



COASTAL MISSISSIPPI REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: CREATIVE AGENCY SERVICES ARPA FUNDS

Proposals due on or before 12:00 p.m. CDT on May 31, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, d/b/a COASTAL MISSISSIPPI (“Bureau” or “COASTAL MISSISSIPPI”), is charged with attracting and serving visitors by communicating and facilitating the COASTAL MISSISSIPPI experience. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI’s multi-faceted sales and marketing approach includes local, statewide, regional, domestic, and international campaigns. The Bureau is searching for a creative agency offering a strategic and creative approach based on sound research to create a campaign(s) that will increase awareness of COASTAL MISSISSIPPI as a travel and tourism destination and attract overnight visitors.

ABOUT COASTAL MISSISSIPPI

COASTAL MISSISSIPPI is a political subdivision of the State of Mississippi governed by 15 Commissioners appointed by the Boards of Supervisors of Harrison, Jackson, and Hancock Counties with a fiscal year spanning October 1 through September 30.

The COVID-19 pandemic created significant disruption to businesses in the hospitality sector, including hotels, restaurants, and small businesses. Additionally, many tourist attractions experienced sharp declines in revenue and visitation.

OBJECTIVE

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), COASTAL MISSISSIPPI is seeking proposals from qualified agencies with a strong understanding of the tourism industry. These agencies should be able to demonstrate their experience and capability to collaborate effectively with COASTAL MISSISSIPPI and its affiliated agencies (including paid media, paid social, public relations, photography/videography, and website vendors) to ensure that marketing and ad hoc campaign efforts are both effective and relevant in maintaining and increasing visitation to the destination. **The desired creative services include brand strategy, creative and brand development, and production services.**

Prospective respondents are required to submit proposals for COASTAL MISSISSIPPI's **creative services**, adhering to the conditions outlined in this RFP. While we intend to contract with the agency that best aligns with the qualifications and scope of work, COASTAL MISSISSIPPI reserves the right to terminate negotiations if an agreement cannot be reached on all matters, **including scope of work and cost.**

COASTAL MISSISSIPPI intends to contract with a qualified agency to support its continued recovery efforts, stemming from the negative economic impacts of COVID-19. Future projects undertaken by the selected agency that are enumerated or implied to fall under the scope of this RFP may be paid in whole, in part, or not at all by federal and state grants. The aforementioned grants may be currently awarded to COASTAL MISSISSIPPI or may be awarded in the future. These funds may be used so long as it is deemed appropriate under the scope of the grant and meet the legal requirements of such. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI reserves the right to make these determinations on an as-needed basis, and any payments are not to be construed as a grant

award unless explicitly stated to be such. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI makes no warranties, express or implied herein, regarding grant awards in this RFP.

Further, in compliance with federal and state statutes, COASTAL MISSISSIPPI encourages small, minority, and women-owned businesses to respond to this RFP. As such, this RFP will be placed on MS PTAP, the bureau's website, Central Bidding's website found hereinbelow, placed in a newspaper of general circulation at the time of publication, and intentional outreach will be conducted in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.321 to ensure equal opportunity for all to respond.

This RFP in no way commits COASTAL MISSISSIPPI to award a contract, to pay any costs in preparation of a proposal, or to contract for the goods and services offered. Although COASTAL MISSISSIPPI intends to contract with the person/company that best meets the qualifications to complete the scope of work, COASTAL MISSISSIPPI may terminate the negotiations if they are unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on all matters, including the scope of work and cost.

GOAL

Coastal Mississippi requires a creative agency to represent our destination, encompassing three counties, is to elevate our brand presence while preserving our established identity and *Play Coastal Mississippi* campaign. The agency will enhance our image through innovative and compelling creative elements by adhering to our current brand standards as a foundation. Collaboration with other vendors will be pivotal to ensure seamless integration of marketing efforts and amplify our reach. Moreover, the agency will craft a dynamic brand strategy that adapts to evolving tourism trends and seasonal fluctuations, ensuring relevance and resonance year-round. Ultimately, the goal is to foster sustained growth and engagement within our target audience while maintaining a cohesive and adaptable brand narrative.

TARGET AUDIENCE DETAILS

As our marketing efforts grow in scale, so do our efforts to connect with travelers that represent significant and enduring growth opportunities for COASTAL MISSISSIPPI. We will continue to monitor universal changes in traveler sentiment and behaviors; however, the primary focus will be on the Experiential Travelers Audience.

