

**Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. dba VISIT SARASOTA COUNTY
Request for Proposal (“RFP”) for Web Services**

RFP No. 2023-05

VISIT SARASOTA COUNTY (“VSC”) invites submissions of proposals from qualified firms authorized to do business in the State of Florida for **Web Services**.

The VSC Centralized Point of Contact (CPC) for this RFP is Samantha Warner, SWarner@VisitSarasota.com

Section A: General Information for Respondents

1. **Background:** VSC is a 501 (c) 6 corporation located in Sarasota, FL. VSC contracts with Sarasota County government on an annual basis to provide tourism marketing and promotion services funded by a portion of the Tourism Development Tax collected by all lodging stays in Sarasota County for periods under six months. Under the terms of the contract between Sarasota County and VSC, VSC may enter into contractual agreements with vendors to perform certain duties.
2. **VSC Mission:** We make Sarasota County a better place by promoting our community on the world stage.
3. **Marketing Overview:** Overarching goals of the marketing program are to increase Sarasota County brand awareness and consumer interactions. Benchmarks include increase in the number of visitors and their spending, increase in Tourist Development Tax collections, growth in market share as measured by new visitors and growth in number of visitors influenced by VSC’s advertising campaigns. VSC closely collaborates with the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation to enhance the strong link between visitation and business attraction and relocation.
4. **VSC Ethics Statement:** VSC and its vendors uphold the highest legal, ethical and moral standards. We require careful observance of all applicable laws and regulations as well as a scrupulous regard for the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity.
5. **Reserved rights:** VSC reserves, in its sole discretion, the following rights:
 - (a) To exclusively determine whether any aspect of the proposal, or the proposal in its entirety satisfactorily meets the criteria established in this RFP;
 - (b) To seek clarification from any respondent;
 - (c) To solicit subsequent proposals from any respondent or respondents submitting a response;
 - (d) To modify the scope of work to be considered for this project, and determine which respondents will be notified, in order to resubmit a revised proposal meeting the modified scope of work as determined by VSC; and
 - (e) To reject any or all responses with or without cause. In the event that this RFP is withdrawn by VSC, or VSC elects not to proceed for any reason, VSC shall incur no liability to any respondent for any costs for expenses incurred in

- connection with the preparation and submittal of the respondent's RFP response or any other submission prepared by respondent.
6. Failure of the respondent to attend a mandatory conference regarding this RFP may result in being disqualified as a qualified respondent by VSC.
 7. Insurance: The respondent selected by VSC shall be required to submit proof of insurance in accordance with Sarasota County Government requirements, including naming Sarasota County Government as an additional insured, upon request of VSC. The insurance specifications may be found through the Sarasota County Risk Management office on the Sarasota County website www.scgov.net
 8. Regulations, Laws, Ordinances & Licenses: The respondent must be authorized to transact business in the State of Florida or be authorized to provide business services in the specific country where said services are to be provided. The respondent shall observe and obey all laws, ordinances, rules, and regulations of the federal, state, and local municipality that may be applicable for its general business operations, and to the provisions of the products and/or services set forth in this RFP. Additionally, the respondent shall have or obtain all necessary permits or licenses required for the operation of said business if performing services for VSC within Sarasota County, Florida.
 9. Public Entity Crimes: Any person or affiliate as defined by Florida Statute who has been placed on the Florida Department of Management Services convicted vendor list following a conviction for a public entity crime MAY NOT submit a bid or a contract to provide any goods or services to VSC.
 10. Indemnification requirements:
 - a. The respondent shall pay on behalf of or indemnify and hold harmless VSC and Sarasota County Government, its Commissioners, employees, officers, agents and volunteers from and against any and all claims, actions, damages, fees, fines, penalties, defense costs including attorneys' fees and court costs, whether such fees and costs are incurred in negotiations, collection of attorneys' fees (or at the trial level or on appeal), suits or liabilities which may arise out of any actual or alleged negligent act, error, omission or default of the respondent arising out of or in any way connected with the respondents or respondent's sub-contractor's performance or failure to perform under the terms of any contract resulting from the RFP. Depending upon the nature of the services being provided, additional indemnification requirements may apply.
 - b. The respondent shall pay all royalties and license fees for equipment or processes in conjunction with the equipment and/or services being furnished. Respondent shall defend all suits or claims for infringement of any patent, trademark or copyright, and shall hold VSC and Sarasota County harmless from loss on account thereof, including costs and attorney's fees.

