REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

WEB DESIGN & MAINTENANCE

VISIT

Lake Charles

LOUISIANA'S PLAYGROUND

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SECTION 1: SUBMITTAL PROCESS

1. **DUE DATE**: December 4, 2020

2. Proposals are hereby solicited and will only be received by:
    Visit Lake Charles
    ATTN: Amos Orr, aorr@visitlakecharles.org
    Digital Strategy Marketing Manager
    1205 N. Lakeshore Dr.
    Lake Charles, LA 70601

3. **SCHEDULE**

Oct. 26, 2020:	Public announcement of Request for Qualifications
Dec. 4, 2020:	Proposals due, no later than 5 p.m. CST
Dec. 9, 2020:	Evaluation of submitted RFQs
Dec. 11, 2020:	Top candidates selected
Jan. 7, 2021:	Finalist Presentation/Interviews/Demos
Jan. 12, 2021:	Notice of Intent to Award and Public Posting

4. **SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS**
    Each bidder is required to deliver its proposal via email to Amos Orr, Digital Marketing Strategy Manager, at aorr@visitlakecharles.org and CC amanning@visitlakecharles.org and cmiller@visitlakecharles.org no later than Dec. 4, 2020 (5:00 p.m. CST).

VISIT LAKE CHARLES

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **INTRO**

   Visit Lake Charles is soliciting proposals from qualified firms for website services. This contract includes website hosting with a robust and flexible CMS and fresh design for VisitLakeCharles.org and its various microsite properties.

   Visit Lake Charles requires a vendor who has demonstrated experience in managing website projects and expertise with best practices regarding successful website design in the tourism industry.

   The response to this RFQ should clearly identify and describe in detail the full scope of the proposed solution, planning and project resourcing as well as the costs and other items required of Visit Lake Charles.

2. **PURPOSE**

   In 2019, Visit Lake Charles went through a rebranding process to highlight Southwest Louisiana as a premier leisure destination known as Louisiana's Playground®.

   The purpose of this RFQ is to identify the appropriate vendor who can provide Visit Lake Charles with CMS maintenance and website design support to stand out in the marketplace in an innovative and creative way to industry stakeholders, including city and state tourism officials, leisure visitors, and private sector travel professionals in addition to event organizers, tournament planners, media professionals, tour group leaders and convention planners.

   Visit Lake Charles currently enjoys a flexible website solution that allows for modifications to be made quickly by the team. The need for alterations to be made is imperative for a marketplace that changes rapidly, and the winning vendor must demonstrate this quality built into their CMS platform and design for Visit Lake Charles to remain cutting-edge and highly competitive in the industry.

   The winning vendor will design a website that provides both a rich visual and intuitive user experience to inspire and plan travel to Southwest Louisiana.

3. **QUALIFICATIONS**
   a. Superior graphic design capabilities, with a user-centric focus and mobile first with a responsive design approach.
   b. Significant project management experience.
   c. Preferred experience in the tourism/DMO industry.
   d. Excellent support system with fast response times to deadlines.
   e. Ability to integrate open APIs and other sources into the website. Specifically, Simpleview CRM.
   f. Preferred experience transitioning website to a new CMS platform with understanding of technical & SEO implications.
   g. Familiarity of setting up and adjusting goals and conversions in Google Analytics.

4. **DIGITAL PROPERTIES**
   The websites/social network channels below represent where content currently resides. The work includes creating a design for VisitLakeCharles.org and the microsites that currently reside within the website, proposing and setting up a CMS for managing content, migrating content from current website, and connecting Simpleview CRM for Business, Event Listings and coupon listings. Please review the following sites and social networking channels:

   WEBSITE:
   https://www.visitlakecharles.org

   MICROSITES:
   https://www.creolenaturetrail.com
   https://www.swlamardigras.com
   http://www.birdingbetweenborders.com

   SOCIAL CHANNELS (for reference only):
   https://www.facebook.com/LakeCharlesCVB
   https://www.facebook.com/CNTAdventurePoint
   https://twitter.com/lakecharlescvb
   https://twitter.com/GoLakeCharlesPR
   https://twitter.com/LAsportscapital
   https://www.youtube.com/user/VisitLakeCharles
   https://www.pinterest.com/visitlakecharles
   https://www.instagram.com/visitlakecharles

   APPS (for reference only):
   Creole Nature Trail | Lake Charles Events | Lake Charles Historic Tour

SECTION 3: SCOPE OF WORK

1. **PROJECT GOALS**
   The goal of this project is to redesign VisitLakeCharles.org as a best-in-class tourism website and with a UX (User Experience) that focuses on a mobile-first design that is responsive for desktop and leverages Lake Charles' most visually compelling cultural assets to immerse users in the beauty of the city and surrounding nature that encourages users to dive deeper - and ultimately strengthens a foundation to convert users to in-market visitors.

