

Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism: 2017 Advertising Agency Selection Process

With enabling legislation dating back to the 1920s and 30s, the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism is a cabinet-level agency charged with enhancing the state's quality of life by promoting, protecting, interpreting, and managing Arkansas's natural and cultural resources. Although its central office is in Little Rock, most of the Department's personnel are based in 52 state parks or 14 welcome centers located across Arkansas. Roughly 800 full-time employees and another 850 part-timers are on the payroll.

The Department has experienced monumental changes over the past quarter of a century, two of which radically transformed the agency's financial position. Passage of Act 38 of 1989 established a tourism development trust fund (primarily based on a 2% lodging tax) designed to supplement the Tourism Division's marketing efforts. These dollars have been used to mount research-based promotional campaigns aimed at key demographic groups in selected markets. In 1996, the state's voters approved Amendment 75, substantially increasing the budget of the State Parks Division. Now, following a couple of decades of improvements and enhancements, Arkansas can claim one of the top state park systems in the entire country.

Results from the two additional funding sources have been impressive. In calendar year 2015, for example, Arkansas's tourism industry hosted 28.1 million guests who spent \$7.3 billion in the state, to include \$374 million in state taxes. Visitation to "The Natural State" has nearly doubled since the "tourism tax" went into effect and overall spending by travelers has more than tripled.

Likewise, the State Parks Division has recorded substantial gains in recent years, particularly in terms of revenue growth. Its total sales of \$28 million in fiscal year 2016 were 30% higher than a decade earlier. The state park system tallied nearly 9 million visitors in Fiscal Year 2015, not bad when one realizes Arkansas claims only 3 million residents.

For the past 20 years the Department has contracted with two outside vendors to handle its advertising needs. One agency has provided what at one time was called "traditional" advertising services while the other, for lack of better terms, was considered the Department's internet agency. Beginning on July 1, 2017, these professional services will be rolled into a single contract.

In the fall of 2016, the Department of Parks and Tourism will begin a process to select a single agency of record. Advertising agencies which desire to partner with the Department's senior management team to build on Arkansas's momentum in the fast-paced and ever-changing travel/tourism/hospitality niche will be asked to respond via an RFP. A nine-member review team will screen the RFPs and will then invite the agencies with the top three score to participate in the second phase of the process: one-hour presentations before

the review team on March 21, 2017, in Little Rock. Agencies interested in bidding on the account are encouraged to study the information shown in the pages that follow.

I. Background Information:

Unlike most state governments, Arkansas has chosen to place its state parks program and tourism promotion efforts under a single agency, in this case the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. With a gubernatorially-appointed executive director at the helm and the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission setting policy, it's been a productive arrangement for well over half a century – despite chronic funding problems in the earlier years.

Working together in the late 1980s, representatives of the state's tourism industry convinced the Arkansas General Assembly to levy a 2% tax on four hospitality-related retail sales categories: transient lodging (hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, cabins, lodges); marina rentals; tourism attraction admission fees; and camping fees. Revenues from the tax, the vast majority of which originate from the lodging component, are placed in a Tourism Development Trust Fund earmarked for use by the Department's Tourism Division to expand Arkansas's presence in the travel marketplace. Results from the first year of collections (FY 1990) were a rather modest \$3.5 million, but represented a huge increase over the previous level of funding. The trust fund has achieved healthy growth in recent years and now realizes about \$17 million annually. Although a portion of the dollars are used for salaries, capital expenditures, and maintenance and operation costs, most of the proceeds are reserved for a research-based comprehensive marketing/promotional effort. The Arkansas Tourism Development Trust Fund is a textbook example of reinvesting tax dollars to generate even more tax dollars.

After struggling for years with an inadequate budget, the Arkansas State Parks system got a much-needed resuscitation with passage of Amendment 75 in 1996. The resulting one-eighth cent sales tax (revenues of which are shared with several other state agencies) currently yields nearly \$30 million annually for upgrading the system's 52 state parks, most of which has been earmarked for long-deferred maintenance projects. These investments have paid off nicely, delivering not only vastly improved levels of customer satisfaction but increased visitor spending as well. As a matter of policy, the State Parks Division annually commits approximately 5% of its operational revenues to marketing.

II. Project Summary:

Between the Tourism Division and the State Parks Division, the Department of Parks and Tourism will have approximately \$14.4 million for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2017, to market Arkansas tourism and its state parks system. Of this total, some \$13 million will be funded by the Tourism Division with the remaining \$1.4 million originating from the State Parks Division. The Department is

seeking a fully integrated marketing communication vendor to work with the Department's senior management team to:

- Guide strategic development for Arkansas's tourism industry;
- Strengthen the state's brand;
- Leverage the state's dollars through an ambitious partnership program;
- Produce creative messages which resonate with the state's target audiences;
- Assemble an aggressive and comprehensive media plan;
- Provide public relations and external communications;
- Host the www.Arkansas.com and www.ArkansasStateParks.com along with other related websites and drive online traffic to the sites; and
- Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the overall efforts.

The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism is seeking an agency that will provide exceptional professional assistance and not view this account as simply one more in a long list of clients. The Department must have a partner which will build on the state's 30+ years of equity in its "Arkansas: The Natural State" branding statement. The Department is looking for a highly-motivated partner which will both understand and appreciate the Department's legacy, history, and vision. The Department requires a partner which is intimately familiar with the Arkansas tourism industry, recognizes its potential, and is eager to devote its resources to advancing this vital and growing niche of the Arkansas economy. The Department expects its agency to fully comprehend the mission of the State Parks Division and provide the resources and expertise to continue its strong upward growth. The Department demands a partner with a tangible passion for Arkansas and a thorough grasp of the state's unique opportunities and experiences. The Department insists on a partner which will contribute to a highly creative, energetic, and collaborative association. Most importantly, the Department must find a partner which is absolutely committed to delivering the best services possible on behalf of Arkansas's taxpayers.

III. Stakeholders:

The selected vendor will have the privilege of serving an impressive list of stakeholders. First and foremost are the citizens of Arkansas, some 3 million residents who will expect the vendor to contribute to enhancement of the state's image, creation of hospitality-related jobs, and generation of state tax revenues. The elected representatives of the people (chief among them the Governor and the 135 members of the General Assembly), of course, will also be among the vendor's clients.

