



OCTOBER 10, 2022

Request for Proposal ■ Visit SLO CAL

Travel Trade / Media Relations

United Kingdom Representation

Visit SLO CAL hereby solicits proposals from qualified representation companies to support the destinations cooperative sales, marketing and media relations efforts in United Kingdom (UK) & Ireland. The Representative will develop, execute and deliver a comprehensive program designed for the travel trade and media relations that supports tourism to San Luis Obispo County (SLO CAL) in an effort to generate increased demand to the destination.

Candidates must bid on the entire Request for Proposal (RFP). Candidates must provide pricing (in US dollars) on the full scope of the RFP.

ABOUT SLO CAL TOURISM

Visit SLO CAL (hereafter referred to as 'VSC') is the official destination marketing and management organization for California's San Luis Obispo County. VSC is a private, non-profit marketing and sales organization dedicated to building awareness for the destination and driving demand for travel into the county.

Located halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, on California's Central Coast, SLO CAL is a diverse set of communities along the famous, scenic Highway 1 and includes California's third-largest wine region. Representing a slower pace of life, vast agricultural and culinary assets, a vibrant arts community and outdoor adventures by land or sea, SLO CAL offers travelers experiential vacations of many varieties. In SLO CAL, where Life's Too Beautiful to Rush, visitors have the opportunity to slow down, find their own pace and reconnect with the things that matter most to them. Savoring the sights, flavors and moments that California is most known for – from crashing waves on coastal cliffs to rolling green hills; fresh markets with juicy citrus and creamy avocados to unique, trend-setting wine blends.

The hospitality and tourism industry in SLO CAL:

- Puts 19,760 residents to work each day
- Contributes \$760M to the local economy
- Collects \$104M in local tax revenue
- Produced hotel occupancy at 66.9% in FY 22
- Welcomed 7.38M visitors in FY 22

With a staff of sales, marketing, public relations, communications and administrative professionals, VSC promotes SLO CAL as a desirable overnight destination to three main markets: leisure, meetings and groups (incl. weddings) and tour and travel.

The core values of VSC are: Future Focus, Collaboration, Drive and Stewardship. These values drive our strategic planning, and affect decisions for sales, marketing and operations.

VSC is currently funded through one main source:

Tourism Marketing District (TMD) - this source is derived from a 1.5% assessment on SLO CAL lodging properties, including hotel, motel, bed and breakfast, vacation rental properties and R.V. parks.

For more information visit: SLOCAL.com

[Review a copy of the current Strategic Plan here.](#)

TRAVEL TRADE OVERVIEW

VSC develops and implements a year-round, targeted global travel trade-based program that effectively:

1. Builds continued awareness across the travel trade industry of the SLO CAL 'Life's Too Beautiful to Rush' brand and proposition as a desirable year-round destination
2. Increases the number of wholesaler/tour operators, retail agencies and distribution channels that feature, promote and sell our product range
3. Creates and establishes partnerships with wholesalers/tour operators, retail agencies, airlines, Visit California, Visit USA Committees, Brand USA, OTAs and emerging distribution channels with the aim of raising awareness and increasing demand for the destination
4. Strengthens travel professionals' knowledge of the destination through educational programs including sales calls, trade shows, webinars, newsletters, in-market presentations, and familiarization trips to the destination
5. Identifies new initiatives and trends to promote the Central Coast to the travel trade

MEDIA RELATIONS OVERVIEW

General Media Relations Goals:

1. Increase outreach to and SLO CAL share-of-voice in top UK/Ireland wine, travel,

- travel trade and lifestyle print, broadcast, and online media and influencers
2. Increase awareness of the SLO CAL as a top destination for international travelers
 3. Create opportunities for VSC to partner with like brands/personalities on promotions that generate significant buzz for travel
 4. Develop collaboration opportunities with other travel/destination clients that mutually benefit from the partnership.
 5. Prevent or mitigate negative impacts of crises in the U.S., California or SLO CAL through crisis communications management strategies

