services hereunder. This section does not require the Contractor to be responsible for or defend against claims or damages arising solely from errors or omissions of the State, its officers, agents or employees.

- 2.4** The Contractor, at all times during the term of this Agreement, shall obtain and maintain in force insurance coverage of the types and with the limits as follows:

**A. Commercial General Liability Insurance:**

The Contractor shall maintain occurrence based commercial general liability insurance or equivalent form with a limit of not less than \$1,000,000.00 for each occurrence. If such insurance contains a general aggregate limit it shall apply separately to this Agreement or be no less than two times the occurrence limit.

**B. Professional Liability Insurance or Miscellaneous Professional Liability Insurance:**

The Contractor agrees to procure and maintain professional liability insurance or miscellaneous professional liability insurance with a limit not less than \$1,000,000.00.

**C. Business Automobile Liability Insurance:**

The Contractor shall maintain business automobile liability insurance or equivalent form with a limit of not less than \$1,000,000.00 for each accident. Such insurance shall include coverage for owned, hired and non-owned vehicles.

**D. Worker's Compensation Insurance:**

The Contractor shall procure and maintain workers' compensation and employers' liability insurance as required by South Dakota law.

Before beginning work under this Agreement, Contractor shall furnish the State with properly executed Certificates of Insurance which shall clearly evidence all insurance required in this Agreement. In the event a substantial change in insurance, issuance of a new policy, cancellation or nonrenewal of the policy, the Contractor agrees to provide immediate notice to the State and provide a new certificate of insurance showing continuous coverage in the amounts required. Contractor shall furnish copies of insurance policies if requested by the State.

**2.5** While performing services hereunder, the Contractor is an independent contractor and not an officer, agent, or employee of the State of South Dakota.

**2.6** Contractor agrees to report to the State any event encountered in the course of performance of this Agreement which results in injury to the person or property of third parties, or which may otherwise subject Contractor or the State to liability. Contractor shall report any such event to the State immediately upon discovery.

Contractor's obligation under this section shall only be to report the occurrence of any event to the State and to make any other report provided for by their duties or applicable law. Contractor's obligation to report shall not require disclosure of any information subject to privilege or confidentiality under law (e.g., attorney-client communications). Reporting to the State under this section shall not excuse or satisfy any obligation of Contractor to report any event to law enforcement or other entities under the requirements of any applicable law.

**2.7** This Agreement may be terminated by either party hereto upon thirty (30) days written notice. In the event the Contractor breaches any of the terms or conditions hereof, this

Agreement may be terminated by the State at any time with or without notice. If termination for such a default is affected by the State, any payments due to Contractor at the time of termination may be adjusted to cover any additional costs to the State because of Contractor's default. Upon termination the State may take over the work and may award another party an agreement to complete the work under this Agreement. If after the State terminates for a default by Contractor it is determined that Contractor was not at fault, then the Contractor shall be paid for eligible services rendered and expenses incurred up to the date of termination.

- 2.8** This Agreement depends upon the continued availability of appropriated funds and expenditure authority from the Legislature for this purpose. If for any reason the Legislature fails to appropriate funds or grant expenditure authority, or funds become unavailable by operation of law or federal funds reductions, this Agreement will be terminated by the State. Termination for any of these reasons is not a default by the State nor does it give rise to a claim against the State.
- 2.9** This Agreement may not be assigned without the express prior written consent of the State. This Agreement may not be amended except in writing, which writing shall be expressly identified as a part hereof and be signed by an authorized representative of each of the parties hereto.
- 2.10** This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of South Dakota. Any lawsuit pertaining to or affecting this Agreement shall be venued in Circuit Court, Sixth Judicial Circuit, Hughes County, South Dakota.
- 2.11** The Contractor will comply with all federal, state and local laws, regulations, ordinances, guidelines, permits and requirements applicable to providing services pursuant to this Agreement, and will be solely responsible for obtaining current information on such requirements.
- 2.12** The Contractor may not use subcontractors to perform the services described herein without the express prior written consent of the State. The Contractor will include provisions in its subcontracts requiring its subcontractors to comply with the applicable provisions of this Agreement, to indemnify the State, and to provide insurance coverage for the benefit of the State in a manner consistent with this Agreement. The Contractor will cause its subcontractors, agents, and employees to comply, with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, ordinances, guidelines, permits and requirements and will adopt such review and inspection procedures as are necessary to assure such compliance.
- 2.13** Contractor hereby acknowledges and agrees that all reports, plans, specifications, technical data, miscellaneous drawings, software system programs and documentation, procedures, or files, operating instructions and procedures, source code(s) and documentation, including those necessary to upgrade and maintain the software program, and all information contained therein provided to the State by the Contractor in connection with its performance of services under this Agreement shall belong to and is

the property of the State and will not be used in any way by the Contractor without the written consent of the State. Papers, reports, forms, software programs, source code(s) and other material which are a part of the work under this Agreement will not be copyrighted without written approval of the State.

- 2.14** The Contractor certifies that neither Contractor nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment or suspension, or declared ineligible from participating in transactions by the federal government or any state or local government department or agency. Contractor further agrees that it will immediately notify the State if during the term of this Agreement Contractor or its principals become subject to debarment, suspension or ineligibility from participating in transactions by the federal government, or by any state or local government department or agency.
- 2.15** Any notice or other communication required under this Agreement shall be in writing and sent to the address set forth above. Notices shall be given by and to James D. Hagen on behalf of the State, and by a representative of the Contractor, or such authorized designees as either party may from time to time designate in writing. Notices or communications to or between the parties shall be deemed to have been delivered when mailed by first class mail, provided that notice of default or termination shall be sent by registered or certified mail, or, if personally delivered, when received by such party.
- 2.16** In the event that any court of competent jurisdiction shall hold any provision of this Agreement unenforceable or invalid, such holding shall not invalidate or render unenforceable any other provision hereof.
- 2.17** All other prior discussions, communications and representations concerning the subject matter of this Agreement are superseded by the terms of this Agreement, and except as specifically provided herein, this Agreement constitutes the entire agreement with respect to the subject matter hereof.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 ABOUT THE SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM / TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA**

