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## **PUBLIC NOTICE – REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **Professional Services for Marketing and Public Relations Services** *for the*

### ***ALABAMA SEAFOOD MARKETING COMMISSION***

**Deadline for Receipt of Proposals: December 22, 2021, at 12:00pm (NOON CST)**

## **I. Objective**

We are blessed in Alabama to have a bounty of seafood that includes shrimp, oysters, crabs, offshore finfish species, inshore finfish species, and other types of seafood products. Our seafood industry is a major economic driver for our state, contributing millions of dollars to our economy and generating thousands of jobs.

The Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission (ASMC) is now requesting proposals from public relations/marketing/advertising agencies interested in assisting the State of Alabama with marketing and public relations services to boost Alabama's seafood industry.

The purpose of this request for proposals is to identify a fully-integrated marketing and communications firm that will work with ASMC through its Program Administrator to build an identity and brand for the experience of fishing and consuming Alabama seafood. In particular, the selected Vendor will:

- 1) Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to expand Alabama's coastal seafood industry and increase its economic contributions to the State of Alabama.
- 2) Build and expand top-of-mind awareness and consideration for the *Alabama Gulf Seafood* brand and maximize the global market share of Alabama seafood.
- 3) Drive online traffic to [eatalabamaseafood.com](http://eatalabamaseafood.com) to further influence the target audience's meal and destination planning.
- 4) Effectively position, brand, and differentiate "Alabama Gulf Seafood" as the industry standard in order to increase sales and market share of Alabama seafood products and related businesses. This goal includes all segments of the industry related to seafood, including, but not limited to, fishermen, dealers, processors, distributors, retailers, restaurants, charter and head boats, recreational fishing interests and other related industries.

## II. Background Information

The Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission (ASMC) was established through Executive Order on March 18, 2011. The ASMC is comprised of fifteen voting members appointed by the Governor to represent the many and varied industries and entities related directly and indirectly to Alabama's seafood industry. Membership also includes the ex-officio non-voting members from the Alabama Tourism Department, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Alabama Department of Public Health, and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. The ASMC also has non-voting members from the Baldwin County and Mobile County Legislative Delegations, and a representative of the Alabama Governor's Office. The ASMC is responsible for advising the Program Administrator with respect to the marketing of Alabama seafood. The Program Administrator will develop and implement a seafood marketing program. In order to accomplish this endeavor, funds were provided to the State of Alabama by BP Exploration and Production Inc. and other sources to fund the Alabama seafood marketing program in previous years.

Since 2011, ASMC has worked to build the marketing, public relations, and outreach campaign to help consumers feel confident about the safety of Alabama seafood and to discover the availability and positive attributes of this bounty. The ASMC, representing all components of the seafood distribution chain, along with the tourism, charter boat sector, and governmental entities, has been established to coordinate the efforts by providing a cohesive vision and overarching strategies to showcase Alabama seafood. These strategies will focus on expanding the value, pride, brand, and global market share of Alabama seafood.

The work of the firm selected in this RFP will expand on the work that has been accomplished over previous years as funding remains available.

## III. Scope of Work

The Vendor that is selected to perform the marketing and public relations functions outlined herein will be advised by the Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission and its Program Administrator. After the Vendor is selected, a meeting will be held with the ASMC to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to discuss possible strategies and provide input on the overarching marketing plan. Duties of the selected firm may include, but are not limited to, the following areas of priority:

- 1) Continue to define *Alabama Seafood*—develop a comprehensive definition of Alabama seafood brand and assess how to best use this brand in a marketing plan. The brand should include all segments of the seafood industry in Alabama.
- 2) Establish a public relations plan to assist with achieving the ASMC's goals.

- 3) Provide specific message points for industry and Commission members to use when being interviewed by the media and develop a plan to address media messages for all sectors, along with message to use in case of emergencies.
- 4) Coordinate international/national/regional/state/local advertising and public relations to expand efforts, including but not limited to, culinary and restaurant publications, other print media, television promotions, outdoor advertising, and radio outlets.
- 5) Work with chefs when they are interviewed by the media to assist with positive messaging.
- 6) Develop retail and food service programs to assist with increasing Alabama seafood sales. These strategies can include the cross-promotion of products with Alabama seafood.
- 7) Coordinate participation in international, national, regional, and state consumer, retail and food service trade events to educate participants about the availability and quality of Alabama seafood. These events should include cooking shows, trade shows, festivals, competitions, fairs, and other gatherings.
- 8) Provide program marketing communications which will include creative design and development, implementation, production, photography, videography, and media purchasing.
- 9) Design and produce educational materials for trade, retail, food service, consumers, tourist, and other groups.
- 10) Improve and maintain a website for the Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission. This web development will include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media outlets.
- 11) Conduct ongoing research regarding consumption and brand recognition.
- 12) Market to audiences beyond Alabama and the Gulf region—business to business marketing.
- 13) Tie together the Alabama seafood experience for tourists. Selling this coastal experience will help all sectors related to seafood.
- 14) Develop seafood education programs for children and foster strategic partnerships with other organizations.
- 15) Create a comprehensive scope of work plan encompassing all of these points and including deliverables, timelines, and budget.

