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Algonquin Park, Muskoka, Parry Sound and the Almaguin Highlands
www.explorersedge.ca



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REQUEST FOR QUOTES: Marketing Agency of Record

RELEASE DATE: March 5, 2012

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: March 21, 2012

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| BACKGROUND..... | 1 |
| OBJECTIVE | 1 |
| SCOPE OF REQUIREMENTS | 2 |
| RFQ SCHEDULE..... | 3 |
| CONTENTS OF QUOTE AND AGENCY SELECTION CRITERIA | 4 |
| CONTENTS OF QUOTE..... | 4 |
| AGENCY SELECTION CRITERIA..... | 5 |
| TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE RFQ..... | 6 |
| OTHER INFORMATION | 7 |
| DUE DILIGENCE | 7 |
| VALIDITY..... | 7 |
| CONFIDENTIALITY | 7 |
| NO LOBBYING..... | 7 |
| USE OF MATERIAL AND DATABASE..... | 7 |
| LAWS OF ONTARIO..... | 7 |
| JOINT PARTNERS AND SUB CONTRACTING..... | 8 |
| USE OF REQUEST FOR QUOTES..... | 8 |
| RFQ SUBMITTAL GUIDELINES..... | 8 |
| QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSION: | 8 |
| APPENDIX A..... | 9 |
| TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE QUOTE | 9 |
| APPENDIX B..... | 10 |
| TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE RFQ..... | 10 |
| CONFLICTS OF INTEREST | 11 |
| INDEMNITY..... | 11 |
| SOFTWARE | 12 |

BACKGROUND

On behalf of Explorers' Edge (EE) the Marketing Committee invites interested Agencies to submit a proposal to become the Agency of Record for EE. The Agency of Record will be responsible for the advertising, marketing, and public relations activities of EE.

EE is the regional tourism organization for Almaguin Highlands, Algonquin Park, Muskoka and Parry Sound. EE is a not-for-profit agency that is governed by a volunteer board of directors. The mandate for EE includes: providing industry leadership and strategic planning, developing strong, collaborative partnerships and packages, marketing, developing the workforce and skills training.

EE programs will fuel the new brand with meaning, develop awareness of EE and the operators we serve, produce measurable results while driving retail sales to our operators.

For more information on Ontario's 13 Regional Tourism Organizations, visit <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/regions/regions.shtml>.

For Information about the role of the Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO's) and the objectives of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture RTO initiative, visit: <http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca/english/regions/index.htm>

OBJECTIVE

Explorers' Edge is issuing a Request for Quotes (RFQ) for a full service Advertising Agency of Record (Agency) with proven destination marketing experience. EE has funding committed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport until March 31st, 2013. The successful Agency will work with EE to support a variety of creative, marketing, communications and outreach efforts as well as support the Three Year Marketing, Brand and Communication Strategy which is currently being developed. The term of the contract will be for one (1) year period, with EE having the option, to renew the contract, at their sole discretion, for an additional suitable timeframe aligned with funding commitment of Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

SCOPE OF REQUIREMENTS

The successful Marketing Agency of Record will be expected to provide a full range of integrated marketing services that will market the Region strategically using bold and innovative tactics aimed at attracting visitors to the Algonquin, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka and Parry Sound Region. The requirements of the Agency will include, but will not be limited to the following:

1. The Agency will develop and implement an annual domestic and international consumer (diverse cultures) and trade based seasonal marketing campaigns as well as a public relations campaign aimed at leisure and targeted group markets that effectively:
 - Builds awareness of the Explorers' Edge brand and increase the consumer's intent to visit Algonquin, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka and Parry Sound Region.
 - Aggressively markets Explorers' Edge region as a vacation destination of choice throughout the year.
 - Builds an integrated campaign that builds awareness and drives traffic from the key segments outlined in the EE Marketing, Brand and Communication Strategic plan.
 - Maximizes cooperative advertising efforts with strategic partners.
 - Evolves the ongoing development and maintenance of a website and other online marketing opportunities such as social media campaigns, and database management.
 - Develops Media Strategy that outreaches to travel writers, traditional media (TV & Print) as well as internet and social media efforts.
 - Increases the proportion of overnight visitors, number of same day visitors and yield per visitor.
2. Marketing Initiatives must take into consideration the priority origin markets for Algonquin, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka and Parry Sound Region which include:
 - a. Near Ontario markets of GTA, Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge and Windsor/London corridor due to projected growth and sheer size of the potential
 - b. Niche markets near U.S. but only in partnership with OTMPC or other Regions
3. Development of the Explorers' Edge brand equity consistent with the findings of the Marketing, Brand and Communication Strategy.
4. Strengthen and support the efforts of local DMO's and private sector marketing organizations.