The South Dakota Department of Tourism ('Department of Tourism' or 'Tourism') / Travel South Dakota is in the capital city of Pierre, and consists of two divisions – Travel South Dakota, and the South Dakota Arts Council. Travel South Dakota is the sole state department responsible for branding and marketing the state as a vacation destination to a variety of audiences, including potential visitors (both domestic and international), the travel-trade industry, and members of the travel media. Marketing South Dakota and our brand, as well as our world-famous attractions, national and state parks, great outdoors, culture and heritage, unique history, the Arts, hunting and fishing are key components of our work. The tourism industry in South Dakota depends upon the Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota to

create comprehensive marketing campaigns that promote our state as one of the nation's most-desired vacation destinations. Dozens of resources are available at [SDVisit.com](https://www.sdvisit.com) to learn more about Travel South Dakota and to inform a thoughtful and strategic RFP submission, including our [Brand Standards](#) book, [2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#), [past marketing campaigns](#), [monthly travel indicators dashboard](#), [research & reports](#), [press releases](#), and more.

### **3.2 TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA'S MISSION**

We enhance the quality of life for all South Dakotans by strengthening our communities and their tourism economies, encouraging responsible stewardship of our destination, and creating meaningful experiences for all to enjoy.

### **3.3 TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA'S VISION**

With a spirit of freedom and optimism, South Dakota's Great Faces and Great Places inspire and unite all visitors and residents through the transformational power of travel.

### **3.4 TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA'S CULTURE**

We are proud South Dakotans who share a passion for our state, its people, and our beautiful places. Our team strives for excellence in creative marketing, innovative thinking, and attentive service to our industry. We take pride in our can-do attitude and aspire to be a leader among state tourism departments nationwide.

### **3.5 KEY TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA GOALS**

- Expansion of Tourism Promotion Tax revenue and sales tax revenue; increase number of tourism-related jobs; increase in overnight stays and lengths of stay
- Expand and enhance the South Dakota brand regionally, nationally, and internationally
- Advance the development of our destination
- Advocate for responsible destination management
- Enhance the quality of life for South Dakota residents
- Encourage responsible stewardship of our destination and grow positive resident sentiment
- Establish highly effective and industry-leading advertising, marketing, and public relations campaigns that produce tangible results and maximize our ROI
- Utilize industry-leading research to maximize our marketing investments by targeting key consumer audiences, behaviors, and markets
- Leverage innovative regional, national, and international marketing partnerships to promote and elevate the South Dakota brand and message
- Diversification of audience demographics, and expansion of markets
- Increase off-season visitation
- Increase statewide visitation in a strategic and thoughtful manner

### **3.6 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM ON SOUTH DAKOTA**

Travel South Dakota has experienced steady and record-setting growth over the past decade. Even in the pandemic year of 2020, South Dakota experienced some of the smallest declines in the nation in visitor spending and overall visitation. We were the very first state in the country to return to pre-pandemic visitor spending levels. The tourism industry is one of the largest industries in South Dakota and has a significant impact upon state and local tax revenues as well as employment. The tourism industry in South Dakota generates nearly \$399 million in state and local tax revenue and sustains nearly 59,000 jobs. In 2024, South Dakota welcomed 14.9 million visitors who spent more than \$5.09 billion dollars (both all-time records). Resources such as economic impact studies, visitor profiles, monthly travel indicator dashboard, marketing ROI studies, etc. can be found at [www.SDVisit.com](http://www.SDVisit.com).

### **3.7 CURRENT MARKETING**

Travel South Dakota emphasizes year-round marketing campaigns with a focus on leisure travel. We do have distinct summer, fall, and winter campaigns, but we also employ an evergreen approach promoting travel to the state. We also utilize distinct niche campaigns like 16 individual Community Cooperative marketing campaigns, our “Forever 605” stewardship campaign, our public/private Sturgis Motorcycle Rally “All Crazies Welcome” cooperative marketing effort, “Hunt the Greatest” campaign, and our Arts and Culture campaigns.

During our fall shoulder season, pheasant hunting is a major focus. Five years ago, Travel South Dakota developed a partnership with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks to promote pheasant hunting in a much more aggressive and tactical manner. Given South Dakota’s popular national and state parks, world-famous attractions, rural and urban experiences, and great outdoors, we are always striving to find new and innovative ways to expand visitation year-round in all corners of the state.

A marketing overview, marketing campaigns, programs and brand standards can be found at [www.SDVisit.com](http://www.SDVisit.com).

### **3.8 TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA’S MARKETING BUDGET**

The total advertising, marketing, and public relations budget for Travel South Dakota is around **\$14 million**, inclusive of production and media costs. The actual budget in any given fiscal year is subject to actual tourism promotion tax and Historic Deadwood gaming revenues collected within that fiscal year as well as legislative appropriation. The department does not receive any state general fund dollars.

### **3.9 ANNUAL REPORTS**

We highly encourage all respondents to take the time to learn more about Travel South Dakota and our work by reading our 2024 Highlights Summary Report (as well as past Annual Reports) [here](#).

## **4.0 CAPABILITIES SOUGHT IN A MARKETING AGENCY**

The South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota is seeking an “Agency of Record” or “Agencies of Record” for all branding, brand management, advertising, marketing, marketing & consumer research, media purchasing, event management, activations, print services, and public relations services. The department is seeking offerors with extensive professional advertising and marketing experience in the development and placement of various forms of marketing to target audiences regionally, nationally, and internationally in strategically selected markets. It is the expectation of the department that the successful offeror will develop innovative marketing campaigns, strategies and programs that will assist in increasing the state’s share of domestic and international tourism markets, which will in turn aid in growing South Dakota’s tourism businesses and the state’s economy.