## IV. Evaluation Criteria and Basis of Award

The ASMC is interested in hiring the Vendor which can accomplish the goals and objectives as outlined in this Request for Proposals. Although cost is a critical component, we consider the quality of the service, experience, professionalism, creative thinking, professional history, and project management commitment to be extremely important factors in making our decision. Submissions that are late or do not comply with proposal instructions may be eliminated. A group selected from the ASMC will evaluate the submitted proposals and several firms **may** be selected to make an oral presentation to the full Commission. Unnecessarily elaborate brochures or other presentation materials beyond that deemed sufficient to present a complete, concise, and effective proposal are discouraged.

The selected firm(s) will provide advertising and communication strategy development services and other selected duties for a period of two years, subject to an annual review. Continuation of the contract after the two-year initial period is dependent on several factors. It is possible the firm may be retained for future years, subject to meeting all requirements of law. Qualifying proposals must provide all requisite information under this RFP and clearly and specifically respond to all items set forth in this RFP.

## V. Guidelines for Submissions and Formats

Proposals must follow the format below:

1. Firm's Background
  - a. Name, address, telephone number and e-mail address
  - b. Year of establishment and years in business
  - c. Internal vendor resources to perform the work
  - d. Total number of employees
  - e. List of current clients
  - f. Name and bios of owner(s) and leadership team
2. Description of Firm's Services and Capabilities
  - a. Provide detailed description of services and capabilities.
  - b. Provide one example of a marketing/communication plan with results.
  - c. Provide up to three examples of creative work.
3. Proposed Project Team and Qualifications
  - a. Name, title, and experience of account executive to service ASMC's account.
  - b. List of staff to be assigned to ASMC's account with resumes included for all team members.
  - c. Client reference list with contact names and telephone numbers.
  - d. Evidence of comparable experience with marketing and public relations efforts related to food products and governmental work.

e. List of the demographic groups with which your organization has had the strongest success, including examples.

4. Approach and Methodology

- a. Describe commitment and procedures in delivery of flawless service to your clients.
- b. Describe how you measure effectiveness of meeting goals and objectives.
- c. Describe how progress of projects is monitored and evaluated.

5. Comprehensive Scope of Work Plan

- a. Deliverables
- b. Timelines

6. Fees/Budget

a. Provide typical blended staff rate, retainer and/or agency commission percentage amount and creative services price list. All proposals must include:

- 1) A cost estimate to include a budget reflecting all necessary expenditures for the Vendor services; and
- 2) A narrative description for each budget line item.

7. Role and Experience Assisting in Food and Industry Public Relations and Marketing

- a. Role and experience in assisting industries that have suffered downturn in sales due to circumstances outside their control.
- b. Provide details of experience assisting industries related to tourism.
- c. Provide details of experience assisting companies or organizations related to food items, especially seafood.

## VI. Supporting Documentation

1) Vendors must provide the following forms with each proposal:

- a. [Immigration Status Form](#)
- b. [Vendor Disclosure Statement](#)
- c. [Certificate of Compliance](#)
- d. W-9
- e. E-Verify Memorandum of Agreement

## VII. General Proposal Information

### 1. Anticipated Schedule of Events

Issue RFP to Potential Applicants	November 29, 2021
RFP Submission Due	December 22, 2021, at 12:00pm (NOON) CST

### 2. Submission of Proposals

Vendors must submit one (1) electronic version of the proposal, in PDF format, saved to a USB Storage Device, along with three (3) printed paper copies no later than 12 pm (NOON) CST on Wednesday, December 22, 2021. All submissions become property of the Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission and will not be returned.

