



Request for Proposal: Website Design and Development

**Stowe Area Association
January 6, 2017**

To All Prospective Bidders:

The Stowe Area Association is a member-driven organization that serves as the official destination marketing organization for Stowe, Vermont.

The purpose of this request for proposal (RFP) is to seek and acquire a qualified firm to develop and design a new destination website for Stowe, Vermont under the same domain, www.GoStowe.com

Attached is a RFP to be filled out by those capable of meeting minimum requirements and carrying out the scope of work. All response will be carefully reviewed and evaluated based on the criteria noted in the attached document.

Please send any questions you may have to clarify this RFP to me amym@gostowe.com or our Marketing Manager, Sharon Harper at sharonh@gostowe.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Morrison", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amy Morrison
Executive Director

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Introduction

The purpose and intent of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to establish a contract with a qualified firm to develop and design a new destination website for Stowe, Vermont, replace the current www.GoStowe.com.

We live in an always-on world where everyone is connected to information and to one another. Our brand is being redefined by how users experience content across all channels. Services required are website redesign, website production, ongoing website support and search engine optimization. Additionally, we are seeking a firm that is able to develop a strategic approach to organizing content that inspires, informs and drives action. Additional services may include, but are not limited to, content marketing strategy, persona development, and mobile first user experience development.

This request is an offer by the Stowe Area Association (SAA) to purchase, in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP, the services proposed by the successful Offeror(s), by contract as needed.

Background and Objectives

Tourism is a key driver of the Stowe economy, and the Stowe Area Association is committed to growing the tourism industry through:

- Increasing traveler trips to Stowe
- Increasing average traveler spend per trip
- Increasing resident spend on tourism activities

The Stowe Area Association is the destination marketing organization for Stowe, Vermont leveraging multiple marketing and communications, including but not limited to PR, advertising, social media, public engagement programs, group tours, sales and event outreach. These efforts direct our target audiences – prospective visitors, previous visitors, Vermont residents, transportation partners, tour operators, travel agents, and industry partners to visit www.GoStowe.com for more information.

To this end, the SAA requires development of a unique website that can support integrated marketing campaigns that embody the incredible diversity of Stowe as a destination and meet the needs of each of our audiences outlined above.

Key objectives are to create a positive user experience making it simple for site visitors to find and share information, elevate the level of engagement, increase the level of repeat visits, drive online bookings, drive signups for e-newsletters, and increase overall site traffic. We hope to exceed industry standard metrics such as time spent on site, bookings via the site etc.

Prospective firms must factor in the complexities of standing out in the current marketplace and competing with other destinations. We want a website that is adaptable in an ever-evolving industry and provides innovative tools that will allow us to effectively compete in a mobile first world.

Proposals should include a review of the existing site, recommendations and a timeline for the best approach to converting the existing website to a new site. We are open to considering multiple options, if such alternative approaches will best all us to complete the project in alignment with planned marketing campaigns, media buys, and budget constraints.

Companies must demonstrate a proven history of strategic and effective travel and tourism-related website development.

Companies will be expected to work in collaboration with the SAA’s internal team.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Element
January 6, 2017	RFP Posting
January 31, 2017	Proposals Due
February 6 – 9, 2017	Selected Proposer (2-3) presentations
February 16, 2017	Selected Proposer Announced & Contract Negotiations Begin
Week of March 6	Start Date

Scope of Services

The Offeror shall provide a proposal, in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth herein, to provide website design, development and ongoing maintenance services to the SAA that may include, but are not limited to:

- Development of a project plan, including timeline, for the entire scope of work with input from internal team
- Development of strategic plan for organizing content around experiences that inspire, inform and drive action.
- Redesign of www.GoStowe.com to create a delightful and uncomplicated experience that includes (but is not limited to) the following features, elements, and functionality:
 - **Intuitive and attractive design**
 - Clean, contemporary design and flow
 - Easy and intuitive navigation that does not require multiple clicks to reach a desired page
 - Mobile responsive web design
 - Balance between simplicity and relevant information
 - Support high-resolution media (images and video)
 - Consistent use of Stowe’s brand standards guide
 - Consumer experience-led user interface that groups and presents information in a logical manner and requires no more than three levels of ‘scrolling’ for the user to find desired information
 - Fast-loading pages in line with Google’s recommendations for site load times.
 - **Content management strategy**
 - An open-source content management system that is instinctive, easy to use, supports the features and functionality outlined below, and can be updated easily by the SAA staff (includes providing recommendations for non-proprietary CMS software)
 - **Social Media Integration**
 - Helpful, engaging and shareable content
 - Social sharing tools that allow visitors to post on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, etc. should be incorporated across the website

