



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

MAY 31, 2018

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RFP FILE NAME/TITLE: Cruise the Great Lakes

1. OVERVIEW:

[Cruise the Great Lakes](#) is the region's cruise marketing partnership. It is a collaboration of the region's States, Provinces and partners working together to grow regional cruising. The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) serves as secretariat.

The mission of [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) is to promote cruising in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River through an optimized and unique brand targeted towards current and potential passengers. Its near-term focus is on marketing to potential consumers in North America. Distribution channels could include direct to consumer, tour operators, and retail travel trade. A secondary, but parallel, audience for marketing will be cruise operators.

Cruising on the Great Lakes is poised for major growth in the coming years, with significant economic benefits for the entire region. In 2018, eight ships plan to operate in the region, representing nearly one million port visits by passengers. Two additional ships plan to enter the region by 2020.

Regional cruising has been growing rapidly despite the lack of a consistent regional brand or marketing program specifically directed at cruise passengers. [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) fills this gap and positions the region for sustained cruising growth for years to come.

Cruise the Great Lakes is looking for a consultant(s) that will help lead this new program and manage its marketing components. The prospective consultant must clearly illustrate how their recommended approach will help reach cruise passengers in North America.

In advance of the launch of Cruise the Great Lakes in July 2018, the partnership has undertaken a series of preparatory steps which will form the basis for the work of the consultant:

- Assess market demand and economic impact in order to understand the existing cruise industry on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and its growth potential. The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers have identified analyses already done, including those completed for the Government of Ontario, Cruise Ontario, the Great Lakes Cruising Coalition, Cruise the Saint Lawrence and the analysis under development by a coalition of Ontario Mayors.
- Conduct a branding audit and analysis, then develop an initial brand. Because a number of different brands already exist and are successful throughout the region, the regional cruise identity is largely an exercise in brand discovery, education and awareness rather than brand creation. To the greatest extent possible, existing brands, content and resources will be built upon and not duplicated or supplanted.

2. SUBMISSION:

All proposals must be submitted electronically to gsgp@gsgp.org by June 30, 2018 with "Cruise the Great Lakes RFP Response" in the subject line. The text of the proposal should be no more than ten (10) type written pages including supporting exhibits. Proposals should be in Adobe PDF format. Clearly marked, direct and brief responses are encouraged. Responses should be as comprehensive as possible based on the information provided in this RFP; unfortunately we are unable to respond to questions.

3. ACQUISITION METHOD:

Purchase of Services.

4. EXPECTED CONTRACT DURATION:

First operational contract:	July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019
GSGP option to renew beyond first year:	Two additional 1-year options to renew operational contract, subject to evaluation of contract performance and budget.

Total anticipated duration:	July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021
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5. CURRENT TOTAL ANNUAL BUDGET:

For July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019, the total available finding for development, operation and management of the program is \$120,000. No more than 50% of this budget may be used for management of the program in year one of the agreement. In

year one of the agreement, at least 50% must be utilized for marketing services which might include those actions listed in the Scope of Services, below.

The \$120,000 includes all monies payable to the consultant to fulfill the scope of services, inclusive of agency fees, meetings and travel, website development, digital marketing, printed material, familiarization tours and event participation. The amount indicated is estimated and subject to final approval by the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) Board of Directors.

Contract amounts for future years may increase or decrease, based upon availability of funds, level of required services and the evaluation of the consultant's performance.

6. SCOPE OF SERVICES:

The marketing program will initially be focused on potential cruise passengers in North America. The [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) Board of Directors has identified a number of potential components that could be incorporated into the marketing program. Responding consultants should consider these components and recommend a specific strategy and corresponding scope of work, using these approaches and/or others, along with a detailed budget describing planned expenditures for each component. Any subcontracting for tasks must be specified in the consultant's response and will be evaluated as part of the proposed program. The consultant will be responsible for all performance and work, regardless of whether sub-contractors are used.

- **Administrative Tasks**
- **Trade Relations**
 1. Familiarization tours:
 - Seeing what the region has to offer through the various cruise lines can best be achieved by experiencing it personally.
 - To that end, [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) could organize familiarization tours of the region including media representatives. Familiarization tours could be linked to digital marketing efforts and advertorial content.
 2. Participation in events:
 - [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) could participate in trade shows, conventions, etc. with partner members to directly connect with the travel trade who can help potential consumers discover the region.
 - At these events, printed information could be shared with attendees.
 - The consultant could assist and support partners' sales efforts to structure and build promotional material specifically for the region.
- **Public Relations**
 - The consultant will serve as the primary contact for [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) with the press and public.
- **Centralized Website**
 - The consultant could oversee the development of a centralized website to explain basic components about the growing cruising industry in the

Great Lakes, and all that the region has to offer. The website could provide an opportunity to share content about the region and create visibility for cruise operators, port authorities, convention & visitor bureaus and attractions.

