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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

2018 International Trade & Consumer Marketing Campaign

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Introduction

Explorers' Edge (RTO12) is the regional tourism organization for Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport. With some of Canada's most iconic natural landscapes within its borders, including those that inspired the Group of Seven painters, and recognized as one of the most popular travel destinations in the province, RTO12 promotes travel to the great Canadian wilderness just north of Toronto in all four spectacular seasons.

RTO12 is a not-for-profit agency that is governed by a volunteer board of directors. The mandate for RTO12 includes: providing industry leadership and strategic planning; providing strong, collaborative partnerships and packages; marketing; and developing workforce and skills training.

RTO12 www.rto12.ca is the administrative name for the region that is known in the consumer marketplace as Explorers' Edge www.explorersedge.ca.

For more information on Ontario's 13 Regional Tourism Organizations, visit <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/regions/regions.shtml>.

The RFP Process

1. The RFP will be posted online and potential bidders will be e-mailed a copy of the RFP.
2. Upon receiving the document and reading its content, potential bidders are requested to send an email to james@explorersedge.ca to acknowledge their intent to provide information about their proposal. This step will guarantee that the bidder name is entered in the bidder list.
3. The bidders prepare their formal response and send their document in an electronic format to Explorers' Edge by the specified RFP close date.

Project Timetable

Request for Proposal Issued: Wednesday November 29, 2017

RFP Due: Friday December 7, 2017 @ 4.00pm

Proposal Submission Guidelines

Restrictions on Communications with Staff

If you wish to seek clarification on any of the information presented here, please contact James Murphy, Executive Director, by email to james@explorersedge.ca until the due date.

Information Submission Format

All responses to the questions in this document must be submitted in a Microsoft Word compatible format.

Submit Information to:

- Explorers' Edge
- 3-1 Taylor Road Bracebridge, ON
- Bracebridge, Ontario P1L 1S6
- Attention: James Murphy, Executive Director

Number of Copies Required / Format of Copies

- Word document - Electronic copy by e-mail

Confidentiality

During the RFP process, the bidder may obtain confidential information in regards to Explorers' Edge businesses and / or its members and employees. The Bidder agrees to keep such information strictly confidential at all times. The bidder may disclose confidential information only when necessary for the submission of a response to the RFP. This does not apply to information known and available to the public.

The Bidder acknowledges that Explorers' Edge will receive many responses to the RFP that might contain information considered confidential by the bidder. The bidder will allow Explorers' Edge to use such information for the purpose of the RFP process.

All information and the responses provided to Explorers' Edge about the RFP will become property of Explorers' Edge and will not be returned to the Bidder.

Executive Summary:

Following our successful 2017 international marketing campaign entitled “Share Your Canada,” in February 2018, RTO12 will launch a substantial new social content campaign that will once again target international travelers in the United States and the United Kingdom and promote visitation to northern Ontario for the late spring (June) and summer (July, August) vacation seasons.

To strengthen our marketing output to these markets, starting in January 2018 and through February 2018, we will first refine the ‘10 Explorers’ Edge Itineraries’ that were outcomes of the “Itinerary & Package Development for International Markets” created in 2017 by Twenty31 Consultants (based on Destination Canada’s EQ Segments), and we will, working with regional tourism businesses, develop final package recommendations (showcasing tourism businesses/partnerships) that align with these refined itineraries.

In addition to promoting these final itineraries and packages directly to consumers, we will also ensure they meet the criteria of international tour promoters who sell trips to Canada, and whom we will also commence targeting to have them insert our product into their programs in order to attract even more international visitors to northern Ontario.

The **2018 International Trade & Consumer Marketing Campaign** is also integral to ensuring that, should commercial air service be successfully introduced at the Muskoka Airport in 2018, RTO12 will have an ongoing, extremely robust international marketing program to leverage in order to promote that service to international travelers.

The Opportunity:

Reporting to the RTO12 Senior Director of Communications & Strategy and working as part of a greater marketing team the consultant role will act as a quarterback for the optimal development and execution of the international trade and consumer marketing campaign.

