



# COASTAL MISSISSIPPI REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: PAID SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES Tourism Industry Recovery, II

**Proposals due on or before 5:00 p.m. CDT on April 10, 2023.**

## **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 marketing agency that will offer 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 tourism attractions experienced sharp declines in revenue and visitation.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this RFP is to seek qualified agencies who have a working knowledge of the tourism industry and can demonstrate the necessary experience to place **paid social media advertising** for **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI’S leisure travel market, meetings & conventions market, and sports tourism market**. Although it is our intent 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.

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** intends to contract with a qualified agency to support its continued recovery efforts, stemmed 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 meets 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, and placed in the newspaper at the time of publication 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/or services offered. Although it is **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI's** intent 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.*

## **TARGET AUDIENCE DETAILS**

As our marketing efforts grow in scale, so do our efforts to connect with travelers that represent large 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 diversify the audience by better understanding the multicultural makeup and focus on how to reach and connect with all who wish to visit.

### **CORE EXPERIENTIAL TRAVELER**

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 seeking out travel experiences that build stronger bonds.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** wishes to employ an outside agency to produce an overall **paid social media strategy** including design and creation of various collateral pieces, collaboration with creative agency for design, paid social media placement, and others relevant components. The agency would manage TRF2 funds for the remainder of FY23 becoming the paid social media agency of record for FY24 and FY25.

The agency should recommend an overall **paid social media strategy** to clearly position **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** to visitors as an affordable and attractive open destination for those who enjoy traveling, specifically in its top drive markets and fly markets. It will be imperative to ensure this scope of services adheres to any changing public health guidelines and is conveyed in an informed manner.

### Project Goals:

- Increase brand awareness and consideration of Coastal Mississippi as a destination
- Improve engagement by 40% by the end of FY 23
- Promote marketing partners by staying up to date on seasonal promotions and current events, offers
- Increase leads and website CTR /conversions for Discover Coastal Mississippi visitors' guide requests, email newsletter subscribers, hotel bookings, and Attractions Pass
- Strategize content and campaigns

The selected agency's responsibilities will include the below:

- Optimize, maintain, monitor, and lead the platforms and paid social strategies carried out on Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and LinkedIn

- Utilize A/B testing, insights, monthly reporting
- Drive engagement through ideating and executing paid social campaigns that align with Coastal Mississippi’s marketing strategies and ultimately to drive visitors to stay overnight or extend their stay in the region of Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson County, Mississippi.
- Analyze data to provide a dynamic paid social campaign
- Report to Marketing Director with collaboration with other department as needed and directed by the Marketing Director
- Provide responsive dashboard access to Marketing Director and designees with up to date performance and campaign KPIs

## **AVAILABLE FUNDS**

**BUDGET: COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** will fund this contract at a **minimum of \$605,000** with an opportunity for additional funding through other funding sources including but not limited to state and federal grants. This budget is based on strategy, placement, management fees, and out-of-pocket expenses. This budget will be implemented in phases over a three-year period, with year one requiring the largest amount of production. **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 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month for payment in the following month. Invoices should be on letterhead from the selected agency and include the month(s) for which payment is due as well as **detail 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. **(Attachment 1)**.

## **TIMELINE**

This tentative timeline may be altered at any time at the discretion of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**.

RFP available to agencies	March 13, 2023
Final day to submit questions regarding this RFP	March 20, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. CDT
Questions answered	March 22, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. CDT
<b>Proposals due by 5:00 p.m. CDT</b>	<b>April 10, 2023 by 5:00 p.m. CDT</b>
Proposals evaluated by RFP committee	April 12-17, 2023
Agencies under consideration will be interviewed. Follow-up interviews will be conducted during this time frame as needed	April 18-21, 2023
Agency selected, and contract negotiations begin	April 27, 2023
Work begins for a limited duration, decided in contract negotiations	May 4, 2023

## **SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS & DELIVERABLES**

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

- 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 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 main role in working with **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**.
4. Hours of operation that staff will be available and any satellite offices
5. Experience as it relates to **paid social media strategy and placement**. 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**

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 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 2**) must be signed and accompany all RFP Response submissions.

**G. Budget** - Please provide a proposed budget based on the balance of FY23 and a full year for the remaining two years of the contract for creative assets 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 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 **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** by the State of Mississippi as part 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 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, 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 the first scheduled meeting of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** following the date bids are due; provided, however, that **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**, in the event of a finding of exigent circumstances, may authorize the President of the Board of Commissioners, the Chief Executive Officer and another officer of the Board of Commissioners to open bids and to report the results thereof to the Board of Commissioners.

### **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 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**

Top agencies will be invited to present, in person or via video conference, their suggested framework.

Presentations will be ranked by the following criteria:

- 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 determined to be the most advantageous to **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**, taking into consideration 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**'s evaluations of proposals are confidential and as such, **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** 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 **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** 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 **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI** employees.

### **STANDARD CONTRACT**

Following is a copy of **COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**'s standard contract template to be referenced for this proposal. 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**

Please submit 10 hard copy responses along with a digital version of the proposal on a hard drive or USB drive. All proposals should include a clear, concise narrative. Proposal format is open to presentation style but must include the aforementioned items.

Printed submissions must be marked "**RFP: Paid Social Media Services**" and delivered to:

**COASTAL MISSISSIPPI**

Attn: Kendra Simpson, Marketing Director

2350 Beach Boulevard, Suite A

Biloxi, Mississippi 39351

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.**

## **QUESTIONS**

Note that all answers regarding questions and request for clarification for this RFP will be responded to publicly on the Coastal Mississippi website consistent with the aforementioned schedule to ensure that all respondents have the same information. Submit questions via email to [kendra@coastalmississippi.com](mailto:kendra@coastalmississippi.com).

No calls, please.



## OFFICIAL CONTACT

**Coastal Mississippi** requests that the proposer designates one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal.

Please identify that person below.

RFP:

\_\_\_\_\_

RFP name as it appears on RFP

PROPOSER/COMPANY:

\_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT PERSON:

\_\_\_\_\_

TITLE:

\_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE:

\_\_\_\_\_





**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

*Please include a signed copy of this statement with your proposal.*

By submission of this proposal and authorized signature below, the proposer certifies that the undersigned corporate officer has the authority to bind the proposer to the terms of this proposal and hereby certifies on behalf of the proposer that:

- Officer has read and understands all commitments and terms of this proposal.
- The information contained in this proposal is accurate.
- Proposer's quote is valid for at least 120 days from the date of submission or the deadline for submission, whichever comes last.
- Proposer understands that if selected as the successful proposer, officer will have ten (10) business days in which to complete contract negotiations, if any, and execute the final contract document. The date of execution can be extended by mutual agreement of the agency/Coastal Mississippi.

RFP: \_\_\_\_\_  
RFP name as it appears on RFP

PROPOSER/COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE / PRINTED NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_