



Natchez Convention Promotion Commission

Request for Proposals

Visit Natchez Public Relations Services

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the NCPC and Visit Natchez as the city's official destination marketing organization is to increase the economic impact of tourism in Natchez by developing and promoting the city to individual and group visitors.

ABOUT VISIT NATCHEZ

The Natchez Convention Promotion Commission and Visit Natchez (hereinafter referred to as NCPC) was established by authority of the Mississippi Legislature for the purpose of encouraging and promoting tourism for the Natchez/Adams County area. This commission is appointed by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Natchez.

The NCPC is Natchez's liaison between potential visitors to the area and the businesses that will host them when they come. It acts as a marketing organization, as an information clearing house, and as a promotional agency for the City and its attractions. It also has fiduciary responsibility for how the tourism taxes funding the NCPC's activities are spent.

ABOUT NATCHEZ

Originally inhabited by the Natchez Indians and founded in 1716 as a French settlement, Natchez, Mississippi is the oldest city in the state and one of the oldest cities in the country. Located on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, we are known not only for our historic buildings, homes and churches, National Park sites, ancient Indian mounds, and the Natchez Trace Parkway, but also for magnificent sunsets, delicious cuisine, a vibrant art and music scene, outdoor adventures, walking trails, and events all year long. The travel and tourism industry has long been a major driver of the local economy, with employment over 20%, and supports hotels, B&B's, restaurants, shops, tour companies by welcoming visitors from around the world. Natchez has a rich history to share including the stories of the Natchez Indians, pre-civil war houses and architecture, African American history from slavery to the civil rights era, women's groups who saved the city from bankruptcy and irrelevancy. In addition to our unique history, Natchez is also looking forward with a vibrant experience for travelers including a burgeoning movie production scene, the largest assortment of bed and breakfasts in the country, riverboat cruise ships and authentic Natchez shopping and dining. The cultural background in Natchez is very diverse with not only a strong parity of black and white demographics, but also a rich tradition of women leadership and a growing LGBTQ community.

Natchez faces an opportunity to drive a greater volume of visitation with travelers looking for a new adventure as we emerge from the pandemic and travel restrictions. Post COVID-19, we must be prepared to inspire travel and capture our share of the market to help aid in economic recovery for Natchez and the tourism industry. We have a new story to tell and are looking to create a new brand to help define and represent our path forward.

More details can be found on our website: visitnatchez.org.

OBJECTIVE & SCOPE OF WORK

This RFP has been issued to seek qualified public relations agencies with experience working in the tourism industry and can demonstrate the necessary experience and creativity to attract new global media partners that will strengthen our marketing efforts. As we emerge from the Covid pandemic, it is an important time to reintroduce Natchez, Mississippi and Visit Natchez and recapture prospective visitors. The NCPC launched a new brand in January 2023 including logo, tagline and brand guidance. Our marketing plan reflects the essence of the new brand and the chosen PR agency will assist with the messaging we want to convey to visitors within Mississippi but to a greater degree, visitors from neighboring states as well as national and foreign independent travelers. We are looking for a public relations firm that will work with us and our other marketing partners to develop new media strategies that will result in positive domestic and international coverage.

The scope of work includes but is not limited to:

1. Create relationships and facilitate contractual obligations with social media influencers who can:
 - a. Increase brand awareness with Millennials and Gen Z
 - b. Build trust with consumers who are like minded
 - c. Improve positive connection with consumers who are knowledgeable about Natchez
2. Relationship building and in-person meetings with media, executive speaking opportunities and thought-leadership positioning.
3. Cultivate and maintain relationships with reporters, editors and bookers at key media publications, outlets, programs, etc.
4. Develop and maintain a targeted media list

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Until an agency is selected, the Executive Director will be designated as your contact and will coordinate any materials needed or questions answered. The Executive Director will be available to conduct a Q&A call should you have any questions. Once the agency is selected, the agency will collaborate with the full staff as well as with our other marketing partners.

TIMELINE

- Proposals will be due by 5:00pm CST on Wednesday, May 29, 2024.
- A committee of staff and commissioners will review the proposals and may request a presentation either in person or via video conference with agencies prior to making a final decision by May 31, 2024.
- The committee will submit a recommendation to the NCPC Board of Commissioners by June 3, 2024.
- Final decision will be made by June 5, 2024 and the selected company will subsequently be notified as well as notices to all submitting companies
- Work should begin by or before June 7, 2024.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Submission must be provided in one 8-1/2 X 11 PDF formatted document, either emailed or submitted in hard copy form on or before the due date. Economic methods of submission are encouraged. Full demonstration of work may be provided in other formats to demonstrate creativity and options, but a copy must be included in the PDF proposal as well. The following sections must be included in the proposal:

