Request For Proposals #: 26-6179

Tourism Representation Services for Canada

Questions and Answers

Question: **Physical Office Location (London vs. Toronto):** Section 2.4 (Mandatory Qualification Requirements, Item 6, Page 6) states the vendor must have a *"Physical presence in London and access to other major tourism producing centers."* Could NYSDED clarify if this refers to **London, Ontario**, if it is a typo intended to read **Toronto, Ontario** or if any major Canadian commercial hub is acceptable?
Answer: **This is a typo. The vendor must have physical presence in Canada.**

Question: **Sections 4.4(c), 4.9 and 4.10** refer to the UK Transfer of Undertakings regulations and to "European country" laws and taxes. Will the executed contract replace these with Canada-specific language?
Answer: **Yes**

Question: **Section 2.3** requires monthly financial reports and invoices; Section 4.3(a) requires quarterly invoicing. Which cadence will apply?
Answer: **Monthly invoices with all supporting documents as well as activity reports will be expected. Sample documents will be provided to the winning bidder.**

Question: **Request for Proposal Response Form:** On page 2 of the RFP where there is a form to be completed to submit with a proposal, there are questions about the address of the Organization as well as a prompt, "Will this product or service be substantially produced in NYS" - is NYS an oversight, should this refer to Canada?
Answer: **This is not a typo.**

Question: **Trade Show Booth & Registration Fees:** Does the $250,000 annual budget cap include hard costs associated with trade show booth space rentals and registration fees, or are event space fees contracted and paid directly by NYSDED, leaving only vendor staff travel expenses to be included in Appendix B?
Answer: **All costs associated with tradeshows and promotional events will be paid from the $250,000.00 annual budget.**

Question: **Staff Travel Expenses:** Appendix H outlines Contractor Travel Reimbursement Guidelines. Are staff travel and lodging expenses for attending mandatory trade shows, sales missions, and FAM trips reimbursed separately per state rates, or must all travel expenses be fully absorbed within the $250,000 annual budget limit under "Administrative/Other Expenses"?
Answer: **All staff travel costs associated with tradeshows, promotional events, sales missions, FAM trips, and other travel deemed necessary to the contract will be paid from the $250,000.00 annual budget. All travel must follow the New York State Dept. of Economic Development travel rules and regulations.**

Question: **Discretionary Activation Fund:** Section 2.2 references an additional $50,000 discretionary budget fund maintained by the Division for tourism activations and campaigns. Should this $50,000 be itemized within Appendix B, or will it be allocated separately on a campaign-by-campaign basis at NYSDED's discretion?
Answer: ***Do not add this to Appendix B. This will be allocated separately.***

Question: **Geographic Scope Expansion:** Section 2.1 (Page 4) notes that the DED Division of Tourism *"may extend Scope of Services to additional geographic markets, upon consultation with vendor."* If expanded beyond Canada during the 5-year contract term, will additional funding/budget be allocated, or would services be re-negotiated under a separate task order?
Answer: **In the unlikely event that this were to occur, the funding and feasibility would be discussed and agreed to by both parties on a case-by-case basis.**

Question: **Partner Alignment & Consortia:** What can NYSDED share about existing tour operator, consortia, and other travel organization (e.g. CATO, OMCA) relationships?
Answer: **New York State strives to keep a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with all Canadian tourism trade and media, as well as Canadian travel associations and organizations. While we currently have a stronger presence in Eastern Canada, our goal is to maintain string working relationships with all provinces.**

Question: **Canadian Market Data & Visitor Demographics:** What specific impact to Canadian visitation has NYSDED experienced in the last two years? What else can NYSDED share about typical Canadian visitation (points of origin, traveler demos, etc.)?
Answer: **It is expected that bidders will perform some market and consumer analysis on which they will base their proposal.**

Question: **Competitive Landscape & Regional Partnerships:** Who are NYS' direct competitors? Would they consider partnering with neighboring/other border states to address new Canadian traveler challenges?
[I am guessing Michigan might be a competitor, but the drop in visitation to border states has been so extreme, it requires a unified approach - like "Visit the Great Lakes." Plus, Canadians think less about states and more multi-week, multi-stop.]
Answer: **NYS is a current member of the Great Lakes USA organization, and is open to collaboration with neighbouring destinations on appropriate, mutually beneficial initiatives.**