While there remains room for growth within the Experiential Traveler audience, we see an opportunity to expand the definition and diversity of the audience by better understanding the multicultural makeup and focusing on how to reach and connect with all who wish to visit.

CORE EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELER

Those traveling with friends, partners, or solo. Frequent travelers seeking new travel experiences off the beaten path.

FAMILY EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELER

Traveling with family, young and old. Seasonal travelers who are seeking out travel experiences that build stronger bonds.

SCOPE OF WORK

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND REQUIREMENTS

- Lead the creation of multi-channel annual brand advertising campaigns from conception to final delivery of assets that fulfill the goals and objectives articulated for domestic/international markets with dynamic updates as needed
- Produce campaign creative assets, including copy, print, digital ads, video, illustrations, etc. to fulfill vendor placements
- Collaborate with Coastal Mississippi’s marketing team to ensure assets and campaigns meet brand standards
- Shooting/producing brand television commercials and other branded video content
- Estimating and invoicing talent costs for all applicable uses
- Management and monitoring of asset usage rights and lifecycles
- Designing and producing digital advertisements
- Designing and producing print and out-of-home assets
- Updating brand guidelines as needed for key targets, including leisure, meetings, sports, and international
- Deliver final creative files to Coastal Mississippi

AVAILABLE FUNDS

BUDGET: Coastal Mississippi requests that each agency provide detailed pricing for **creative services**, including account management. *COASTAL MISSISSIPPI reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services.*

BILLING: COASTAL MISSISSIPPI will pay monthly. Invoices must be dated and received by the 20th day of the month for payment in the following month (Net 45). Invoices should be on letterhead from the selected agency and include the month(s) for which payment is due as well as **details of work completed with appropriate back-up from third parties** at the mutually agreed upon rate(s) or amount in the executed contract and all back-up including detailed invoices, contracts, or subscriptions from third party or contracted vendors.

OFFICIAL CONTACT

COASTAL MISSISSIPPI requests the proposer designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal.

TIMELINE

This tentative timeline may be altered at any time at the discretion of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**, with adequate notice being provided to the public in compliance with all pertinent laws, regulations, and ordinances.

RFP available to agencies	May 8, 2024
Final day to submit questions regarding this RFP	By 5:00 PM CDT May 22, 2024
Questions answered	By 5:00 PM CDT May 24, 2024
Proposals due by 12:00 p.m. CDT	By 12:00 PM CDT May 31, 2024
Proposals evaluated by RFP committee	June 1 – June 14, 2024
Agencies under consideration will be interviewed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted during this time frame as needed	June 17 – June 21, 2024
Agency selected, and contract negotiations begin	June 27, 2024

Work begins for a limited duration, decided in contract negotiations

August 1, 2024

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES

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 agency’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, Ownership, and Management

1. Name, address, and telephone of the entity that will be contracted with and all trade names to be used
2. Name, address, and telephone numbers of the organization’s principal officers and other owners

D. Organization’s Structure and Experience

1. Organizational chart of the company, including any subcontractors who will work with COASTAL MISSISSIPPI
2. Total number of employees, including full-time, part-time, and contract workers
3. Summary of employees who will work on the account, including their name, title, a short summary of their qualifications, and their leading role in working with COASTAL MISSISSIPPI.
4. Hours of operation that staff will be available and any satellite offices
5. Experience in **creative content, print layout, messaging, ad design, video production, and talent acquisition**. No more than **three** relevant case studies should be provided, including project goals with measurable KPIs and results. Creative work should be included in each case study.

E. Client Information

1. Current clients in descending order of size
2. List your two most recent past clients and reason for termination
3. List any travel/tourism clients and their current status

F. Account Gain and Loss

1. 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 the part of the organization.
2. List of accounts gained over the last two years and why your organization was awarded the work.
3. Three references that are current accounts with contact names, email, and phone numbers

E. Conflict(s) of Interest - The proposer must declare and provide details of any actual, potential, or perceived conflict(s) of interest.