   Navigation should be effortless, and content that users need most to decide to visit or to plan a trip should be tremendously easy to find. We are looking for a graphic design and UX proposal that will determine the look and feel of the website as a whole and its primary content types and core functional components in addition to hosting and a CMS that will allow Visit Lake Charles staff to easily update content as needed.

2. **WEBSITE HOSTING**
   a. Connect to Simpleview CRM for database items such as business listings, events and coupons. Seamless transition of databases from existing website hosting provider.
   b. Visit Lake Charles must maintain ownership of the websites, components, content, domain names, and DNS records.
   c. Open-source content management system that permits non-technical staff to easily update content on individual web pages, control sizes and types of images, and manage publishing of links to other websites through a browser-based interface.

3. **WEBSITE MAINTENANCE**
   a. General support including, but not limited to, resolution of images, bugs, and problems that may arise and inhibit usability, display, accessibility, or workflow for staff or website visitors.
   b. Technical support response time
   c. During working days within 1 hour of initial request
   d. During weekends and holidays within 12 hours of initial request
   e. Specific response plan to website hack
   f. Website Backups: Specific backup schedule, including full backups and incremental backups

4. **FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS:**
   a. Navigation: The website must have a professional and user-friendly interface.
      i. Full navigation analysis as to the path to completing tasks and the overall organization of information.
      ii. Navigation throughout the website is to remain transparent with users able to easily find the content.
      iii. Navigation that is organized and specified to each step of the page for website users to retrace their steps.
   b. Compatibility: Content must be delivered across multiple platforms/browsers.
   c. Social Media:
      i. The website should integrate social media. Proposals should discuss integration of popular social media services such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. This includes on business and event listings.

      ii.   Social Media Sharing/Bookmarking

d. Videos/Rich Media: The website should have the ability to incorporate videos and other rich visual elements.

e. Onsite Search tool: To search by topic for relevant content.

f. Effective search function with ability to be sorted by geography and key attributes/amenities for business, event and coupon listings.

g. Blog: The proposed solution must have the ability to post updates to a blog.
   i. Ability to create categories, authors, tags, and other blog filtering abilities.
   ii. Ability for users to subscribe.
   iii. Ability for users to comment with backend controls admin controls.

h. Pages highlight related-content feature which will recommend website content based on search behavior and previous pages visited.

i. Microsites that can be differentiated from the main website with their own navigation and hierarchy and customizable color scheme.

j. Create a design that is responsive for the best possible experience via tablet and smartphone, but that also takes full advantage of widescreen desktop displays.

k. Calendar of Events
   i. Features a robust, intuitive Calendar of Events that is searchable & sortable by user.
   ii. Users should be able to subscribe to a feed of events.
   iii. Add to calendar on event detail pages
   iv. Online event submission option with subsequent approvals before content is published.
   v. Allow for the automated import of events via XML files from external community partners.
   vi. Linked to business listings if applicable.
   vii. Ability to pre-query and filter on the backend and turn of filter tools for users. Example: We would like to be able to filter out specific types of events on the backend of the website so that only certain events appear on specific pages. This is useful for Mardi Gras events, Christmas events or events that occur in a specific part of town, such as downtown Lake Charles. We often pre-filter events, and this functionality is imperative.
   viii. Event data is stored in the Simpleview CRM

l. Maps
   i. Integration of maps is required to allow users to find points of interest as well as to determine relative location of points of interest within the destination.
   ii. Maps need to accurately chart location of businesses/events in the website database.