**4.1** The offeror will be expected to possess and display key knowledge of the travel and tourism industry. Although not a mandatory requirement, experience in working with tourism advertising and marketing is highly valued.

**4.2** The successful offeror will be required to provide a high level of quality services which are normally associated with the handling of a large national account of this scope and size.

**4.3** In addition to providing strategic advertising, marketing, and public relations services, the offeror’s capabilities must include some or all the following creative production and media purchasing activities and experience on a national, regional and local level (if these services do not currently exist in-house, please indicate in your proposal how the capability will be added and the services provided):

- Traditional TV
- Connected TV and OTT
- Digital
- Social Media
- Audio
- Integrated Partnerships
- Print
- Out-of-Home (OOH)
- Public Relations
- Email
- Search and SEO
- Event and in-market activations
- Websites
- Measurements and Reporting
- Consumer Research and Insights

#### 4.4 We are also seeking agencies that have the following capabilities:

- **Brand management:** Offeror shall possess an understanding and knowledge of the South Dakota brand as well as extensive experience with brand management and brand strategy. Offeror shall be adept at providing recommendations on integrating the brand into every aspect of Travel South Dakota's marketing activities, from advertising to public relations, websites, email marketing, social media, etc.
- **Creative services:** Offeror shall possess the ability to develop advertising concepts, themes, and slogans; design advertising and publication layouts; create and produce television commercials; produce videos; develop stories that align with and support a larger creative campaign, from concept to storyboard to final production; produce rich media and conversion-centric digital elements; and copywriting for print, email, audio, television, etc.
- **Media research, evaluation, purchase, placement services:** Offeror shall possess the ability to provide the highest quality experience and skills in media strategy, including research and evaluation of all mediums and advertising channels (video, print, digital, social, audio, out-of-home, etc.) as well as superb skills in negotiating, placement, and purchase of media buys (and finding added value and partnership opportunities within the media buys).
- **Research and reporting:** Offeror shall possess the ability to provide market analysis data and information; market segmentation and psychographic analysis; pre-test advertising concepts and taglines in key markets; organize and conduct focus group studies; conduct research to determine motivation for travel among consumers and understand consumer's propensity to travel. Offeror shall possess the ability to provide tracking and reporting of all campaign elements as well as other aspects required to manage and measure results of a comprehensive and integrated marketing campaign. Offeror shall also possess or have access to data intelligence and technology tools (data-management platforms and demand-side platforms) that will provide Travel South Dakota with the ability to distribute personalized content to appropriate audiences across multiple channels. These platforms must integrate with many of the digital ad networks.
- **Knowledge of domestic and international travel:** Offeror shall possess the ability to provide information and research regarding travel trends, future projections, and demonstrate an understanding of the market / economic fluctuations and how these affect travel as it relates to consumer attitudes and behaviors toward/about travel. Offeror shall demonstrate the ability to develop marketing messages that speak to the right audience, with the right message, at the right time, on the right platform.



- **Account management/fiscal management:** Offeror shall demonstrate the ability to provide account management regarding fiscal responsibility including, but not limited to, budgeting/accounting, invoicing, comprehensive tracking, timing, and implementation of best practices for a compensation and pricing structure.

**Travel South Dakota places a high priority on the efficient and effective use of public funds. Accordingly, proposals should demonstrate a clear strategy for maximizing the return on investment through cost-efficient media placements and reasonable, transparent agency fees that reflect fair market value.**

- **Experience in building strategic partnerships:** Offeror shall possess the ability to build key partnerships with other organizations, businesses / companies, communities, and DMOs. This would include identifying potential corporate and non-traditional tourism partners as well as assisting the Travel South Dakota in preparing and presenting potential marketing partnerships to these entities. The successful offeror will also assist in brainstorming ways to potentially expand cooperative marketing opportunities for the South Dakota tourism industry, thus allowing the industry to buy into strategic marketing opportunities offered by the department.
- **Communication:** The successful offeror shall understand the importance of communication with Travel South Dakota, the South Dakota tourism industry, and key stakeholders. Offeror will be expected to be in frequent (often daily) contact with the department, including weekly status conference calls. While most of the contact will be via Zoom, MS Teams, email, and phone calls, it is expected that the successful offeror's key account team members conduct in-person meetings at the department's behest. The successful offeror will also be required, at their own expense, to send account team members to the following events and meetings: the annual South Dakota Governor's Conference on Tourism (typically the third week in January in Pierre, SD), quarterly Tourism Advisory Board meetings, ESTO (the annual national tourism conference hosted by the U.S. Travel Association), Destination International's annual summer conference, and key meetings and events as determined by Travel South Dakota.
- **No conflicts of interest:** If successfully awarded a contract, and during the term of the said contract, the offeror shall not hold or acquire an account that is considered by the South Dakota Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota to be a competitor (city, county, state, region, CVB, Chamber of Commerce, BID Board, etc.) without first seeking verbal and written approval from the Department of Tourism / Travel South Dakota. The department retains the right to determine whether it considers a DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) a competitor.

## **5.0 TELL US ABOUT YOUR AGENCY**

This is a very important section of the RFP which will assist Travel South Dakota in choosing the very best agency / agencies for our marketing work.

Please provide the information requested in sequential order:

**5.1 AGENCY HISTORY AND FACTS:** Please provide a brief history of your agency (one page or less).

Please also provide the following:

- Ownership structure and the names, titles, and length of service of the agency principals along with a brief resume for each
- The size of the agency in number of employees
- The total annual billings for your agency for the past five years
- The list of your premier agency accounts
- All current and / or former travel and tourism industry accounts / clients signed by your agency as well as reference contact information for each
- All accounts (tourism and non-tourism) gained and lost/resigned during the past five years and the reasons why these accounts were lost / resigned or gained (please provide reference contact information for each as well)

**5.2 EXPERTISE:** Please address what you consider to be your agency's strongest area / areas of marketing expertise.

**5.3 ACHIEVEMENTS:** Please describe **THREE (3)** of your agency's most significant achievements over the past five years.

