



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – UK & IRELAND & GERMAN SPEAKING MARKETS**

**ISSUED: SEPTEMBER 30, 2025**

**CLOSING: NOVEMBER 11, 2025 @5PM CST**

The Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) unites the chief executives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Québec, and Wisconsin. The Governors and Premiers work as equal partners to grow the region's \$6 trillion economy and protect the world's largest system of surface fresh water. GSGP manages two partnerships aimed at increasing tourism to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region—Great Lakes USA (GLUSA) and Cruise the Great Lakes (CTGL).

GLUSA consists of the member states of NY, PA, IL, IN, WI, MI and MN as well as over 30 partner DMO's. Many states and DMO's have their own international marketing programs and GLUSA serves as the organization that oversees complementary and cooperative marketing and sales efforts. Currently GLUSA focuses efforts on the U.K., Ireland, German, Austrian and Swiss markets. The ultimate goal of the organization is to increase economic impact through international tourism.

CTGL is the region's cruise marketing partnership and a collaboration of the region's States, Provinces and partners working together to grow regional cruising via advocacy and policy. Its mission is to promote cruising in the region through an optimized and unique brand targeted at current and potential passengers. Over 90% of CTGL current cruise ship guests are U.S. based so this RFP does not need to include this organization extensively.

Each program is overseen by a board consisting of representatives from each of the participating member States and Provinces. Each program also has a fee-based partnership program open to interested organizations (e.g., Conventions and Visitors Bureaus; Cruise Ship Operators; and Ports).

For more information on GLUSA and CTGL, visit:

<https://greatlakesusa.co.uk/>

<https://www.greatlakes.de/>

[www.cruisethegreatlakes.com](http://www.cruisethegreatlakes.com)

GSGP is now accepting proposals from interested individuals or agencies who will serve as in-country representation and would help support the GSGP's tourism programs in the United Kingdom/Ireland and Germany/Austria/Switzerland. You may submit information for one or both markets and please clearly specify.

**All proposals must be submitted by email to [gsgp@gsgp.org](mailto:gsgp@gsgp.org) by November 11, 2025 @5pm CST.**

**1. PROCUREMENT OVERVIEW:**

Great Lakes USA (GLUSA) is seeking the services of an organization to develop and implement programs/campaigns to position Great Lakes USA as a preferred travel destination in United Kingdom and Ireland, and/or German speaking markets of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

GLUSA is looking for a vendor or vendors that will increase the volume of travelers to Great Lakes USA with highly cost-effective results-driven programs. The prospective vendor(s) must clearly illustrate how their recommended programs will increase visitors and the economic impact to Great Lakes USA states and the region's return on investment, showing quantifiable results.

**2. GENERAL CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS:**

**All proposals must be submitted by email to [gsgp@gsgp.org](mailto:gsgp@gsgp.org) by November 11, 2025 @5pm CST.**

**3. ACQUISITION METHOD:**

Purchase of Services.

**4. EXPECTED DURATION OF CONTRACTS:**

First operational contract duration:	January 1- December 31, 2026
Option to renew beyond first year:	The following year contract will be 18 months (January 1, 2027- June 30, 2028) The third year will be July 1, 2028-June30, 2029, subject to the evaluation of the contract performance and GLUSA budget.

Total anticipated duration:	January 1, 2026- June 30, 2029
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**5. PROPOSAL REQUESTED FOR THE FOLLOWING SCOPE OF WORK**

We would like to focus on 4 core areas and see them outlined in a proposal with measurable results.

**Product Audits** – Understanding the market and what product is where to determine need areas and provide gaps to the Tourism Director and Board of Directors. This will help us make smart marketing and investment decisions and assist with goals setting for the future. Provide an example of a recent product audit you have conducted or conduct a mini audit for a specific target demographic in the Great Lakes area.

**Market maintenance and development:** The proposal should include an outline of how to maintain existing markets, seek new opportunities for growth and managing the maturity of our key markets. The proposal should also include insights into new marketing opportunities in key markets with direct flights to major cities in the region, or countries with growing inbound potential.

- Proposal should include a demonstration of knowledge of the Great Lakes region, travel trends, regional distinctions and provide a plan for quickly onboarding and gaining expertise if not already familiar with the region. Agencies should articulate how their understanding of the region will inform their approach.
- Include knowledge of key operators and companies that are currently carrying Great Lake product, or companies that could be championing our region and are not currently.
- Sales calls, trainings, FAMS, and co-op marketing are important elements to include.

**PR Pitching and Outreach**— ongoing, active, and always on approach with monthly reporting. Proposal must include sample PR pitch report with impressions or number of products, short and long lead pitching and 2 examples of successful PR campaigns for US partners.

- Proposal must include an example of a Media FAM to the region with simple itinerary and demonstration of coordination.
- Include managing and executing (minimum 4) pre-approved FAMS/sales mission per the marketing plan mutually agreeable to the board.

**Ongoing Services** Ongoing communication, consultation, and strategic guidance: The proposal should include an outline of services that will support, maintain, and grow the GLUSA presence in the UK, Germany and key markets while providing information to State Members. The firm will be providing a monthly report that will be tracked with a dashboard of KPIs that will be established in the first 90 days.

- The firm will act as a connector between the trade and media in the respective markets and the Tourism Director and GLUSA board based in the U.S.
- Monthly calls with Tourism Director to discuss upcoming opportunities and insights into the markets.