SCOPE OF SERVICES DESIRED

During the term of the agreement, the Representative will provide the following **travel trade services** for the United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Scotland) market that include, but are not limited to:

1. Develop and implement an annual travel trade plan and KPIs that supports activities mentioned in the Travel Trade Overview section. The plan shall include a proposed budget, recommended promotional activity and suggested advertising recommendations, if any (advertising is not part of current program of work in the UK).
2. Assist in scheduling and escorting educational/familiarization visits (minimum of 2 per year) and any additional requests by travel trade professionals during the contract period. The Representative will seek airline participation and qualify agents and product managers.
3. Provide support and assistance for in -market marketing campaigns. The Representative will act as a resource to seek campaign opportunities aligned with the identified budget, review and evaluate programs including insights and recommendations on how to optimize travel trade partnerships and **ROI**.
4. Jointly coordinate an annual in-market sales mission during the contract period, to include airline participation, function organization and invitations to industry representatives. The function will include, but is not limited to, meals, seminars, workshops, presentations, and other activities and logistics.
5. Jointly coordinate and attend key industry trade shows, product launches, seminars and annual visits to the top tour operators & travel agents.
6. Set targets and work to increase the range of product featured in tour operator programs.
7. Develop, maintain, and grow an accurate and up-to-date database (on an ongoing basis) of tour operators, travel agencies, airline and travel trade contacts to be used for the distribution of the VSC travel industry newsletters.
8. Develop and maintain an editorial calendar for travel industry newsletters and send out monthly newsletters.
9. Provide monthly reports of Representative's activities to include: a list of sales

calls conducted, with pertinent discussion points; general market information to include economic conditions; competitor observations, perceptions of California's Central Coast; trade/roadshows or seminars attended or conducted; Tour Operator/Wholesale program development; a summary of miscellaneous contacts made, number of agents trained, requests and inquiries serviced during each reporting period. Outline actions steps with dates and needs.

10. Provide support and assistance to partners by providing a list of wholesalers, incentive buyers, as requested by VSC.

11. Coordinate and conduct in-market presentations, webinars and seminars in partnership with Airlines, Tour Operators, and Wholesalers to educate travel industry about the destination and its products. Minimum 300 agents trained annually.

12. Analyze state and national tourism plans; complete an inventory of Visit California, and Brand USA plans in the United Kingdom, to identify areas of coordination and use of best practices. The plan should incorporate coordination with state and national brand development.

13. Provide a dedicated travel trade account manager assigned to the account.

14. Maintain in-office inventory of collateral material for distribution to travel trade clients.

15. Ensure all activities comply with brand standards and quality levels.

During the term of the agreement, the Representative will provide the following **media relations services** for the UK & Ireland markets that include, but are not limited to:

1. Develop a strategic and integrated media relations program designed to generate publicity in UK/Ireland consumer and trade publications, and to reach annual PR goals, including:

a. A key target list of publications/outlets and influencers for SLO CAL coverage, pitching, visits, etc.

b. An annual proactive pitch schedule, including strategic pitch angles to support the brand and leverage trends.

c. Jointly coordinate an annual in-market media mission to include coordination of event, deskside meetings, media invitations, promotional/ media materials, travel and logistics.

d. Source, vet and facilitate individual media visits and group press trips with guaranteed coverage over the course of the year. Track and report the coverage resulting from these visits.

e. Creation, translation and distribution of press releases, press materials, assets and other relevant media content as requested. Provide analytics from content distribution.

f. Operate a proactive press office responding to all media enquiries regarding SLO CAL, Visit SLO CAL, and its partners.