**5.4 YOUR PROCESS:** Depending upon the components to which you are responding, briefly describe your agency's process for developing effective advertising / marketing campaigns, cooperative marketing campaigns, social media campaigns, public relations and / or event activation campaigns, constructing and maintaining consumer and tourism industry-oriented websites, conducting consumer research and reporting, and email marketing campaigns.

**5.5 CREATIVE WORK:** From a creative standpoint only, briefly describe **THREE (3)** campaigns your agency has created and worked on that you are most proud of. Please provide samples of the creative, and any other relevant elements, that were a part of those campaigns. We would encourage the development of a microsite for sharing this work.

**5.6 TOURISM SPECIFIC ADVERTISING AND MARKETING:** Briefly describe what your agency's philosophy is when it comes to tourism-specific advertising and marketing.

**5.7 UNDERSTANDING OF TOURISM:** In two pages or less, please share with us your understanding of South Dakota's tourism offerings, the state of the travel & tourism industry, both within South Dakota as well as nationally, national travel & tourism trends and forecasts,

and, finally, what you see as the South Dakota Department of Tourism's / Travel South Dakota's biggest opportunities and challenges in the next five years. Please include supporting rationale for your insights.

### **5.8 YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON THE USE OF AI IN TOURISM**

Please describe your agency's philosophy regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI), including what you see as effective applications, opportunities, and potential liabilities for destinations and brands in the travel and tourism industry both now and in the future. Additionally, please outline your agency's formal policy on the use of AI in marketing, creative work, and internal processes. Include any policies related to clients' sensitive data, intellectual property, and ownership rights, as well as procedures for policy oversight.

**5.9 ROLE OF THE CLIENT:** Briefly describe your agency's philosophy / approach on the role you think the client should play in the development of effective advertising and marketing.

**5.10 PERSONNEL AND QUALIFICATIONS:** Please describe your agency's key personnel who have experience with tourism-related marketing and/or other experience which qualifies them to successfully work on the Travel South Dakota account.

- Provide a list of all key personnel who will have direct and significant responsibilities for providing the work / services outlined in the specific components to which you will be responding in the RFP.
- For each person specified, please state their experience and qualifications as well as tourism marketing experience relevant to their ability to manage/work on the Travel South Dakota account.
- Please provide an organizational chart of the team members who will be assigned to the account, the estimated percentage of time each member will spend on the account, and a listing of other accounts to which they are currently assigned.

**5.11 WHY YOU:** In one page or less, please describe why your agency is the best fit for Travel South Dakota, why your firm is the best qualified to do the work laid out in this RFP, why you are passionate about working for Travel South Dakota and promoting The Mount Rushmore state, and, finally, what sets you apart from other marketing agencies seeking our work.

## **6.0 SCOPE OF WORK**

This RFP divides the scope of services sought by Travel South Dakota into **NINE (9)** different components. The reason for dividing the work into nine components is to provide the department with the flexibility to choose the most creative, innovative, and dynamic agency possible. The nine components allow prospective offerors the opportunity to submit proposals in response to one or more (or all) components.

While the RFP is divided into nine components, it should be understood by all offerors responding to the RFP that there will be overlap among tasks/work between components.

Furthermore, it is important that all offerors recognize that an award of a contract under a particular component does not guarantee exclusivity to perform all the tasks described under the component. Travel South Dakota reserves the right to assign work to any offeror as they see fit. Some tasks listed in the following components may also be kept as operational activities within the department.

Requirements and expectations that apply to all components are as follows:

- Every month, the agency will be expected to give an update on the status of the budget.
- The agency will be required to provide performance and / or campaign reports specific to their awarded component's objectives.
- The agency must have the financial capacity to contract and purchase media or other applicable services without advance payment by Travel South Dakota.
- The agency shall agree and understand that Travel South Dakota shall have the right to approve or disapprove of any of the agency's personnel assigned to the account. Furthermore, the agency must obtain the verbal and / or written approval of the department prior to replacement of any previously approved account team member. The agency shall agree and understand that Travel South Dakota shall have the right to request replacement of any person assigned to the account team for any reason. Unless the situation regarding the agency's assigned personnel requires immediate replacement, the agency shall be allowed at least fourteen calendar days after notification to replace the account team member.

## **6.1 COMPONENT ONE: BRAND MARKETING**

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent between \$8.5 million and \$9.5 million annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, but excluding the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT ONE** shall work collaboratively with Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other selected agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Develop comprehensive, innovative, and highly impactful marketing campaign strategies that are based on quality research evaluating the profile, demographics, and media usage of the South Dakota visitor and audience, while also identifying emerging changes and trends.
- Develop and produce engaging content and award-winning creative for integrated, omni-channel campaigns that captivate viewers, expand and enhance the South Dakota brand, produce tangible results, and maximize our ROI.
- Planning and development of comprehensive media schedules for omni-channel campaigns that align with our strategy and objectives.
- Media buying, implementation, and management of traditional, digital, video, audio, paid social, paid search, print, integrated partnerships and OOH placements.
- Campaign reporting - Perform evaluations and generate reports on the overall performance and effectiveness of marketing tactics and campaigns.
- Assist in planning and producing presentations for various marketing presentations throughout the year.

## 6.2 COMPONENT TWO: COOPERATIVE MARKETING & MANAGEMENT

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent between \$2.1 million and \$2.25 million annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, but excluding the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT TWO** shall work collaboratively with Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Develop comprehensive, innovative and highly impactful marketing strategies and omni-channel campaigns for 16+ DMOs such as CVBs, BID Boards, Chambers of Commerce or other entities partnering with Travel South Dakota that support and align with Travel South Dakota's broader campaigns.
- Create and deliver engaging content and award-winning creative for omni-channel campaigns that support and align with the overall Travel South Dakota campaign creative.
- Campaign reporting - Perform evaluations and generate reports on the overall performance and effectiveness of marketing tactics and campaigns for each cooperative marketing partner. This includes development and maintenance of a campaign dashboard for each partner.
- Assist in planning and producing presentations for various marketing presentations throughout the year.
- For more information about Travel South Dakota's cooperative marketing programs, see [www.SDVisit.com](http://www.SDVisit.com).

