

Request for Proposals for Media Buying Agency of Record



GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to obtain proposals from qualified media buying agencies interested in becoming Sea Research Foundation, Inc.'s (SRF) media buying agency of record by providing strategic media planning, purchasing and analysis.

A presentation of your agency's capabilities, case studies that demonstrate results-oriented campaigns and a preliminary rate structure are required.

RFP PROCESS AND RESPONSE FORMAT

Submitting firms are requested to email proposals by Noon, Friday, January 10, 2014. Late responses will not be considered.

Please send to:

Jacinta Simoncini

Assistant Director of Marketing

Sea Research Foundation, Inc.

jSimoncini@searesearch.org

Agency responses will be evaluated by a selection committee, which will select finalists to make in-person presentations January 27 – 31, 2014. Agencies will be notified by January 17, 2014 if they are selected for presentations.

Responses to this RFP will be considered confidential and not shared with anyone outside the selection committee or SRF staff.

All submitted materials will become property of SRF and will not be returned. It is anticipated an agency would be selected by February 7, 2014.

QUESTIONS

Please direct any questions to Jacinta Simoncini, Assistant Director of Marketing, **no later than January 3, 2014 5pm.** 860.572.5955 x519, jSimoncini@searesearch.org.

No informational meetings will be held once the RFP has been released to agencies. No questions will be taken after January 3, 2014.

WHO WE ARE

About Sea Research Foundation, Inc.

Sea Research Foundation, Inc. (SRF), a non-profit organization, operates Mystic Aquarium, the Ocean Exploration Center and JASON Learning.

Mystic Marinelife Aquarium was founded in 1973 to serve as a living laboratory and major public exhibit, highlighting some of the most intriguing species in the world. The Aquarium established itself as a progressive research entity under the leadership of its director, Dr. Stephen Spotte, whose publications became the cornerstone of modern aquarium keeping. Today, Mystic Aquarium is one of the premier aquariums in the country with one of America's largest, outdoor beluga whale exhibits as its centerpiece. Mystic Aquarium also features endangered African Penguins, Stellar Sea Lions, Northern Fur Seals and a diversity of fish and invertebrates.

Since 1997, Mystic Aquarium has also featured the work of famed explorer, Dr. Robert Ballard in the Ocean Exploration Center. The 10,000 square-foot gallery features *Titanic: 12,450 feet below*, Dr. Ballard's own telling of Titanic's majesty, tragedy and rediscovery. It also houses the Nautilus Live Theater, where Dr. Ballard's current deep-ocean explorations are broadcast live to Aquarium visitors.

In 2010, SRF assumed management of the JASON Project, now JASON Learning, an internationally recognized STEM education program for middle-school students, and an affiliate of the National Geographic Society. JASON reaches over 2 million school children globally with high-tech STEM education programming tied to federal and state common core standards.

SRF continues to conduct world-class research around the globe including annual studies with wild beluga whales in Point Lay, Alaska and Cunningham Inlet, Canada. SRF is also an extremely active member with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

Sea Research Foundation Mission Statement:

Inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through education, research and exploration.

GENERAL SCOPE OF WORK

SRF is seeking a media buying partner to serve as primary media planning resource, inclusive of strategic media direction; market analysis; media negotiation and purchasing; and post-buy analysis. Advertising Creative services will be solicited in a separate RFP. Agencies that offer creative services are more than welcome to respond to both RFPs.

For the sake of this RFP, the primary focus will be to drive attendance to Mystic Aquarium. SRF is seeking a partner to establish a data-driven media program designed to expand on Mystic Aquarium's consumer positioning, New England's Hands-on Aquarium, with a new media campaign to launch in the Spring of 2014.

The selected partner will work with the SRF Marketing team to create an integrated media strategy that may include, but certainly not be limited to:

- Television
- Online Advertising
- Radio
- Viral/mobile/social media campaigns
- Untraditional and/or traditional out-of-home
- Strategic partnerships and sponsorships
- Grassroots efforts/tie-ins

ANNUAL BUDGET

At this time the total 2014 advertising media budget is \$525,000. The budget covers all campaign elements, including planning, agency fees, production, events, technology, paid media, etc. Agencies should be able to demonstrate good budget stewardship and success in leveraging modest, non-profit budgets to achieve exponential results.

AGENCY CAPABILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for this campaign, responding agencies should have at a minimum (but not limited to) the following:

- Strong research and planning capabilities
- Relevant experience (tourism and/or attractions)
- Social media campaign planning
- Digital strategy and execution
- Budget management and reporting

Agencies may form partnerships or engage subcontractors as a team to respond to this RFP, but these relationships must be identified in the response.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the questions below within your proposal to provide us with insight into the capabilities, capacity and philosophy of your agency. Response must be limited to no more than (5) double-sided pages.

1. Please tell us about your agency and your team.
 - a. How many full-time employees do you have?
 - b. What's the average tenure of employees at the agency?
 - c. Who would work on Sea Research Foundation's account?
 - d. What's your agency's vision?
2. Please provide an overview of your agency's scope of services.
 - a. Briefly describe your agency philosophy, specifically, your planning and buying approach.
 - b. Briefly describe your capabilities.
 - c. Do you plan to outsource any of your work? If so how do you keep outsourced work in touch with the account?
3. Please tell us more about your work.
 - a. Please include a list of your clients in descending order of size and include the number of years you have worked with them.
 - b. Please also include the names of clients added in the past two years and names of clients lost in the past two years.
 - c. Did you provide pro-bono work in 2013? If so, for which client(s)?
 - d. Please provide at least three (3) relevant case studies that best represent your agency's work.
4. Describe your approach to creating a strategic media plan. Please include:
 - a. How do you solicit input from your clients?
 - b. What role would your SRF counterparts play in the development of a campaign?
 - c. Can you describe how you manage typical agency to client communication?
 - d. Describe how your agency evaluates the success of a campaign
5. Please outline your recommended billing structure for SRF including any pro-bono work that may be provided.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Insight and approach to developing a strategic media plan. Based on agency experience, relationships and staff that have resulted in successful, results-oriented campaigns.
- Demonstrated ability to develop smart media campaigns that utilize a unique mix of traditional and non-traditional media to engage audiences and achieve results.
- Understanding and approach to working with a non-profit organization with multiple stakeholders; demonstration of passion and commitment to SRF's mission.
- Qualifications, experience and fit of staff that would be assigned to the SRF team.
- Cost structure