m. Integrations
   i. Crowdriff user generated content galleries on pages and listing detail pages
   ii. Issuu online guides embedded on pages
   iii. Embedded YouTube videos
   iv. Yelp and TripAdvisor Reviews on business listings
   v. Audio Eye for accessibility
   vi. Wufoo embedded forms
   vii. MailChimp sign up forms
   viii. Google Analytics
   ix. Google Tag Manager
   x. Threshold 360
   xi. Reel Scout

n. Pop-ups/Special Alerts
   i. We need customizable notification bars and pop-ups that can show up on the website with customizable text/graphics. Preferably with customizable logic based on URL structure or visitor behavior (pages visited, goals completed, time on site).
o. Special Offers/Coupons
   i. Linked to business listings.
   ii. Ability to separate into categories and filter.
p. Forms: Currently we use a mixture of Simpleview CRM, Wufoo, and MailChimp forms
q. Partner Listings
   i. Some partner listings are related as children to other partner listings. Example: Golden Nugget to Chart House. We would want child listings to appear on parent listings on the front end of the website.
r. Staff/Contacts Directory
s. Trip Builder/Add to Favorites Feature
t. Articles Page for outside media stories and internal press releases separate from blog content.
u. Related Content

5. CONTENT/PAGE TYPES

The below list of Content Types and Functionality are starting points for the design project to reference as it pertains to planning and budgeting for both mobile and desktop. This information is not presented to limit suggestions on better UX or added ideas for functionality, but to help provide a basis for minimum expectations. When comps are designed for the various content types, we would like to have mobile and desktop versions included.

- a. Homepage Page
- b. Section Page /// Interior Page /// Navigation Page
- c. Hybrid Page (Copy with pre queried listings)
- d. Venue Listings Page (Directory with search/filter capabilities)
  - i. List View, Map View
- e. Venue Listing Detail Page
  - i. Short Form, Long Form
- f. Calendar Event Listings Page
  - i. List View, Map View
- g. Calendar Event Detail Page
  - i. Event has passed functionality for evergreen events.
  - ii. Generic Form
- h. Editorial Page
  - i. Generic Story
  - ii. News Story (Limited shelf life, becomes archived)
- i. Site Search Results Page
- j. Sign Up Form Page
- k. Sign Up Form Confirmation Page
- l. Articles/Press Release Page
  - i. Listing View Page, Article View Page
- m. Image/B-Roll Library
- n. Contact Us (Form Page)
- o. Static Itinerary Page
- p. Top 10 List Page
- q. Microsite Pages (used for conferences and meetings)
  - i. Homepage, Interior Page
- r. Special Alert/Pop-ups – ability throughout the site and/or on specific sections

6. ALREADY DETERMINED

- a. We will be utilizing Simpleview Inc. for our CRM platform
- b. We will be utilizing MailChimp Email Marketing

7. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

a. Suggestion for CMS and setup/implementation of chosen CMS.
b. No fewer than three initial concepts for the look and feel of the site, consistent with Visit Lake Charles' branding guidelines.
c. Up to two rounds of revisions to create final look and feel comp.
d. Comps for each content type and core functional components listed below (Desktop and Mobile.)
e. Up to two rounds of minor revisions to address UX and functionality.
f. User testing done prior to final design/layout of site navigation to determine usability.
g. Integration of various APIs from needed sources.
h. Analytics tracking implementation and conversion tracking setup.
i. Sitemap Analysis
j. Full website content migration from Simpleview CMS
   i. Navigation
   ii. Text
   iii. Images/GIFs
   iv. PDFs
   v. Videos
   vi. Hyperlinks
   vii. Embedded Videos
   viii. Embedded Forms
   ix. Embedded UGC Galleries

SECTION 4: QUALIFICATION/SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

To ensure that all information is properly evaluated, please organize and label proposals to correspond with the structure provided below (ie, 3A, 3B, 3C, etc.). Proposals (submittals) shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. COMPANY EXPERIENCE, HISTORY AND REFERENCES (5 POINTS)

Describe your organization's experience including:

a. Working with city, county/parish or state-level Destination Marketing Organizations
b. Experience working with Visit Lake Charles and/or its tourism partners (if applicable)
c. Collaborating with DMOs in the Southeast region and its advantages and challenges
d. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of traditional DMO websites
e. Working collaboratively with client's creative and digital team
f. Describe the level of experience of key staff members that will handle the Visit Lake Charles account
g. Must include three Destination Management Organization referrals and include scope of work with the DMO, contact name, and contact information.