The measurable economic benefits of the project include:

- Increase in long-haul visitors to the Explorers’ Edge region
- Increase in extended stays in the Explorers’ Edge region
- Increase in room night occupancy in the Explorers’ Edge region

Other measurable benefits that relate to the project include:

- International Tour Operator Engagement
- Number of international tour operators that embrace regional packages and include them in communication / sales
- International consumer list creation for further and ongoing lead nurturing activities

- Building of interest in the region, in Ontario, and in Canada as a preferred and branded destination in 2018
- The refinement of specific region-wide itineraries and packages

Objective

The purpose of this RFP is to have the successful proponent show how they would develop and implement the following components:

- 1) The refinement of the 10 Explorers' Edge itineraries **(January 2018)**
- 2) The creation of packages featuring multiple tourism business offerings that align with the recommended itineraries (includes outreach to and training of tourism business stakeholders). **(January 2018 – February 2018)**
- 3) Research into tour promoters in the United States and the United Kingdom who will promote our product offering (i.e. itineraries and packages). **(January 2018 – February 2018)**
- 4) Research into recommended 'last mile' infrastructure and services development to ensure consumer purchase and redemption of recommended itinerary and package options meet expectations (e.g. signage at airport, car rental availability, ease of purchase, etc.) **(January 2018 – March 2018)**
- 5) Communications Plan development and outreach to international tour operators to pitch the itineraries and packages. **(February 2018)**
- 6) Marketing of tourism businesses via the social, mobile, content campaign by featuring the itineraries and packages. **(February/March 2018)**

The expected deliverable from this RFP will be a proposal for how to bring the multiple components of the plan together for execution.

The proposal, at a minimum, will break out the costs across the following:

- Research
- Industry Outreach
- Consulting Remuneration
- In Market Campaign Spend
- Final Report Development
- Travel

Your proposal will form an integral part of the contract and will be considered the Scope of Work for the Initial Term.

Corporate Information:

Please provide a synopsis of your qualifications, including a detailed summary of previous successful planning and training for comparable clients. Also include:

- A description of the respondent's company, including location(s), business operations, financial security, and corporate history
- A standard contract proposal

Note: Proponents shall identify, within their submission, all excluded items.

Assumptions: The entire project will be fully completed no later than May 30, 2018

Selection Process

The following aspects of your proposal will be used to evaluate the proposals:

1. Demonstrated experience in developing, managing and implementing a successful multi-faceted Marketing Plan with measurable results using digital, social and content components.
2. Demonstrated successes in package development
3. Demonstrated successes in tourism operator outreach
4. Demonstrated successes in international tour operator facilitation
5. Demonstrated strong corporate history and presence, financial standing, and capacity to perform;
6. Implementation approach and methodology, including project timing, scheduling, staff training, and transition from the existing application;
7. Cost competitiveness;
8. References (minimum of three).

As part of the selection process, respondents may be asked to present their proposal to an Explorers' Edge staff representative.

Proponent Qualifications

Proponents considered for this project must be able to demonstrate the following credentials/expertise:

1. Proven results in creating and executing successful branded content strategies and successful contests
2. Experience in international tour operator facilitation
3. Clear understanding of the RTO model in Ontario, the business objectives of RTO12 in particular and the ability to differentiate RTO12 in the marketing place by increasing consumer visits significantly
4. Excellence and experience in project management
5. Experienced, professional in-house project team (including Project Manager) to meet all project deadlines
6. Proven ability to provide regional outreach
7. Proven use of current technologies, standards, and best practices

Evaluation Criteria

A total of 100 points will be allocated to each proposal, as follows:

Category	Available Points
Technical	
Qualifications and Experience of Company	10
Qualifications and Relevant Experience of Project Team	20
Understanding of Objectives	10
Quality of Approach and Methodology	20
Proposed Work Plan and Schedule	20
Sub Total	80
Financial	
Fees and Disbursements (including sub-consultants)	20
Total	100

Financial points will only be awarded to submissions that have achieved a minimum score of 60 out of 80 points on the technical evaluation criteria. Proposals that do not meet this minimum score will be deemed non-compliant and will be given no further consideration.