Respondents located in Sarasota County must comply with the Local Business Tax ordinance. It shall be the responsibility of the respondent to obtain a current local

business tax receipt from the Sarasota County Tax Collector (www.sarasotataxcollector.com).

11. Due Diligence: Due care and diligence have been exercised in the preparation of this RFP, and all information contained within is believed to be substantially correct. However, the responsibility for determining the full extent of the services or goods being solicited rests solely with the respondent.
12. By submitting a response to the RFP, the respondent certifies that he/she has not divulged to, discussed or compared his/her response with any other respondent's submittals and has not colluded with any other respondent or parties to this response whatsoever.
13. The respondent shall be prohibited from assigning, transferring, conveying, subletting, or otherwise disposing of its responsibilities under the resulting Agreement, or its rights, title or interest therein or its power to execute such Agreement to any person, company, corporation, or partnership without prior written notice and consent and approval of VSC whose consent and approval may be withheld at VSC's sole discretion.
14. The respondent shall be required to execute a contract agreement prepared by VSC, which shall establish the rights and responsibilities of both parties in the final agreement. The contents of the resulting contract may differ from the terms set forth in the RFP.
15. All documents and plans provided to VSC by respondent as part of the response to said RFP shall become the exclusive property of VSC.
16. Respondents acknowledge that all documents submitted with their response are subject to disclosure under Public Records and Sunshine Law requirements of Chapter 119, Florida Statutes (Public Records) and section 286.011, Florida Statutes (Public Meetings). If a respondent wishes to claim exemption from disclosure to the public records law for any of its documents submitted, the respondent must cite the specific statutory exemption being asserted.
17. Protests: Any supplier that has submitted a proposal or a bid, and who believes that they have been aggrieved in connection with the solicitation or award of a contract, may protest the solicitation or the award action by communicating with VSC's centralized point of contact for the procurement process, to request materials necessary for the filing of a formal protest.

Section B: Scope of Services

Summary: VSC is soliciting proposals from qualified firms for Website Services. This contract includes website hosting with a robust and flexible CMS intact, as well as other web publishing services (SEO, eNewsletter managed services, content creation, and others). The contract for services will be with VSC. The contract will be for work to be performed October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024, with an option to renew annually through September 30, 2029.

Currently Visit Sarasota County is going through a website redesign process to update the site to Drupal 9 platform, and to simplify the website for leisure visitors. The new site will be active by

August 31, 2023. While Visit Sarasota County is not looking to entirely redevelop the site, we do wish to continue to stay on top of the latest tools and services of the industry.

Part I: Website Services – Migration of Services

Summary: Firm must provide as seamless a migration as possible from the current firm's hosted platform to the new hosted platform (including website domains, site content, database architecture and other web hosting services, etc.). VSC will also work with firm to identify outdated content or functionality that will not need to be migrated, and in some cases, identify content/pages which need tweaked functionality (examples: Sports Commission and Meetings pages). Note again that Visit Sarasota County does not intend for a complete redesign of VisitSarasota.com.

Detailed Requirements:

1. New firm must migrate all website domains, data, and content presentations from current platforms.
2. Firm must be able to identify and map all current processes that are in use for dataflow and website management, using the supplied high-level web architecture diagrams and related addendum materials.
3. The selected firm will work with current firm to securely acquire web content and data to ensure a seamless transition to the new environment.
4. There must be a guarantee of a 24/7 VSC website(s) uptime under a Service Level Agreement.
5. Firm must transition and/or maintain the professional web hosting infrastructure (Rackspace, etc) sufficient to the task of accommodating millions of pageviews annually, as well as a plurality of web domains; this may include scalable cloud-based hosting / CDN platforms such as Amazon Web Services, Cloudflare, etc.

