



USA

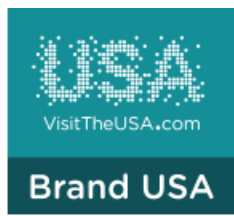
VisitTheUSA.com

Brand USA



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

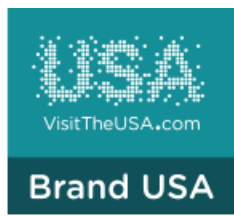
Strategic Communications, Media & Public Relations  
December 2018



Request for Proposals:  
Strategic Communications, Media & Public Relations

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## PURPOSE

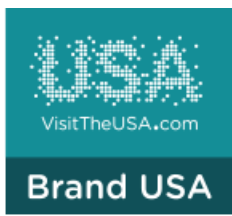
The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to identify the appropriate agency to support Brand USA's strategic global communications, media relations, and public relations priorities. Brand USA continually works to build brand awareness and credibility to communicate U.S. travel policy both internationally and domestically. Our desired partner will have the capacity to provide strategic counsel and direction, actively share and promote our message, amplify our successes, and position the business case of how travel positively impacts the United States economy – at the national, regional, and local levels.

As our agency, the selected firm will be responsible for assisting in the development and support of Brand USA's public relations and media efforts to maximize communications efforts aimed at key domestic and international reporters and media outlets. And the agency must be able to provide strong media & PR strategic insight and message development to assist Brand USA with proactive campaigns and reactive approaches related to topics including but not limited to: travel news, travel trends, Brand USA marketing initiatives, issues impacting travel, DMO and partner crises, and more.

## OBJECTIVE

The selected agency's responsibilities will include the below objectives:

- Tell the story of Brand USA's marketing and strategies, programs, successes and opportunities to media across the country and around the globe.
- Ensure awareness, understanding, and support of our work to fuel the nation's economy through the power of travel.
- Build engagement, trust, and advocacy through strategic communications.
- Elevate Brand USA executives as global tourism thought leaders.
- Communicate travel policy and correct any misconceptions.
- Identify industry trends to help shape our messaging.
- Enhance the credibility of the organization in its effectiveness to increase international visitation and spend.
- Increasing the level of goodwill for the organization to mitigate potential negative issues
- Develop communications strategies to support Brand USA's programs and initiatives and promote the ways in which Brand USA promotes DMOs globally.
- Strengthen domestic public relations efforts to assist in attracting additional partners both within the tourism industry and beyond.
- Establish working relationships with influential global media.
- Position Brand USA as an ambassador for U.S. tourism worldwide.
- Upon request, provide support for consumer and trade efforts.



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## QUALIFICATIONS

- Brand management: Ability to drive brand consistency with appropriate localized nuances across international markets.
- Global media experience demonstrated by the execution of media strategies that result in positive media coverage.
- Proven travel/tourism or hospitality industry experience.
- Local perspective in our core markets, to include messaging/channel restrictions, and language & translation best practices.
- Planning and execution of media: agency must be able to react quickly to tight turnarounds.

## BUDGET

Proposer must submit an appropriate and realistic budget, outlining each of the duties.

## SCOPE OF WORK

**The following categories represent core responsibilities of the Representation Firm in support of Brand USA's mission and annual business plan:**

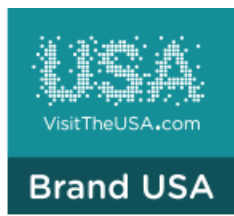
### **1. Media & Public Relations Services**

The selected Agency will execute the following:

- Create and implement a comprehensive media & public relations plan that adheres to Brand USA's communications strategies and standard operating processes.

