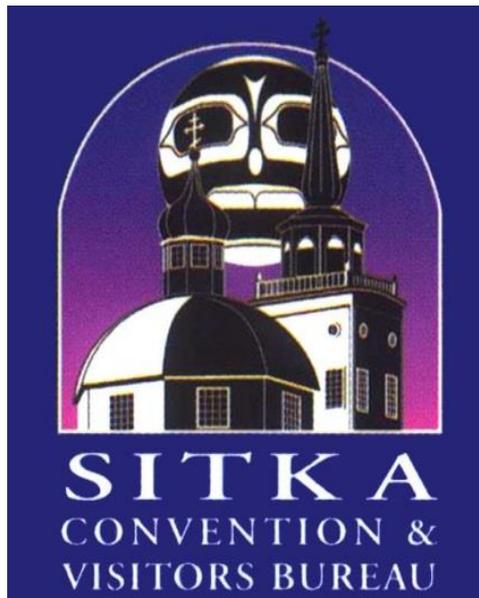


Request for Qualifications

BRANDING SERVICES & DOWNTOWN PEDESTRIAN SIGNAGE PROJECT for SITKA, ALASKA



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Table of Contents

I. SUMMARY	3
II. PROJECT BACKGROUND	4
III. PUBLIC OUTREACH	4
IV. BRANDING & BRAND IMPLEMENTATION (PHASE 1a & 1b).....	5
V. WAYFINDING/DIRECTIONAL SIGNANGE PROJECT & DESIGN (PHASE 2a & 2b)	5
VI. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	6
VII. SELECTION FACTORS AND WEIGHTING	7
VIII. CANCELLATION OF RFQ	8
IX. OTHER	8
X. QUESTIONS	8

I. Project Summary

This is a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from organizations to facilitate, manage, and complete the development and implementation of a brand identity, brand identity marketing, and a branded wayfinding and directional signage program for Sitka, Alaska.

Desired Result

The desired result is to increase the quantity and quality of leisure and business travelers to Sitka using the brand/brand identity, and to enhance the visitor experience in Sitka through strategically placed, branded wayfinding and directional signage in the downtown area. This will provide opportunities for new businesses, jobs, residents, and other outcomes that support the equality of life and economic well-being of Sitka.

Management Approach

To achieve the desired result, a wide range of local community interests – businesses, nonprofits, local governments – must be represented in the development and implementation of the project. The management approach must include generous opportunities for public engagement and active community outreach to educate the general public about branding and branding applications. The development team selected for the project must be diverse and not controlled by any one organization, but facilitated by the qualified organization selected by the RFP process.

Project Organization

We have divided the project into the following phases: 1a) Brand Development; 2a) Downtown wayfinding and directional Signage System; 1b) Brand Implementation and 2b) Branded Signage Design and Documentation. **It is our desire to have phases 1a & 1b completed simultaneously with phases 2a & 2b to ensure the project is completed as expeditiously as possible.**

Funding

Funding has been secured in the amount of \$90,000 from the City of Sitka for this project. We believe that this amount should be adequate for Phases 1a, 1b, and 2a of the project as well as a good portion of Phase 2b. It is anticipated that additional funding for specific brand implementation projects may be required.

Respondent Considerations

We encourage respondents to carefully consider the qualifications required to attain the desired results of the project and, if needed, propose partnerships in responding to this RFP.

Project Leadership, Staffing, and Schedule

The responses from this RFQ will be reviewed by the *Qualification Team*. This team will consist of the Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau (SCVB) Director, the Tourism Commission Chair, a city staff member, the Sitka Tribe of Alaska Economic Development Director, and one local tourism business representative. The Qualification Team will review and select the consultant(s) who will perform this project and work with the consultant(s) to develop the definitive scope of work. The definitive scope of work will include definitions, detailed project roles and responsibilities, and project budget. The Team will guide the selection process through the definitive scope of work and budget completion, thereafter, the Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau will be the primary project coordinator.

The schedule for the project will be determined in the definitive scope of work. It is anticipated that Phases 1a & 2a will be completed in 2014, with phases 1b & 2b being completed in the early part of 2015. The estimated schedule for this RFQ is as follows:

- Advertise RFQ: Friday, February 21st, 2014
- Deadline for Responses: Friday, March 21st, 2014 (4 p.m.)
- If deemed necessary: confirm Interviews with Finalists by Wednesday, March 26th, 2014
- Qualification Team Interviews Finalists by Wednesday, April 3rd, 2014
- Selection of Consultant(s) by Friday, April 4th, 2014
- Development of Definitive Scope of Work & Budget no later than Friday, April 18th 2014 (Note: if a mutually acceptable scope of work and budget cannot be developed, the Leadership Team may choose to attempt to develop a scope of work and budget with other respondents to the RFQ)
- Begin Project no later than Monday, 28th, 2014

II. Background

Sitka is an island community in Southeast Alaska, an area commonly referred to as “The Inside Passage”. Access to and from the island is only possible by boat or plane, with the closest large cities being Juneau (90 miles to the north) and Ketchikan (180 miles to the south). Sitka has a population of 9,000 residents with an incorporated land area totaling 4,800 square miles. The majority of the incorporated area is uninhabited rainforest wilderness, with the populated area consisting of 14 miles of shoreline highway and 40 additional miles of paved streets. The downtown area is very compact and walkable. The main downtown road is Lincoln Street, which is approximately 1 mile in length.