5. Negotiate media discounts and bonus spaces using the Explorers' Edge not for profit status.
6. The Agency is responsible for design and production of all materials and will be required to competitively source production for all items not produced by the agency studio.
7. Execute and track media spend through to billing and provide post analysis reports.
8. Manage project budget, seek necessary EE approvals and provide the EE with monthly budget control reports and monthly billing reports.
9. Prepare a project plan based on the "work back schedule", outlining key dates and activities.
10. Coordinate a range of "below the line" marketing activities to ensure a more cost effective way and targeted way to reach primary markets.
11. The development of stories, features and narratives that will highlight awareness and appeal of the plethora of rich Explorers' Edge regional products and experiences.
12. Develop a funding strategy that leverage our media buy via industry partnership.
13. Arrange for photography, film and television productions, printing, display construction and other outside services when required.

The Agency selected must be a full service marketing agency or created agency partnership that can provide services required. Proponents must be agencies that have experience in destination marketing as well as integrating a strategic plan into a marketing plan. Interested Agencies must be able to demonstrate measurable success, and a proven track record in previous tourism campaigns on behalf of tourist destinations (hotel, restaurant, or attraction).

RFQ SCHEDULE

The successful bidder should be prepared to commence work immediately after the contract is awarded. The following are the key dates for this RFQ:

Issue Request for Quotes: March 5, 2012
RFQ submittals (by 5:00pm): March 21, 2012
Award of Contract: March 30, 2012

Explorers' Edge reserves the right to alter this schedule at its sole discretion.

CONTENTS OF QUOTE AND AGENCY SELECTION CRITERIA

CONTENTS OF QUOTE

In order to assist EE in its evaluations of submissions, the following should be used by Agencies when preparing their RFQ's. This is intended as a guideline only and should not be considered restrictive. Additional material which is felt to be relevant to the submission should also be included.

A. CORPORATE INFORMATION (10%)

- Years in operation.
- Number of staff.
- Summary of your organization and structure.
- Years delivering similar campaigns
- Outline of other services your company provides.
- Equivalent information for any additional partners in the bid

B. REFERENCES / COMMITMENT OF KEY STAFF (15%)

- Supply three references from last 5 years of comparable campaigns performed by your Company; include contacts and telephone numbers that you agree the EE can contact.
- Include brief resumes of proposed staff assigned to this project indicating education, professional accomplishments, relevant experience and their specific role or responsibility assigned for this project.

C. QUALIFICATION (30%)

- Demonstrate experience delivering similar and comparable marketing, public relations and/or advertising particular to destination marketing.
- Demonstrate strategies you will use to reach desired target markets.
- Provide examples of experience with tourism and event destination marketing campaigns aimed at driving visitors with detailed results.
- Detail processes for ongoing communications and reporting to the HHBRTA.
- Demonstrate your ability to coordinate processes to ensure deadlines are realized.
- Demonstrate your ability to manage aggressive project timelines while maximizing budgets.

- Demonstrate the ability to execute tactics that support an overall strategic plan. Demonstrate ability to react quickly to client request and integrate new ideas and information into campaign.
- Understanding of execution of ROI measurements.

D. APPROACH (30%)

- Provide a preliminary overview of your approach of working with EE
- Creativity: describe how you would intend to approach and deliver integrated campaigns that include all mediums utilizing marketing, advertising, digital tools and public relations tools.
- Innovation: describe how your strategy will position the HHBRTA as an industry leader.

E. PROPOSED PRICING (15%)

- Provide a detailed pricing schedule per appendix A. Provide invoice terms.

AGENCY SELECTION CRITERIA

Agency selection will be the sole responsibility of the EE and will be undertaken at the sole discretion of the EE in accordance with EE's selection criteria.