This will include but not be limited to the following:

- Relationship building and in-person meetings with media, executive speaking opportunities and thought-leadership positioning.
- Develop and maintain a targeted media list.
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with reporters, editors, and bookers at key media publications, outlets, programs, etc.
- Proactively pursue positive stories and respond to inquiries - targeting all forms of media: broadcast, digital, podcasts, print, etc. (consumer lifestyle and travel, travel/meetings trade outlets) as appropriate for each opportunity.
- Utilize Brand USA's Cision and Cision Impact portals to develop an accurate and reliable system of measurement.
- Coordinate approved communications flow with other U.S. destination representatives and Brand USA partners, relevant associations, and members of the U.S. government (i.e. U.S. Commercial Service, U.S. Embassy, etc.) in market.
- Collectively work with Brand USA's corporate communications and public policy departments and Representation Firm(s) on any issues surrounding corporate communications and public policy.



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- Develop and implement a crisis communication plan to support Brand USA's global crisis communications strategy as directed by corporate communications.
- Develop media kits, as needed.
- Vet Brand USA media calls, as needed.
- Draft news releases, messaging documents, talking points, FAQs, media Q&As, etc.

#### Crisis & Issues Support

- Collectively work with Brand USA's corporate communications and public policy team to monitor news coverage for issues which may impact international travel to the United States or a destination partner.
  - Provide advice on a strategy to include media and PR response as well as partner support.
- Develop and implement a crisis communication plan to support Brand USA's global crisis communications strategy.

#### Media Training

- Provide media training for executives and senior staff, as needed.

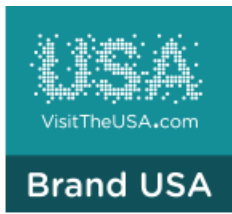
## 2. Account Administration & Overhead

- Provide written weekly, monthly, quarterly, annual and campaign-specific reports to show status and/or results as compared to goals. Details included in the Metrics & Reporting section. (Sample progress report will be provided upon request.)
- Develop a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats (SWOT) analysis for key initiatives and campaigns.
- Provide detailed back-up and appropriate receipts for all monthly expenses related to billable services and out-of-pocket purchases. This documentation shall be submitted monthly along with monthly invoice and report, and will be subject to audit at Brand USA's discretion.
- Store and maintain an adequate inventory of Brand USA collateral and promotional items, the selection of which meet all requirements as established by Brand USA.

## METRICS, REPORTING & EVALUATION

- Weekly status reports should be received each Friday at Noon.
- Monthly reports should be received by 5<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding month.
- Quarterly reports should be received by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the first month in the next quarter.
- Annual report should be received by Jan. 31, 2020. This report should also include a competitive analysis of the state of the industry, Brand USA's position in the market, and issues that could adversely or positively affect the destination's strategic position going forward.
- Campaign-specific reports should be received by the last day of the following month.





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## EVALUATION AND SELECTION

### Evaluation Procedures

Brand USA will establish a committee to evaluate and rate all proposals based on the criteria prescribed in Attachment 3. Proposals may be rejected if minimum requirements are not met. All proposers seeking clarification of this RFP must submit questions in writing to Brand USA, no later than Jan. 11, 2018 (due by 5:00 PM, EST), and sent by email to [RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com).

### Basis for Contract Award

A contract will be awarded to the organization whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to Brand USA, taking into consideration the criteria set forth in this RFP.

### Post Selection

Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, Brand USA will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected. Brand USA's evaluations of proposals are confidential and as such, Brand USA is unable to respond to any questions and/or requests for information as to why a company was not selected.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### Term

Brand USA expects the contractual term will start on March 1, 2019 and run 12-months with options to renew the agreement on similar terms upon mutual agreement of Brand USA and the selected Agency.

### Budget Form

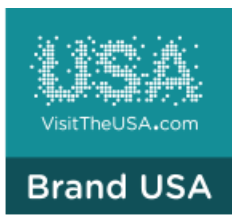
Please provide a proposed budget based on a full year of activities, administrative expenses, overhead costs that correspond to those detailed in your proposal.