Other critical stakeholders are owners/operators and employees within the Arkansas tourism industry, convention and visitor bureaus, regional tourism associations, chambers of commerce, advertising and promotion commissions, and other destination marketing organizations (DMOs). In addition, the list also includes

other state and federal agencies, regional and national tourism-related organizations, and members of the media.

IV. Target Markets:

Arkansas's traditional tourism markets have been those within a day's drive of the state. In somewhat more specific terms, that's generally equivalent to a large oval placed across the mid-section of the country (from Chicago south to New Orleans and from Nashville west to a line extending from Oklahoma City down to Austin). In addition to those cities, other primary metropolitan areas would include Wichita, Kansas City, Springfield, St. Louis, Memphis, Jackson, Shreveport, Houston, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Tulsa, Fort Smith, the Fayetteville/Springdale/Rogers/Bentonville corridor, and Little Rock. Estimates indicate approximately two-thirds of the state's travelers originate beyond Arkansas's borders, most often from contiguous states.

With recent additions to Arkansas's tourism product – think the Clinton Presidential Center, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and Johnny Cash's Boyhood Home – a strong argument can be made that it's time to abandon what's often referred to as “Arkansas's marketing egg” in favor of an expanded geographic base. In fact, research shows increasing numbers of visitors from California, Pennsylvania, Florida, and other more distant states.

As for targeted audiences, the state has relied on Baby Boomers, empty nesters, outdoor enthusiasts, retirees, and young families in the recent past. But times are indeed changing and Arkansas has seen growing success with Gen Xers, Millennials, adventure travelers, road and mountain bikers, motorcyclists, geotourists, heritage tourism buffs, craft beer fans, and foodies.

Additionally, the Department is interested in enhancing its working relationships with the following groups: tour company owners/operators, family and military reunion planners, meeting and convention planners, sporting event organizers/planners, wedding planners, niche associations, travel editors/writers/photographers, and bloggers.

While international promotion has not been a priority of the Department, the staff feels that the timing is finally right to make some initial forays into this complex and competitive arena. Up through the present, our efforts have been limited to modest cooperative ventures with Travel South USA and Mississippi River Country, two multi-state organizations concentrating on the development of international traffic to their respective regions. Both provide opportunities for “pay to play” promotions which could offer attractive, low-cost options for bringing Johnny Cash's Boyhood Home, the Clinton Presidential Center, and other attractions to the attention of foreign travelers in selected countries.

Although the primary market for Arkansas State Parks is Arkansas residents, its enabling legislation specifically includes tourism among the listed objectives,

making it one of the few state park systems in the country with this charge. Its audiences are wide-ranging, stretching from Civil War aficionados to amateur geologists searching for the discovery of a lifetime at Crater of Diamonds State Park. Archaeological resources at Hampson Museum, Parkin, and Toltec attract far different crowds than the adventure enthusiasts showing up for a Class IV whitewater expedition at Cossatot or a mountain biking event at Devil's Den. Likewise, visitors to the Ozark Folk Center are seeking vastly different experiences than those at Pinnacle Mountain or Logoly.

V. Key Challenges:

While Arkansas's tourism industry can point to significant improvements over the past couple of decades, it still faces challenges – with a lingering image problem occupying the top of the list. Thanks to the notorious contributions of humorist Bob Burns, journalist H. L. Mencken, and Governor Orval Faubus, the state has struggled for years to establish a positive public perception, not only from coast to coast but also within our own 75 counties. The election of former Governor Bill Clinton as President along with the ascension of corporate titans such as Walmart, Tyson, and J.B. Hunt have been of immense help in countering much of the negative stereotyping which has plagued Arkansas, her residents, and the state's tourism economy.

In addition, focus group research shows that some potential visitors express concerns about the level of service they might expect while traveling in Arkansas. A few have questioned whether or not the state has commercial flight connections and others have doubted the availability of high quality dining, lodging, and shopping experiences. The state's confusing liquor law situation ("wet" versus "dry" counties) is yet another hardship.

Two other challenges bear mentioning. One has to do with product development – or making sure that the state continues to supply new reasons for repeat visitors to come back. Much like a successful theme park, Arkansas must regularly offer "new rides" in order to present the state as an enticing, exciting, and ever-improving destination of choice.

The second challenge is the constant effort to establish a permanent seat for the tourism industry at Arkansas's economic development table. Although the hospitality niche has generated thousands of new jobs in the state during the past few years and has contributed billions of dollars to the Arkansas economy (and hundreds of millions to the state's coffers), it is seldom in the mindsets of legislators, chamber of commerce executives, and other key local, regional, and state development leaders. Until this frustrating inequity is remedied, tourism will never be in a position to assume its rightful role in contributing to the state's future.

VI. Contract Period:

The initial contract between the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the selected vendor shall be for a one-year period (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018). However, state law allows up to six one-year extensions if the Department determines that its relationship with the vendor is positive, that the collaborative results have been satisfactory, and that the taxpayers of the state have been well served by the vendor's performance.

VII. Project Schedule:

November 1, 2016:	RFP information distributed to prospective agencies
November 15, 2016:	Deadline for questions from prospective agencies
January 6, 2017:	Deadline – RFPs due from agencies no later than 5:00 PM
January 9, 2017:	Review panel begins screening of RFPs
January 16, 2017:	Announcement of finalists invited to present
January 20, 2017:	Meeting with representatives of finalists to go over details about presentations (process, order of presentations, locations)
March 21, 2017:	Ad agency presentations
March 21, 2017:	Selection made by review panel
May 1, 2017:	Submission of proposed contract to the Office of State Procurement
Mid-June 2017:	Approval of contract by Arkansas Legislative Council
July 1, 2017:	New contract goes into effect

VIII. Services Solicited:

The purpose of this Request for Proposal is to identify a marketing communications firm with a proven record of success in the travel/tourism field to serve as champion for both the Arkansas brand and that of Arkansas State Parks, bringing in new visitors and contributing to the growth of the state's economy. Basic services required from the selected firm may include but are not limited to:

- Market research
- Market strategy
- Creative and production for broadcast, print, and out-of-home
- Digital including strategy and production
- Social marketing including strategy and execution
- Media planning and placement
- Event marketing
- Partnership development
- Public relations
- Website hosting and enhancement
- Budget management

IX. Measuring Success:

Monitoring success has been a constant challenge for the advertising field – and all are familiar with the pithy quotes over the years from various authorities regarding this dilemma. While the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism isn't opposed to an agency winning creative contests for its work and receiving accolades from peer groups, we prefer an evaluation process offering a bit more substance – one involving an actual measurement.