2. Build and maintain relationships with in-market media.
3. Represent VSC/SLO CAL at in-market media events, such as IMM and/or Brand USA Travel Week.
4. Activate untapped media contacts to create new media opportunities and open new media channels.
5. Track organic and procured media coverage of SLO CAL as a tourist destination via a news/clipping service, including key metrics.
6. Provide monthly PR activity and results reports including action steps for the following month, reflecting media evaluation benchmarks and using data sets as defined by VSC.
7. Provide crisis communications management as required.
8. Assist with localization of positioning and key market messages.
9. Ensure a dedicated PR account manager is assigned to the account.

DETAILED COST

Please provide Representative's proposed fee structure (i.e. including expense estimates) for managing a destination account requiring full service. This must be provided, or proposal will not be considered, no markups allowed.

The scope of services outlined are expected to be included as part of the fee. State all services that the Representative would be willing to perform as part of the fee and list any services that would not be included. Please also state any additional routine monthly expenses identified that would not be included within the fee and would be passed on to VSC.

REFERENCES

Will be required if you are selected to move forward.

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

Proposals submitted must contain, at a minimum, the information described below. The evaluation of the proposals and presentation will include, but not be restricted to, these points. Please respond to each numbered section in order, numbering the responses in the same sequence as below to make the review process easier.

1. COMPANY BACKGROUND

Describe your firm's internal organization and the manner in which services will be furnished. Include and identify those services which may not be available in the local office but are available from your firm and explain how you will access those services. Provide an example of the structure of servicing used for an account similar to this RFP. Please include the following:

- Details on the corporation background and each known subcontract or, its size, and resources
- Date established
- Name(s) and Type of Ownership (public company, partnership, subsidiary, etc.)
- List and provide bios for the key individuals in the company
- Physical locations including addresses of all branches

2. COMPANY EXPERIENCE

- List of key accounts including all current tourism, destination and hospitality accounts
- Details of contracted client experiences within the last three (3) years relevant to the services requested in this RFP
- List of experience in extensive Travel Trade and Media Relations Representation
- Identify the staff person(s) who would be the appointed Account Manager for Travel Trade and Media Relations, describe their qualifications, credentials, experience and responsibilities and specifically, work and experience on similar accounts

CONTRACT TERM

Contract Term: 18 months

- January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024
- After which the contract will be awarded/renewed on an annual basis on a FY calendar.

CONTRACT VALUE

- A maximum \$30,000 professional service fee has been allocated January 1, 2023–June 30, 2024. This does not include funds for activation, program support or media relations hard costs.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

VSC is to be advised of all new business solicitations by the Representative that could be perceived to constitute a conflict of interest. With regards to the matter of branch or subsidiary offices of the Representative, it should be clear that all such offices are considered as part of the total corporate entity. List any accounts the Representative would perceive as a potential conflict.

USE AND DISCLOSURE

VSC reserves the right to use information submitted in response to this document in any manner it may deem appropriate in evaluating the fitness of the services proposed. Materials that are submitted by the Representative that should be considered highly confidential should be marked as such. If confidentiality is

requested but cannot be afforded, the Representative will be notified and will be permitted to withdraw their proposal.

Additionally, and at its discretion, VSC agrees to maintain confidentiality of any product information developed by and offered by the Representative. All information provided in this RFP shall be deemed confidential and shall not be shared by the Representative.

RFP SCHEDULE

10/10/22	RFP dissemination
10/21/22	Q & A and Notice of Intent to Bid (if not already submitted) and if you are requesting a NDA, due
10/28/22	Q & A response sent to agencies
11/18/22	Proposals due
11/23/22	3–5 finalists chosen and notified of final presentation dates and times
12/7/22	Oral presentations by finalists, scorecards reviewed
12/12/22	Selection decision made
12/12-12/16	Contract Negotiation
12/12/22	Notification to proposers not selected completed
1/2/23	Project Start Date
2/10/23	Project initiation and onboard phase completed

Submit questions to marketing@slocal.com

Questions will be answered only during the timeframe allowable. All questions and answers will be provided to all interested respondents via email and/or SLOCAL.com

Submissions may be provided electronically to marketing@slocal.com or via regular mail (must be received by November 18, 2022) to:

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