Bidder Certification

(Bidder must sign and return.)

I certify that this information is complete and correct to the best of my understanding and that I am authorized to submit this information on behalf of the company.

Authorized

Signature_____Date_____

Title_____

Print/Type

Name_____

Print/Type Company Name

Here_____ 10

Proposal Preparation and Format

The Bidder must ensure that the proposal meets the following mandatory requirements.

- An intent to Bid email is received by email before the “Closing Date and Time” as outlined in the RFP Timelines
- A complete bid is received by email “before the “Closing Date and Time” as outlined in RFP Process and Timeline
- Includes a cover letter including Bidder’s name, address, telephone, e-mail address and primary contact person with a note of date and time of submission. The letter should be submitted by a person authorized to sign on behalf of and to bid the Bidder to its Proposal and the terms of the RFP.
- Includes a statement that the Project Conditions outlined in the RFP have been reviewed and understood.

Pricing

Bidders must provide a detailed/line-itemed breakdown and summary of costs to provide the proposed services with total price shown. Prices must be quoted in Canadian dollars, including freight and delivery charges, and taxes.

Notes: Be advised that taxes are considered within the project budget. Prices must remain valid for at least 120 days. Bidders are required to provide their payment terms as part of their proposal.

Bidder Qualifications and References

Bidders shall provide the following information:

- Company profile outlining history, capabilities, qualifications, and experience as well as other information you deem relevant
- Summary of prior experience (within last 3 years) in providing the goods or services similar to those described in this RFP.
- Identification of all key personnel, including sub-contractors, who will be assigned to this project. Please include their relevant experience and qualifications and their roles and responsibilities in the project, as well as their level of efforts
- References including names, position, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for which the Bidder has performed similar work. These references might be contacted during the proposal evaluation phase to determine their satisfaction with the work carried out.

Cost of Proposal Submissions

- The Bidder is responsible for all and any costs associated with the preparation and submission of the Proposal. Explorers’ Edge will not be liable to pay any such costs or reimburse the Bidders in the event Explorers’ Edge decides to reject all Proposals.

Information Indicative Only

- The information that is provided in this RFP is indicative only. Through the review of the proposals and subsequent finalization of an agreement with the successful Bidder Explorers' Edge reserves the right to request further information or clarification of information. Explorers' Edge reserves the right to request new or additional information regarding a Bidder and any individuals or other persons associated with a response.

Confidentiality

- If the Bidder does not want the documents that are submitted in response to this RFP to be made available to the public, the Bidder must indicate that the documents are submitted in confidence. The documents contain trade secrets, technical, commercial, financial or labor relations information that disclosure of the documents could reasonably be expected to result in harm, as specified in Section 10 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act. While Explorers' Edge will endeavor to maintain the confidentiality of all such information, the Bidder must realize that such information may well become public or be disclosed.

Other Considerations

- Explorers' Edge in its sole and absolute discretion, may discuss or negotiate with any Bidder, the terms and conditions of its response without any obligation to other Bidders and without giving rise to any rights of other Bidders to amend or negotiate their response.
- Explorers' Edge shall not have any obligation to notify any of the Bidders of discussions or negotiations with any other Bidder, to invite amended responses from any other Bidders, to disseminate other information disclosed to any one Bidder, or to approve a further submission made as a result of such information.
- Conflict of Interest.
 - The bidder must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest including situations or circumstances that could give a bidder an unfair advantage during a procurement process or compromise their ability to perform
 - Explorers' Edge reserves the right to disqualify a vendor's quote due to a conflict of interest
 - The bidder must avoid and disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest during the performance of their contractual obligations
 - Explorers' Edge reserves the right to terminate an agreement where a vendor fails to disclose an actual or potential conflict or where such a conflict cannot be resolved.
- In the event of any discrepancies appearing, or differences of opinion, misunderstanding or dispute arising between the Bidder and Explorers' Edge respecting the intent or meaning of this RFP, or accompanying documents, or as to any omission there from or misstatements therein, the decision and interpretation of Explorers' Edge shall be final and binding upon all parties. There shall be no review or appeal of such decision.

End of RFP. Thank you for your time.