Part II: CMS

Summary: VSC's current site is a responsive design website with CRM integration and a host of third-party tools. VSC continues to identify and adapt new disruptive technologies that increase engagement and traffic to the site. VSC relies on a CMS designed to deliver content daily on website and across other web channels, such as social media and newsletters, all of which must be visually satisfying and structurally sound on mobile, desktop and tablet. VSC's current CMS is a drupal-based platform.

Detailed Platform Features:

1. Web Agency must be able accommodate current CMS services. Web agency must integrate with our current CRM backend (Simpleview), Google Double-Click ad server, VSC's various social media channels (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc), Google Analytics, and various third party tools, including Bound and Crowdriff.
2. Platform must flexibly expand existing web properties and economically facilitate the creation of new web properties.

3. Platform must intelligently deliver a common core of existing content and assets (calendar events, partner listings, articles, etc) across VSC web properties in a modular and/or widgetized manner.
4. Content creation delivery must be an easy and adaptive process. VSC must be able to create landing pages, articles, blogs, information pages with customizable components to serve our marketing efforts.
5. Those components include but aren't limited to: photo and video slideshows, bullet point lists with option to add images, business listing components, related articles and HTML/Iframe boxes.
6. The platform must smoothly accommodate for updating content across mobile and tablet-based content presentation in addition to any standard display styles, and do so without overly redundant effort required.

Part III: Managed Services

Summary: The firm must provide SEO services, email campaign services (development, mailing, reporting), content creation and web hosting and maintenance services.

Detailed Managed Services:

1. Continue search engine optimization and targeting:
 - a. Analyze current SEO status, page structure, and keyword performance.
 - b. Analyze ranking among search engines in regards to page rank, pages indexed, referral links and traffic patterns on site to develop benchmarks for improvement.
2. Email campaign development, mailing and reporting for consumer e-newsletters:
 - a. The firm must create templates and implement and manage a sophisticated e-blasting system that will enhance and enable tactical email deployment and delivery with comprehensive tracking abilities through ExactTarget.
 - b. Targeted emails with imagery and content that is catered to audience segments is mandatory. A self-managed tool must be available that automatically removes unsubscribe requests from the e-blast list for legal as well as list quality purposes.
 - c. Email subscriptions within the website(s), as well as imports from offline marketing sources such as the VSC fulfillment vendor, will be managed by the firm's project team throughout the course of the year. Real time feeds from the VSC fulfillment vendor must flow into the customer opt-in database.
3. Web-hosting and site maintenance:
 - a. The firm must host and support the website(s) and associated microsites along with its email blast architecture within the dedicated Rackspace server network as defined in Part I: Website Services – Migration of Services.
 - b. Hosting must include setting up and administering the site and programming any necessary scripts required for the performance and growth of the site.
 - c. Additionally all ongoing technical maintenance must be outlined.

BUDGET

All services for the awarded contract will be on a monthly retainer fee basis. The maximum available funding cannot exceed \$205,000 with \$125,000 for monthly web services, \$2700 for monthly content creation and \$80,000 for special projects and

enhancements. VSC does not pay commission. VSC does not pay for travel expenses to Sarasota County.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS – Parts I, II and III:

1. From time to time, the firm will be asked to provide additional information on various initiatives and/or asked to make presentations to (but not limited solely to) the following: the VSC Board of Directors the Tourist Development Council and quarterly vendor coordination meetings in Sarasota County with VSC staff. These tasks do not represent a separate budget line item, but are to be included in the costs of the budget. Travel to and from Sarasota County is not a reimbursable expense.
2. The firm's principals must be available for consultation and to provide advice in matters pertaining to specific areas of expertise. The selected firm shall be responsible for developing short-term and long-term strategies with the VSC. These tasks do not represent a separate budget line item, but are to be included in the submitted budget.
3. The vendor firm agrees to provide and perform all services pursuant to the contract and in accordance with generally accepted standards of professional and ethical practices (as outlined in the codes of conduct established by several industry associations, such as Destination Marketing Association International, the American Marketing Association, etc.).
4. The successful respondent must agree to work closely with VSC professional staff to appropriately ensure alignment between the VSC, other marketing vendors and the successful respondent. Collaboration capabilities as part of a team are critical.
5. It is **mandatory** that all qualifying firms demonstrate the ability to partner with VSC current vendors and to include references and/or case studies in the formal proposal. The ability to partner and be part of a greater team is critical and expected.
6. The successful respondent must provide monthly, quarterly and annual reporting on their outcomes and provide measurements of their progress on the project.
7. The successful respondent must have the ability to follow VSC billing procedures that include:
 - a. Submitting all invoices promptly at the last day of the month of service, but only after thoroughly checking all invoices for accuracy and completeness.
 - b. Providing all required back-up documentation, justification, and proof of work for all expenses submitted within the invoice. All expenses must be submitted by successful respondent to VSC for reimbursement within sixty (60) days or they shall not be accepted or honored by the VSC, and they will be returned unpaid to successful respondent.
 - c. Invoicing will be accompanied by VSC-signed estimates, estimate approvals, tear sheets or vendor affidavits for media billing and appropriate copies of vendor invoices, as supporting back-up to charges billed.
 - d. Travel Provisions (if applicable): All travel and entertainment by the successful respondent must be pre-approved by the VSC no later than seven (7) working days prior to the event by submitting to the VSC appropriate paperwork. All travel and per diem expenditures will be reimbursed in accordance with the U.S. General Services Administration.

8. From time to time, the successful respondent will be asked to prepare reports or make presentations on topics selected by VSC to (but not limited solely to) the following: VSC Board of Directors and the Tourist Development Council.
9. The successful respondent's principals must be available for consultation and to advise VSC staff upon reasonable oral or written advance notice.
10. The firm must send a representative to Sarasota County for quarterly in-person meetings for the duration of the contract.
11. Budgets may be increased or decreased, as needed, depending upon available funding. The budget for this project is subject to the availability of funds approved by the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners. The successful respondent should be aware that specific compensation for the contract will be negotiated in the event that budgets are decreased.

Section C: Term

The term of the resulting contract will be for work performed October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024, with an option to renew annually through September 30, 2029.

Section D: Qualification Requirements

1. In order to be considered a qualified supplier, all firms to which VSC is considering including in this RFP should be normally engaged in performing the type of work specified by this Request for Proposals. Firms should ideally be engaged in this type of work for a minimum of five (5) years to be considered a qualified supplier. Determination of satisfactory evidence of responsibility and satisfactory ability to perform the required services by the respondent shall be made solely by VSC Review Committee.
2. VSC Review Committee reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to request on-site visits at the offices of any of the firms submitting proposals prior to making final recommendations to VSC management or VSC Board of Directors.
3. Firm should be experienced in tourism destination clients. Interested firms must be able to demonstrate measurable success in projects on behalf of tourist destinations or tourism businesses.
4. Firm should have the size and resources to successfully handle the account the size of VSC as documented by minimum billings of \$300,000.

Section E: Evaluation Criteria and Process

1. VSC may or may not request additional information or clarification of submitted materials, or of additional background information on the proposer, during the evaluation process. VSC may or may not request oral presentations, but reserves the right to award the contract based solely on the basis of written proposals.