*Note: -Although Brand USA's fiscal year begins Oct. 1 and ends Sept. 30; please base your proposed budget on the 12-month period.*

*-Overhead includes, but is not limited to, hardline and mobile phone use, internet charges, lease of office space, local gas mileage, and cost of operations.*

### Billing

The budget for this RFP and all administrative and overhead payments shall be made in U.S. dollars. All program and out-of-pocket costs will be reimbursed in the currency in which they were incurred. The RFP budget shall not be adjusted for the rate of currency exchange. Brand USA limits invoicing to two invoices per month. One invoice shall be for administration and overhead. The other invoice shall be for out-of-pocket and third-party expenses. Receipts are required for all out-of-pocket expenses.



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**Conflict(s) of Interest**

The proposer must declare and provide details of any actual, potential or perceived conflict(s) of interest.

**Financial Statements**

Proposer must demonstrate financial viability for maintaining an account of this size. Please provide financial statements inclusive of income statement and balance sheet.

Financial statements provided must be the most recent statements available, but no more than 12 months old. Financial statements are to be submitted in a sealed envelope. After review, all financial statements will be destroyed or returned to proposer.

If proposal is a joint proposal, you must submit financial statements for all proposers.

**Personnel / Management**

Proposer must provide a team to Brand USA to execute aforementioned strategies. To best streamline reporting and office management as part of this contract, Brand USA will require a 100 percent allocated position of:

**Strategic Account Director:** This position will oversee all aforementioned activities in the scope of work. For the sake of this RFP, this position must be identified in your written proposal.

Please identify other positions that will conduct day-to-day work on behalf of Brand USA and their percentage of time allotment:

- Media & Public Relations
- Issue & Crisis Support
- Administrative
- Other recommended staffing

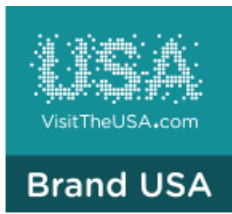
For all individuals assigned to this account, please provide an organizational chart of proposed staffing and information on each team member that includes:

- Overall experience
- Current resumes/biographies demonstrating qualifications related to this RFP
- Length of time with agency

**Subcontractors**

The proposer should identify all proposed subcontractors for work that exceeds \$5,000 per fiscal year and document the portions of service that will be performed by subcontractors and their ability to perform the work.

Please provide the name and background of each subcontractor company, if applicable, as well



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as the resumes of proposed subcontractors' key personnel, including those conducting day-to-day work.

*Note: The proposer must make it clear to any subcontractors included in the proposal that if the proposer is selected, the subcontractors may not necessarily be selected.*

### Proposal Costs

Costs for developing proposals and related presentations are entirely the responsibility of the proposer and shall not be reimbursed by Brand USA.

### Official Contact

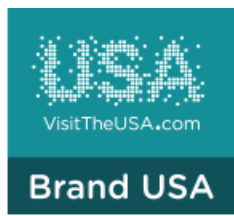
Brand USA requests the proposer designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal. Please identify this point of contact on the Notice of Intent to Bid Form (Attachment 1).

### SUBMISSION DELIVERABLES & SCHEDULE

Please submit your responses in hard copy and electronic format. All proposals should include a clear, concise narrative. Proposal format is open to presentation style, but must include the following information:

- Executive Summary
  - Market Intelligence
1. **Project brief:** An issue brief and executive messaging document on recent travel related public policy issues/misconceptions or a potential crisis (i.e. Tariff and border issues, natural disasters, etc.)  
Resources: [U.S. Travel & Tourism Advisory Board](#), [U.S. Travel Association](#), [National Travel & Tourism Office \(NTTO\)](#), [Travel Promotion Act](#),
  2. **Comprehensive corporate communications plan:** Describe in detail how your agency would launch a Brand USA program or initiative ([National film premiere](#) or consumer platform launch – [GoUSA TV](#), [Hear the Music](#))
    - a. Strategy, objective, and goals
    - b. Identify spokespeople
    - c. Targeted media list(s)
    - d. Proposed media pitch(es)
    - e. Messages and talking points
    - f. Communication sequence, including partner and social media communication
    - g. Draft news release
  3. **Case study:** Show how earned media was successfully used to change public perception.





