



USA

VisitTheUSA.com

Brand USA



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP – WeChat B2B account

08.08.2018



## INTRODUCTION

Brand USA is the destination marketing organization for the United States with the mission of increasing 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 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. 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 1.8 million American jobs (directly and indirectly) and benefits virtually every sector of the U.S. economy. Brand USA works in close partnership with more than 700 partner organizations to invite the world to explore the exceptional, diverse, and virtually limitless travel experiences and destinations available in the United States of America.

Brand USA is governed by an 11-member Board of Directors. Each director is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. Each director represents a sector of the travel and tourism industry as identified by the Travel Promotion Act. The executive leadership team possesses strong expertise and experience in the travel, tourism, and advertising industries.

Brand USA delivers a dynamic marketing program that includes, but is not limited to, a global advertising campaign, earned media and public relations strategies, a robust social media outreach plan, promotional and incentive campaigns, trade shows and sales missions, and educational campaigns about U.S. entry policies. Brand USA carefully selected its marketing tools and target audience after vigorous analysis of existing and original market research.

Brand USA is committed to including diverse firms as an important part of its sourcing and procurement activities. In furtherance and support of this goal, we encourage minority, women and locally-owned firms to pursue business opportunities with us. Minority and women-owned firms who otherwise meet the minimum requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal are encouraged to submit a Notice of Intent to Bid. In addition, Brand USA also seeks to do business with firms that also recognize the value of diversity and inclusion in the composition of their workforce and in their own contracting, subcontracting or teaming activities. We encourage such firms who meet the minimum bidding requirements (regardless of size or ownership) to also submit a Notice of Intent to Bid. Brand USA reserves the right to give weight or allocate bidding credit to diverse firms or those with a demonstrated commitment to inclusion as part of its evaluation process.



## WHY DOES A COUNTRY AS POPULAR AS THE USA NEED A MARKETING PROGRAM?

Although the United States remains one of the world's most popular travel destinations, during the first decade of this century, while the global travel market was booming, the USA's share of international travelers declined 37 percent—from 17.2 percent in 2000 to 12.4 percent in 2010. The resulting impact on the U.S. economy was an annual loss of 467,000 jobs and \$606 billion in lost revenue. In addition to being seen as unwelcoming (resulting from increased security measures that came following 9/11) and too familiar, the United States was also one of the world's only industrialized nations without a national tourism board to attract international travelers to its shores in order to fuel the nation's economy by inspiring the world to visit the U.S.A.—to see it again, or for the first time.

With the strength of a national marketing effort from Brand USA now in place, the United States is working to regain its share of the global travel market. By welcoming more international visitors to the USA, Brand USA is supporting U.S. economic growth, helping to spur job creation, and creating a more positive impression of the United States around the world.

## WHY IS INTERNATIONAL VISITATION SO IMPORTANT TO THE NATION'S ECONOMY?

### International visitation helps local communities.

On average, overseas visitors spend nearly \$4,400 per trip and generate tax revenue in communities across America without burdening local services, such as public schools and fire departments. When international travelers spend this kind of money in our communities, it lessens the tax burden on U.S. citizens.

### International visitation supports American jobs and economic growth.

When international visitors come to the U.S.A., the money they spend directly supports about 1.2 million American jobs and added over \$180 billion to the U.S. economy. Overseas arrivals represent around 50% of all international arrivals, yet account for over 85% of total international travel spending. (Source: US Travel Association and NTTO 2016 Data)

### International visitation enhances the image of the United States worldwide.

Surveys show that international visitors to the United States are 74 percent more likely to have a favorable view of America and 61 percent more likely to support U.S. policies.



## Who Pays for It?

International visitors and private contributions fund the work of Brand USA— no U.S. taxpayer dollars are used to fund Brand USA’s marketing efforts. Instead, the organization is supported by contributions from partnering organizations that are matched by fees paid by international travelers to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) program.

ESTA is an automated system implemented by the Department of Homeland Security in 2008 that determines the eligibility of visitors from 38 international markets to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). ESTA authorizations are generally valid for multiple trips over a period of two years or until the traveler’s passport expires, whichever comes first.

## BRAND USA IS BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Brand USA is delivering on a dynamic marketing strategy that includes, but is not limited to, a global advertising campaign, earned media and public relations strategies, a robust social media outreach plan, promotional and incentive campaigns, trade shows and sales missions, and educational campaigns about U.S. entry policies. Brand USA carefully selects its marketing tools and target markets and travelers after vigorous analysis of existing and original market research.

Brand USA with and through the support of more than 700 partners worldwide has made notable progress towards our mission of increasing international visitation to the United States and by all accounts, our efforts are working. Since we began operations in 2011, Brand USA has:

- Established consumer and trade marketing initiatives in more than 30 international markets, which generate 90% of all inbound travel to the United States.
- Expanded our USA consumer campaign to 16 key markets that generate more than 85% of the United States’ international visitors.
- Significantly increased the effectiveness of our consumer campaigns during FY2016 that helped drive increases in international traveler intent to visit the USA ranging from 7% to as high as 99%.
- Established the nation’s largest in-market representation network to work directly with the international travel trade in 20 top travel markets.



- Increased partner program participation in Brand USA cooperative marketing programs by 13% from 245 in FY2015 to 277 in FY2016, which demonstrated value for partners.