Question: **Accountability & Evaluation Metrics:** What metrics does NYSDED currently use to track and report out on this work?
Answer: **Some examples are below, but we encourage bidders to suggest additional metrics and methods:**
Tour operators that carry NYS product, both existing and new, with and without NYC
NYS tour product being offered, both existing and new, both with and without NYC
Amount of earned media as a direct result of firm/NYS activity
All paid campaign data, including room nights booked
Number of sales call, media pitches, etc. made

Scope, market and current program

Question: Is there an incumbent contractor for Canada? If so, for how long, and what were the principal activities and budget in the current fiscal year?

Answer: **The current Canadian vendor is Reach Global Marketing. The current contract is four years ending January 31, 2027. Principal activities are similar to what ESD is asking for in this current RFP.**

Question: Are French-language materials, media relations and trade activity in Québec within the expected scope, and is bilingual staffing required?

Answer: **French-language materials will be expected to be produced when legally necessary and/or logically effective, and NYS retains a firm to assist with translation. Bilingual staff is not required.**

Question: Who currently provides NYC Tourism + Conventions' Canada representation, and what form of coordination does the Division expect under Section 2.1(v)?

Answer: **Reach Global Marketing currently provides Canadian representation for NYC Tourism + Conventions. Maintaining a positive working relationship includes but is not limited to regular communication on activities in market, collaboration on activities when it is mutually beneficials, and consideration of joint marketing and promotions when possible and approved by the NYS program director.**

Question: Who are the Division's statewide advertising agency and public relations firm with whom the media and trade database is to be shared?

Answer: **The winning bidder may be asked to share consumer media data with:**
Campbell Ewald, NY, NY
MMGY Global, NY,NY

Question: Is consumer paid advertising (Section 2.1(iii)) expected to be funded from the US$250,000, or will the Division fund media buys separately?

Answer: **Generally, consumer media will be paid through our domestic media firms and not impact the $250,000.00 annual budget. If a rare exception occurs and any paid advertising needs to be done through the contractor, budget and amount will be discussed and agreed up prior to execution.**

Question: Appendix I references an I LOVE NY Canadian Marketing Committee and a Canadian Road Show. Do these exist today, and are they expected to continue?

Answer: **The Canada Marketing Committee is manged by the NYS Division of Tourism staff and activates at least once a year. A Canadian Roadshow, or sales mission, is expected to take place at least once every two years.**

Question: How many trade and media familiarization tours per year does the Division anticipate; do the Division or regional partners host in-state costs; and is contractor travel to in-state industry events (for example, the annual tourism summit) reimbursable?

Answer: **NYS currently host approximately three FAM tours per year, rotating between trade and media. In-state costs are paid for by NYS and NYS tourism partners. The Canadian contractor will be responsible for travel by FAM attendees and staff to NYS and return travel to Canada. There may be additional independent FAM tours or reverse missions, costs for which will generally follow the same routing. In the unusual event that funding deviates from this process, all billing would be reviewed and agreed to prior to execution.**

Staffing, conflicts and contract

Question: How does the Department define a "competing US destination" under Section 2.1? Would representation of a US city or state outside the Northeast require prior approval?

Answer: **While in general I LOVE NY does not oppose representation of other destinations outside the state, any current or future business with an American DMO would expect to be disclosed and discussed with NYSDED. A competing destination would be one which draws a substantial number of visitors who might instead choose to travel to New York State and where the contractor would have to choose which client to prioritize.**

Question: May staff assigned to this account also serve other non-competing clients, provided their hours are itemized in Appendix B?

Answer: **NYSDED would need to determine with the contractor what safeguards might be needed to avoid any conflicts of interest between represented clients. This might include different staff being assigned to the NYS account, but such a requirement is not a hard and fast rule.**

Question: Is the five-year term a single contract, or an initial term with annual renewals at the Department's option?

Answer: **This is a five- year contract with no option to renew**.