- Social followership tools that encourage site visitors to engage with GoStowe on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube
 - Integration of social media feeds (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) within the homepage and other key pages, including hashtag strategy
 - **Travel and Tourism**
 - Integration of existing third-party feeds
 - Capability to integrate booking functionality
 - Events calendar, including the option for site users to upload events and options for sorting the calendar by date, location, type of event, etc.
 - **Consumer Engagement Strategy**
 - E-newsletter signup
 - Content hub for downloadable materials including but not limited to free visitor's guides, brochures, maps, infographics, etc.
 - News media hub
 - **Member Relations Strategy**
 - Integration of a business directory for member business listings
 - Secure member portal as a landing page for SAA communication and updates
 - **Analytics**
 - Includes Google Analytics integration using Google Tag Manager. Please note that what we want to track may change over time., and we will need to be able to adapt.
 - **Other key requirements and considerations include:**
 - Image rich with use of captivating photos and videos
 - Can display changing photographs and video content on the homepage and other landing pages
 - Has functionality to support slideshows and carousels
 - Meets mutually agreed upon ADA standards of compliance
 - Displays correctly on all major browsers
 - Displays time-sensitive, accessible information (e.g. experiences, partner deals) on the home page and other landing pages
 - Integrates with multimedia marketing campaigns, including paid media, native advertising, social media advertising, online and onsite activations and public engagement programs
 - Considers Search Engine Visibility best practices as part of website design, development and maintenance
 - Utilizes best-in-class search functionality
 - Gather email, areas of interest and demographics information in a format that permits SAA to maintain a single database of users that can be easily segmented
 - Able to provide multi-language support, if needed
 - Website must be safe and secure using HTTPS
 - Design and CMS must allow for easy changes to site navigation, images, listings and overall content
- **Development and implementation**
 - Build the website based on the approved design
 - Migrate existing content and images
 - Create and build appropriate content as needed, including integration of new photos and videos

- Develop any and all templates needed for staff to easily update web content
 - Collaborate with SAA internal team to ensure alignment with planned integrated marketing campaign efforts
 - Complete all other work necessary to develop and fully test the website
 - Ensure website is fully operational
 - Conduct consumer user testing prior to launch
- Training: Provide CMS training to a minimum of three SAA team members
 - One-year support: Provide one year of website support, CMS maintenance from the date the new website is live, including performance and load testing to ensure that the website meets predefined performance and load testing metrics
 - Long term proposal: Provide a proposal for website support, CMS updates and maintenance as well as Search Engine Visibility best practices beyond year one.
 - Hosting recommendation: Provide suggestions on the best website hosting opportunity, either third-party or with your company
 - Other: Any other additional items not listed above, to provide a fully operational website

Stowe Area Association will:

- Deliver content for integration into new site
- Maintain current URL address

Process and Requirements

Offeror will provide SAA with consulting services as mutually agreed upon and described in a Statement of Work, which will govern any assignment that is engaged under this RFP.

The statement of work (SOW) shall be drafted as an engaged letter between the parties setting forth the following:

- A complete and detailed description of the type(s) of services to be rendered by the Offeror
- The applicable billing rates for the services to be rendered (“Service Fees”)
- Any additional terms and conditions to which the parties may agree

Offerors will submit their proposals within the timeframe indicated.

No extension in the submittal date will be granted on an individual basis. If SAA determines that the timeframe it has established for the RFP is inadequate, it may, as its option, extend the submission deadline for all Offerors.

Offerors agree that their proposals are a firm agreement to provide services at a stipulated rate to the SAA. Those rates will be reflected in the Statement of Work engagement letter. All pricing schedules quoted in response to this RFP, however, must remain in effect for the duration of the contract if awarded.

Offeror may withdraw their proposal at any time by notifying SAA in writing of their intention to do so.