According to studies by Oxford Economics, in the past four years alone (fiscal years 2013 through 2016), Brand USA's marketing initiatives are responsible for welcoming 4.3 million incremental visitors to the USA, benefiting the U.S. economy with more than \$13.6 billion in incremental spending; and nearly \$30 billion in total economic impact, which has supported, on average, nearly 51,000 incremental jobs per year.



## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to identify the appropriate vendor to develop and maintain Brand USA's B2B WeChat in China. Our objective is to develop a WeChat platform, which is simple for our travel trade partners (tour operators, travel agents, receptive tour operators, wholesalers, etc.) to use to receive information and communicate with the community manager, navigate, and search. The goal is to better inform our travel trade partners so they can better sell travel to the United States to potential Chinese visitors.

## SCOPE OF WORK

### Register and build the WeChat Platform

- Set up Brand USA's B2B account on WeChat, in our name, following all necessary application procedures to ensure the quality of the account.
- Account verification is listed as under "Brand USA".
- Develop functions including front and back-end coding; integration of third party APIs and testing/quality assurance with User Experience(UX) in mind.
- Design multi-function channels within the account to shoulder promotional tools.
- Create new functionality for the USA Specialist Program and other programs, as needed.

### Content translation and creation

- Re-create the USA Discovery Program function into Brand USA B2B WeChat mini program. This includes translating the content from English into Simplified Chinese. (A key requirement is for the WeChat app to pull content in real-time from the USA Discovery Program China website. All content from the USA Discovery Program China website will be made available via an API. The API will be provided to the chosen vendor. The chosen vendor will be responsible for pinging the RESTful web services and pulling content. The vendor will work collaboratively with Brand USA's digital agency in the coordination, implementation, and testing of the integration.) - [Link](#).
- Integrate the [Brand USA travel trade website](#) on our WeChat platform.
- Menu design and set-up.



- Content development: Collaborate with Brand USA on the creation of travel trade art, content, layout, structure, navigation, translation and upload. Content should reflect Brand USA's branding appropriately with design for Chinese travel trade WeChat users.
- Create B2B appointments and RSVP ability for Brand USA projects e.g. roadshows and training seminars.

#### WeChat Communication Management

- Communications
  - a) Develop automated welcome message with evergreen and promotional QR codes for tracking follower sources.
  - b) Community management
    - i. A minimum of two WeChat posts week with oversight from Brand USA.
    - ii. Responding to travel trade WeChat user queries and conversations with the goal of providing accurate information and engage users. Customer service hours of 0900-18:00 China Time. Queries received off hours to be responded within 24 hours.
- Strategy
  - a) Develop content and posting strategies to drive user engagement.
  - b) Collaborate with Brand USA on other functionality issues related to user engagement.
- Project Management and Reporting (in English)
  - a) Regular communication regarding ongoing projects.
  - b) Weekly reporting on travel trade / user queries.
  - c) Monthly engagement statistics.



## Core Objective

- To better deliver new trade products and engage with travel trade across the country for product development in China.
- To provide ongoing Brand USA and U.S. destination news, events, activities to travel trade through creating a calendar. To develop a multi function trade calendar to update the travel trade in China.
- To facilitate and help maintain the travel trade database logged in by tour operators and travel agencies.
- To develop a platform for online training programs.
- To send out invitation and RSVP for various B2B events like roadshows.

## Functional Requirements

- Advanced architecture expertise with Drupal 7 & 8, informed by testing, analytics and best practices.
- U.S.-based Account Manager.
- Superior art skills with the ability to consistently match pre-existing content.
- Ability to apply quality assurance for the current and last two versions for all major browsers for desktop and mobile.
- Ability to meet technical specifications with flexibility to tailor the product to meet Brand USA needs.

## QUALIFICATIONS

The selected vendor will have at least two years of proven record experience with:

- WeChat project development and community management
- Premium international destination marketing.
- Drupal development with multi-language content management and graphic design.
- Solid company with proven financial backing.



## PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SPECS

- Proposal should include:
  - Vendor background and client list.
  - Project plan and time line for the WeChat registration and development, including hwat can be developed by September 30<sup>th</sup> assuming a September 1<sup>st</sup> start date.
  - Core team and bio/background.
  - Case studies – 3 examples of a proven record of WeChat development and driving community engagement.
  - Budget for development, hosting, maintenance, and community management.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

|                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Proposal released       | August 8 <sup>th</sup>  |
| B. Written Questions       | August 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| C. Answer questions answer | August 15 <sup>th</sup> |
| D. Proposal due            | August 22 <sup>nd</sup> |
| E. Proposal evaluation     | August 24 <sup>th</sup> |
| F. Notice of contract      | August 31 <sup>st</sup> |

## DELIVERY OF PROPOSAL

Proposals may be e-mailed to [RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com) or sent by courier such as Federal Express, UPS, etc. to:

Brand USA Headquarters  
 C/O RFP Administrator  
 1725 Eye Street NW, Suite 800  
 Washington, DC 20006  
 ATTN: RFP – Website Development and Design  
 Phone: 202.536.2060  
 Email: [RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com](mailto:RFPadmin@TheBrandUSA.com)



## ATTACHMENT 1

### 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 five (5) 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Official Contact Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Facsimile Number



\_\_\_\_\_

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 |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Development and User Experience | 40          |       |
| Content management              | 25          |       |
| Team and Strategy               | 25          |       |
| Price                           | 10          |       |
| <b>TOTAL POINTS</b>             | <b>100</b>  |       |