The main economic drivers include commercial fishing, government, and tourism. A large quantity of tourism visitors arrive in Sitka via cruise ship. The majority of cruise ship passengers are transported from the ship to one of two downtown lightering docks.

Sitka has a very long and complex history. The Tlingit people have inhabited the surrounding area for thousands of years. They continue to have a strong cultural presence, and approximately 30% of Sitka’s residents are Alaska Native. Sitka was also the capitol of Russian America and site of the transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States in 1867. Russian influences can still be seen in downtown architecture and through local art offerings. Sitka is also known for: nationally renowned arts programs, king salmon catch rate, abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing, scenic beauty, and warm local hospitality. More than 20 sites in the downtown area are listed on the National Historic Register.

Wayfinding and Directional Signage Background

The goal of creating an integrated system of wayfinding, directional and interpretive signage has been a community goal for many years. Numerous City of Sitka plans have included the project as a goal, the most recent being the 2007 Visitor Industry Plan v1.0 and 2.0, 2007 CBS Comprehensive Plan, the 2010 Sitka Passenger Fee Fund Implementation Plan and the 2011 Sitka Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Action Plan.

Branding Project Background

The need for the branding was recognized within the community and brought to the attention of the City of Sitka Assembly by the Destination Sitka Working Group (DSWG), an ad-hoc committee formed during the 2012 Sitka Economic Forum. The group has active representatives from many sectors of Sitka, including local business, non-profits, tour operators, local media members, the Tourism Commission, Sitka Chamber of Commerce and SCVB. Through a number of meetings, it was decided by the DSWG that the most impactful way to move forward with cooperative, multi-agency marketing was through destination branding. Branding presentations were given to the DSWG, Tourism Commission, and Sitka Assembly along with the book “Destination Branding for Small Cities”. The idea of destination branding has had strong support from all parties involved.

III. Public Outreach

Stakeholder and Community Involvement, Learning and Ownership

For this project to succeed, it is essential that the stakeholders be involved from the beginning of the process and that the community be regularly updated and allowed an opportunity to provide feedback. We believe that community involvement should:

- Help the stakeholders and community gain a fundamental understanding of and appreciation for the wayfinding and directional signage project, branding process and marketing concepts.
- Support identification and ownership of the brand and brand identity
- Help identify priorities for using the brand to support marketing and mentoring functions to be performed by the consultant(s).

The participants, methods, purposes and scope of community involvement will be included in the more definitive scope of work, but a minimum of 5 on-site public meetings will be required for the full project.

IV. BRANDING & BRAND IMPLEMENTATION (PHASES 1a & 1b)

It is our desire to have phases 1a & 2a completed simultaneously with phases 1b & 2b. *In responding to the RFQ, it will be particularly important for respondents to demonstrate the following capabilities related to these phases of the project:*

- Successfully developed destination brands that are enduring and durable through a coherent, logical process that provided a proven competitive advantage
- A history of designing and implementing marketing programs that used brands and brand identities to achieve targeted goals
- Experience in mentoring diverse interests in successfully using and integrating brands and brand identities

Phase 1a: Brand Development & Phase 1b: Brand Implementation

The specific steps and products involving brand development and implementation will be defined in the scope of work. However, our desired outcomes for Phase 1a & 1b include:

- Destination branding that creates competitive advantage through proven strategies
- A framework and strategy to reach and attract visitors that maintains the integrity of our destination
- Mutually identify two projects and assist in the design and implementation of a marketing program that makes use of the brand and brand identity
- Educate diverse stakeholders in brand integration and ways to include the brand in marketing initiatives (determined after the brand and brand identity are developed)

V. Wayfinding and Directional Signage Project and Design (Phases 2a & 2b)

It is our desire to have phases 1a & 2a completed simultaneously with phases 1b & 2b. *In responding to the RFQ, it will be particularly important for respondents to demonstrate the following capabilities related to this phase of the project:*