- Quotes will be evaluated by but not limited to the following criteria:
- Agency approach and client services.
- Relevant experience in tourism direct to consumer campaigns.
- Demonstration of executing campaigns with measurable evidence of success. Experience using research to develop compelling creative and messaging.
- Knowledge of the tourism consumer and tourism business sector behaviour, values and motivations.
- Relevant experience of individuals, and individuals as a part of a team. Creative aesthetic.
- Proposed Pricing.
- Ability to encompass a marketing, advertising and public relations campaign into a broader strategic plan.

Quotes may be eliminated from consideration at the EE's discretion for any reason, but at a minimum, including but not limited to:

- The RFQ is substantially incomplete

- The proposal is not responsive to the objectives and requirements of this RFQ. There is evidence of financial instability of the firm or team.
- The RFQ is inconsistent with the EE's policies or requirements. A conflict of interest exists.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE RFQ

For terms and conditions of this RFQ please see appendix B.

OTHER INFORMATION

DUE DILIGENCE

Vendors are solely responsible for conducting their own independent research, due diligence, and any other work or investigations and for seeking any other advice necessary for the preparation of their quote.

VALIDITY

Proposals shall remain valid and open for acceptance by EE for a period of ninety (90) days following the due date for receipt of proposals.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of records and information relating to this work must be maintained at all times. All correspondence, documentation and information provided by EE staff to any Agency in connection with, or arising out of this RFQ or the acceptance of any RFQ, remains the property of EE, and must not be disclosed without written authorization from EE.

Agencies are advised to identify in their quote material any technical, commercial, proprietary or similar confidential information, the disclosure of which could cause them injury. Any information in the submitted material which is not specifically identified as confidential will be treated as public information.

NO LOBBYING

Agencies must not attempt to communicate directly or indirectly with any employee or Board members of EE or with members of the public or the media, about the RFQ, other than as expressly directed or permitted by EE.

USE OF MATERIAL AND DATABASE

All creative produced, and databases compiled during the contract period shall become the property of EE.

LAWS OF ONTARIO

Any contract resulting from the RFQ will be governed by and will be construed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Province of Ontario.

JOINT PARTNERS AND SUB CONTRACTING

Using a joint partnership(s) is acceptable and must be clearly identified in the proposal. This includes a joint submission by two or more Agencies having no formal corporate links. Agencies must be prepared to take overall responsibility for a successful interconnection of the products or services and this must be defined in the proposal. Sub contracting to any firm or individual whose current or past corporate or other interests may in the EE's opinion give rise to a conflict of interest in connection to this project described in this RFQ will not be permitted.

USE OF REQUEST FOR QUOTES

Any portion of this document, or any information supplied by the EE in relation to this RFQ may not be used or disclosed, for any purpose other than for the submission of the RFQ.

RFQ SUBMITTAL GUIDELINES

The quote must: Be submitted electronically (Word File). Your submission should not exceed 10 pages in length. This does not include any work samples or media you may wish to attach.

Be accompanied by a cover letter and/or e mail signed by an authorized representative of your company certifying the accuracy of all information contained in your submission and acknowledging your company's offer of services according to the terms of this RFQ.

The working language of the HHBRTA is English. All responses to this RFQ will be in English.

QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSION:

Questions and final proposals must be submitted to the attention of:

James Murphy, Executive Director

Explorers' Edge

james@explorersedge.ca

(705) 706-1649

Corporate Office Location: 345 Ecclestone Drive, Bracebridge, ON P1P 1R1

APPENDIX A

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE QUOTE

Please outline the cost of developing and writing an integrated marketing plan and the monthly retainer to execute the plan.

Please provide the hourly rate in Canadian dollars, exclusive of HST , for the following:

- Professional Staff Marketing Staff Administration Staff
- Web Design and Maintenance
- Others relevant individuals – please list
- Travel Cost please provide a description of your billings policy on travel costs (i.e. is it cost plus x %). Please provide us with your mileage rate, and policy on air travel (i.e. economy, business, first class).
- Agency Mark-up, please provide a description of your policy on your agency mark-up fee, including the percentage and the types of media that your agency marks up.

