



Public Relations Services Request for Proposal

Due: 5/31/13

Who We Are:

Visit Mendocino County (VMC) is a destination marketing organization representing an incredibly beautiful and diverse region. Its nearly 4,000 square miles contains 30 miles of public California coastline, more than 90 wineries, 6 navigable rivers, 150 miles of trails through redwood forests, and numerous small, charming towns. VMC focuses its marketing efforts on increasing overall visitation to Mendocino County, specifically in the shoulder seasons of spring and fall, increasing length of stay and increasing overnight visitor spending. VMC is a tourism improvement district organized by the nearly 500 accommodations properties within Mendocino County, and funded by a Transient Occupancy Tax charged to overnight visitors. The County of Mendocino makes an additional annual investment in tourism marketing. VMC itself is governed by a volunteer board of directors who works in concert with committees and professional staff. This project will be managed by staff, with oversight by a media committee. As a result of a 2008 Mendocino County Visitors' Study, the organization developed the following message as its key positioning statement: Coastal villages, hand crafted wines and giant redwoods. Mendocino County, where Pacific coastal villages, the great redwood forest and America's greenest wine region beckon you to come escape to a slower pace. Come sit by the fire, savor a delicious Mendocino vintage, stare up into a mighty Redwood tree or watch a whale breach from the porch of one of our unique Inns. Mendocino County is just two hours north of San Francisco where you'll feel so far away from it all.

Project Objectives:

VMC is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit bids from qualified public relations firms for public relations services for its destination marketing organization. The agency will develop and implement a comprehensive public/media relations program with the goal of attracting new visitors to Mendocino County and raising awareness of Mendocino County with the traveling public. The communications effort will be complemented by a modest paid advertising program in key market segments.

Objectives:

-Build the overall Mendocino County message in key target publics including:

- Media (includes editors and producers in print, broadcast and online)
- Key VIP Travel Opinion Leaders
- Take advantage of relationships with out-of-County marketing partners to reach international markets when possible



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- Use media relations, public relations and marketing tactics to recruit consumers to book rooms and attend Mendocino County activities.
- Build partnerships and alliances to achieve these goals.

VMC seeks a partner who not only has expert experience in destination marketing and in reaching its audiences, but who also has a passion for Mendocino County, an awareness and understanding of its brand and its position in the tourism market, and a perspective on how VMC can best represent the region.

Scope of Work

Consumer Public/Media Relations - Develop and implement a plan to provide positive domestic public/media relations coverage.

- Recruit editors and media leaders to include coverage of Mendocino County in articles, news stories, broadcast news shows and online communications.
- Conduct verbal and written pitches to editors and industry leaders based on internal marketing calendar. Write and coordinate all components necessary to pitch editor and media targets.
- Research, write and distribute at least two press releases per month.
- Update VMC official press kit and support materials.
- Monitor, collect, catalogue and report media results.
- Assist VMC with copywriting as requested.
- Assist in the development of the annual marketing plan and year-end report.
- Provide scheduled quarterly, monthly, weekly status reports and other reports as needed. Be present (in person or by phone) during weekly staff meeting.
- If out-of-County Agency, Agency must make at least one monthly in-person visit to Mendocino County (or more as requested and necessary) to meet with VMC staff, attend stakeholder meetings, assist with events or to guide press visits.
- Recruit editors and writers to serve as judges in two important annual VMC-coordinated events: Beer, Wine & Mushroom Festival (November) and Crab, Wine & Beer Festival (January).

Internal/In-County Public/Media Relations – Work with VMC staff to develop and implement a plan to provide local public/media relations coverage, targeting local residents and in-County stakeholders.



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Familiarization Tours – Facilitate and execute media familiarization trips. Provide advance press kits and follow up information to journalists. Document all media visitation for follow up, reporting and future outreach. Provide public relations training for local stakeholders as requested. Create and maintain internal database of visiting press in a digital format accessible by both agency and staff.

| San Francisco Bay Area In-Market Media Event – Assist in the development of VMC’s annual San Francisco media event, targeting San Francisco Bay Area media. Currently, the event is “Taste of Mendocino,” and partners with Mendocino Winegrowers, Inc to communicate the quality of wine and food experiences available in Mendocino County. Firm is responsible for outreach to media to garner attendance of key food, wine and travel media at the event.

| Promotions/In-Market Stunts – Assist VMC in development of marketing promotions and in-market stunts in support of overall marketing calendar and key VMC messaging and goals.

Social Media – Extend VMC social media strategy by supporting communications messages through outreach to key influencers in the online sphere.

In Person Media Visits – Set up media desk sides in large media markets in order to create and solidify relationships with editors, tell the Mendocino County story and encourage media visits and coverage for Mendocino County. Attend larger marketing partner (like Visit California) media events as requested. Provide public relations training for local stakeholders and internal staff as requested.