Question: Must the Contractor Account under Section 4.3(e) be held at a Canadian bank, or may it be held at a US bank with offices in Canada?

Answer: **The Contractor Account can be held by either a Canadian bank or a US bank with offices in Canada.**

Question: Will a Canadian-registered affiliate of a US or European company be acceptable as the contracting entity, and does the Department have a preference?

Answer: **As long as the affiliate has a physical office in Canada and can demonstrate strong Canadian trade and media relationships, NYSDED does not have a preference.**

Question: **Scope of Work:** Can you share a list of priority trade shows NYS attends in Canada?

Answer: **It is expected that bidders will suggest tradeshow and market activity and memberships as part of their strategic proposal.**

Question: **Scope of Work:** Can you share a typical number of sales missions and fam tours hosted by NYS?

Answer: **Typically we will hold anywhere from 3-6 FAM tours a year, covering group trade, group media, individual media, agent training FAMS, and reverse sales missions.**

Question: **Consumer Marketing:** Can you expand on the agency's role for the creation and buying of advertisements in the Canadian market?

Answer: **It is expected that bidders will create a trade media plan as part of their strategic proposal. Consumer trade spend will be mostly covered by our domestic PR company and therefore will minimally impact the Canadian contractor budget, but we would still like to understand your capabilities here. The NYS Division of Tourism has a media and graphics team to assist with ads and campaigns, all other associated costs will be part of the $250,000.00 annual budget.**

Question: **Contract commencement and transition period:** The RFP identifies an estimated contract start date of February 1, 2027, while also stating that the Division of Tourism's fiscal year and annual renewal period begin on April 1, 2027. Could you please clarify how marketing initiatives, partnerships or other programs implemented by the incumbent contractor that extend into the period from February 1 through March 31, 2027 would be managed by incoming vendor.
Answer: **The Feb 1 - March 31 budget will be a prorated percentage (approx. 17%) of the annual budget. The program director will work strategically with the incumbent vendor to create a soft pause on activities to prepare for a possible transition, implementing Jan 31 deadlines on existing campaigns and projects.**

Question: **Contract commencement and transition period:** We assume the Department would expect a formal handover or transition process involving the outgoing contractor, with incoming vendor assuming responsibility for relevant programs during this two-month period? We would also appreciate clarification on how associated work and expenses should be reflected in the proposal and budget for this period.
Answer: **The Feb 1 - March 31 budget will be a prorated percentage (approx. 17%) of the annual budget, and this will be used in part to perform onboarding and other transition handoffs and trainings. The program director will work strategically with the incumbent vendor to create a soft pause on activities to prepare for a possible transition, implementing Jan 31 deadlines on existing campaigns and projects.**

Question: **Canadian social media management and advertising:** The introductory section of the RFP identifies social media as one of the ways I LOVE NY markets New York State. Could you please clarify whether the Canadian market representative is expected to: **The Canadian representation company will not create or manage any specific NYS social media channels.**

Manage or contribute to Canada-specific organic social media content;
Answer: **Winning firm may be asked to advise on the NYS domestic media team's Canadian focused social content and/or promotions.**

Manage Canadian-market paid social media campaigns and advertising expenditure;
Answer: **Winning firm may be asked to advise on the NYS domestic media team's Canadian focused social content and/or promotions. They will not be asked to financially contribute to paid campaigns.**

Coordinate Canadian social media activity with the Department's headquarters
Answer: **Winning firm may be asked to advise on the NYS domestic media team's Canadian focused social content and/or promotions.**

and/or appointed advertising agency;
Answer: **Winning firm may be asked to advise on the NYS domestic media team's Canadian focused social content and/or promotions.**

or Provide recommendations and market input only, with social media execution remaining with the Department or its agency?
Answer: **Yes**

Question: Vendor has the personnel and expertise to manage Canadian social media content, campaigns and associated paid media activity. However, as this responsibility does not appear to be clearly defined within the scope, we would appreciate confirmation as to whether it should be included in our proposed budget and work plan.
Answer: **Winning firm may be asked to advise on the NYS domestic media team's Canadian focused social content and/or promotions, but will not be responsible for creating or managing NYS social channels in the Canadian market.**