## **6. SCOPE OF SERVICES:**

### **This RFP asks responding vendors to:**

- Recommend a marketing strategy and annual or short-term project program of work for GLUSA including trade, and media projects. Provide suggested metrics for activities and initiatives. No consumer first initiatives unless through a trade partner.  
Include suggested trade co-ops, public relations, managed media, trade education, trade, and media familiarization tours to the region.
- Include an example of an annual report, annual detailed travel trade product audit and earned media report.
- Summarize goals and deliverables, including planned trade and media activities, education, and other services. Include proposed KPIs to report on and provide an example of reporting.
- Identify potential opportunities for expansion of individual state and membership buy-in activities, and proposed partner pricing structure for each opportunity.
- Include membership in VisitUSA U.K./Germany in the proposal and budget and how you would leverage that membership to drive business to the Great Lakes region.
- Attendance at GLUSA/CTGL annual meeting at a partner location. Present on trends and program updates at least twice a year.
- Create and maintain a media library of images, B-roll, and other assets with assistance of Tourism Director.
- Organize and support GLUSA at U.S. Travel's IPW and Brand USA's Travel Week as requested (proposals must outline any additional fees associated with this request).

**Please note: Any subcontracting of work must be specified in the bidder's response and will be evaluated by GLUSA as part of the proposed program. GLUSA must approve sub-contractors in advance, but the primary contracted vendor will be responsible for performance.**

## **7. COMPENSATION:**

There are two contracts available. Please specify which markets you are covering in your proposal.

- Each market (U.K./Ireland OR Germany/Switzerland/Austria):  
\$100,000 USD / Year
- Contractor invoices paid in US Dollars.
- Value Added Tax (VAT) does not apply to services invoiced to and rendered on behalf of GLUSA. Payments will be made directly to the contractor(s).
- Compensation will be on a cost reimbursement basis. Contractor will submit an invoice accompanied by relevant documentation that supports the successful completion of services.
- Invoices will be paid at the end of the month after receipts are submitted and reviewed, along with the monthly program status report.
- The agency will be required to produce detailed receipts for all expenses.
- GLUSA will have 30 days after receipt of the invoice to process payment.

Proposals should outline retainer fees and project costs. It is expected that the retainer will cost approximately 50% of each contract while opportunities and projects outside of the retainer make up the remaining 50%.

The proposal must include a separate cost proposal detailing the work expected under the retainer, proposed additional projects and their costs and any additional proposal costs not outlined in this request.

Terms to Use:

**OOP= travel costs, third-party pass-through costs and/or subscriptions or any approved administrative costs (but not limited to)**

**FEE= all associated labor or time to perform the scope of services defined above.**

## **8. CONTRACTOR(S) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:**

International organizations that are selected to market Great Lakes USA are considered eligible if they meet the following *minimum* qualifications:

- Minimum 7 years' experience in destination marketing.
- Demonstrated effectiveness of programs for current or previous travel clients.
- An office located in, or with access to, a major metropolitan area in the United Kingdom and/or Germany through which activities will be coordinated and managed. Please specify the number of full- and part-time employees that work in the designated office.
- Account 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. All account staff must be fluent in written and spoken English.

- Experience in marketing and developing travel brands for any United States travel destination.
- Familiarity of Great Lakes USA as a travel destination.

## **9. ELEMENTS OF PROPOSAL**

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

- Description of your business including, a general overview, years in business, annual current client billing for the past seven (7) years, including an estimate for current year, organizational flow chart, number of full and part-time employees and consultants/contract employees by functional area, list of clients for the past three years, indicated those that are current and length of relationship for all, and contact person for this RFP and address, phone and email.
- Organization's capabilities as they relate to GLUSA's marketing opportunities and challenges.
- Provide three examples of past projects like 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 agency team was responsible for the project.
- Proposed account team including any subcontractors & 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 account and the person who will be the primary day-to-day contact with the GLUSA team.
- Overview of latest market trends with a broad overview explaining the general strategy of how your business would address these trends to put Great Lakes USA in the best position.
- Provide a list of all current travel destinations and travel industry clients, if any: client name, work performed, and contract status. GLUSA reserves the right to disqualify Bidders who have travel-related clients that, in the opinion of GLUSA, could pose a conflict of interest.

**POST AWARD (within 90 days):**

- Recommended strategies and tactics and methods of measurement to Scope of Services in Section 6. Must include a Year 1 action plan with an itemized budget.

## **10. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS**

Proposals will be evaluated based upon bidders' responsiveness to this RFP in terms of compliance with all eligibility requirements as detailed in Section 8.

- Demonstrated ability to perform all required services as detailed in Section 6
- Relevant experience of marketing agency and subcontractors if any
- Demonstrated results.
- Marketing agency and account team credentials
- Overall quality of the submission

Any response, regardless of the submission formats specified, that fails to meet a mandatory specification of this RFP may be found non-responsive without further evaluation unless GLUSA, in its discretion, determines that the non-compliance is insubstantial, can be corrected or that an alternative proposed by the bidder is acceptable.

Proposals will be evaluated by the Great Lakes USA State Tourism Directors (Board of Directors) or their designees and the Tourism Director of GLUSA. This review panel will determine eligibility and select agencies invited to present capabilities (if required). This will be arranged via teleconference or webinar.

All expenses related to the presentation, if required, will be at Bidder's cost, not GLUSA's.

The panel will then make the final selection of a marketing agency. GLUSA reserves the right to reject proposals if it is deemed in the best interests of Great Lakes USA.

## **11. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION:**

Proposals, excluding any resumes, should be no more than 10 pages including supporting exhibits. Materials exceeding this limit will not be considered.

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Proposals will be evaluated based upon:

- Demonstrated ability to perform all required services.
- Relevant experience.
- Demonstrated results.

- Overall quality of the submission.
- Knowledge of and contacts in the Great Lakes USA region.

GSGP will conduct virtual interviews, and notify finalists/awardees as appropriate, with an estimated start date of January 1, 2026.

***Note: No phone or email inquiries during the application or selection process for all respondents.***