



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Digital Agency for China

June 5, 2019



INTRODUCTION

Brand USA is a public-private not for profit organization created by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009. The mission of Brand USA is to generate increased international visitation to the United States and to grow its share of the global travel market. Brand USA will accomplish this via marketing campaigns and programs and partnerships with the travel industry. The incremental increase in international visitation will generate billions of dollars of revenue, which will in turn create new American jobs.

While the United States welcomed 60 million visitors in 2010, its share of the international travel market has decreased significantly over the past decade. The U.S. share of long haul international travel fell from 17.2 percent in 2000 to 12.4% percent in 2010. Brand USA, the U.S.'s National Tourism Marketing Organization will reinvigorate the nation's image and recapture its share of the market.

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 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 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 \$4,500 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 more than 1 million American jobs and added \$181 billion to the U.S. economy. (Source: US Travel Association and NTTO 2013 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—with half of Brand USA's budget generated by contributions from the private sector and matching funds provided by a \$10 fee paid by travelers from markets that are not required to have a visa to enter the United States. These markets are designated as visa-waiver countries. As a result, U.S. taxpayers contribute \$0 toward Brand USA's marketing efforts.

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.

In 2013, we were fully deployed (consumer, co-op, and trade marketing) in eight markets (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, and the United Kingdom)—and delivered a 47:1 return on marketing investment, 1.1 million incremental visitors, \$3.4 billion in direct travel spending, and \$7.4 billion total spending—which supported 53,000 new jobs. In 2014, Brand USA expanded the consumer campaign to China and Taiwan, and in 2015 will be fully deployed in 14 international markets (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom). Every 1 percent increase in travel from these markets fuels the nation's economy by generating 500,000 additional visitors and \$1 billion in international visitor spend a year.





PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to identify a world-class creative agency for Brand USA's campaigns, consumer public relations, social media platforms, key opinion leaders (KOL) and websites in China. The goal is to create and disseminate engaging, localized in-language content and creative, which will stimulate consumer desire to travel from China to the United States of America.

SCOPE OF WORK

The selected vendor will collaborate with Brand USA and constituents to serve as Brand USA's creative agency in China. This work will include:

USA Campaign

The United States offers visitors some of the most unique travel experiences to be found anywhere in the world. To activate travel-dreaming and consideration, we are looking for a results-oriented creative agency who will bring market insight and will build a comprehensive consumer marketing strategy for a creative campaign and content that inspires visitation to the USA. Including:

- Development of bespoke USA campaign, which directly leverages Brand USA's Many Voices strategy and interprets it in a way that speaks to the Chinese audience and motivates travel to the USA.
- Campaign asset creation should account for all relevant consumer channels in China – social, video, and trade to ensure strategic messaging lives across all touchpoints
- Technological know-how to build out unique creative ad units and campaigns for endemic China platforms such as Mini-Programs, H5 etc.

Consumer Public Relations

As part of its overall media outreach and public relations strategy, Brand USA promotes the entirety of the United States through the power of earned media, events, and stakeholder communications. A comprehensive media and public relations plan in China is an integral part of Brand USA's overall efforts to promote the many unique experiences and range of destinations available in the United States, as well as to support key marketing messages and initiatives.

The selected representation firm will execute the following:

- Create and implement annual strategic consumer and trade communications plan to increase awareness through earned media coverage.
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with both consumer and trade media, KOLs, and influential professionals.
- Provide information, translated when appropriate, to the consumer lifestyle and travel trade press.
- Proactively pursue positive stories and respond to inquiries as appropriate for each consumer and trade opportunity.
- Provide recommendations on localized media content and market-specific story angles.
- Arrange interviews with press to support key GoUSA initiatives.
- Develop and implement GoUSA's Visiting Journalist Program in market as directed by HQ.
- Develop, promote, and execute a minimum of one GoUSA dedicated press event in market.
- Provide results of earned media coverage for all consumer and trade communications activities.

Social Media Management

Provide social media content development and management services for Go USA branded pages on Sina Weibo, WeChat, Youku, Douyin, Travel Snap, and other social channels as needed.

Development of social media strategy, including key messaging and editorial calendar.