While not an out-and-out barometer of the state's tourism campaigns, collections of the 2% tourism tax provide a useful gauge for the health of Arkansas's tourism industry. Our goal is to achieve year-over-year increases which outpace inflation and are equal to or exceed the tourism industry's overall growth on a national basis.

In addition to those quantitative measurements, we look for qualitative indicators from the state's annual focus group sessions. Participants in these exercises share valuable insights on the state's image, the direction of its marketing campaigns, and possible hot buttons for future promotional efforts.

X. Conflict of Interest:

The agency of record for the Department of Parks and Tourism cannot be servicing the tourism account of another state at the time its contract with the State of Arkansas begins. Nor can the agency of record enter into a contract to service another state tourism account for the duration of its contract with the Department. It will be permissible, however, for the agency of record to include regional and local destination marketing organizations, both within Arkansas and beyond its borders, among its clients.

It is possible that a primary vendor may wish to use a subcontractor to perform certain services required under this proposal (e.g., hosting the Department's websites). In such situations, the Department has no issue with a subcontractor servicing other state tourism accounts. Should such an arrangement be proposed, the Department will insist on dealing with a single contact for Tourism and a single contact for State Parks representing both the primary vendor and its subcontractor.

XI. Goals of the RFP Process:

The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism is charged with both encouraging its residents to vacation within the state and inspiring potential out-of-state travelers to visit Arkansas through promotional campaigns designed to establish the state as a world-class tourism destination. In order to meet this mandate, the Department is conducting a review for a new integrated agency vendor.

The Department is seeking the professional services of one lead marketing communications vendor/agency to provide the following areas of expertise: **Lead and Creative, Public Relations, Social Media, Media Planning and Buying,**

Website Development and Hosting, and Web Marketing. The lead agency may choose to subcontract one or more of the above services.

The goal of this review is to identify a partner which can work in close collaboration with the Department (comprised of two separate divisions under the same contract) to develop, implement, and continually optimize a comprehensive and integrated marketing program that aggressively promotes the State of Arkansas as a year-round travel destination. This RFP seeks to identify a lead agency partner (with the option to bring in subcontractors) which can provide consumers with an integrated solution across traditional, digital, social media, and public relations – whether the media be paid, earned, or owned.

The requirements of this RFP include the six tracks listed above:

1. **Lead and Creative** – Vendor/agency will be responsible for identification and development of an overarching consumer brand campaign, including: brand communication and strategy; associated content strategies; consumer preferences and insights; creative asset development; and lead campaign performance measurement and analytics. The lead agency will serve as a brand steward with all subcontracted agency partners to ensure a unified, cohesive, and integrated marketing program for the state. The lead agency will also hold the contract as “agency of record.” As the agency of record, the lead agency will be the primary point of contact for project coordination with all subcontractors and will be responsible for the final work product.
2. **Public Relations** – Vendor/agency will be responsible for earned media impressions, development of outbound “pitch” materials, and contribute to campaign performance measurement and analytics.
3. **Social Media** – Vendor/agency will be responsible for all owned media channels and platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).
4. **Media Planning and Buying** – Vendor/agency will be responsible for management of all paid media, including planning strategy, channel optimization, and media buying, and will collaborate with all partners on campaign performance measurement and analytics.
5. **Website Development and Hosting** – Vendor/agency will be responsible for hosting the www.Arkansas.com and www.ArkansasStateParks.com (two individual yet integrated) websites, maintaining and enhancing the websites, and insuring that they are constantly improved to meet the needs and expectations of the traveling public.
6. **Web Marketing** – Vendor/agency will be responsible for the full range of digital marketing activities.

XII. Scope of Services:

1. **Tourism in Arkansas:** Tourism is among the leading industries within the State of Arkansas, providing more than 100,000 jobs and contributing nearly \$350 million annually in state taxes. In Calendar Year 2015, Arkansas hosted over 28 million guests, some two-thirds of which were out-of-state visitors, who collectively spent over \$7.3 billion while traveling in and through The Natural State.

There are many compelling reasons for tourists to vacation in Arkansas. The state is centrally located and within an easy drive of a number of major metropolitan areas. It offers a remarkable array of fascinating landscapes and appealing attractions within its 54,000 square miles. Arkansas can claim America's oldest national park, its first national river, and the only diamond mine in the world open to the public. It has 52 state parks, three national forests, seven units within America's national park system, an extensive network of Corps of Engineers reservoirs, and a dozen or so national wildlife refuges. In addition, the state's many superb attractions include the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena-West Helena, Johnny Cash's Boyhood Home in Dyess, the Bikes, Blues and BBQ Motorcycle Rally in Fayetteville, and five Epic-rated mountain biking trails. And, of course, the state has long bragged about its legendary duck hunting and world-class trout fishing adventures.

Tourism in Arkansas is a collection of businesses representing a variety of sectors: lodging, dining, museums, resorts, marinas, outfitters, private attractions, gaming, cultural facilities, vineyards, breweries, gasoline stations, convenience stores, convention centers, and retailers. State and federal agencies – such as the Department of Arkansas Heritage, the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service – are important partners to the industry.

2. **The Tourism Division:** The Department's Tourism Division has a staff of approximately 65 employees. This dedicated group of professionals promotes the state's spectacular scenery, unrivaled outdoor recreational activities, quaint but vibrant small towns, unique cultural experiences, and genuine hospitality. Its goal is to enhance the image of Arkansas and contribute to the state's prosperity by strengthening the economy via tourism. Staff members provide promotional opportunities, technical expertise, research, and access to grant programs.

In addition to its administrative section, the Tourism Division has five sections organized by these categories: Communications, Group Travel, Tourism Development, Research, and Welcome Centers.

Approximately one-fourth of the Division's \$18 million annual budget is funded from the state's General Revenues. The remaining \$15 million comes

from the 2% tourism tax, proceeds of which are placed in the state's Tourism Development Trust Fund. Arkansas is fortunate to have a stable, dedicated source of monies for tourism promotion and development, giving Arkansas the long-term stability needed to plan and deliver consistent messaging to the state's target audiences. Nevertheless, the staff is driven to be smarter and more creative with the Department's marketing and media in order to develop engaging and rewarding relationships with these potential customers.