Proposals must be sealed and labeled on the outside of the package to clearly indicate that they are in response to the “**RFP for SEAFOOD MARKETING**”. **Mail, UPS, Federal Express or hand deliver** the hard copies and USB Storage Device to:

**Chris Blankenship**  
**ASMC Program Administrator**  
**64 North Union Street, Suite 468**  
**Montgomery, AL 36130**

If you have any questions, please submit them via email to [dcnr.commissioner@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:dcnr.commissioner@dcnr.alabama.gov). Subject line should read: “**Question – RFP for Seafood Marketing**”. The Program Administrator will respond to all questions promptly.

## VIII. Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated against the criteria outlined below. However, this does not preclude DCNR from engaging in any discussions/negotiations that DCNR may deem beneficial or necessary to assist it in evaluating proposals. In scoring against stated criteria, DCNR may also consider such additional factors as accepted industry standards and a comparative evaluation of all other qualified RFP responses to determine the most advantageous offering to ASMC and the State of Alabama.

The basis for the selection from qualifying proposals of a marketing/public relations firm will include, but not be limited to, successful demonstration of the following:

- 1) Ability and past performance in providing marketing and public relations services as outlined in the Scope of Work, including performance of such services in the context of food or seafood marketing.

- 2) Specialized expertise, capability, and technical competence to manage a large-scale marketing program consistent with all applicable state and federal funding compliance requirements.
- 3) Ability in terms of capacity and availability of qualified personnel, equipment, and facilities to provide the required services efficiently and effectively, as to both performance and cost and in a manner consistent with all applicable compliance requirements and available funding.
- 4) Cost proposal.

Responses to additional requests for information and/or interviews **may** be required prior to a selection, if any, of a professional services firm. Any interviews, if necessary, will be conducted in Montgomery, Alabama during the week of January 3, 2022.

## IX. Additional Clauses

- 1) Authority:  
This RFP is issued under the authority of Section 41-16-72 of the Code of Alabama. This process is only for the benefit of ASMC and is to provide ASMC with competitive information to assist it in the process of selecting a vendor. All decisions on compliance, evaluation, terms, and conditions related to the RFP will be made solely at the discretion of ASMC.
- 2) Intellectual Property:  
All intellectual property including logos, trademarks, studies, reports or any other materials prepared, developed, or produced by (or provided to) the Vendor shall belong to and remain the property of the State of Alabama through DCNR and/or ASMC. The Vendor shall fully turn over to the State of Alabama such intellectual property without any reservations.
- 3) Negotiations:  
ASMC reserves the right to negotiate with any Vendor whose proposal is within the competitive range, as well as to select a Vendor other than the vendor offering the lowest price.
- 4) Disclaimers:  
ASMC reserves the right to award to multiple Vendors; to award by item, groups of items; to divide the award; to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, and to waive any informality or technical defects if, in its judgment, the best interests of ASMC and the State of Alabama will be served. ASMC may seek clarification of the proposal from Vendor at any time, and failure of the Vendor to timely respond may be cause for rejection. Clarification is not an opportunity to change the proposal. The submission of a proposal confers on Vendor no right of selection or to a subsequent contract. This process is for the benefit of ASMC only and is to provide ASMC with competitive information to assist in

the selection process. All decisions on compliance, evaluation, terms, and conditions will be made solely at the discretion of ASMC and made to favor the State of Alabama.

Any contract related to this RFP is subject to the availability of funds and/or the needs of the ASMC. Accordingly, the ASMC, at its discretion, may or may not issue a final contract as a result of this RFP. Furthermore, even in the event an initial selection is made by the ASMC, no selection is final until full execution of a written negotiated agreement detailing final terms and an agreed upon scope of work. If the ASMC deems, at its sole discretion, that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached in accordance with an initial selection, the ASMC reserves the right to proceed with efforts to make another selection based upon proposals submitted pursuant to this RFP, issue another RFP, or terminate efforts to obtain assistance as to some or all services described herein.

5) Alterations:

ASMC reserves the right to alter any deadlines or revise any part of this RFP by issuing an addendum to the RFP at any time. Addenda, if any, will be posted ASMC's website. It is the responsibility of the interested Vendor to check the website for addenda.

6) Waiver of Informalities:

ASMC reserves the sole and exclusive right to reject or accept any and all proposals and to waive any informality in any proposal. The best interests of ASMC shall be considered as the key factor selecting or not selecting a Vendor.

7) Rejection/ Cancellation:

Issuance of this RFP in no way constitutes a commitment by ASMC to award a contract. ASMC reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or part, all proposals submitted and/or cancel this RFP if it is determined to be in ASMC's best interest. ASMC also reserves the right to withdraw this RFP at any time or terminate the contract resulting from this RFP upon thirty (30) day notice without penalty. ASMC further reserves all rights available to it, contractually and at law.