F. Certification Form – Certification Form (**Attachment 1**) must be signed and accompany all RFP Response submissions.

G. Budget - Please provide a proposed budget based on the balance of FY24 and a full year for creative design, production, creative account management, and out-of-pocket expenses. Note: Although COASTAL MISSISSIPPI's fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30; please base your proposed budget on the 12-month period.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

1. Submittals in response to this request and respondents' participation in the process shall be at no cost or obligation to COASTAL MISSISSIPPI. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI reserves the right to, at any time, abandon or terminate its efforts to contract for any or all of said services without any obligation to any respondent.
2. Responses to this request and other materials submitted shall become the property of COASTAL MISSISSIPPI and will not be returned.
3. Respondent shall not contact any COASTAL MISSISSIPPI personnel or staff after this request has been advertised, except to ask questions as specified below under "Respondent Questions." Such contact will be considered cause for disqualification.
4. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI may waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submittals.
5. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI 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 COASTAL MISSISSIPPI's opinion, is not properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the Contract or to complete the Work enumerated or implied to fall under the scope of work thereof.
6. All applicable laws, ordinances, and the rules and regulations of all governmental authorities having jurisdiction shall apply to the Contract throughout. Further, all legal matters shall be adjudicated by the state courts of competent jurisdiction in Harrison County, Mississippi, and shall comply with all relevant federal and state laws, regulations, and ordinances.
7. This Contract is being funded in part or completely through a grant provided to COASTAL MISSISSIPPI 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 respondents. Each respondent is cautioned to carefully review the *Standard Terms and Conditions*, which are a part of the sample contract, and to ensure that all responsibilities and obligations are properly addressed.
8. By executing a signature on the submittal, the respondent certifies that:
 - a. Neither the respondent nor any of its team members, is currently debarred from submitting proposals or entering into 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.

EVALUATION & SELECTION

COASTAL MISSISSIPPI will establish a committee to evaluate and rate all proposals based on the criteria prescribed. Bids will be opened in a manner in compliance with Mississippi Code by an Officer of the Board of Commissioners, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Director whose department the RFP falls under at the Bureau's office and will report the results thereof to the Board of Commissioners.

SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 1

A review committee will evaluate proposals meeting all RFP requirements and rank them based on the following selection criteria. The top agencies will be chosen for Step 2.

- Tourism Industry Experience 15%
- Qualifications to execute the plan of work, including costs of services 60%
- References from past clients 10%
- Evaluation of prior work 15%

SELECTION PROCESS – STEP 2

The top two (2) agencies will be invited to present their suggested framework in person or via video conference.

The following criteria will rank presentations:

- Agency's expertise in diverse but cohesive strategies for driving tourism 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 the most advantageous to COASTAL MISSISSIPPI, considering the criteria set forth in this RFP. Upon completing the selection process under this RFP, COASTAL MISSISSIPPI will notify the winning proposer and all other proposers who were not selected. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI is a political subdivision of the state of Mississippi and, therefore, must comply with Title 25, Chapter 61 of the Mississippi Code. As such, COASTAL MISSISSIPPI will not provide any additional documents outside of this RFP and the attachments named herein without a formal public records request being submitted.

After awarding the contract, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between COASTAL MISSISSIPPI and the selected agency to define better, 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 COASTAL MISSISSIPPI employees.

STANDARD CONTRACT

A copy of COASTAL MISSISSIPPI's standard contract template for this proposal may be found on the Bureau's website at www.coastalmississippi.com, at www.centralbidding.com, or provided upon request. By responding to this request, the respondent is asserting its intent to accept the terms and conditions contained therein unless exceptions to the contract are provided as part of the respondent's submittal.

DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS

Submit (2) two hard copy responses and a digital version of the proposal via hard drive or at the Central Bidding website provided hereinbelow. If electronic responses are submitted at www.centralbidding.com, hard copies

are not required. All proposals should include a clear, concise narrative. **The proposal should be bound, no larger than 8.5' x 11', and must include the aforementioned items.**

Printed submissions must be marked "**RFP: CREATIVE SERVICES**" and delivered to:

COASTAL MISSISSIPPI

Attn: Kendra Simpson, Marketing Director
2350 Beach Boulevard, Suite A
Biloxi, Mississippi 39531

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. COASTAL MISSISSIPPI 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. **A postmark will not be considered proof of timely submission.** Official Bid Documents are available at Central Bidding (www.centralbidding.com). Electronic Bids may be submitted at Central Bidding (www.centralbidding.com). For questions related to the electronic bidding process, please call Central Bidding at 225-810-4184.

QUESTIONS

For questions regarding this RFP, please email Kendra Simpson, Director of Marketing, at kendra@coastalmississippi.com. Note that all answers regarding questions and requests for clarification will be responded to publicly on the COASTAL MISSISSIPPI and Central Bidding websites consistent with the aforementioned schedule to ensure that all respondents have the same information. No calls, please.