## 6.3 COMPONENT THREE: ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA & INFLUENCER MARKETING

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent around \$1 million annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, but excluding the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT THREE** shall work collaboratively with Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Identify emerging technology and trends in social media to enhance and expand social media platforms by executing robust, innovative, creative, and engaging strategies and campaigns that are aligned with the department's brand.
- Ongoing social media activities shall include, but are not limited to, real-time community management, production and management of social media assets including photography and video, campaign-specific reporting, paid promotions, monthly content planning, and additional program support as needed.
- Provide support for partnerships with influencers including ideation, vetting, contract negotiation, transportation arrangement, itinerary and destination immersion support, and reporting.
- Support for community management should be prioritized, with an emphasis on strengthening Travel South Dakota's efforts for both day-to-day engagement and during times of crisis.

- Prioritize photo and video asset creation, management, and organization of those assets.
- Provide leadership in areas of crisis communications, tourism stakeholder engagement, etc.
- Collaborate with Travel South Dakota team, and other marketing and agencies of record, to plan and execute integrated campaigns.

#### **6.4 COMPONENT FOUR: EMAIL MARKETING PROGRAM**

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent around \$650,000 annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, including the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT FOUR** shall work collaboratively with Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Design and create compelling and innovative email marketing programs for both consumer and industry contact lists.
- Provide strategies – consumer and industry – for content messaging, increased engagement, list management (including development and cleansing), segmentation, and A/B testing.
- Offeror shall provide editorial calendars for efforts to align with ongoing marketing campaigns.
- Develop email templates and be responsible for content writing, individual email design, coding, testing, and deployment.

#### **6.5 COMPONENT FIVE: CONSUMER WEBSITE & INDUSTRY WEBSITE**

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent between \$800,000 and \$1.15 million annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, including the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT FIVE** shall work collaboratively with Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Evaluate the current design, navigation, usability, and functionality of the consumer website (TravelSouthDakota.com) and industry website (SDVisit.com). Develop and implement a plan to ensure both incorporate the latest technology and industry best practices, including accessibility, while delivering a first-rate user experience.
- Provide website management and maintenance, including essential ongoing optimizations.
- Provide website management, maintenance and content development for Travel South Dakota Online Training System which may include CMS updates, technology enhancements, website hosting services, training videos, user reports and technical assistance, style sheets and design work and navigation updates.

## 6.6 COMPONENT SIX: PUBLIC RELATIONS

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent around \$350,000 annually, including monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT SIX** shall work collaboratively with the Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Develop and execute a comprehensive regional, national, and international public relations strategy that includes ongoing pitches to television, print, digital and online media outlets that aligns with brand strategy and goals.
- Provide crisis communication leadership and guidance with the ability to remain flexible and nimble through changing events.
- Develop a strategic public relations and media relations plan that includes targeted day-to-day, monthly, or quarterly outreach to key travel writers, journalists, etc., and ongoing relationship building with said travel writers, journalists.
- Provide media relations work that includes assistance with media research, story development pitches, press releases, media alerts that supports Travel South Dakota's campaign and brand initiatives.
- Provide media relations work including coordination of and assistance on destination immersion tours, support event activation and outreach, virtual media offerings, and media blitz and media event coordination.
- In collaboration with Travel South Dakota team, develop media materials, press kits, and media mailers.
- Provide media monitoring services and joint management of the software and tools.
- Maintain and audit regional and national target media lists.
- Collaborate with Travel South Dakota team, and other marketing and agencies of record, to plan and execute integrated campaigns.

## 6.7 COMPONENT SEVEN: EVENTS AND ACTIVATIONS

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent around \$250,000 to \$350,000 annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, including the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT SEVEN** shall work with the Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Concept, develop and execute robust and engaging brand activation events.
- Create marketing elements and materials related to the specific event and promotion of activation.
- Coordinate and support event activation outreach in key or emerging markets.

## 6.8 COMPONENT EIGHT: RESEARCH AND REPORTING

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent around \$500,000 annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, including the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT EIGHT** shall work with Travel

South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Possess the ability to provide frequent market analysis data and information as well as market segmentation and psychographic analysis on a regular cadence
- Pre-test advertising concepts and taglines in key markets
- Organize and conduct marketing focus group studies
- Conduct research and testing to determine motivation and influences for travel among consumers and understand consumer's propensity to travel.
- Provide tracking and reporting of all campaign elements as well as other additional aspects required to manage and measure results of a comprehensive and integrated marketing campaign.
- Possess or have access to data intelligence and technology tools (data-management platforms and demand-side platforms) that will provide Travel South Dakota with the ability to track distributed personalized content to appropriate audiences across multiple channels. These platforms must integrate with many any of the digital ad networks and reporting tools.
- Collaborate with other businesses, agencies, and vendors to conduct research on a regular frequency; gather, collect, transform, and interpret new and existing data sources; be comfortable building and integrating new data pipelines, and conduct monthly meetings to share current, new, and evolving travel trends; in-depth market research; content measurement across website, social, paid ads, etc. and changes in audience and behavior cohorts and customer journey.

