

The logo consists of the letters 'USA' in a white, pixelated font, set against a solid blue square background.

VisitTheUSA.com

Brand USA



Brand USA

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Global Communications & Public Relations

February 2025



INTRODUCTION

As the destination marketing organization for the United States, Brand USA's mission is to increase incremental international visitation, spend, and market share to fuel the nation's economy and enhance the image of the USA worldwide.

Established by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009 as the nation's first public-private partnership to spearhead a globally coordinated marketing effort to promote the United States as a premier travel destination and communicate U.S. visa and entry policies, Brand USA began operations in May 2011.

As one of the best levers for driving economic growth, international travel to the United States currently supports 1.2 million American jobs* and benefits virtually every sector of the U.S. economy. Since its founding, Brand USA has worked with more than 900 contributing organizations to invite the world to explore the exceptional, diverse, and virtually limitless travel experiences and destinations available in the United States of America.

According to studies by Oxford Economics, over the past seven years Brand USA's marketing initiatives have helped welcome 7.5 million incremental visitors to the USA, benefiting the U.S. economy with nearly \$55 billion in total economic impact, and supporting more than 50,000 incremental jobs each year.

Brand USA's operations are supported by a combination of nonfederal contributions from destinations, travel brands, and private-sector organizations plus matching funds collected by the U.S. government from international visitors who visit the United States under the Visa Waiver Program.

For industry and partner information about Brand USA, please visit TheBrandUSA.com.

For information about exceptional and unexpected travel experiences in the United States, please visit Brand USA's consumer website at VisitTheUSA.com.



PURPOSE

Brand USA is seeking a global communications and public relations firm to serve as a cross-organizational resource for strategic media relations and communications in our mission to attract international visitors to the U.S. This agency will support Brand USA's existing global PR efforts by providing expertise in earned media strategy and strategic messaging to protect and enhance the USA's brand image worldwide.

This agency will work closely with Brand USA's in-house PR team and international agency network, ensuring alignment with overall strategy while offering additional support in key markets where conditions shift. With a primary focus on international visitors, the selected firm will help strengthen Brand USA's presence in key global markets, ensuring messaging resonates with travelers and reinforces the U.S. as a welcoming and open destination. The agency will also support Brand USA in telling its story, amplifying its impact, and merchandising its work to key media across the U.S.

BACKGROUND

Key areas of support:

- Strategic Counsel & Messaging Development
- Media & Influencer Relations
- Issues Management Support
- Thought Leadership
- Public Relations & Industry Collaboration
- Event Support and Execution

SCOPE OF WORK

The agency will be responsible for the following:

- **Strategic Counsel for In-House PR Team**
 - Act as an advisory resource for Brand USA's global PR team
 - Provide guidance on rapid response strategies.
- **Strategic Communications & Messaging**
 - Develop and execute a strategic messaging framework for Brand USA, based on international travel trends.
 - Craft key messages emphasizing the welcoming nature of the U.S. and the economic impact of tourism.
 - Provide strategic guidance on narrative development, including promoting U.S. tourism as a form of soft diplomacy.
 - Develop and implement a dynamic communications strategy for major global events, such as America 250, FIFA World Cup, and summer (2028) and winter (2034) Olympic games, positioning



Brand USA the U.S. as the premier travel destination for the next decade.

- **Issues Management**
 - Develop a proactive strategy to address real-time and potential challenges.
 - Provide communication support with rapid response capabilities.
 - Monitor global news cycles and advise on potential risks.
 - Developing action plans for addressing negative sentiment and challenges.
 - Providing messaging recommendations to guide Brand USA's communications and PR team.
- **Domestic Media Relations & Industry Engagement**
 - Strengthen Brand USA's domestic media presence by fostering relationships with key U.S. media outlets and engaging local industry partners.
 - Showcase Brand USA's programming, campaigns, and initiatives through targeted media outreach, press events, and strategic storytelling.
 - Leverage industry stakeholders to amplify messaging and reinforce Brand USA's role in driving tourism growth across the country.
- **Media & Influencer Engagement**
 - Proactively cultivate and maintain strong media relationships with top-tier U.S. and global outlets to ensure consistent and positive coverage of Brand USA.
 - Develop and execute a comprehensive media relations strategy, securing high-impact placements in key travel and business publications.
 - Enhance rapid response media capabilities
 - Leverage influencers and key opinion leaders (KOLs) to amplify Brand USA's messaging across digital and traditional media.
 - Support earned media efforts, including press engagement, editorial pitching, and strategic storytelling to reinforce Brand USA's mission.
- **Thought Leadership**
 - Develop and execute a thought leadership strategy that highlights Brand USA's role in driving and contributing to the economic benefits of tourism.
 - Secure executive speaking opportunities at industry conferences, panels, and media forums to highlight Brand USA's role in driving economic growth.
 - Pursue high-impact placements for op-eds, expert commentary, and research-driven insights that reinforce the value of international travel to the U.S. economy.



- **Event Support & Execution**

- Assist in planning and executing media events and industry activations, as needed.
- Assist in staffing major global PR events, including IPW and Travel Week, and other events as needed, to support media relations, partner engagement, and on-site execution.

QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

The agency must demonstrate capabilities in the following areas:

- Proven experience in strategic communications and public relations
- Strong relationships with travel and business media, both domestically and worldwide.
- Ability to conduct rapid response media engagement and issues management.
- Expertise in nation branding and tourism marketing.
- Experience working with tourism boards and international organizations.
- Strong copywriting, editing experience
- Staffing: Two (2) full time account team members, with additional staff and resources as necessary
 - One senior-level (VP or above) – 100%
 - One account director – 100%
 - Additional staff and resources as necessary

BUDGET

The annual budget including retainer and PR activation is: \$500,000. Proposers must submit a detailed and realistic budget breakdown, along with an estimated execution timeline.



MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Proposals may be rejected if they do not include all deliverables. Proposers wishing clarification of this RFP must submit questions in writing to Brand USA, no later than **MARCH 17** and sent by e-mail to RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com. Questions will not be answered on calls, with the exception of meetings with scheduled finalists during, or after the meeting. Company names will be removed from the published question/answer document. Duplicative questions, irrelevant questions and questions already addressed in this RFP may not be published. Pitches will be not be accepted outside the RFP process.

Costs for developing proposals are entirely the responsibility of the proposer and shall not be reimbursed by Brand USA.

1. **Notice of Intent to Bid** must be received by **MARCH 21** (due by 5:00 PM EDT).

The notice shall be sent by e-mail to RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com. The NOTICE OF INTENT TO BID, is nonbinding; however, it ensures the receipt of all addenda related to this RFP. Proposals will be accepted only from applicants who submitted a timely NOTICE OF INTENT TO BID.

2. **RFP Responses** must follow the below guidelines and contain the following information:
 - Proposals must not exceed five (5) pages in length.
 - Provide a high-level overview of your approach and key differentiators.
 - Provide any existing client relationships that may present a potential conflict of interest.
 - Identify the staffing plan for Brand USA's account. Include resumes or bios of key team members.
 - Outline your proposed plan with relevant case studies demonstrating past success.
 - Provide a comprehensive budget breakdown, including retainer fees, hard costs, and any additional anticipated expenses.
3. **Certification Form**: Must be signed and accompany all RFP Response submissions.



TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

This tentative schedule may be altered at any time at the discretion of Brand USA. Brand USA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or any part thereof; waive an informality in the proposals and accept the proposal that best meets the needs of Brand USA.

A. Proposal Released	March 12
B. Written Questions (due by 5:00 PM EDT)	March 17
C. Written Questions Answered and posted to Brand USA website	March 19
D. Notice of Intent to Bid Due (due by 5:00 PM EDT)	March 21
E. Proposal Due (due by 5:00 PM EDT)	April 4
F. Notification and Scheduling of Finalist Interviews	W/O April 7
G. Finalist Presentation/Interviews	W/O April 14
H. Notice of Intent to Award Contract and Public Posting	April 21

DELIVERY OF PROPOSAL

Proposals should be e-mailed to RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com. We will acknowledge receipt, so if you do not receive a receipt notification within two business days, please contact us. If the file size of your proposal is too large to email, or send via a FTP service, contact us and we will make arrangements.

EVALUATION AND CONTRACTING

All proposals satisfying the requirements of this Request for Proposals will be evaluated to establish which of the providers best fulfills the needs of Brand USA and this project. This Request for Proposals in no way commits Brand USA to award a contract, to pay any costs in preparation of a proposal, or to contract for the goods and/or services offered.

Brand USA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, to negotiate with all qualified providers or to cancel this Request for Proposals. After awarding the contract, the schedule will include a period of collaboration between Brand USA and the selected Contractor to better define, elaborate upon, and fix the Contractor's final Scope of Work and general Terms and Conditions.



ATTACHMENT 1

NOTICE OF INTENT TO BID

Due: [Date]

SEND TO: rfpadmin@thebrandusa.com

NAME OF BIDDER / COMPANY:
CONTACT PERSON:
MAILING ADDRESS:
TELEPHONE:
FAX:
E-MAIL ADDRESS:
SIGNED:



ATTACHMENT 2

CERTIFICATION

Please include this statement as part of the Proposal

Certification Statement

By submission of this proposal and authorized signature below, Proposer certifies that the undersigned corporate officer has authority to bind the bidder to the terms of this Proposal and hereby certifies on behalf of the bidder that:

1. He/she has read and understands all commitments and terms of this Proposal.
2. The information contained in this Proposal is accurate.
3. Proposer's quote is valid for at least 120 days from the date of proposal's signature below.
4. Proposer understands that if selected as the successful Proposer, he/she will have ten (10) business days in which to complete contract negotiations, if any, and execute the final contract document. Date of execution can be extended by mutual agreement of contractor / Brand USA.

Authorized Signature

Typed or Printed Name

Title

Date

Official Contact

Brand USA requests that the Proposer designate one person to receive all communications for clarification and verification of information related to this proposal. Please identify this point of contact below:

Official Contact Name

Phone Number

Official Contact Title

Facsimile Number

Email Address

Street, City, State, Zip



ATTACHMENT 3 FOR BRAND USA USE ONLY

Bid/Proposal: _____

Evaluated By: _____

Date: _____

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation committee will judge each written proposal based on the following criteria:

	MAX. POINTS	SCORE
Demonstrated success with managing strategic communications and public relations	50	
Ability to execute against listed qualifications and requirements	15	
Qualified staff to manage the requirements	15	
Cost effectiveness	20	
TOTAL POINTS	100	