Please provide confirmation that you have availability to start immediately once contract is awarded. EE intends to be in market for Spring 2012.

Please breakdown the example of \$500,000.00 budget allocated to marketing in percentage value into the following categories:

- Fee Schedule
- Dollar Resources in Market Production Costs

The contract between EE and the successful Agency will contain a provision whereby the EE will require a 10% hold back on the total contract price until the requirements of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, funding agreement have been met.

APPENDIX B

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE RFQ

- Explorers' Edge reserves the right, at its sole option, and for its convenience, to accept and/or reject any RFQ, in whole or in part, for any or no reason.
- By issuing this RFQ, Explorers' Edge does not imply or give any assurance whatsoever that any quote will be accepted.
- No contractual or other legal obligations arise on the part of Explorers' Edge to any Agency by this RFQ until such time as a final, written agreement, if any, is subsequently entered into with an Agency.
- Explorers' Edge may or may not award the business that is the subject of this RFQ to any Agent or Agency at the HHBRTA sole discretion. Explorers' Edge reserves the right to negotiate with agencies, seek clarification from agencies regarding their responses and invite modifications to the quotes submitted.
- Explorers' Edge retains the right to withdraw or modify this RFQ at any time without notice and without obligation to the Agency.
- Explorers' Edge may waive compliance with the requirements of this RFQ and consider a response that does not meet all of the requirements of this RFQ.
- Your quote is submitted at your own risk. If, prior to the deadline for submission of quote you fail to notify Explorers' Edge of an error and your quote is selected, you shall not be entitled to any compensation or time by reason of the error or its later correction.
- No part of this RFQ will become part of any final agreement between the Explorers' Edge and the Agency unless specifically incorporated into a final, written agreement. Any or all contents of your quote may become part of the final agreement.
- Your response, including fees, shall constitute a binding offer capable of acceptance in whole or in part by Explorers' Edge and if selected will remain valid until such time as a final agreement is negotiated and executed.
- Explorers' Edge shall not be in any way responsible for or liable for any costs associated with your submission and you shall not make claim to Explorers' Edge for any such cost or expenses.
- By submitting a response, you agree to waive any right to claim damages against Explorers' Edge for any reason, cause, or thing arising out of the RFQ process.

- If you are selected you may be required to provide satisfactory proof of maintenance of relevant insurance coverage (including commercial, professional, general liability and automobile insurance).
- Explorers' Edge reserves the right to postpone or change the date for receipt of quotes or any other deadlines and dates specified in this RFQ upon notice. By submitting a quote, the Agency agrees to be bound by any modifications made by Explorers' Edge.
- Explorers' Edge reserves the right to discuss different or additional terms to those included in the RFQ or received in any quote, and to amend or modify any terms of this RFQ.
- The Agency shall bear all costs and expenses associated with the preparation and submission of its quote. This includes but is not limited to; site visits and inspections; all information gathering processes; interviews, preparing responses to questions or requests for clarification from Explorers' Edge preparation of questions for Explorers' Edge, and any contract discussions and negotiations.
- Explorers' Edge may require Agencies to send representatives to Explorers' Edge for interviews and presentations.
- Explorers' Edge reserves the right to discontinue negotiations with any Agency.
- All submissions become the property of the Explorers' Edge, and will not be returned.
- Neither Explorers' Edge, its staff, representatives, nor any of its consultants or agents will be liable for any claims or damages resulting from solicitation, collection, review or evaluation of quotes.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Explorers' Edge requires a statement from the Vendor indicating that no conflicts of interest exist that would interfere with the objective delivery of services.

INDEMNITY

The Agency will indemnify and save harmless Explorers' Edge, Board of Directors, its employees and agents from and against all claims, demands, losses, damages, costs and expenses made against or incurred, suffered or sustained by Explorers' Edge at any time or times (either before or after the expiration or sooner termination of this Contract) where the same or any of them are based upon or arise out of or from anything done or omitted to be done by the Agency or by any servant, employee, officer, director, or sub contractor of the Agency pursuant to the contract excepting always liability arising out of the independent acts of Explorers' Edge.

SOFTWARE

It is the Agency's responsibility to ensure that Explorers' Edge has all licenses required to use any software that may be supplied by the Agency pursuant to the contract.