3. **The State Parks Division:** With 52 parks located across Arkansas, the State Parks Division offers a wide array of resources focused on recreation, natural, cultural and historical experiences, not only for state residents but also to tens of thousands of visitors from afar. The 54,600-acre system – which can be traced back to work projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the days of The Great Depression – includes six lodges (with conference facilities, meeting rooms, and onsite catering services), ten restaurants, two golf courses, ten marinas, over 200 cabins, in excess of 1,700 campsites, dozens of playgrounds, and some 300 miles of hiking, biking, ATV, and equestrian trails. In addition, the state parks offer more than 50,000 interpretive programs annually which entertain, inform, and educate guests on everything from flint knapping to Dutch-oven cooking to the role of bats in our environment.
4. **Current Program Detail:** The following information – budgeting details on the Department's Spring/Summer 2016 marketing campaign – is included only for illustrative purposes. It's shown as a means to provide background knowledge and should not be viewed as a recommendation for priority programs or budget allocations in the future.

“Traditional” agency:

Research		\$113,000
Media		5,290,300
Television	2,863,500	
Online	900,000	
Magazine	927,700	
Radio	409,800	
Out-of-home	81,800	
Newspaper	107,500	
Group Travel		120,900
Creative/Production		455,400
Campaign Content Support		332,700
Partners in Tourism		359,200
Industry Outreach		38,300
Vacation Planning Kit Production		10,000
Photography		20,000
Contingency		50,000

Internet agency:

Mobile website	130,500
SEO, keyword buys, new content	508,100
Back office/industry support	102,500
Hosting, bandwidth usage, etc.	39,500
Total Spring/Summer Budget	\$7,570,400

The state's Spring/Summer 2016 campaign represented approximately two-thirds of the Department's annual promotional budget. Combining the Fall/Winter campaign expenditures would yield a total annual marketing budget of roughly \$11.4 million.

XIII. Specifications and Requirements:

1. **Basic Expectations:** This RFP is soliciting bids from a lead contracting agency which will also serve as the creative agency to meet the expectations and comprehensive marketing functions outlined below. The lead agency may have a subcontractor (or subcontractors) to fully address the Department's requirements. As noted earlier, the lead agency will hold the contract as the agency of record. As the agency of record, the lead agency will be the primary point of contact for project coordination with any and all subcontractors and will be responsible for final work products. Recognizing the value of a productive and collaborative team environment to bring in the expertise of all involved parties, the Department will ask that all subcontracting agencies have input into strategies and direct communication with the Department's staff for implementation. The contractor(s) must be able to meet the state's expectations of service during the contracted term, to include:
 - A. Deep knowledge and understanding of Arkansas's brand and consumer segments
 - B. Extensive experience with the travel category
 - C. Ability to develop and contribute to an integrated marketing strategy across paid, earned, and owned media – with input and guidance from all agency partners
 - D. Commitment to a team approach – accepting that good ideas are the goal, no matter their origin
 - E. Ability to deliver consistency in messaging
 - F. Fully integrated creative development
 - G. Proactive in bringing opportunities and ideas which challenge the Department, helping further advancement of Arkansas's tourism marketing objectives
 - H. Clear lines of agency communication and responsibility
 - I. A thorough appreciation for emerging technology, trends, platforms, and messaging opportunities – and how to best leverage them on behalf of the state

- J. A reputation for taking calculated risks – backed by research and insights – to advance the cause of Arkansas tourism
- K. Account representation in the greater Little Rock metropolitan area
- L. An absolute commitment to transparency, trustworthiness, and integrity
- M. Ability to develop and manage right-size campaigns for budget
- N. Ability to make limited funds work hard to achieve goals
- O. An understanding of the unique systems, timelines, and responsibilities which are inherent with a state government account
- P. Previous agency and/or key staff experience with a destination marketing organization
- Q. Commitment to be available at key in-state functions and events
- R. Willingness to incorporate and expand on existing partnerships and programs which have been successful
- S. Capacity to add international marketing (travel trade and consumer) to scope of work as directed
- T. An understanding of Arkansas State Parks, its brand and market segment

2. Lead Agency Specific Expectations:

- A. Develop, facilitate, and deliver on a foundational, creative, big idea that will serve as the brand catalyst and platform for all state content
- B. Cross-functional, channel-agnostic creative and content ideas and recommendations
- C. Proven ability to provide deep and meaningful strategic insights
- D. Ability to provide key insights and segmentation around target consumers
- E. Thorough understanding of cross-functional metrics/analytics to deliver actionable data
- F. Ability to lead a team of agencies in developing integrated marketing communications

3. Social Media Agency Specific Expectations:

- A. Development of integrated social media strategy within an overarching marketing platform
- B. Discover/present creative means to drive engagement and connect with consumers
- C. Thorough grasp of various platforms and their potentials
- D. Deliver first-to-market opportunities within tourism category
- E. Knowledge and utilization of best practices in metrics and analytics related to social media

4. Media Agency Specific Expectations:

- A. Proven ability to deliver meaningful strategic insights
- B. Ability to define and deliver against clear goals, success metrics, and return on investment
- C. Ability to effectively buy media and extend the state's media investment through aggressive negotiations and added value

programs, including an efficient and effective system of programmatic buying.