Industry/Travel Trade Public/Media Relations – Develop and implement a plan to communicate with industry and travel trade media in support of VMC outreach efforts with industry organizations and key international media targets, as possible. Includes writing and distributing press releases and media outreach in coordination with Visit California international offices and regional partners. Create and maintain strong relationships with Visit California, San Francisco Travel and other regional DMO staff.

Consumer Trade Shows – Attend consumer trade shows in order to connect with attending media as requested.



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Clipping Service – Provide comprehensive clipping service for all Mendocino County articles relative to VMC promotion. Compile all articles, press releases and any other relevant documents resulting from public relations outreach in a digital format accessible by both agency and staff.

Image Library – Cultivate and contribute to the growth of VMC's image library for use with media.

Project Budget

The budget for this public relations contract is \$120,000 annually. Contract will cover: photocopies, faxes, phone, transfer and storage media, clipping service; press kit design, production and materials; client database management and direct mailings; couriers, delivery and postage; travel and direct expenses; and rush charges, cancellation fees and overtime. Contract will be in place from July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014 and will be renewed annually with review by VMC.

No costs related to the preparation of the proposal for this RFP or to the negotiation of the contract with VMC may be included in the proposal. Only costs to be incurred after the contract effective date that are specifically related to the implementation or operation of contracted services may be included.

Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated by a media committee and staff:

Proposal Meets Project Objectives/Scope of Work	1-3 Points
Creativity in Satisfying VMC Goals	1-5 Points
Meets Project Budget	1 Point
Completion of Proposed Guidelines	1-5 Points
Quality of Project Narrative	1-5 Points
Experience/Understanding of Tourism Industry	1-3 Points
Experience/Understanding of Mendocino County Brand	1-3 Points
Quality of Work Plan and Timeline	1-5 Points
Feedback from References	1-5 Points
Total:	9-34 Points

Proposal Guidelines

Transmittal Letter – The transmittal letter must be on official business letterhead of the organization proposing to become the contractor. The letter is to transmit the proposal and shall identify all material and enclosures being forwarded collectively as a response to this RFP. The transmittal letter must be signed by an individual authorized to commit the company to the work proposed,



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and include the address, city and state of the proposed location from where the services will be provided or from which the contract will be managed.

Background Information

Proposals must address:

- 1) Briefly describe the Agency's qualifications and relevant experience, especially regarding skills pertinent to the specific work required by the RFP and any special or unique characteristics of the organization which would make it especially qualified to perform the required scope of work. Include similar information for subcontractors and specify what aspects of the contract will be subcontracted.
- 2) Name of project manager and list of team members, including their professional credentials and the amount of time each will spend on VMC's scope of work.
- 3) A current client list identifying length of relationship and ranked by revenue. Please include client contact information, as client list may be used for reference purposes.
- 4) Experience of company in developing public relations program of a comparable scope, highlighting experience with destination travel and destination marketing organizations. Provide a description of three projects that occurred within the past five years which reflect experience and expertise needed in performing the functions described in the scope of services portion of this RFP. For each of the three examples, please provide a contact/contact information from the client organization involved to be used as a reference. If the agency has not provided similar services, note this, and describe experience with projects that highlight the Agency's general capabilities. Disclose any accounts in the past years which have been terminated because of nonperformance or alleged nonperformance.
- 5) Describe Agency experience and knowledge of Mendocino County.

Project Narrative

The bulk of the proposal should be a narrative outline of the strategy and tactics the contractor envisions for the execution of the scope of work. This can take any form, but should incorporate examples, and showcase an understanding of the unique needs of Mendocino County. Potential contractors should take the time to examine our website, current press kit, collateral material and visitors guide in helping to form a perspective on presenting Visit Mendocino County messaging and brand. Project proposals should address each of the points in the scope of work section of this document, but may include further innovative ideas, with justifications for their relevance in furthering the goals of VMC.

RFP Timeline



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RFP Issued	4/24
Contractor Questions Submitted to VMC by Email	5/15
Question Responses Emailed	5/24
Deadline for RFP Responses	5/31
Interviews w/Shortlisted Agencies	6/17-21
Notification of Successful Agency	6/28
Contract Start Date	7/1

Submission

Proposals must be submitted by Friday, May 31, 2013 at 5pm PST. Proposal packets should include: transmittal letter, background information, project narrative, work plan and timeline, case histories and references, and budget. Please submit nine printed copies with an original proposal to the address below, as well as an electronic pdf document via email to jen@visitmendocino.com.

Contractors should submit questions via email in a single document (or email) by Wednesday, May 15, 2013 at 5pm PST to jen@visitmendocino.com. All contractors will receive question responses via email by Friday, May 24, 2013 at 5pm PST.

Agencies moving to the next phase of the process will be asked to make a presentation at an in person interview between Monday, June 17 and Friday, June 21. The successful agency will be informed on Friday, June 28, 2014.

Mail proposals to:

Public Relations Agency Proposal
Visit Mendocino County
345 N. Franklin Street
Ft. Bragg, CA 95437

And electronic copy (pdf format) to jen@visitmendocino.com