Section F: Response Format and Deadlines

1. All respondents shall submit a digital copy of their response to SWarner@VisitSarasota.com by June 9, 2023 at Noon, Eastern Standard Time. If you'd like to mail a thumb drive to our administrative offices, you may do so,

VSC, 301 N. Cattlemen Rd, STE 203, Sarasota, FL 34232. Responses received after Noon on June 9, 2023 shall be deemed invalid, unqualified responses and shall not be considered, and shall be discarded. It shall be the sole responsibility of the respondent to have its proposal delivered to VSC administrative office for receipt on or before the stated time and date.

2. File Size Restrictions: The file size of the proposal PDF must not exceed 10 MB, in order to accommodate electronic distribution and storage of documents.
3. Interpretation/Addenda: No interpretation or clarification of the meaning of the proposal documents will be binding if made to any respondent orally. Every such request for clarification must be by email, addressed to VSC CPC. Telephone inquiries or individual meetings are not permitted. VSC shall not be responsible for oral interpretations provided by any VSC employee, representative, or others. As a result of receipt of written submissions to VSC requesting clarification or interpretation, VSC shall, if it deems necessary, provide clarification notices or addenda to said Request for Proposal, and VSC will attempt to notify via email all prospective respondents who have secured an invitation to submit proposals. Written statements issued by VSC shall be the only official method whereby interpretation, clarification or additional information shall be provided to all potential respondents. In all instances, it shall be the responsibility of each respondent, prior to submitting its proposal, to contact the VSC CPC for this RFP to determine if addenda have been issued and to make such addenda a part of the respondent's proposal. Any questions regarding clarification or interpretation, etc., must be submitted to the VSC CPC prior to (June 5, 2023, noon, EST). All questions will be answered by the CPC at one time by (June 6, 2023). No additional questions will be entertained after that date. Respondents may not modify nor transfer their proposals to any other companies and/or respondents after the submission of same to VSC.
4. All qualified proposals will be reviewed by a Review Committee made up of Sarasota area tourism industry professionals and VSC staff. The Review Committee will meet on June 15, 2023, in Sarasota County, Florida or via an online platform. Oral presentations by the respondents may be required at the discretion of the Review Committee. The date for oral presentation, if required, will be June 22, 2023 via a digital platform, most likely Zoom. If no oral presentations are requested, the Committee's selection and recommendation to the VSC Board of Directors shall be based on its assessment of the response that best meets the needs of VSC in the sole discretion of VSC.
5. Determination of satisfactory evidence of responsibility and satisfactory ability to perform the required services by the respondent shall be made solely by VSC Review Committee. The Review Committee reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and to request on-site visits at the offices of any of the firms submitting proposals prior to making final recommendations to VSC Board of Directors.
6. VSC may or may not request additional information or clarification of submitted materials during the evaluation process. VSC may or may not request oral presentations and may award the contract based solely on the basis of written proposals.

7. VSC Review Committee will submit information pertaining to the respondent with the highest aggregate score to VSC Board of Directors for approval at its **July Board** meeting. The criteria used to evaluate written RFP submissions will include, but not be limited to, the following:

Section G: Rating Points - Descriptions

Following is the description of VSC's evaluation criteria, including the potential maximum number of scoring points that may be awarded in that category:

- 10 Corporate Background – Quality and experience of firm, and its ability to meet the requirements as set forth in this RFP and its ability to provide the full Scope of Services set forth in this RFP. Firm that can demonstrate that it has been engaged in the services described in this RFP for a minimum of five (5) years may be given additional consideration.
- 10 The firm's professional staff & subcontracted services – Professional capabilities demonstrated in the services described in this RFP, and include professional capabilities of the staff and/or subcontractors assigned to this project for VSC.
- 20 The firm's demonstrated experience in the area of travel and tourism, which should include firm's demonstrated ability to meet changing landscapes for clients in the travel and tourism industry.
- 20 The firm's approach to addressing the Scope of Services outlined in this RFP, including suggested strategies, methodologies for execution of the strategies, and benchmarks for success.
- 10 The firm's project/account management process, including availability of professional staff, management of project timelines, and client communications.
- 10 The firm's demonstrated ability to meet the needs established in the Scope of Services, by providing three (3) case histories that have relevance to the type of work outlined in this Scope of Services. Case histories must be in the field of travel and tourism.
- 5 The firm's demonstrated ability to integrate services as part of a greater team effort to deliver the scope of services required from a previous project.
- 5 The firm's ability to demonstrate it is located in Sarasota or a contiguous county (Manatee, Desoto and Charlotte) and maintains a business license in at least one of these counties.
- 10 Pricing.
- 100 Total.

