



USA

VisitTheUSA.com

Brand USA



Request for Proposal

Brand USA Global Marketplace 2.0

November 9th, 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to identify the appropriate vendor to create, or supply a scalable conference web platform for Brand USA Global Marketplace. Our objective is to provide the Travel Industry with a robust meeting website which will function both as a marketplace and a conference center for special events.

BACKGROUND

Brand USA Global Marketplace is currently a custom-built, always-on, virtual platform that provides access to a diverse range of U.S. destinations, attractions and points of interest for the international travel industry. This platform was originally developed to provide a connection point between U.S. destinations and the global travel trade, while travel restrictions limited face-to-face meetings. We are showcasing the diversity the U.S. offers international tourists, hosting a variety of scheduled industry events and 24/7 activities. We envision this platform to also be utilized post-pandemic.

Through a variety of activities from ongoing networking opportunities and enrichment sessions, to large-scale events across multiple markets, Brand USA encourages the international travel community to engage with U.S. destinations on an ongoing basis via this website. Brand USA Global Marketplace facilitates Buyer/Supplier engagement, hosts enrichment activities, on-platform events and offers access to Brand USA proprietary programs.

At the start of the pandemic, Brand USA moved quickly to launch this product. Having significantly learned from our users already, we are now prepared to develop Brand USA Global Marketplace 2.0, with improved functionality and scalability.

SCOPE OF WORK

Functional Requirements

- A user friendly, flexible content management system (cms) that does not require code changes to perform basic website functionality. Drupal is preferred. A proprietary cms is not acceptable.
- A multi-site environment. The initial English language site will eventually appear in several languages. It may be necessary at times to geo-target languages to specific countries.
- An integrated registration system which captures, stores and enables log-in. This site requires a password for entry and use. User log-in to the website should not be usable by others. Participants will build their own professional profile, which is seen by participants.
- An integrated appointment matching system, tied to the registration system, which can schedule up to 300 concurrent meetings -up to 1,500 per day - and handle 7 days of concurrent meetings. Scheduled meetings will happen automatically for each party, placing the users in a video conference, together. Users receive push notifications on the platform just prior to meetings that begin either by clicking a link to each participant, or automatically, if they do nothing. Screen sharing capability is required. This system should also be able to send email reminders.
- Responsive design for mobile and tablet.
- A translation connector to our provider, SDL. This is important for speed to market and cost reduction.
- Live chat integration, with auto-response when not staffed.
- Ability to utilize push notifications on the website during events. SMS push too, if possible.
- Video conference integration for multi-person meetings, using Zoom, Amazon Chime, or another major video conference provider. Must include screen sharing and live chat.
- YouTube video player integration for video-on-demand. We are open to other players for live streaming of main events.
- Provide overall project management, acting as lead agency for Brand USA Global Marketplace. This includes weekly conference calls with Brand USA staff, consultants and other agencies.
- Provide technical support for issues/bugs.
- Tagging all pages for Google Analytics. Many individual elements will also require tagging and measurement.
- Responsive customer service during eastern time zone (USA) operating hours. Emergency contact needs to be available for outages or major issues, 24/7.
- A minimum of 5,000 people should be able to use the site concurrently.
- Live simultaneous on-screen push notifications on all pages. Scheduled notifications, if viable.
- Expansion will include building out a Buyer Expo, similar to the USA Partner Pavilion, where we showcase international markets via pods
- Brand USA contracts directly for hosting/cdn/security, video conferencing and other SaaS products. The vendor is responsible for load balancing/testing; maintenance; updates and most interaction with the companies who provide the services.
- All quality assurance to be performed by the vendor.
- Compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Close to one-hundred percent up-time.
- Upgrade software and connectors to latest versions.
- Flexibility to tailor the product to meet Brand USA needs.
- Proactively suggest UX/UI improvements and continue to educate the collective group about new developments in conference website technology and use.
- Enhanced filtering system for searching exhibitors

You may view the basic structural requirements on the current website at www.brandusaglobalmarketplace.com. Contact rftadmin@thebrandusa.com for a guest log-in.