- 1) Organization Details
 - a) Include Name, address, telephone and email of organization that will be contracted with and all trade names to be used
 - b) Contact names and telephone numbers of the organization's principal officers as well as subcontractors should also be included.
 - c) An organizational chart of company, including any subcontractors who will work with NCPC
 - d) Brief history of the company, especially as it relates to work in the tourism sector and prior experience and knowledge of Natchez, Mississippi
 - e) Experience as it relates to messaging, ad design, and placement strategy
 - f) Summary of employees who will work on the account including their name, title, a short summary of their qualifications and their main role in working with NCPC
 - g) Total number of employees including full time, part time and contract workers
- 2) Case Study & References
 - a) Show how earned media was successfully used to achieve desired public perception.
 - b) Indicate if the agency has had a contract terminated for non-performance over the last five years with either litigation determining the agency at fault or no litigation due to inaction on part of the organization.
 - c) Provide three references from past clients (destination marketing organizations are preferred)
- 3) Communications Plan
 - a) Strategy, objective and goals
 - b) Targeted media list(s)
 - c) Proposed media pitch(es) with messages and talking points
- 4) Timeline

Timeline for the project assuming a June 7 commencement
- 5) Cost

Cost proposal (itemized a la carte)
- 6) Disclosure

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

Proposals including supporting samples will not be returned to submitting companies

DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS

Submittals must be marked "Request for Proposals: Advertising Agency Services Limited Duration/COVID-19 Recovery" and delivered to Visit Natchez, 500 Main Street, Suite 1, Natchez, MS, 39120 or via email at lynsey@visitnatchez.org.

Submittals received in any manner not specifically set forth above shall not be accepted or considered.

Submittals received after the deadline will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the submittal is received by the specified deadline. The delivery date and time will be recorded upon receipt. NCPC will not be responsible for late or incomplete responses due to mistakes or

delays of the respondent or carrier used by the respondent or weather delays. A postmark will not be considered proof of timely submission.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

1. Submittals in response to this request and respondents' participation in the process shall be at no cost or obligation to NCPC. NCPC reserves the right to, at any time, abandon or terminate its efforts to contract for any or all of said services without any obligation to any respondent.
2. Responses to this request and other materials submitted shall become the property of NCPC and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any NCPC personnel or staff after this request has been advertised except to ask questions as specified below under "Respondent Questions." Such contact will be considered cause for disqualification.
4. NCPC may waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submittals.
5. NCPC reserves the right to reject any submittal if the evidence submitted by, or investigation of, such respondent demonstrates that such respondent or its subcontractors, in NCPC's opinion, is not properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the Contract or to complete the Work contemplated therein.
6. All applicable laws, ordinances, and the rules and regulations of all governmental authorities having jurisdiction shall apply to the Contract throughout.
7. This Contract is being funded through a grant provided to NCPC by the State of Mississippi as part of its ARPA State and Local Fiscal Relief Fund (SLFRF) allocation received from the U.S. Treasury Department. The SLFRF program places numerous obligations on recipients and subrecipients which flow down to successful respondent. Each respondent is cautioned to carefully review the *Supplemental Terms and Conditions* which are a part of the sample contract and to ensure that all responsibilities and obligations are properly addressed.
8. By executing a signature on the submittal, respondent certifies that:
 - a. Neither the respondent, nor any of its team members, is currently debarred from submitting proposals or entering into contracts issued by any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi or the Federal Government.
 - b. No Federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the respondent, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
 - c. If any funds other than Federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, respondent shall complete and submit Standard Form LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals meeting all requirements of the RFP will be evaluated by the NCPC and ranked based on the following selection criteria and points (out of 100 possible points):

- Qualifications to do the scope of work (25 points)
- Overall experience of the Agency (25 points)
- Capabilities as assessed from references (15 points)
- Timeline to complete the project (10 points)
- Knowledge of Natchez and tourism industry (10 points)
- Pricing (15 points)

COMPANY CONTACT & PROPOSAL DEADLINE

Please submit proposals via email by May 29, 2024, to:

Lynsey Gilbert
Interim Executive Director
Visit Natchez
500 Main Street
Suite 1
Natchez, MS 39120
lynsey@visitnatchez.org

PROVISIONS

The Natchez Convention Promotion Commission reserves the right to negotiate a final agreement with the firm most closely aligned to meet the needs of the organization. This includes ordering changes in the work within the general scope consisting of additions, deletion or other revisions with the agreement price and time being adjusted accordingly. The NCPC may terminate the negotiations if they are unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on all matters including the scope of work and cost.

The Natchez Convention Promotion Commission is committed to diversity in all facets and is seeking a provider that shares this commitment. We desire an organization with a diverse team and one that understands the challenges and complexities of Natchez’s unique history and landscape.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Please contact Lynsey Gilbert at lynsey@visitnatchez.org with any questions regarding this RFP.