2. COMPANY NARRATIVE (15 POINTS)

Describe in narrative format the organization's approach to website migrations and redesigns focusing on DMO clients (if applicable). Include information on creative concepts, budget and website strategies. Please include the following information of the organization's approach to web design & marketing:

a. Illustration of how Visit Lake Charles will interact for planning, development of design, and transition of website.
b. Explain how your organization meets additional custom requirements.
c. Unique selling proposition over competitors.
d. The organization's point of view on the future of web design and how the organization helps their clients prepare for that future.
e. In a few words, the organization's philosophy on tourism marketing and promotions on marketing platforms.
f. Your suggested visit schedule for discovery, visits and interaction with our teams.
g. Timeline and/or Project Plan
h. Standard practices for client communication and accountability
i. Any awards and/or industry credentials for either individual staff or the organization as a whole.

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3. **DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITIES (25 POINTS)**
   Describe in narrative format the organization's website design/CMS capabilities for its clients. Please include the following information:
   a. The organization's preferred CRM vendors & previous integrations
   b. Preferred programs, software and/or tools used for similar projects

4. **BUDGET (25 POINTS)**
   Based on the RFQ requirements, the proposer must submit a detailed, realistic budget with an estimated execution timeline. The proposal can be quoted as a time & materials contract with a maximum price allowed based on the scope as defined herewith. A fixed price proposal will be prioritized. You can provide tiered options based on scope as well.
   a. Please fully explain your method of compensation. These allocations will be used to demonstrate the organization's philosophy on resource allocation and compensation.
   b. How is the organization paid?
      i. Please provide a detailed cost structure for each area of work.
      ii. If commission or other fees are part of the proposal, they must be listed in the budget section of the proposal and include a detailed breakdown of the pricing structure of the commissions and fees.
   c. No monthly retainer fees will be allowed.
   d. The winning organization must agree and adhere to a detailed invoicing policy breaking down individual costs of staff time, commissions, development and support hours, and other fees.

5. **EXAMPLES (25 POINTS)**
   a. Provide a no fewer than 3 examples of websites generated by the organization (DMO sites preferred).
   b. Case study of a prior client (preferably a DMO) that demonstrates how the organization has contributed to a client's success with a focus on cost effectiveness of the spend and results through reporting and analytics.

6. **SUMMARY (10 POINTS)**
   a. The organization should state in one sheet or less, the specific reason the organization is best qualified, suited and capable of being awarded the website design and maintenance contract for Visit Lake Charles.

SECTION 5: SCORING METRICS

1. **EVALUATION OF RFQ SUBMITTED**

Section	Point Value
Company Experience/History	5
Company Narrative	15
Design & Development Capabilities	25
Budget	25
Examples	25
Summary	10

2. **FINALIST INTERVIEW AND PRESENTATIONS**

Section	Point Value
Company Experience/History	15
Company Narrative	15
Design & Development Capabilities	25
Budget	20
Interview/Presentation/Demos	25

SECTION 6: FINAL STEPS

1. **EVALUATION & CONTRACTING**

   This Request for Qualifications in no way commits Visit Lake Charles to award a contract, to pay any costs in preparation of a proposal, or to contract for the goods and/or services offered.

   All proposals satisfying the requirements of this Request for Qualifications will be evaluated to establish which provider best fulfills the needs of Visit Lake Charles and this project. After submissions are complete, evaluations will be finalized. Upon completion of the evaluations, the website committee will identify the highest scoring respondents based upon the metrics listed in Section 5. The top respondents will each be contacted for a formal in-person interview and presentation to be given to the website committee in Lake Charles, LA.

   Once the interview and presentations are completed, a single finalist will be selected based upon the metrics listed in Section 5, and a formal contract will be negotiated.

   Visit Lake Charles reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, to negotiate with all qualified providers or to cancel this Request for Qualifications. After selecting a provider, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between Visit Lake Charles and the selected Contractor to better define, elaborate upon, and establish the Contractor's final Scope of Work and general Terms and Conditions.

2. **QUESTIONS**

   Proposals must address each item listed above, giving specific details of techniques to be used in achieving these requirements. Proposals may be rejected if minimum requirements   are not met. All proposers wishing clarification of this RFQ must submit questions by email to Amos Orr at aorr@visitlakecharles.org and CC amanning@visitlakecharles.org and cmiller@visitlakecharles.org.