** VSC Staff will check all references to supply and update the committee*

Section H: Response Qualification Format

Proposals submitted must contain, at a minimum, the information listed below. The evaluation of proposals will consist of, but is not restricted to, these points. Answers should be as succinct as possible. Respondent, for purposes of review and evaluation, shall answer all questions. Responses must be tabbed to match the requirements as set forth in the RFP.

Tab A: Corporate Background

- Company legal name, state of incorporation or partnership registration, corporate headquarters address, phone number, fax number, email address(es), and company website.

- Branch office locations, if applicable.
- Key contact name, address, phone number, email address.
- List firm's ownership and date established.
- Provide firm's Federal Employer's Identification Number
- Corporation must include its Florida Corporate Charter Number, if applicable.
- Total number of full-time employees and total number of part-time employees.
- Total billings related to **Web Services** for each of the last five (5) years.
- Statement of willingness to comply with all Sarasota County Government insurance requirements.
- Statement affirmatively establishing that no officer or high ranking official of the Proposer has been convicted of any Public Entity Crimes within the State of Florida.
- If firm wishes to be awarded five (5) additional local preference points in the scoring matrix, the firm must document that they have paid a local business tax prior to submitting this bid in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte or Desoto Counties.

Tab B: Professional staff and subcontracted services

- List the names of and the percentage of time for all staff to be dedicated to VSC contract.
- Provide information on the firm's organizational structure pertaining to the staff involved in this scope of work.
- Provide resumes for the firm's staff dedicated to VSC project.
- Provide information on any subcontractors to be utilized in performing this scope of work for VSC, and the percentage of work to be completed by each of the subcontractors.
- If using subcontractors, include information on the subcontractor(s) background, resumes for subcontractor staff involved in performing this scope of work, the reasons for using the subcontractor, and respondent's method of quality control and management of the subcontractor(s).

Tab C: Experience and Response to Scope of Services

- List all current travel/tourism/hospitality clients the firm serves and year that respondent began providing services for these clients. If your firm does not serve travel/tourism clients, please describe your approach to the industry.
- List all travel/tourism/hospitality clients added and lost by firm in the past three (3) years and give a brief description of how business was added or why lost.
- Provide name, title, phone number and email address for each of respondent's five (5) largest travel/tourism/hospitality clients as references. If your firm does not serve travel/tourism clients, please describe your approach to the industry.
- Provide information on the technical capacities of respondent's firm to meet the scope of services for the firm's other major travel/tourism/hospitality clients.
- Outline your firm's approach to the Scope of Services.
- Describe respondent's process of project management and client communication as provided to the firm's other major clients.
- Describe the firm's ability to work as part of a team on a project.

Tab D: Case Histories

Provide three (3) case histories that are related to the type of services required in this Scope of Services. These case histories should be no more than three (3) written pages in length each and should contain the following information:

- Program synopsis and situational overview.
- Objective.
- Methodologies.
- Insights/program interpretation/recommendations/actions.
- Where appropriate, demonstrate how your firm worked with others as part of the project.
- Results/Outcomes.
- Budget.

Tab E: Summary

Provide a summary, not to exceed two (2) pages, on why respondent is uniquely qualified to be the provider of services for VSC.

Tab F: Pricing

Provide annual itemized pricing model and budget allocations for providing the summary of services described in the Scope of Services. Also include billing rates for special projects. If firm is bidding on other VSC RFPs listed in the opening section of this document, describe how this might impact the pricing.