Brand USA

- Creation of original, aggregated and user generated content; moderation/response as needed; and management of assets for advertising campaigns.
- Identify and work with popular Chinese social media Influencers to create value for GoUSA properties and partners.
- If/as requested, create social media content for and promote Brand USA partners on the GOUSA channels
- Recommend emerging/important Chinese social media channels and verify GoUSA registration prior to launch.
- Assist with social media analytics and provide performance-based recommendations.
- Utilize Brand USA's digital asset management (DAM) for all imagery and video assets.
- Create banners and art as needed

Website Management for GoUSA.cn and GoUSA.tw:

- Provide website hosting, maintenance and technical support in China and Taiwan. Obtain, or renew necessary in-country licenses, or permits.
- Work with other Brand USA agencies who provide services for our VisitTheUSA.com websites in producing content and generating frequent database updates. Attend weekly calls to discuss updates and issues.
- Deliver the websites through acceleration and geo-targeting via a reliable content delivery network. Perform content audits for the websites, as requested. Assist with website analytics and make performance based recommendations.
- Mitigate online threats by providing DDOS protection and backups to provide data recovery, if necessary. Note that the websites are built on Drupal 8.
- Provide proof-reading and improvement for all new translated content.
- Proactively provide suggestions for improving content.

Administrative

- Monthly insight reporting, quarterly trends report and regular updates on emerging technologies and opportunities in the China market which Brand USA should be leveraging to fulfill its mission
- Provide limited translation services in Mandarin and Cantonese. This includes regular translation of social media posts to English, so Brand USA can understand what is being featured; all legal contracts/documents; and other short-form content needs.
- Devise and manage a project roadmap to meet, or beat deadlines.
- Host weekly calls with Brand USA and conduct regular meetings with other partner agencies as needed.
- Accurately manage to budget and present additional scopes of work, if required.
- Attend Brand USA quarterly agency and conference meetings in-person. Brand USA is responsible for travel and expenses.
- Advise Brand USA on leveraging emerging technology and platforms

Media Planning & Buying

From time to time, the Agency may be asked to plan and buy media to support a specific initiative. For that reason, it would be ideal that if requested, the following skills are optimal.

- Media planning and buying that includes digital media channels/assets and competitive rate structure.
- Strong negotiation capabilities/buying power in each market for in-kind and value-added media.
- Local perspective in our core markets for FY14, to include messaging restrictions, potential clearance issues and language & translation best practices.
- Targeting expertise per market based on media consumption habits.
- Tracking and optimization for any over- or under-delivery.
- Reporting to include timely pre/post buys and proof of performance across all channels.
- Coordination with other Brand USA marketing efforts not directly managed by the agency to implement cohesive individual campaigns and support our overall messaging strategy.





QUALIFICATIONS

- A minimum of three years providing enterprise level service to major global companies.
- A minimum of three years' experience creating content, creative and art for digital
- Distribution via paid, earned and owned media. This includes creation of short and long-form video in the USA, for consumption in China.
- Experience with development of insight and strategy, key performance indicators, interpreting research and analytics and social media listening is required.
- A minimum of three years' experience in China, directly managing all technical aspects of website development, hosting, acceleration, geo-targeting and SEO.
- A minimum of three years of website architecture/design expertise, including map development - all informed by research, testing and analytics.
- Must be a business based in China.
- In-house capability of translating English to Mandarin and Cantonese, quickly and accurately.
- Solid relationships with Chinese digital media companies.

- Proven experience in developing state-of-the-art digital platforms.
- Ability to meet technical specifications with flexibility to tailor the product to meet our needs.
- Significant project management experience.
- Superior references from large consumer brands currently utilizing your services in China.
- Excellent support system with fast response times.





ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- After viewing the GoUSA social platforms, can you provide immediate recommendations for improvement?
- Which emerging social media platforms should we be considering for China and why?
- What are a few of your biggest wins on Chinese social media and why do you think they were so successful?
- How do you encourage consumer engagement and sharing?
- Can you speak to experience in leveraging KOL's to drive a consumer message both on social media and through a larger brand campaign (Brand Ambassador Programs)?
- Can you outline your point of view on effective video strategies in China and how your agency has supported brands in solving for a complex and diversity video landscape in the China market?
- Can you highlight any examples of your agencies work in developing technologies such as WeChat Mini Programs or H5 platforms?
- Do you have experience receiving a database push from the USA, which renews content a website in China?
- Do you utilize third parties, or outside consultants to perform work? Whom?
- What are your typical support response times?
- How do you measure website speed performance in China and what consistent page load times can we expect?
- Are you able to work, or respond during regular east coast business hours in the USA?

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SPECS

Proposal format is open to presentation style and delivery of the proposing team, but it must include the following information:

- Provide background information on your company, including your current industry ranking in China, including a list of current clients, demonstration of an ability to meet the qualifications, and





answers to the questions presented.

- State unique selling proposition over competitors.
- Show case studies (minimum of three) with demonstrated results relevant to Brand USA (scale, industry, and/or similarity) and that demonstrate your ability to meet the qualifications listed above..
- Illustrate how we will interact for execution and optimization.
- Describe your experience working in a multi-agency, fast-paced and integrated marketing environment.
- Provide staffing plan, which should include resumes, if possible. Identify other potential resources (writers, influencers, strategists, or anyone outside your agency you may want to utilize). Note employee retention rate.
- Provide three client references.
- Proposal shall not exceed 45 pages.