## **6.9 COMPONENT NINE: VACATION GUIDE & PRINT GUIDE PRODUCTION**

Historically, for this component, Travel South Dakota has spent around \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually, inclusive of all media and production costs, including the monthly retainer and any other potential agency fees. The offeror selected for **COMPONENT NINE** shall work collaboratively with Travel South Dakota and, potentially, other agencies of record, and may be required to perform the following duties:

- Provide production services for Travel South Dakota's print publications. This may include production of multi-language international guides, reproduction of the scenic drives guide, and all other printed publications as necessary. This may also include edits or revisions to Travel South Dakota's current publications.
- Most notably, the offeror shall provide annual production services for Travel South Dakota's Vacation Guide including, but not limited to the following services:
  - Timeline creation for entire guide (annually).
  - Content strategy outline and content creation for at least 35 pages of intro copy. Must create original and unique content for these editorial pages providing sourcing, proofing, and factchecking services.
  - Provide design layout creation for at least 35 introductory pages, the front and back covers, and inside front of the guide. Design should integrate annually with Travel South Dakota's current brand standards.



- Production of design templates for Travel South Dakota's four regional tourism association sections as determined year-to-year, including style guides (font usage, color schemes copy/ad layout options), and listings updates as needed.
- Compile two indexes, one by city and one listed by activity and/or attraction.
- Creation of guide imposition.
- Provide proofing and revision services, along with compliance with design consistency.
- Coordination and execution of an annual eGuide / digital guide version including adding web links to all addresses in entire eGuide / digital guide (currently 244 pages of content).

## **7.0 RESPONDING TO THE RFP COMPONENTS: WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU**

### **7.1 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT ONE: BRAND MARKETING:**

For **COMPONENT ONE**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's media experience and capabilities.
- Describe your agency's experience in brand strategy brand management and tourism-related marketing.
- Describe your agency's approach and capabilities when it comes to integrated, omni-channel campaigns, from conception to client pitch, media buying, creative production, placement, management and optimization. Please use specific examples when describing your strategies and capabilities. Explain how you measure and define the success of campaigns.
- Briefly describe your agency's experiences and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting marketing campaigns. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.
- Provide at least **THREE (3)** examples of relevant multi-media campaigns spearheaded by your agency and executed in the past three years, along with a brief description of the success of these efforts. In the example, please briefly include:
  - The objectives of each campaign.
  - The research and methodology that went into the development of each campaign.
  - The resulting creative and media strategy, along with campaign results. Please provide how success was measured and what insights were gained to apply to future efforts.
  - Please provide any creative or other materials related to the campaign.
- Develop **ONE (1)** peak-season campaign using a budget of \$5 million to promote travel in South Dakota. This plan should include market selection, media placement, and a detailed budget with media spend, agency fees, and production costs.

### **7.2 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT TWO: COOPERATIVE MARKETING & MANAGEMENT:**

For **COMPONENT TWO**, please address the following:

- If not already provided in a previous component, please describe your agency's marketing experience and capabilities.
- Describe your agency's experience in brand, brand management and tourism-related marketing specific to an overarching brand and aligning partners.
- Describe your agency's approach and capabilities when it comes to marketing strategies and media placement for co-op advertising with an overall broader marketing campaign. Please use specific examples when describing strategy and capabilities. Explain how you measure and define the success of the campaigns.
- If not already provided in a previous component, briefly describe your agency's experience and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting campaigns. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.
- Develop **THREE (3)** peak-season marketing campaigns using a tiered-budget approach of \$250,000, \$125,000, and \$80,000 to promote summer travel in South Dakota that reflect a co-op advertising model. The plans should include market selections, media placement, and a detailed budget with media spend, agency fees, and production costs for each tier.

### 7.3 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT THREE: ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFLUENCER MARKETING:

For **COMPONENT THREE**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's social media experience and capabilities as well as paid social strategy.
- When it comes to tourism marketing, what specific experience does your agency have with social media strategy, campaigns, and community management?
- Provide insight as to how your agency handles social's SEO strategy.
- Describe how your agency would (and would not) leverage AI to support social media efforts, and any rules related to use of AI for owned social media platforms and/or influencer partnerships.
- Describe the process for how your agency strategically captures content for use on social media platforms for your clients.
- Please provide **THREE (3)** examples of successful social media campaigns your agency has been responsible for creating and executing in the last three years, and the metrics used to gauge success. Preferably, **ONE (1)** should be tourism related.
- Please provide **TWO (2)** examples of unique influencer partnerships your agency has been responsible for in the last three years. Include a recap of the partnership, how it came to be, your philosophy on influencer partnerships, and key results from the effort.
- Briefly describe your agency's experiences and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting social media campaigns. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.
- Please review the department's current social media channels and provide a critique on current activity and opportunities for improvement.

## 7.4 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT FOUR: EMAIL MARKETING PROGRAM:

For **COMPONENT FOUR**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's experience, capabilities, and approach in developing creative, effective, and robust email marketing campaigns that integrate into an overall marketing strategy.
- Describe your experience with or understanding both the travel and tourism consumer audience and tourism industry audiences.
- Please provide **THREE (3)** examples of engaging and effective email marketing campaigns that your agency has overseen for its clients over the past three years.
- Briefly describe your agency's experiences and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting the effectiveness of email marketing campaigns. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.

## 7.5 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT FIVE: CONSUMER WEBSITE AND INDUSTRY WEBSITE:

For **COMPONENT FIVE**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's website management and hosting experience and capabilities, including applications you have the most knowledge about.
- Describe your agency's experience in brand positioning, brand management, and personalization with tourism-related websites.
- Describe your agency's approach and capabilities when it comes to managing, optimizing, and hosting successful websites. Please use specific examples when describing your strategies and capabilities.
- What strategy do you have for migrating an existing site and/or database to a new site and/or database?
- Do you have experience with business and event listings and, if so, what platform(s) do you have experience with? What CMS, hosting vendors, or other platforms and partners do you prefer to work with?
- Briefly describe your agency's experiences and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting the effectiveness of a website. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.
- Please review TravelSouthDakota.com and provide feedback is on the overall design, navigation, usability, and effectiveness of the website. In your professional opinion, does the website provide potential visitors to the state with inspiring and engaging content. Please highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the website and what you would propose to improve.
- Please provide examples of **THREE (3)** websites (tourism or non-tourism) that you have developed over the past three years. With each example, please briefly include:
  - What made the website effective?
  - What are you most proud of about the website?
  - Provide examples of the success the website is garnering for its client.