- Proven effectiveness in using a variety of methods and approaches for stakeholder involvement, community education and outreach and gathering and synthesizing community input
- Previously developed and implemented wayfinding and directional signage systems that were achieved through a coherent, logical process and successfully achieved target results
- History of designing unique wayfinding and directional signage that integrates the look and feel of the destination brand, maintains the unique historical and cultural character of the destination, and incorporates the interests of residents, businesses, and property owners

Phase 1a: Wayfinding Strategy Development

The specific steps and products involved in the wayfinding and directional signage project and design will be defined in the scope of work. However, it is generally anticipated that the brand development process would include most or all of the following:

- **Wayfinding Audit Completion:** Preliminary work has been done by the Tourism Commission and private sector, including existing signage inventory for reference, key crossing points, and potential sign types/locations in the downtown area. Additional work needed to complete the audit include pedestrian demographics; identification of major walking, cycling, and accessible routes; and potential alternate routes.
- **Consultation with user and stakeholder groups**
- **Strategic Wayfinding System Development:** The strategic system will link primary walking routes in the downtown area (including the 6 district nodes identified in the CPET Master Plan and existing/proposed sections of the Seawalk) and identify specific locations for directional, interpretive, identifying and kiosk signs.

Phase 2b: Branded Signage Design and Documentation

The specific steps and products involving brand development will be defined in the scope of work. However, it is generally anticipated that the brand development process would include most or all of the following:

- **Design:** Create signage specifications that incorporate the Sitka brand as identified by Phase 1a, including all types identified in Phase 2a.
- **Documentation:** Signage fabrication specifications, including: sign schedule with type and location of all signs and kiosks; estimate of probable costs; kiosk and sign construction drawings with specifications; graphics design layouts and text for wayfinding and directional signs in reproducible, print-ready high resolution in appropriate electronic format with written permissions for all copyrighted materials.

VI. Submission Requirements

Six paper copies of responses along with a PDF copy on a computer disc or usb drive must be received by mail or in person on or before 4 p.m. on Friday March 21st, 2014 at:

Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau
ATTN: Branding & Wayfinding RFQ
303 Lincoln Street, Suite #4
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Responses shall:

- Be on standard 8.5" x 11" paper (size constraint does not apply to attachments that may include resumes or other credential materials) with no less than a one- inch margin at the top, bottom and sides and typed in a font no smaller than 11 point font.
- Be no longer than 10 typed pages, excluding attachments that may include resumes or other credential materials

Responses to this RFQ must include the following:

Introduction to Managing Organization

- Organization name
- Contact name
- Address
- Phone and FAX numbers
- Email address

- Web site address
- History of the organization
- Include a summary of the organization's vision, mission, goals and objectives, if available

Project Team Qualifications (20 pts. for Phase 1 & 4, 20 pts. for Phase 2 & 3 = 40 pts.)

- Review the qualifications of all organizations, groups or institutions to be involved in the project, including contact information for each organization. Please describe qualifications in view of the specific requirements of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this project.
- An identification of the name and qualifications of the Project Manager and key staff to be involved with the project. Attach a complete resume for each as an attachment to the response, including professional licenses or certifications and a description of experience with similar projects.

Project Experience (40 pts.)

- Provide detailed information about prior projects or work that best supports the capabilities of the respondent to perform the work required to achieve the desired results. In doing so, please provide information about projects that reflect your qualifications regarding Phases 1 and 2 of this RFQ.
- Provide at least three references for similar or relevant work or projects.

Project Management (20 pts.)

Submit a narrative that summarizes:

- The management approach for the project
- Accountability with the Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Communication on progress
- Cost management and cost control processes
- Anticipated timeline for completion, including major markers
- A timeline and proposed process for working with the Brand Leadership Team to complete the Definitive Scope of Work

VII. Selection Factors and Weighting

Responses will be evaluated by the Qualification Team for the project. Evaluation factors will generally be as follows:

Factors Points

Project Team Qualifications

For Phase 1a & 2a: 20

For Phase 2a & 2b: 20

(Subtotal: 40)

Prior Experience: 40

Management Approach: 20

Total Points: 100

VIII. Cancellation of RFQ

This RFQ may be cancelled or any or all bids or proposals may be rejected in whole or in part.

The Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals that may result from a selected professional service consultant, waive irregularities or information in the submittals, and award this contract to the respondent that best meets the selection criteria.

The selection process will include interviews only if deemed necessary by the Qualification Team.

Proposals that do not comply with all criteria set forth in this RFQ are subject to disqualification.

IX. Other

All respondents will be informed of the decision made about the contractor retained.

Respondents will not be provided with detailed information about the rating of their response or the relative rating or ranking of respondents. Respondents must comply with all relevant federal, state and local laws, regulations, rules and other requirements.

The Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau encourages disadvantaged, minority, and women-owned consultant firms to respond.

X. Questions

Questions may be directed to:

Tonia Rioux

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