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

SAA is committed to selecting the most competitive offer. Our evaluation will be geared to identify those proposals that offer the best combination of expertise and value, considering the following:

1. Understanding and provision of all items requested in the RFP
2. Demonstrated prior experience developing and implementing strategic websites in the travel and tourism sector; proposed team experience.
3. Quality, creativity and relevance of tour and travel samples provided
4. Suitability for project – current work load, staff size, references and a demonstrated effectiveness with similar project
5. Budget approach

SAA will not, however, base its evaluation solely on price and reserves the right to make an award to an Offeror who may not necessarily be the lowest bidder.

- SAA reserves the right to award all, partial or none of this solicitation.
- Travel and travel reimbursement is not authorized for this acquisition.

Offeror shall have the capability, experience, and expertise to provide the SAA with services in accordance with the requirements set forth herein and consistent with the representations made in the submission under this RFP.

Proposal Format

SAA will not provide any reimbursement for any costs associated with the development or presentation of a proposal.

Failure to include any of the following information may have an adverse impact on the evaluation of a proposal:

- Offeror should complete all the components of the Evaluation and Selection Criteria. Offeror should respond to the main themes of each of the outlined Evaluation and Selection Criteria in a comprehensive, yet succinct, narrative that addresses the SAA's core needs as outlined above. Offeror should provide corresponding examples, sample work products or references when asked to do so. The SAA may request additional detailed responses to individual questions.
- Inclusion of client information or references that reflect upon the Offeror's consulting expertise or experience is desirable.
- Table of contents and an executive summary of the proposal should be included.
- A fee schedule for work proposed under the RFP should be included.

Company Details

- Company name and parent company name
- Ownership structure
- Years in operation
- Mailing address (headquarters)
- Other office location(s)
- Primary phone
- Website and blog URL
- Primary point of contact

- Bios of primary team members who would be engaged in this project
- Total number of employees
- Comprehensive pricing and/or rate sheet for all potential services you might provide under this RFP should you be selected as a service provider

Conflicts of Interest

- Certification that there are no conflicts of interest between any existing contracts. Client relationships that could potentially be a conflict of interest must be listed together with a discussion of how you will resolve the potential conflict of interest. The respondent cannot currently be working with any tourism offices in the Northeast include that states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maine, Pennsylvania, New York and New Hampshire.

References

- Three references for travel and tourism-related web development work including: company name, primary client name, contact details ad brief explanation of services provided

Capabilities and Experience

- Provide an overview of services and capabilities
- Address key resources applicable to the project described in this RFP (e.g. work completed in-house or outsourced, access to software or other technology, etc.)
- List relevant experience with travel and tourism-related web design
- What percentage of business is tourism-related
- List awards/accolades and special certifications

Approach to Project

- Explain your methodology and planning process for website development
- Detail the technical requirements and systematic implementation needed
- Provide number of revisions included
- Outline what content will be needed (multimedia and text)
- What key areas of focus would you recommend for the redevelopment and improvement of www.GoStowe.com
- Detail project management from your agency
- Timeline to complete project
- Detailed budget

RFP Logistics

RFP Deadline

Bids shall contain (6) printed copies and one (1) digital copy on a thumb drive. All bids must be delivered to the SAA no later than 5:00 pm on January 31, 2017, at the following address:

Stowe Area Association
51 Main Street
Stowe, VT 05672

Intent to Bid

If your company plans to submit a bid, please send an email by January 15, 2017, to sharonh@gostowe.com.

Non-Disclosure

This RFP contains information that is proprietary to SAA and its member businesses. No part of this RFP may be reproduced, in whole or in part, unless specifically required for the bidder's internal use in responding to this RFP. Disclosure or distribution without the express written consent of SAA and its member businesses is strictly prohibited. The bidder will regard and preserve as confidential all information obtained from any source as a result of this RFP. It is for proposal purposes only and is not to be disclosed or used for any other purpose. SAA reserves the right to request the return or the destruction of any of the material contained in this RFP document. Information received in response to this RFP will be held in strict confidence and not disclosed to any party other than SAA without the express written consent of said bidder.

The Stowe Area Association reserves the right to terminate this solicitation prior to entering into any agreement with any qualified firm pursuant to this Request for Proposal, and by responding hereto, no firms are vested with any rights in any way whatsoever.

The Stowe Area Association reserves the right to reject any or all bids for not complying with the terms of this RFP. SAA also reserves the right to negotiate with the selected bidder in the event that the lowest responsive and responsible bid price exceeds available funds. Any bid may be withdrawn prior to the above scheduled timeline. Any bid received after the time and date specified shall not be considered.