## 7.6 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT SIX: PUBLIC RELATIONS:

For **COMPONENT SIX**, please address the following:

- Please describe your agency's public relations capabilities and overall experience as it pertains to tourism clients.
- Please describe your agency's experience with developing national and regional public relations strategies that include ongoing pitches to television, print, digital and online media outlets (both domestic and international).
- Please describe your agency's experience with public relations relationships that include day-to-day, monthly, or quarterly outreach to key travel writers, journalists, and influencers (and ongoing relationship building with these groups).
- Please describe your agency's ability to integrate with other agencies of record to collaborate and provide an integrated approach for the department.
- Describe your agency's experience in brand management.
- Briefly describe your agency's experiences and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting public relations campaigns. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.
- Describe your agency's experience in crisis communications strategy and provide **ONE (1)** example of a crisis that your agency has successfully assisted a client in navigating.
- Please describe **TWO (2)** key public relations campaigns executed for clients in the last three years. For each campaign, please include the objectives of the campaign, research methodology that went into the development of the campaign, budget, campaign creative, strategy, and execution, results of the campaign, and how the success of the campaign was measured.

## 7.7 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT SEVEN: EVENTS AND ACTIVATIONS:

For **COMPONENT SEVEN**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's experience, capabilities, and approach to developing, coordinating, and executing event activations that integrate into an overall marketing strategy.
- Describe your agency's approach and capabilities when it comes to marketing strategies and media placement to promote events and activations. Please use specific examples when describing strategies and capabilities.
- Explain how you measure and define the success of events and activations. Briefly describe your agency's experience and approach when tracking, monitoring, and reporting on event activations. Please provide at least **ONE (1)** reporting example.
- Provide **THREE (3)** key event activation campaigns your agency has executed in the past three years along with a brief description of the success of these efforts. In the example, please briefly include:
  - The objectives of the activation/campaign.
  - The research and strategy that went into the development of the activation.

- Activation creative and media strategy, along with campaign results. Please provide how success was measured and what insights were gained to apply to future efforts.
- Please provide any collateral or creative materials related to the campaign.

## **7.8 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT EIGHT: RESEARCH AND REPORTING:**

FOR **COMPONENT EIGHT**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's experience, capabilities, and approach to conducting, coordinating, and sharing custom research that guides the overall marketing strategy across partner agencies and vendors.
- Describe your agency's approach and capabilities when it comes to pre-testing advertising concepts and creative and how you utilize that information to optimize campaigns.
- Explain how you measure and define the success of campaigns. Briefly describe your agency's experience and approach when it comes to tracking, monitoring, and reporting on campaign effectiveness and efficiencies.
- Please provide at least **TWO (2)** reporting examples through online dashboards, presentations or reports and how that is shared with a variety of key stakeholders.
- Please indicate if you have experience monitoring multiple niche campaigns and co-op campaigns simultaneously and how that is managed, tracked and shared effectively.
- Provide **THREE (3)** custom research projects your agency has executed in the past three years that provided direction for future campaigns such as: consumer audience profiles and personas, visitor perceptions of a destination, competitive market research, destination assessments, in-market intercept studies/focus groups and return on ad spend for specific campaigns.
- Share any data intelligence and technology tools (data-management platforms and demand-side platforms) that will provide Travel South Dakota with the ability to deliver personalized content to appropriate audiences across multiple channels. These platforms must integrate with many of the digital ad networks and reporting tools.
- Provide **TWO (2)** examples when you worked closely with other businesses, agencies, and research vendors to conduct research that was shared with your clients and agencies to optimize campaign effectiveness.

## **7.9 RESPONDING TO COMPONENT NINE: VACATION GUIDE & PRINT GUIDE PRODUCTION**

FOR **COMPONENT NINE**, please address the following:

- Describe your agency's experience, capabilities, and approach to the production of print materials and how you integrate the print guides into the overall marketing strategy.
- Describe your agency's ability to translate print guides into digital eGuides, website content, or digital offerings, keeping accessibility best practices in mind.
- Describe your agency's ability to provide creative services and copywriters specific to the print production of Travel South Dakota's work.

- Describe your agency's ability to provide multi-language translation services, as necessary, for one or more of these publications.
- Provide **THREE (3)** print productions performed by your organization in the last three years which are similar to the requirements of this component.

## 8.0 **PROPOSAL RESPONSE FORMAT**

**8.1 ONE (1)** original and **TEN (10)** copies shall be submitted. **The submitted proposal shall not be longer than 75 pages.** We encourage the development of microsites that you can direct us to that include more in-depth details of your work (marketing campaigns, creative, activations, etc.).

**8.2** In addition, the offeror should provide **ONE (1)** copy of their entire proposal, including all attachments, in electronic format on a flash drive. Offerors may not send the electronically formatted copy of their proposal via email.

**8.3** The proposal should be page numbered and should have an index and/or a table of contents referencing the appropriate page number.

**8.4** All proposals must be organized and tabbed with labels for the following headings:

- **RFP Form:** The State's Request for Proposal form completed and signed.
- **Executive Summary:** The one or two-page executive summary is to briefly describe the offeror's proposal. This summary should highlight the major features of the proposal. It must indicate any requirements that cannot be met by the offeror. The reader should be able to determine the essence of the proposal by reading the executive summary. Proprietary information requests should be identified in this section.
- **Detailed Response:** This section should constitute the major portion of the proposal and must contain at least the following information:
  - A complete narrative of the offeror's assessment of the work to be performed, the offeror's ability and approach, and the resources necessary to fulfill the requirements. This should demonstrate the offeror's understanding of the desired overall performance expectations.
    - A specific point-by-point response, in the order listed to each requirement in the RFP. The response should identify each requirement being addressed as enumerated in the RFP.
    - A clear description of any options or alternatives proposed.
- **Cost Proposal:** Cost will be evaluated independently from the technical proposal. Offerors may submit multiple cost proposals. All costs related to the provision of the required services must be included in each cost proposal offered.