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- The Agency must have previous experience in all facets of tourism marketing or retail marketing and public relations. Background information on your company, including:
  - History, years in business, and relevant experience in the past three to five years
  - Company size, number of employees, and staff retention rates
  - Types of services provided
  - Locations, parent company, and/or affiliate information, type of company, etc.
- A list of the primary contacts for the Brand USA account, including a brief bio of each team member plus their experience and knowledge of the USA.
- The accreditations your company has acquired since its inception, including details of any company membership in professional or trade organization affiliations
- A listing of at least three (3) relevant references, including the name of the reference entity, a brief statement describing the relationship between the proposer and the reference entity, and the name, title and telephone number of a contact person at the reference entity
- Information demonstrating the company's organizational capability to successfully perform the Scope of Work by submitting three to five case studies exemplifying proven success in representing a destination
- A description of your organization's experience working with the travel trade and media
- A description of your abilities to coordinate and work with multiple U.S. stakeholders, destination/supplier offices, and other representation organizations on behalf of Brand USA
- A current client list
- Financial Statements as set forth in the Administrative Information section above
- Conflict(s) of Interest Statement as set forth in the Administrative Information section above

**RFP Management**

All communications regarding this RFP must be sent to the Brand USA RFP Administrator at [RFPAdmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPAdmin@TheBrandUSA.com):

RFP Administration

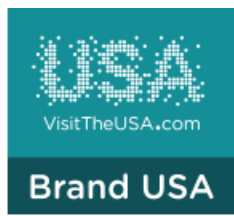
Brand USA

1725 I Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor

Washington, DC 20006

This includes delivery of the following documentation by the due dates set forth in the Tentative Scheduled section found below:

- Intent to Bid
- Written Questions
- PDF of Written Proposals



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Note that all answers regarding questions and request for clarification regarding this RFP will be responded to publicly consistent with the schedule below to ensure that all respondents have the same information at hand.

### Notice of Intent to Bid

Notice of Intent to Bid (Attachment 1) must be received by **January 25, 2019 5:00 PM, EST**. The notice must be submitted via e-mail to [RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com). The Notice of Intent to Bid is non-binding; however, it ensures the receipt of all addenda related to this RFP. Proposals will be accepted only from applicants who submitted a timely Notice of Intent to Bid.

### Certification Form

Certification Form (Attachment 2) must be signed and accompany all RFP Response submissions.

### Tentative Schedule

This tentative schedule may be altered at any time at the discretion of Brand USA. Brand USA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or any part thereof; waive an informality in the proposals and accept the proposal that best meets the needs of Brand USA.

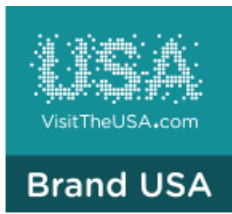
A. Request for Proposal Released	Dec. 20, 2018
B. Written Questions Due by 5:00 PM EST	Jan. 11, 2019
C. Written Questions Answered and Posted to Brand USA Website	Jan. 18, 2019
D. Intent to Bid due by 5:00 PM ESTP	Jan. 25, 2019
E. Proposal Due (due by 5:00 PM EST)	Feb. 4, 2019
F. Proposal Evaluation by Scoring Committee	Feb. 18, 2019
G. Pre- Calls to Finalists	Week of Feb. 18, 2019
H. Finalist Presentation/Interviews	Week of Feb. 25, 2019
I. Notice of Intent to Award Contract and Public Posting	Week of Mar. 4, 2019

### Delivery of Proposal

Each proposer is required to deliver eight (8) hard copies in addition to the electronic version of the proposal. Electronic versions of your proposal must be in a PDF format and sent to [RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com).