8) Errors and Omissions in Proposal:

ASMC reserves the right to make corrections or amendments due to errors identified in the proposals by ASMC or by the Proposer. ASMC, at its discretion, has the right to request clarification or additional information.

9) Compliance with Laws:

Vendors acknowledge and agree to comply with all applicable State regulations, ordinances, and laws, Federal regulations and laws, and ASMC policies, guidelines, and standards.

10) Non-Assignability:

The anticipated agreement(s) may not be assigned or otherwise transferred without the express written consent of ASMC.



11) Non-discrimination:

ASMC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, pregnancy, national origin, genetic information, veteran status, or disability in its hiring or employment practices nor in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities.

12) Disclosure Statement:

Act 2001-955 requires a disclosure statement to be completed and filed with all proposals, bids, contracts, or grant proposals to the State of Alabama in excess of \$5,000. A Disclosure Statement is available for completion on the Attorney General's web site at [www.ago.alabama.gov](http://www.ago.alabama.gov) under Publications and Forms. Vendor must include a completed copy of the Disclosure Statement in their proposals.

13) No Expectation:

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute a commitment by ASMC to select any proposal submitted in response to the RFP, or to award a contract to any Vendor who responds to this RFP. ASMC reserves the right, and has absolute and sole discretion, to cancel a solicitation at any time prior to approval of the award by ASMC. This process is only for the benefit of ASMC and is to provide ASMC with competitive information to assist it in the process of selecting a vendor. All decisions on compliance, evaluation, terms, and conditions related to the RFP will be made solely at the discretion of ASMC.

14) Open Trade:

By submitting an application, the Vendor represents that he/she and the business entity he/she represents is not currently engaged in the boycott of a person or an entity based in or doing business with a jurisdiction with whom the State of Alabama can enjoy open trade, as defined in Act 2016-312.

15) Public Information:

All responses received will be subject to the Alabama Open Records Act, Ala. Code § 36-12-40, (1975), as amended, and may be subject to public disclosure upon request. The Open Records Act is remedial and should therefore be liberally construed in favor of the public. The Alabama Trade Secrets Act is Ala. Code §§8-27-1 to 8-27-6, (1975), as amended. Proposers are cautioned to be familiar with these statutes. The burden is on the one asserting the trade secret to show that the information sought to be protected meets the definition of a Trade Secret as defined in the Act.

Any response submitted that contains confidential, trade secrets, or proprietary commercial information must be conspicuously marked on the outside as containing confidential information, and each page upon which confidential information appears must be conspicuously marked as such. Identification of the entire proposal as confidential is not acceptable unless the Vendor enumerates the specific grounds or applicable laws which support treatment of the entire material as protected from disclosure according to the foregoing statutes or other applicable Alabama law.

The owner of the confidential information shall indemnify and hold the State of Alabama and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and any and all of its officers, agents, and employees harmless from all costs or expenses including, but not limited to, attorney fees and expenses related to litigation concerning disclosure of said information and documents.

16) Changes and/or Withdrawal of Proposal:

Any proposal may be withdrawn until the date and time set above for the submission of the proposals. To accomplish this, a written request signed by the authorized representative of the Vendor must be emailed to the addresses referenced herein. Any proposals not so withdrawn shall constitute an irrevocable offer, to provide to ASMC the services set forth in this RFP, until one or more of the proposals have been awarded.

17) Errors and Omissions in Proposal:

ASMC reserves the right to make certain minor corrections or amendments due to errors identified in submission by ASMC or by the Vendor. However, correction by reason of a minor error is permissible only to the extent that it is not contrary to the integrity of the process, interests of the State of Alabama, or the fair treatment of other Proposers. ASMC reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted and to request additional information of one or more Proposers.

18) Costs of Preparation:

Costs of preparation of a response to this request are solely those of the Vendor. ASMC assumes no responsibility for any such costs incurred by the Proposer. The Vendor also agrees that ASMC bears no responsibility for any costs associated with any administrative or judicial proceedings resulting from the solicitation process.

19) Maintaining Adequate Records:

The selected Vendor awarded a contract shall maintain adequate records to justify all charges, expenses, and costs incurred in estimating and performing the work for at least three (3) years after completion of the contract resulting from this RFP. ASMC shall have access to all records, documents, and information collected and/or maintained by others in the course of the administration of the agreement. This information shall be made accessible at the awardee's place of business to ASMC, including the Comptroller's Office and/or its designees, for purposes of inspection, reproduction, and audit without restriction.