5. **Public Relations Agency Specific Expectations:**
 - A. Proven understanding of and experience with nuances of the tourism industry
 - B. Ability to develop consumer-focused public relations programs that complement an overarching marketing plan
 - C. Extensive knowledge and experience with industry's best practices in PR campaign management

6. **Web Agency Specific Expectations:**
 - A. Provide insightful leadership and best practices related to digital communications and targeted marketing
 - B. Provide best practices in website optimization and user experience for consumers and staff
 - C. Define and deliver against clear goals, success metrics, and return on investment
 - D. Commitment to making the Department's websites among the best in the tourism category
 - E. Knowledge and utilization of best practices and analytical benchmarks

7. **Website Hosting Agency Specific Expectations:**
 - A. Proven experience hosting a major tourism-oriented website
 - B. Commitment to making the www.Arkansas.com and www.arkansasstateparks.com websites among the best in their categories, in addition to integration of the two websites
 - C. Transition details to be determined during first six months of contract

XIV. Scope of Work:

1. **Marketing Strategy and Brand Planning:**
 - A. Develop brand positioning strategy and marketing plans, including competitive and situational analyses, goals, objectives, priorities, audiences, and integrated multi-media strategies
 - B. Strategize, plan, and execute integrated and measurable marketing programs to build awareness, intent, and travel to Arkansas
 - C. Develop partnership programs and brand-to-brand relationships to extend marketing reach, engage industry partners, and tap into shared consumer affinities
 - D. Account management, including account staff coordination, budget management, project management, status reports, quality control, and client communications for Tourism and separate Account management and support for State Parks

2. **Research and evaluation:**
 - A. Monitor, track, and provide points-of-view on social, economic, political, environmental, media, consumer, and travel industry data and trends that could impact the state's tourism business
 - B. Identify opportunities to grow market share and/or revenue
 - C. Conduct research to shape, target, and measure marketing efforts
 - D. Track and evaluate performance or marketing activities
 - E. Produce reports, summaries, dashboards, and other tools on industry and state performance indicators
 - F. Monitor and provide intelligence on marketing activities of competitors
 - G. Conduct audits and analyses of state tourism products and experiences

3. **Creative Services:**
 - A. Conceptualize big, singular ideas that engage the audience with Arkansas's and Arkansas State Parks' brand
 - B. Strategize, create, produce, procure, and prepare advertising and branded content for distribution on domestic and international online and offline media channels, including paid, owned, and earned and social media platforms
 - C. Create, produce, publish, and distribute printed promotional materials including, but not limited to *The Arkansas Travel Guide*, *Water & Woods*, the *Arkansas Motorcycling Guide*, the *Arkansas Mountain Biking Guide*, the *Arkansas Road Biking Guide* and the *Arkansas State Park Guide*.
 - D. Research, produce and/or procure, and manage assets and content for tourism development and marketing purposes, including but not limited to artwork, illustrations, photography, video, music, maps, voiceover, copy, literature, brand identity, etc. Negotiate rates and use for rights-managed assets
 - E. Design and translate content for international, trade, and internal audiences as necessary
 - F. Develop creative concepts, design, and art direction for the various publications
 - G. Design promotional content using static and dynamic data feeds and formats
 - H. Work collaboratively with other agencies, subcontractors, and the Department's staff to bring ideas to life across all owned, earned, social, and paid media touch points

4. **Public Relations:**
 - A. Strategize, develop, execute, and support comprehensive domestic and international public/media relations campaigns and program activities, using both traditional and emerging social media approaches – including news releases, e-mail blasts, targeted media events, story pitches, and development of hosted press trips

- B. Engage Arkansas’s tourism industry partners to assist in all phases of work with the media
- C. Service inbound media requests/inquiries which may include but are not limited to content development, hosting, logistical arrangements, providing visuals and video
- D. Track results of inbound servicing
- E. Cultivate and maintain relationships with influential travel and lifestyle voices
- F. Enhancement and maintenance of online media room, and blogs
- G. Track and report on editorial coverage in both traditional and social media outlets to quantitatively and qualitatively assess earned media value of PR efforts and provide ongoing reports of the findings
- H. Represent Arkansas at media events, shows, marketplaces, trips, and other outreach forums
- I. Develop and manage an integrated contact and communications management system for the purpose of facilitating and tracking communications with media contacts
- J. Communicate Arkansas’s tourism successes to the state’s partners, constituents, media outlets, legislators, and industry members
- K. Develop and deliver workshops and seminars on a variety of media, public relations, and travel trade topics as needed and/or requested
- L. Assist with crisis management strategy, plan, protocol, execution, monitoring and support, including social media channels

5. Social Media:

- A. Strategize, develop, and execute social media strategies including competitive and situational analyses, goals, objectives, priorities, and audiences
- B. Develop a brand positioning which complements the overall consumer-marketing program
- C. Account management, including account staff coordination, budget management, project timelines, status reports, quality control, and client communications
- D. Compelling, creative execution across all current and future social media channels on an on-going basis
- E. Identify and counsel as to how Arkansas can maximize emerging technology and trends in the social environment
- F. Execution, measurement, tracking, and evaluation of all social analytics
- G. Suggest new tactics and metrics as objectives, network size, and campaigns mature, grow, and evolve
- H. Conceptualize, produce, and execute high-impact social media events and campaigns

6. Web Agency:

- A. Marketing Strategy and Brand Planning
 - i. Develop digital marketing plans, including competitive and situational analyses, goals, objectives, priorities, and audiences

- ii. Develop a brand positioning that complements the overall consumer-marketing program
 - iii. Account management, including account staff coordination, budget management, project timelines, status reports, quality control, and client communications
- B. Creative Services
- i. Create, produce, and prepare digital branded content for distribution on domestic and international online media channels, including paid, owned, earned, and social media platforms
 - ii. Research, produce and/or procure, and manage assets and content for tourism development and marketing purposes, including but not limited to artwork, illustration, photography, video, music, maps, voiceover, copy, literature, brand identity pieces, etc.
 - iii. Negotiate rates and use for rights-managed assets
 - iv. Design and translate content for international, trade, and internal audiences as necessary
 - v. Design promotional content using static and dynamic data feeds and formats
- C. Website Development, Design, and Strategy
- i. Lead, actualize, and execute website design, re-design, coding, development, automated personalized marketing, content apps, and integration of marketing campaigns and digital projects
 - ii. Research marketplace, target audiences/users and develop strategies to reach them and fulfill their needs and expectations of a travel destination website
 - iii. Emphasis on automated, personalized marketing, user experience, and interaction design (commonly known as “the consumer journey”)
 - iv. User interface design
 - v. Software engineering/programming/development
 - a. Support and development of Java-based CMS platform
 - b. Support and development of MySQL database
 - c. Support and integration of Oracle database
 - d. Expertise in HIPPO CMS platform’s marketing tools
 - e. Expertise in Apache SOLR research platform
 - f. Expertise in JAVA development
 - g. Expertise in Google analytics to achieve maximum marketing results
 - h. Expertise in Google TagManager
 - vi. Working with third party social media APIs to integrate the state’s social media and web presence and leverage their respective audiences

