



Request for Proposals:
STONE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
ADVERTISING AGENCY SERVICES

Tourism Industry Recovery, III

Proposals are due on or before November 29, 2024, by 5 pm CT.

OBJECTIVE

This RFP has been issued to seek qualified firms who have a working knowledge of the tourism industry that can demonstrate the necessary experience along with a marketing and advertising plan to reach all types of travelers. While it is the Stone County Economic Development Partnership's (SCEDP's) intent to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work, SCEDP may terminate the negotiations if the firm is unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on all matters including the scope of work and cost.

SCEDP intends to contract with a qualified agency to support its continued recovery efforts, stemming from the negative economic impacts of Covid-19. The contract will be funded through federal ARPA dollars for Mississippi Tourism Recovery, III. As such, preference will be given to companies with offices in Mississippi or who employ Mississippi residents.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

SCEDP wishes to employ an outside agency to develop and execute an integrated marketing, advertising and PR strategy including digital marketing, social media strategies, traditional print, broadcast media and other recommended components to maximize the current brand and campaign: Explore Stone County, Mississippi: Hidden Gems Await.

The agency should recommend an overall media creation and placement strategy to clearly position Stone County to visitors as an affordable and appealing destination for those who enjoy traveling, specifically in its top drive markets.

The selected agency's responsibilities will include:

- Update and print destination guides, brochures, sales kits, itineraries, and other relevant Explore Stone County marketing materials.
- Create a portfolio and use new marketing assets, including photos, graphics, videos, and testimonials, for marketing purposes. The rights to all original assets are to be owned by SCEDP.
- Develop targeted campaigns for specific visitor segments based on their behaviors and travel trends, such as road trips, girlfriend getaways, pet-friendly travel, and more.
- Create printed direct mailing pieces as needed.
- Update and/or add in-market signage/kiosks at main attractions and hotels.
- Create and place billboard ads in key visitor markets.
- Provide monthly reporting and metrics to the Executive Director to demonstrate the ROI for the campaigns and to ensure KPI's are met.

ABOUT STONE COUNTY

Stone County's tourism initiatives through the Stone County Economic Development Partnership (SCEDP) are partially funded by a 2% tax on gross proceeds of sales derived from restaurants and lodging. The new tourism campaign is supported in part with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds which are focused on driving visitation from outside of

Mississippi and were allocated through the State Legislature as a result of initiatives of the Mississippi Tourism Association.

TARGET AUDIENCE DETAILS

General target audiences include segments such as: foodies, travel enthusiasts, cultural and heritage travelers, and sports and outdoor recreation enthusiasts geographically concentrated within approximately 300-mile radius.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Funding for this proposal will be at a minimum of \$169,000. The budget is based on creative production, strategy execution, media planning and placement (both online and offline), media placement fees, account management fees, and out-of-pocket expenses. This budget will be implemented in phases over a one-year period. SCEDP reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.

BILLING

SCEDP limits invoices to one invoice per month. Each invoice should include the month(s) for which payment is due as well as details of work completed at the mutually agreed upon rate(s) or amount in the executed contract.

NOTICE TO INTENT TO BID

The Notice of Intent to Bid is non-binding; however, it ensures the receipt of all addenda related to this RFP. Proposals will be accepted only from applicants who submitted a timely Notice of Intent to Bid. Notice of Intent to Bid must be emailed by the deadline below with the subject line "Intent to Bid: Advertising Agency and Production Services" to layla@stonecounty.com.

OFFICIAL CONTACT

SCEDP requests that firms designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal. Please identify this point of contact on the Notice of Intent to Bid Form.

Destination Website: www.explorestonecounty.com

TIMELINE

- November 8, 2024- RFP available to agencies.
- November 13, 2024- Final day to submit questions regarding this RFP.
- November 15, 2024-Questions answered.
- November 18, 2024-Notice of Intent to Bid due by 5:00 pm CT.
- November 29, 2024- Proposals due by 5:00 pm CT.
- December 2-3, 2024- Proposals evaluated by the RFP committee.
- December 12-13, 2024 – Consideration of agencies (interviews if needed)
- December 16, 2024 - Agency selected
- After January 1, 2025 - Work begins for a limited duration decided in contract negotiations.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Your response to this RFP must be submitted in the following format and labeled accordingly:

- A. Statement of Qualifications- Provide a written statement of your firm's qualifications for providing the work as described in the Scope of Work.

- B. Tourism Experience-Provide a written statement of your involvement in the tourism industry, specifically with DMO clients, industry memberships and resources.
- C. Organization Management
 - a. Name, address and telephone number of the entity that will be contracted with and all trade names to be used.
 - b. Name, address and telephone numbers of the organization's principal officer.
- D. Organization's Structure and Experience
 - a. Organizational chart of company, including any subcontractors who will work with SCEDP.
 - b. Total number of employees including full-time, part-time and contract workers.
 - c. Short history of the company, especially as it relates to work in the tourism sector.
 - d. Summary of employees who will work on the account including their name, title, a short summary of their qualifications and their main role in working with Stone County.
 - c. Hours of operation that staff will be available and any satellite offices.
 - d. Experience as it relates to messaging, ad design, and placement strategy. No more than **three** relevant case studies should be provided, including project goals with measurable KPIs and results. Creative work should be included for each case study.
- E. Client Information
 - a. Current client in declining order of size
 - b. Name your two most recent past clients and reason for termination.
 - c. Name any travel/tourism clients and their current status.
- F. Account Gain and Loss
 - a. Indicate if the agency has had a contract terminated for non-performance over the last five years with either litigation determining the agency at fault or no litigation due to inaction on part of the organization.
 - b. List of accounts made over the last two years and why your organization was awarded the work.
 - c. Three references are current accounts with contact names, email, and phone numbers.
- G. Proposed Marketing Plan and Budget
 - a. Provide a proposed marketing plan and a \$169,000 budget for SCEDP's use of these funds. The plan should be aimed at driving **out-of-state visitation** from a 300-mile radius of Stone County.
 - b. Outline your agency's proposed recommended breakdown of the allocated funds with a narrative description of each category of spending. The budget should cover a part of FY 25 Jan. 1, 2025, through Sept. 30, 2025, and FY26 Oct. 1, 2025, through Sept. 30, 2026.

DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS

Please submit your responses in hard copy and electronic format. Electronic submittals must be marked "Request for Proposals: Advertising Agency Services Limited Duration/COVID-19 Recovery" in the subject line and delivered via email in PDF format by 5 pm CT on Friday, November 29, 2024, to layla@stonecounty.com.

In addition to electronic format, please submit five (5) hard copy proposals in a sealed envelope addressed to:

SCEDP
 Attn: Layla Essary, Director
 P.O. Box 569
 115 Hatten Avenue East
 Wiggins, MS 39577

Submittals received in any manner not specifically set forth above shall not be accepted or considered.

Submittals received after the deadline will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the submittal is received by the specified deadline. The delivery date and time will be recorded upon receipt. SCEDP will not be responsible for late or incomplete responses due to mistakes or delays of the respondent or carrier used by the respondent or weather delays.

QUESTIONS

Note that all answers regarding questions and requests for clarification for this RFQ will be responded to publicly consistent with the published schedule to ensure that all respondents have the same information. Email Layla Essary, Director, with any questions by November 13, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. CST at layla@stonecounty.com. All questions will be answered publicly on November 15, 2024. No calls, please.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

1. Submittals in response to this request and respondents' participation in the process shall be at no cost or obligation to SCEDP. SCEDP reserves the right to, at any time, abandon or terminate its efforts to contract for any or all said services without any obligation to any respondent.
2. Responses to this request and other materials submitted shall become the property of SCEDP and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any SCEDP personnel or staff after this request has been advertised except to ask questions as specified below under "Respondent Questions." Such contact will be considered the cause for disqualification.
4. SCEDP may waive any informalities, minor defects, or reject all submittals.
5. SCEDP reserves the right to reject any submittal if the evidence submitted by, or investigation of, such respondent demonstrates that such respondent or its subcontractors, in SCEDP'S opinion, is not properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the Contract or to complete the Work contemplated therein.
6. All applicable laws, ordinances, and the rules and regulations of all governmental authorities having jurisdiction shall apply to the Contract throughout.
7. This Contract is being funded through a grant provided to SCEDP by the State of Mississippi as part of its ARPA State and Local Fiscal Relief Fund (SLFRF) allocation received from the U.S. Treasury Department. The SLFRF program places numerous obligations on recipients and subrecipients which flow down to successful respondent. Each respondent is cautioned to carefully review the *Supplemental Terms and Conditions* which are included at the end of this document to ensure that all responsibilities and obligations are properly addressed.
8. By executing a signature on the submittal, respondent certifies that:
 - a. Neither the respondent, nor any of its team members, is currently debarred from submitting proposals or entering contracts issued by any political subdivision or agency of the State of Mississippi or the Federal Government.
 - b. No Federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the respondent, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.
 - c. If any funds other than Federally appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, respondent shall complete and submit Standard Form LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," in accordance with its instructions.

SMALL, MINORITY AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

In compliance with federal and state statutes, SCEDP encourages small, minority and women-owned businesses to respond to this RFP. As such, this RFP will also be placed on MS PTAP at the time of publication to ensure equal opportunity for all to respond.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

SCEDP will establish a committee to evaluate and rate all proposals based on the criteria prescribed. At SCEDP'S discretion, finalists may be invited to an interview meeting via Zoom or in person.

Selection Process Step 1:

Proposals meeting all requirements of the RFP will be evaluated by a review committee and ranked based on the following selection criteria. Top agencies will be chosen for Step 2.

- Tourism industry experience & qualifications to execute marketing plan [20%]
- Marketing plan, scope of work and budget [55%]
- References from past clients [10%]
- Evaluation of prior work [15%]

Selection Process Step 2:

Top agencies may be invited to present, in person or via video conference, their suggested framework to the RFP review committee. Presentations will be ranked by the following criteria:

- Agency's expertise in diverse but cohesive strategies for driving demand [60%]
- Ability to illustrate return on investment for suggested strategies [25%]
- Suggestions to address current and forecasted traveler sentiment [15%]

Selection Process Step 3:

A contract will be awarded to the organization whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to SCEDP, taking into consideration the criteria set forth in this RFP. Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, Stone County will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected.

SCEDP'S evaluations of proposals are confidential and as such, SCEDP'S is unable to respond to any questions and/or requests for information as to why a company was not selected.

After awarding the contract, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between SCEDP and the selected agency to better define, elaborate upon, and update the agency's final Scope of Work and general Terms and Conditions. For the selected agency, an employee will be designated as your contact and will coordinate any materials needed or questions answered with all other Stone County employees.