Question: **Additional US$50,000 fund:** How would the potential additional US$50,000 fund be accessed and administered? For example:

Would it be available to the successful contractor in addition to the US$250,000 annual contract ceiling?
Answer: **The availability and allocation of these funds will be determined by the NYS Division of Tourism program director on a project basis and will not impact the annual $250,000.00 budget.**

Would it be allocated only for specific activations or campaigns approved by the Department?
Answer: **Yes**

Should bidders include proposed uses for this fund in Appendix B, or exclude it from the financial proposal?
Answer: **No**

Would contractor fees or management costs associated with those initiatives be eligible?
Answer: **Yes, but those costs will be paid through the $250,000.00 annual budget.**

Question: **FAM tours and hosted activity:** Will the Department provide funding or support for hosted media and tour operator familiarization trips, or must all such costs be accommodated within the contractor's US$250,000 annual budget?
Answer: **The Canadian contractor will be responsible for FAM attendees and staff travel to NYS and return travel to Canada. There may be additional independent FAM tours or reverse missions, and costs for which will generally follow the same routing. In the unusual event that funding deviated from this process, all billing would be reviewed and agreed to prior to execution.**

Question: **FAM tours and hosted activity:** We assume the 11 regional partners would work with their suppliers to support and assist with some FAM cost (s). How supportive are New York State hotel partners, suppliers with hosting?
Answer: **All in-state costs are generally covered through a separate NYS Division of Tourism budget as well as through NYS tourism partner support. Any deviation from this practice will be discussed and agreed to prior to execution.**

Budget, cost scoring and Payment
Question: Is there an expected or minimum share of the US$250,000 annual budget to be spent on direct marketing activity versus personnel and administration?
Answer: **No. there is no expected or minimum share of the annual budget to be spent in different categories/subcategories of the budget.**

Question: Is the US$50,000 discretionary fund (Section 2.2) in addition to the US$250,000, and would the contractor execute it under the same reimbursement terms?
Answer: **It is in addition, and will run through a separate budget and payment process.**

Question: Please describe the weighted-average formula used for the 20-point cost score, and whether it scores total five-year cost, annual cost, or the marketing share of the budget.
Answer: Cost score = total cost points available * [1- (difference between bid being evaluated and the lowest bid)/ highest bid]

Question: Will Appendix B Year 1 cover the period from February 1, 2027 to March 31, 2027 only, or a full twelve months? How should Years 2–5 align to the April–March fiscal year?

Answer: Year 1 budget is: February 1, 2027 – March 31, 2028
Year 2 budget is: February 1, 2028 – March 31, 2029
Year 3 budget is: February 1, 2029 – March 31, 2030
Year 4 budget is: February 1, 2030 – March 31, 2031
Year 5 budget is: February 1, 2031 – March 31, 2032

Question: Given payment in arrears and the requirement to fund expenses in advance of reimbursement, would the Department consider a quarterly advance or monthly invoicing for direct marketing costs?
Answer: **Generally, media campaign expenses can be reimbursed in progress: 50% at activation, 50% at conclusion of campaign deliverables. All other expenses must be incurred and all deliverables realized prior to billing. Invoices are expected on a monthly basis, and no advance payments will be made.**

Question: Expenses will be incurred in Canadian dollars. What exchange-rate basis will be used for reimbursement in US dollars, and are exchange losses reimbursable?
Answer: **Payments to subcontractors or vendors will be subject to the exchange rate prevailing on the exact date of payment issued by the contractor. The contractor will bear the cost of the conversion rate.**

Question: Which trade shows does the Department intend to exhibit at directly (booth fees contracted by the Department), so that bidders include only attendance and travel costs in Appendix B?
Answer: **All bidders are expected to create a strategic tradeshow and event plan as part of a successful bid. There are occasions that we may ask that you partner with NYS organizations, associations, or partners to share costs, but a successful bid should assume all costs for proposed activities.**

Question: Is the contractor expected to pay the Visit USA Committee Canada membership, and is it a reimbursable cost?
Answer: **Yes as part of the $250,000 annual budget.**