- vii. Identify and counsel as to how the state can maximize emerging technology and trends in web marketing, design, and development
- viii. Full ADA compliance
- ix. Identify and counsel as to how the state can maximize emerging technology and trends in mobile platforms (such as tablets, smartphone, wearables) in terms of native and web apps to support and enhance the state's marketing efforts
- x. Evaluate and advise the state on current marketing and PR efforts on digital and mobile platforms
- xi. Advise on how to present and use www.Arkansas.com and www.Arkansasstateparks.com and all other associated URLs on smartphones (i.e., responsive design, content parity, etc.)
- xii. Assist the state with an analysis of new and emerging web content delivery systems and technologies and creative strategies, objectives, and implementation plans as necessary from this analysis
- xiii. Work with third party reservation vendor with State Parks to integrate online reservations into various online platforms for State Parks Division

7. Media Planning and Buying:

- A. Annually develop and recommend media objectives, strategies, and tactics in support of overall marketing plan goals and objectives
- B. Plan, negotiate, and purchase media placements and program integration on channels and publishers including but not limited to print, digital (including display, search engine marketing, mobile, video, social media), broadcast, out-of-home, event, sponsorship, point-of-purchase, cooperative marketing, direct marketing, and emerging technology vehicles
- C. Evaluate and recommend search engine optimization strategies and activities in coordination with the digital marketing agency
- D. Monitor and optimize placements to ensure maximum performance and full completion of all media schedules, negotiating make-goods and bonus units as appropriate
- E. Provide performance reports and analyses of media placements throughout and at the completion of each campaign (the contractor shall retain, and submit to the state upon request, proof of publication, performance, or other such affidavits for all media participation)
- F. Develop cooperative marketing program for industry partner participation
- G. Monitor industry and priority media markets and report on media insights, opportunities, and information of importance impacting client and its competitors

8. Web Hosting:

- A. Details on hosting the Department’s two primary websites – www.Arkansas.com and www.ArkansasStateParks.com and all associated URLs – will be determined during the first six months of the transition stage.

XV. Offeror Qualifications:

To enable the Department to determine the capabilities of an offeror to provide integrated marketing services as described in this RFP, the offeror shall respond to the following regarding its ability to meet the specified requirements.

Please note that each item must be completely addressed. Offerors taking exception to any requirements listed in this section may be found unresponsive or be subject to point deductions. Responses for the entire Offeror Qualifications sections are limited to 100 pages.

1. Company Profile and Experience:

By answering the series of questions shown below, the offeror shall submit documentation establishing that the company responding to this request has the qualifications, experience, and expertise to provide the services specified in this RFP.

This section shall be completed by the lead agency. Questions should be answered in the order in which they appear below.

A. General Information:

- i. Agency name, address, main telephone number, and website
- ii. Agency contact name, title, phone number, and e-mail address
- iii. To what network and/or holding company does your agency belong (if any)?
- iv. Is there any material litigation pending against the company? If yes, explain the nature of such litigation. Could the litigation have any material effect upon the operation of your organization?
- v. Describe the company’s legal organizational structure (corporation, partnership, etc.), including parent, subsidiary, or affiliate status.
- vi. Is the company in the process of merging with another organization or being acquired by another firm? If yes, please provide details in 500 words or less.
- vii. Provide agency revenue for 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 (estimated).
- viii. List the agency’s current clients, including all clients and specific brands. Indicate the year the client was acquired and the assignment relationship (agency of record or by project)

and the scope of work (e.g., creative, strategy, media planning/buying, public relations, digital, etc.).

- ix. Show recent account trends (revenues gained or revenues lost) on a client-by-client basis.
- x. Describe your agency's current or past tourism experiences, including clients, length of account relationship, and scope of work.
- xi. How is your agency uniquely qualified, experienced, and positioned to market the State of Arkansas as a premier tourism destination?

B. Staffing/Departments:

- i. Submit an organizational chart for your agency, including the number of employees by department and function.
- ii. Provide biographical sketches of key staff members who will work on the account, including each individual's name, title, role on the account, and percentage of time that will be dedicated to the Arkansas tourism account. Where appropriate, include relevant work accomplishments and experience.
- iii. Provide a summary describing average tenure of your employees, typical annual turnover, and practices/policies in place to ensure account continuity with staff turnover.

C. Awards, Accolades, and Industry Recognition:

- i. List any significant awards and industry recognition received by the agency over the past five years. Indicate the client and campaign which was recognized, and the year the award was given.

D. Client References:

- i. Provide a minimum of three references from current clients. References must be related to the scope of services for which the agency is bidding. For each reference, provide the company name, dates of service, contact person (including title, telephone number, and e-mail address), and a complete description of the services provided. References may be contacted to verify the agency's ability to perform the services specified in the Department's RFP. The State of Arkansas reserves the right to use any information, additional references, or supplemental research deemed necessary to establish the ability of the offeror to meet the contract's requirements. Negative references may be grounds for proposal disqualification.

2. Agency Components Section:

This section should be completed by the lead agency and/or the subcontractor agency as applicable. Questions should be answered in the order which they appear below.

A. Lead/Creative Agency Section:

- i. To quickly and efficiently serve Arkansas's tourism industry, the Department desires the lead agency to have (or acquire soon after the contract award) an office within the state. At a minimum, we prefer the day-to-day account staff, particularly the account manager, to be stationed within a central Arkansas-based office. How do you plan to meet the preference for an in-state presence for the key account representative?
- ii. Describe your approach to developing integrated advertising campaigns. Include a description of the agency's creative process, and how it determines and prioritizes strategy, insights, and recommendations.
- iii. How does your agency motivate its staff and other agency partners to continually strive for excellence on behalf of a client?
- iv. Provide details on your agency's experience in developing and executing content strategies.
- v. Describe your experience working with clients which are governmental agencies.
- vi. Elaborate on your experience working with destination marketing organizations.
- vii. Describe your approach to measurement and analytics.
 - a. What is your approach to continuous reporting and optimization?
 - b. How do you demonstrate program success to your clients and remain accountable for the program's outcome?
- viii. List and briefly describe any proprietary research tools of the agency (and explain if any tools have additional costs not included in a core retainer).
- ix. List and explain your agency's capabilities in understanding and marketing to specific audience segments (and include any proprietary programs the agency uses to gain a better understanding of an audience's habits, tendencies, and motivations).
- x. Provide a recent case study which demonstrates your agency's ability to develop and execute integrated marketing and communication ideas (include paid, owned, and earned media):
 - a. Define your client's challenge.
 - b. Detail the responsible agencies and their specific contributions to the overall idea.