Hard copies should be sent by courier such as Fed Ex or UPS to:  
Brand USA Headquarters  
C/o RFP Administrator  
1725 Eye Street NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20006  
ATTN: RFP – Strategic Communications, Media & Public Relations  
Phone: 202.536.2060

Proposals must be received by the date and time referenced in the tentative schedule (no later

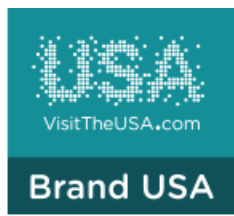


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than Feb. 4, 2019 at 3:00 PM EST). Late submissions will not be accepted. Proposals may not be faxed.

**Evaluation & Contracting**

All proposals satisfying the requirements of this RFP will be evaluated to establish which of the providers best fulfills the needs of Brand USA and this project. This RFP in no way commits Brand USA to award a contract, to pay any costs in preparation of a proposal, or to contract for the goods and/or services offered. Brand USA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, to negotiate with all qualified providers or to cancel this RFP. After awarding the contract, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between Brand USA and the selected Agency to better define, elaborate upon, and fix the Agency's final Scope of Work and general Terms and Conditions.



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## ATTACHMENT 1

### Notice of Intent to Bid

Due: January 25, 2019

**SEND TO:**

Brand USA Headquarters

C/o RFP Administrator

1725 Eye Street NW, Suite 800

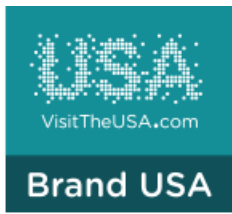
Washington, DC 20006

ATTN: RFP – Strategic Communications, Media & Public Relations

Phone: 202.536.2060

Email to: [RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com)

NAME OF PROPOSER / COMPANY:
CONTACT PERSON:
MAILING ADDRESS:
TELEPHONE:
FAX:
E-MAIL ADDRESS:
WEBSITE:
SIGNED:



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## ATTACHMENT 2

### Certification

Please include the following statement as part of the proposal:

#### Certification Statement

By submission of this proposal and authorized signature below, proposer certifies that the undersigned corporate officer has authority to bind the proposer to the terms of this proposal and hereby certifies on behalf of the proposer that:

- He/she has read and understands all commitments and terms of this proposal
- The information contained in this proposal is accurate
- Proposer's quote is valid for at least 120 days from the date of proposal's signature below
- Proposer understands that if selected as the successful proposer, he/she will have ten (10) business days in which to complete contract negotiations, if any, and execute the final contract document Date of execution can be extended by mutual agreement of Agency / Brand USA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed or Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Official Contact

Brand USA requests that the proposer designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal. Please identify this point of contact below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Official Contact Name and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

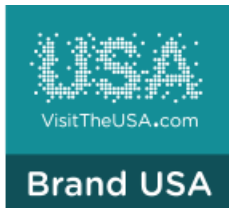
\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Facsimile Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State/Country, Zip



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## ATTACHMENT 3

### Proposal Evaluation Criteria

#### FOR BRAND USA USE ONLY

Bid/Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluated By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation committee will judge each written proposal based on the following criteria:

CRITERIA	MAX. POINTS	SCORE
1. Overall Experience of the Agency: Evaluation will include an assessment of such items as history of your company or professional experience, as it relates to the requirements within this RFP.	20	
2 Scope of Work: An assessment of the quality of proposed strategies, creativity, detail of plan, and related items.	20	
3. Familiarity with Brand USA: An assessment of your understanding of our organization and how you incorporated this knowledge into your proposal, and related items.	10	
4. Qualifications of Personnel: An assessment of the qualifications and experience of your managerial team, staff, and subcontractors and related items.	10	
5. Capabilities: Evaluation will include an assessment of your past performance related to developing effective strategic counsel, communications plans, messaging, etc.	20	
6. Cost Effectiveness: An assessment of whether the proposed budget is reasonable and appropriate and if the proposed services are cost effective in relation to the fees charged and value of overall project.	20	
TOTAL POINTS	100	