- The website could embody the brand developed by the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) partnership. It could target current and potential cruise passengers, with a secondary audience being the cruise industry.
- The website could also include information about the different ports and attractions that can be visited during regional cruises. Each State and Province could highlight tourism activities available when the cruise ships dock in their area.
- Pictures and videos could be featured on the website, highlighting the interesting activities surrounding the ports of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence. Each partnership member could be invited to provide content in order to utilize existing promotional material and save on production costs.
- The website could include an interactive map, highlighting the ports interested in welcoming cruise passengers, where consumers can easily learn about the ports, cities and attractions. This map could also present the cruise line itineraries.
- **Digital Marketing**
 - *Paid search*: The consultant could administer the purchase of paid searches to have the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) website present in the first results shown on search engine result pages. This could be a useful tactic to gain visibility through the first year of existence.
 - *Sponsored content*: The consultant could reach out to mainstream media providers that are used by the target audience to write advertorial editorial content about the cruise itineraries and regional cruising experience to help gain visibility for the website.
 - The consultant could use web, print and TV media like *National Geographic Traveler, Smithsonian Journeys, Cruising World, CNN, Fox, MSNBC, Times, etc.* to advance awareness of [Cruise the Great Lakes](#).
- **Printed Material**
 - *Map*: Considering the primarily North American target audience, which is financially stable and on average over 45 years old, the consultant could manage the development of printed material to reach it. This map could geographically locate the Great Lakes within North America and include the St. Lawrence River, and locate each active port offering activities for the cruise passengers.
 - The map could offer business description and logo recognition for the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) partners. It could also present partner cruise lines offering regional itineraries. Additional single sheet material could be shared with the map about each partner port and cruise line.

- The map could be available for order through the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) website to help gather information about potential clients that could be shared with partners.
- The map could be shared with partners to distribute at events, sales missions, tourism bureau activities, etc.

7. COMPENSATION

Consultant invoices will be paid in US dollars. Value Added Tax (VAT) does not apply to services invoiced to and rendered on behalf of GSGP. Payments will be made by GSGP directly to the consultant.

Compensation for management services will be paid on a monthly basis following the receipt of a monthly program status report, with equal payments made over the course of the term of the contract.

Additional compensation (e.g. expenses) will be on a cost reimbursement basis. The consultant will be required to produce detailed receipts of all expenses. The consultant will submit an invoice accompanied by relevant documentation that supports the successful completion of services. Any pre-payments will be agreed upon on a project-by-project basis.

Compensation will be paid monthly after the completion of the month and relevant receipts, along with a monthly program status report, are submitted and reviewed. GSGP will have 30 days after receipt of the invoice to process payment.

The total amount of all compensation including expenses shall not exceed US\$120,000 for July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019.

8. CONSULTANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Consultants are considered eligible if they meet the following *minimum* qualifications:

- Minimum 5 years in destination marketing experience.
- Experience in marketing and developing travel brands for North American travel destinations.
- Demonstrated effectiveness of programs for current or previous travel clients.
- An office located in, or with access to, a major metropolitan area in North America through which activities will be coordinated and managed. Please specify the number of full- and part-time employees that work in the designated office.
- The consultant, or consulting team, must demonstrate experience and ability to work within the community in the travel and tourism field and have the necessary network of contacts to initiate and implement this program. Fluency in written and spoken English is required, with French language skills also an advantage.

- Familiarity of the Great Lakes region as a cruise travel destination is not required, but will be taken into consideration when reviewing proposals.

9. ELEMENTS OF PROPOSAL

To be considered a valid response to this RFP, submissions must include:

- A description of your business including a general overview, years in business, annual current client billing for the past five (5) years, including an estimate for current year, organizational flow chart, number of full and part-time employees and consultants/contract employees by functional area.
- A list of all travel and marketing industry clients over the last three years, if any: client name, work performed, annual billings (or, if confidential, dollar range of billings), and contract status. Consultants who have travel-related clients that could pose a conflict of interest may be disqualified.
- The consultant's capabilities as they relate to [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) marketing opportunities and challenges.
- Three examples of past projects that required actions similar to those outlined in Section 6 Scope of Services. Outline the key goals, objectives, and outcomes. Attach any examples of creative and/or supporting materials. Provide client contact information. Indicate who from the consultant's team was responsible for the project.
- The Proposed account team (if applicable) including any subcontractors and proposed partners/subcontractors: names, credentials, length of employment, work status (permanent vs contract employee). Clearly identify the person who will have primary responsibility for managing the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) program and who will be the primary day-to-day contact.
- An overview of latest market trends with a broad overview explaining the general strategy to put [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) in the best position to advance its goals.
- A recommended marketing program, itemized budget and methods of measuring outcomes for activities such as those described in Section 6.

10. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be evaluated based upon the consultant's responsiveness to this RFP and compliance with all eligibility requirements as detailed in Section 8, including:

- Demonstrated ability to perform all required services such as those detailed in Section 6, or otherwise proposed
- Relevant experience of consultant, marketing agency and subcontractors, if any
- Demonstrated results
- Credentials of the consultant, marketing agency or account team
- Overall quality of the submission

Any response, regardless of the submission formats specified, that fails to meet mandatory specification of this RFP may be found non-responsive without further evaluation unless GSGP, in its discretion, determines that the non-compliance is insubstantial, can be corrected or that an alternative proposed by the consultant is acceptable. Regardless, GSGP reserves the right to reject proposals for any reason, unless otherwise prohibited by law.

Proposals will be evaluated by a review panel selected by the [Cruise the Great Lakes](#) Board of Directors or their designees and the Executive Director of GSGP. This review panel will determine eligibility and select consultants invited to present capabilities. This will be arranged via teleconference or webinar. All expenses related to the presentation, if required, will be at the consultant's cost.

The panel will then make the final selection, and a contract will be prepared for signature with a start date of August 1, 2018.

11. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Proposals due:	June 30, 2018
Interview date (if required):	July 2018 (specific dates to be agreed with finalists)
Start date for contract	August 1, 2018

Schedule is subject to change; consultants will be notified of any changes.