- c. What key insights and analyses led to the program's success?
- d. Describe the key performance indicators and program measurements used to gauge the program's overall effectiveness.

B. Public Relations Section:

- i. Describe how you collaborate with other account areas within your agency on a client's roster to develop a cohesive public relations plan.
- ii. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the public relations program (including how you develop the strategic approach and bring to execution in market, including outbound media exposure).
- iii. What key metrics do you use most often with your clients to gauge effectiveness and return on investment?
- iv. What do you believe are the top three mistakes clients make in the PR arena, and how do you help clients avoid these pitfalls?
- v. Provide a public relations case study from the past 24 months that demonstrates your agency's creativity and thinking. It should be pertinent to this RFP, and should include editorial coverage your agency obtained on behalf of a travel/tourism account.

C. Social Media Section:

- i. Describe how you collaborate with other account areas within your agency on a client's roster to develop a cohesive social media plan.
- ii. Describe your strategic and creative process in the development of social media content.
 - a. How do you ensure that content is on strategy and maintains a strong linkage to the brand?
- iii. What is your approach to data, research, and measurement?
 - a. What key metrics do you most often use with your clients?
 - b. How does this data influence the client's overall initiative, both online and offline?
- iv. What do you believe are the top three mistakes which clients make in the social media arena, and how do you help your clients avoid these pitfalls?
- v. Provide a social media case study from the past 24 months that demonstrates the creativity, innovativeness, and strategic capabilities of your agency. It should include any insights and lessons learned that have resulted in the improvement and enhancement of subsequent initiatives. The case study should be pertinent to the content of this RFP.

D. Media Planning and Buying Section:

- i. Describe how you collaborate with other account areas within your agency on a client's roster to develop a cohesive marketing plan.
- ii. List the agency's primary analytic and planning tools you will use to service the account
 - a. Indicate those which have additional out-of-pocket costs and those which are accessible to the client without additional costs.
 - b. Provide samples of reports or dashboards where appropriate.
- iii. Provide an overview of your agency's philosophy regarding strategic media planning and channel planning.
- iv. What is your overall philosophy and/or approach concerning media buying, including programmatic buying?
- v. What are the primary factors you use to gain a competitive buying advantage for your clients?

E. Digital Agency Section:

- i. What is your agency's overall philosophy on developing digital strategy?
 - a. How do you collaborate with other roster agencies to ensure an integrated and holistic execution?
 - b. What do you believe is the most significant/important development in the digital arena to date, and how is your agency set to capitalize on it?
- ii. What is your approach to data, research, and measurement?
 - a. What key metrics do you most often use with your clients?
 - b. How does this data influence the client's overall initiative, both online and offline?
- iii. Describe your process for content development.
 - a. How do you ensure content is strategic and maintains a strong linkage to the brand?
- iv. Provide two case studies from the previous 24 months, clearly identifying the challenges, goals, and objectives of the campaign and the agency's role.
 - a. One of the case studies should involve a situation where your agency was responsible for web design and personalization strategies.
 - b. The second case study should demonstrate your agency's ability to contribute to an integrated campaign.

XVI. Proposed Costs:

The total combined marketing/advertising budget (both from the Tourism Division and the State Parks Division) is estimated/projected to be in the range of \$12 million annually – although this number could fluctuate depending upon the economy, tax collections, legislative acts, acts of God, and/or other factors. As noted earlier, the contract for the successful bidder will be for a one-year period with the possibility of up to six annual extensions.

Please provide a blended rate card by agency function. For account Planning/Strategy, incorporate rates for integrated planning of any subcontractors. Failure of an offeror to provide pricing for all items listed on the schedule may be cause for rejection of the entire offer or cancellation of the contract. An offeror may enter “No Cost” in the unit price column to indicate that the service will be provided without charge.

1. Services and Hourly Rates:

Offerors must list the blended rate for all categories of services listed below and the amount per billable hour the agency will charge. Include all items on the worksheet shown below and any others which are relevant to the proposal that the Department would be expected to pay.

<u>Service Provided</u>	<u>Amount per Hour (dollars)</u>
Account Supervision	_____
Account Planning/Strategy	_____
Creative Services	_____
Research/Analytics Services	_____
Website Strategy	_____
User Experience Services (web)	_____
Web Search Services	_____
Web Technology/Development Services	_____
Media Services	_____
Social Media Services	_____
Public Relations Services	_____
Accounting	_____
Budget Research and Estimates	_____
Travel Time	_____
Other (please list as appropriate; information only; not scored)	_____

2. Additional Compensation Requirements:

- A. Minimum Timekeeping Requirements:
 - i. The agency must maintain a weekly record of time expended in performance of this contract.
 - ii. The agency will report usage of hours to the Department on a monthly basis.

- iii. The contractor must maintain an internal control system that has the capacity to segregate labor hours and resultant costs by contract and by job or work order when appropriate.
- iv. The Department reserves the right to audit any or all of the above-described records at any time, with or without cause.
- B. Travel Reimbursement: Travel expenses must be estimated in advance and require Departmental approval prior to scheduled travel.
- C. Additional Costs: Separately from the above cost proposals, identify and list any and all additional costs, including: ongoing maintenance costs, software, subscriptions, pass through costs, etc. Indicate whether the cost is a one-time “set up” fee, ongoing fee for each usage, or an annual fee.

XVII. Agency Evaluation:

The RFPs will be evaluated by the Department’s nine-member Ad Agency Review team comprised of the following individuals:

- Administration Director, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism;
- State Parks Director, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism;
- Tourism Development Manager, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism;
- Communications Manager, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism;
- Parks and Tourism designee; and
- Four members of the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, to be designated by the Commission’s Chair.

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Maximum Points</i>
Familiarity with Arkansas’s tourism industry and product	35
Company profile, experience, and staffing	30
Creative Marketing/Media/Brand Development	30
Web Hosting Experience	20
Experience with government clients	15
Public Relations	15
Social Media	15
Media Planning and Buying	15
Digital Experience	15
Pricing of Services	10
<i>Total possible points</i>	<i>200</i>

Offerors must score a minimum of 150 points to be considered for the second phase of the selection process.