BUDGET

Based on the RFP requirements, the proposer must submit a detailed, realistic pricing matrix.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must address each item listed, giving specific details of techniques to be used in achieving these requirements. Proposals may be rejected if minimum requirements are not met. All proposers wishing clarification of this RFP must submit questions in writing to Brand USA, no later than June 12, 2019 (due by 5:00 pm, EDT), and sent by email to rfdadmin@thebrandusa.com. Responses will be posted to Brand USA's Corporate website – www.thebrandusa.com .

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 (Attachment 1) must be received by June 20, 2019 (due by 5:00 p.m. EDT). The notice shall be sent by email to rfdadmin@thebrandusa.com at the Brand USA office. 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 contain the following information:



- a. Executive Summary.
 - b. Services and Activities: Provide description of the nature of the organization’s services and activities. Note when the business was established, brief history and location in China. List the location(s) of the office(s) from which the primary work on this contract would be performed and serviced.
 - c. No Conflict of Interest: Client relationships that could potentially be considered a conflict of interest must be listed.
 - d. Contract Manager/Team: Identify one individual on the proposer’s account team who will manage the contract work. Identify the role of each member who will service the account.
 - e. Current resumes must be attached for each person who would in any way be associated with this account.
- 3. References: Provide at least three relevant references.
 - 4. Pricing Matrix.
 - 5. Timeline and/or Project Plan.
 - 6. Certification Form (Attachment 2) must be signed and accompany all RFP Response submission.

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	Wednesday, June 5, 2019
B. Written Questions (due by 5:00 p.m. EDT)	Wednesday, June 12, 2019
C. Written Questions Answered and posted to Brand USA Website	Monday, June 17, 2019
D. Notice of Intent To Bid Due (due by 5:00 p.m. EDT)	Thursday, June 20, 2019
E. Proposal Due (due by 5:00 p.m. EDT)	Monday, July 8, 2019
F. Proposal Evaluation by scoring committee	Wednesday, July 24, 2019
G. Notification and Scheduling of Finalist Interviews	Wednesday, July 31, 2019
H. Finalist Presentation/Interviews	Week of August 26, 2019
I. Notice of Intent to Award Contract and Public Posting	Tuesday, September 24, 2019





DELIVERY OF PROPOSAL

Insert copy here.

Proposals must be e-mailed to 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, D.C., USA, 20006
ATTN: RFP – Digital Agency for China
Phone: 202.536.2060
Email: rfpadmin@thebrandusa.com

Proposals are DUE no later than July 8, 2019, 5pm eastern time.

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 Information 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: June 20, 2019 at 5pm EDT

SEND TO:

Brand USA Headquarters

C/O RFP Administrator

1725 Eye Street NW, Suite 800

Washington, D.C., USA, 20006

ATTN: RFP – Digital Agency for China

Phone: 202.536.2060

Email: 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

Official Contact Title





Email Address

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 of demonstrated work in China:

	MAX. POINTS	SCORE
1 Expertise as a creative agency	15	
2. Social media management and content creation experience	15	
3. Consumer public relations ability	15	
4. Website technical experience	15	
5. Strategy and logistics	15	
6. Qualifications of personnel	15	
7. Cost effectiveness	10	





TOTAL POINTS	100	
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FOR BRAND USA USE ONLY

ORAL INTERVIEW / DEMONSTRATION CRITERIA

The evaluation committee may, if it deems necessary, select certain proposers for oral interviews and/or demonstrations. Interviews/demonstrations apply only to the top finalist(s), as determined by the evaluation committee. The oral interviews/demonstrations will allow finalists to demonstrate their understanding of the project objectives and to articulate their capability to meet or exceed the requirements of this RFP.

The evaluation committee reserves the option of conducting the oral interviews/demonstrations via teleconference, at the Brand USA office, at the finalist’s and/or the proposed subcontractor’s site, or other designated site.

The evaluation committee reserves the right to designate one or more members of the committee to perform the oral interviews/ demonstrations, if needed, so that grading of oral interviews/demonstrations may be done by fewer than the entire committee.

If interviews/demonstrations are not required, the maximum number of points is 100. If interviews/demonstrations are deemed necessary, the maximum number of points is 150.

If a finalist cannot meet on the designated interview/demonstration date, the evaluation committee reserves the right to disqualify the finalist as non-responsive.

The following criteria will be used for scoring the oral interview/demonstration:

	MAX.	SCORE
1. Provider demonstrations will be judged on the same criteria - pro rated – as listed in Attachment 3 “Proposal Evaluation Criteria”.	50	