## **9.0 PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND AWARD PROCESS**

**9.1** The offeror is cautioned that it is the offeror's sole responsibility to submit information related to the evaluation of categories and that the State of South Dakota is under no obligation to solicit such information if it is not included in the proposal. The offeror's failure to submit such information may cause an adverse impact on the evaluation of the proposal.

**9.2** After determining that a proposal satisfies the mandatory requirements stated in the Request for Proposal, the evaluator(s) shall use subjective judgment in conducting a comparative assessment of the proposal by considering each of the following criteria:

- Specialized expertise, capabilities, and technical competence as demonstrated by the proposed approach and methodology to meet the project requirements;
- Resources available to perform the work, including any specialized services, within the specified time limits for the project;
- Record of past performance, including price and cost data from previous projects, quality of work, ability to meet schedules, cost control, and contract administration;
- Familiarity with the project locale;
- Proposed project management techniques; and
- Ability and proven history in handling special project constraints.

**9.3** Experience and reliability of the offeror's organization are considered subjectively in the evaluation process. Therefore, the offeror is advised to submit any information which documents successful and reliable experience in past performances, especially those performances related to the requirements of this RFP.

**9.4** The qualifications of the personnel proposed by the offeror to perform the requirements of this RFP, whether from the offeror's organization or from a proposed subcontractor, will be subjectively evaluated. Therefore, the offeror should submit detailed information related to the experience and qualifications, including education and training, of proposed personnel.

**9.5** The State reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive technicalities, and make award(s) as deemed to be in the best interest of the State of South Dakota.

**9.6 Award:** The requesting agency and the highest ranked offeror shall mutually discuss and refine the scope of services for the project and shall negotiate terms, including compensation and performance schedule.

- If the agency and the highest ranked offeror are unable for any reason to negotiate a contract at a compensation level that is reasonable and fair to the agency, the agency shall, either orally or in writing, terminate negotiations with the contractor. The agency may then negotiate with the next highest ranked contractor.
- The negotiation process may continue through successive offerors, according to agency ranking, until an agreement is reached, or the agency terminates the contracting process.

## 10.0 **COST PROPOSAL**

Below is a basic **COST PROPOSAL** to provide guidance as you prepare costs for the various components of the RFP. Please know that you can modify your Cost Proposal however you wish to fit your overall responses.

**10.1** Please state direct, hourly rates in the simple format provided below for all proposed agency team members and services provided within your proposal. Titles listed below are EXAMPLES/REFERENCE only. In your submission, please provide the actual titles and hourly rates for all agency personnel who will work on the account:

### **Title & Hourly Rate in Dollars Per Hour:**

Account Management (Director/Account Executive, Account Coordinator, etc.)

Brand Planning (Research Director, Research Specialist, etc.)

Creative (Creative Director, Copywriter, Videographer, etc.)

Media (Paid Media Strategist, Media Planner, Media Buyer, etc.)

Digital (Digital Strategist, SEO Specialist, Developer, etc.)

Marketing Analytics (Analytics Director, Analytics Strategist, etc.)

Social (Social Media Director, Social Specialist, Content Creator, etc.)

Public Relations (Account Director, Event Actions Representative, etc.)

**10.2** Media commission rate percentage that incorporates all costs for media research, planning, negotiation, tracking, pre- and post-buy analysis, and placement.

**Media commission rate:**            %

**10.3** In addition to ongoing marketing work costs, many agencies charge a flat monthly retainer fee for specific areas of work. If your agency charges a retainer fee, please list the fee for each area of work you will be responding to in the RFP.

For example:

**Monthly strategic & account leadership retainer fee: \$**

**Monthly creative retainer fee: \$**

**Monthly public relations retainer fee: \$**



**Monthly social media retainer fee: \$**

**Monthly eCRM retainer fee: \$**

**10.4 Consideration of all Inherent Costs:** Cost Proposals must take into consideration all inherent costs of providing the services described in the RFP. Proposer is responsible for paying all travel costs including, but not limited to, round-trip travel, meals, etc. The State will not pay any additional charges beyond that which is approved by Travel South Dakota, and the costs listed in the Cost Proposal.

**10.5 Fixed Cost:** All proposal costs must remain firm for the initial contract term. Costs can be lowered at any time during the contract without requiring a written approval for individual statement of work projects.

Contractor may request a cost increase in writing to the State no later than one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the beginning of the next contract period and prior to the proposed effective date of the cost increase and will be limited to fully documented cost increases to the Contractor which are demonstrated to be industrywide. Requests for a cost increase are limited to one (1) per renewal term.

**10.6: Cost Clarification:** The State reserves the right to clarify any cost discrepancies related to assumptions on the part of the proposers.

## **11.0 SCORING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF WRITTEN PROPOSALS**

**11.1** The following are just some examples of the criteria we will be looking at when scoring submissions. This is not an all-inclusive listing but will give the offeror an idea of general scoring guidelines.

- Marketing agency's ownership structure, overall organization and history
- Marketing agency's creativity, history of effective marketing campaigns, marketing capabilities and competencies
- Marketing agency's tourism marketing experience
- Marketing agency's understanding of South Dakota, its tourism product, knowledge of the tourism industry and trends– state and nationally
- Marketing agency's philosophy and methodology of marketing
- Marketing agency's consumer research capabilities
- Marketing agency's personnel experience and qualifications
- Marketing agency's cost of services, budgeting capabilities, account management capabilities and demonstration of sound fiscal management
- Marketing agency's financial stability
- Marketing agency's references