XVIII. General Information on Submitting Proposals

1. **Exceptions:** All proposals are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses shall be controlled by such terms and conditions and the submission of other terms and conditions, price lists, catalogs, and/or other documents as part of an offeror's response will be waived and have no effect either on this Request for Proposals or on any contract that may be awarded resulting from this solicitation.

Offeror specifically agrees to the conditions set forth in the above paragraph by signature to the proposal.

2. **Oral explanations:** The Department shall not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after the award.
3. **Reference to other data:** Only information which is received in response to this RFP will be evaluated; information previously submitted shall not be evaluated.
4. **Elaborate proposals:** Elaborate proposals in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond that necessary to present a complete and effective proposal are not desired. Given that Arkansas's brand is "The Natural State," offerors are encouraged to keep sustainability in mind as they prepare their responses.
5. **Cost for proposal preparation:** Any costs incurred by offerors in preparing or submitting responses are the sole responsibility of the offerors.
6. **Time for acceptance:** Each proposal shall state that it is a firm offer which may be accepted within a period extending through July 1, 2017. Although the contract is expected to be awarded prior to that date, this period is requested to allow for unforeseen delays.
7. **Titles:** The titles and headings used in this RFP and any subsequent contract are for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.
8. **Confidentiality of proposals:** In submitting this proposal, the offeror agrees not to discuss or otherwise reveal the contents of the proposal to any source outside of the using or issuing agency, government or private, until after the award of the contract. Offerors not in compliance with this provision may be disqualified, at the option of the Department, from contract award. Only discussions authorized by the issuing agency are exempt from this provision.
9. **Right to submitted material:** All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFP, and all other reports, charts, displays,

schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the offerors shall become the property of the Department upon submission.

10. **Offeror's representative:** Each offeror shall submit with its proposal the name, title, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the person with authority to bind the firm and answer questions or provide clarifications concerning the firm's proposal.
11. **Subcontracting:** Offerors are encouraged to include the use of subcontractors for portions of the work, provided that their proposals clearly indicate what work they plan to subcontract and to whom.
12. **Proprietary information:** Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the offeror does not wish disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation or contract administration will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL." Any section of the proposal which is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section. Cost information may not be deemed confidential. In spite of what is labeled as "CONFIDENTIAL," the determination as to whether or not it is shall be in accordance with the state's Freedom of Information law.
13. **Protest procedures:** When an offeror wishes to protest a contract awarded pursuant to this RFP, the complaint should be sent to:

Director
Office of State Procurement
DFA Building
1509 West 7th Street, Suite 300
Little Rock, AR 72201

XIX. Submission of Proposals:

It is the sole responsibility of the offeror to have the proposal in the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism by the specified time and date of closing. Proposals arriving after the deadline will not be accepted. Bids submitted via telegraph, facsimile (FAX) machines, telephone, and electronic means, including but not limited to e-mail, in response to the RFP will not be acceptable.

Indicate firm name on front of each sealed proposal envelope or package submitted in response to this RFP.

Proposals shall be submitted in one (1) original paper document, three (3) paper copies, and nine (9) electronic copies on USB in PDF format. The preferred method is PDF conversion from the Proposer's source files (to minimize file size and maximize quality and accessibility) rather than scanning so that the State can

open, print, read, and save the PDF file you have created. To ensure consistency, the electronic copy should be ONE file document and in the same order as the paper original. If this is not possible, the electronic copy files should be in the same order as the paper copy, with a directory listing of the files.

Please note the evaluation committee will use the electronic media copies to review your submittal. Failure to include all information in the electronic media copies may have an impact of your evaluation scores.

Sealed proposals must be received by **5:00 PM on Friday, January 6, 2017**, and should be addressed as follows:

Mr. Mark Steindl, Procurement Administrator
Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
1 Capitol Mall, Suite 4A-900
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

XX. Second Phase of the Selection Process:

Once the Department's nine-member review team has completed its evaluation of the RFPs, scores will be tallied based on the criteria shown in section XVII above. Depending upon the final standings, the three agencies with the highest composite scores will then be notified of their success and invited to participate in the second phase of the review process.

The second phase will consist of one-hour presentations from each of the selected agencies before the review team, followed by a 15-minute question and answer session. Each agency will be given an assigned room at Little Rock's Marriott Hotel/Statehouse Convention Center Complex one day in advance of its scheduled presentation to allow its team to make whatever arrangements are necessary and to rehearse – if desired.

These sessions have a two-fold objective: 1) to allow the review team to get better acquainted with the presenting agency, its key staff members, and the organization's areas of expertise; and 2) to give the advertising agency an opportunity to make its case before the review team. In particular, this time should be used by the agency to demonstrate to the review team its unique skills, qualifications, and plans to elevate Arkansas's tourism industry to an even greater role in the state's economy by enhancing the Arkansas image, generating additional travelers, creating more jobs, and increasing tax collections.

The review team will move from room to room to observe the agency presentations in an order to be determined at the January 20, 2017 meeting with all finalists. Although all presentations are open to the media and the public (and good crowds could very well be expected), it is strongly suggested that – in a display of professional courtesy – the competing agencies agree to refrain from observing

presentations of the other finalists. While such an arrangement cannot be enforced, this would seem to be a fair and ethical approach for all concerned.

Following each agency's presentation, the review team will independently score the agency, using an evaluation similar to that when the RFPs were examined. The categories and the assigned point totals are as shown:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Maximum Points</u>
Familiarity with the Arkansas tourism product and industry	25
Demonstrated expertise in integrated, multi-media planning	25
Strong background in creative execution	25
Clearly stated direction for advancing the state's tourism industry	25
Well-reasoned plan for enhancing and extending Arkansas's message	25
Experience hosting a major tourism website	25
Experience representing a major destination marketing organization	20
Qualified and experienced staff	20
Obvious enthusiasm for broadening Arkansas's brand recognition	20
Experience converting research findings to brand building	20
Established competence in social media	20
Proposed public relations program	20
Experience with a state government's tourism account	10
Experience promoting a state park account	10
Pricing of services	10
<i>Total possible points</i>	<i>300</i>

Once the scores are tabulated, the review team will forward its recommendation to the Executive Director of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism for an agency of record beginning on July 1, 2017.