As you'll see, the site includes a main lobby, which serves as the homepage for the marketplace and specific events, such as Brand USA Travel Week Europe 2020. The lobby includes a help desk with email functionality at most times, live chat during live events and a link to the main conference space for keynote (video) speeches. Keynote video presentations could be live, but will most likely be pre-recorded. Users should be able to ask questions during sessions. There are currently 8 breakout spaces used for smaller sessions, but we'd like to increase the spaces up to 20. Breakout sessions should hold up to 500 participants. Each breakout space is a smaller version of the main auditorium. Participating partners have their own landing pages, or "pods," which function as a showcase for their brand. Each pod is brandable using a template; can book meetings; live chat or hold audio/video calls; visitors can leave a virtual business card; the pod display; .pdfs; photos; and shows videos. These pods should also be able to show a map and display a social media feed by using Stackla (our social integration partner). The site has a video-on-demand page with YouTube integration; a networking lounge where participants can join live video conference meetings and live chat. Each user has a "virtual briefcase," in which they can store selected .pdfs (brochures), presentations or other media.

"Partner Take-Overs": With Brand USA Global Marketplace 2.0, our partners should be able to utilize the platform for their own conferences. For example, a state destination marketing organization should be able to hold its annual conference on this platform with its own branding, pods and rooms. This could be accomplished using a subsite set-up in this multi-site environment, re-skinning the existing site, or another method you suggest.

Our answers to anticipated questions

Q: Are you seeking a custom solution?

A: Perhaps. We realize there are many conference solutions available that can be adapted and customized to meet our needs. Perhaps our requirements dictate starting from scratch, or maybe you've already created a scalable conference platform, which would be more efficiently adapted. We are open to learning about many potential possible approaches.

Q: Are you seeking a developer with specific experience with conference websites?

A: Conference development is a specialty for many digital agencies and experience in this arena is preferred. However, we welcome all proposals.

Q: How about design/art and branding?

A: We have the rights (and files) for the current look and it may be more expedient for you to adapt this creative than to start fresh. If you'd like to create new design/art, include your approach in the proposal. In either case, you will have to create characters and animation for the crowds.

Q: May we utilize third party contractors for registration and meeting matchmaking?

A: Yes. However, there must be a true data integration with the website, so that the process is not visible to the end-user. For example, a user shouldn't have to go to multiple websites to register/match before even entering the conference website. You are responsible for sub-contracting costs, licensing and management. Include these costs in your proposed budget.

Q: Do you wish to "own" this website?

A: Ideally, yes. We typically own code for our websites. We are open to hearing about long-term licensing, but we must be able to sub-license the product to others in the travel industry.

Questions For You

Please address:

- How would you improve our current Brand USA Global Marketplace website?
- What are a few of the greatest challenges you've solved in developing conference websites?
- Do you outsource development and if so, to whom?
- What is your development approach/methodology?
- Do you use third-party vendors for services you propose providing to Brand USA? If so, who are these supporting vendors?
- Will you provide full service during regular eastern-time zone business hours?
- What is your maintenance schedule?
- What is your quality assurance process?
- How do you meet custom requirements?
- What is your unique selling proposition compared to others in this space?

QUALIFICATIONS

The selected vendor will:

- Have a minimum of three-years of experience developing websites, preferably for conferences in the entertainment, travel, or media industry.
- Have a solid understanding and demonstrable knowledge of the current state of conference website development.
- Be a solid company with proven financial backing.

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SPECS

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

- Case study or studies- minimum of one - with demonstrated results relevant to Brand USA (travel, or scale similarity in another industry).
- Resume or background description of the staff at your company with whom we will have the most day-to-day contact.
- Company history and background.
- Links to at least five websites your company has developed.

BUDGET

Based on the RFP requirements, the proposer must submit a detailed, realistic budget with an estimated execution timeline. The budget should include maintenance for one year.

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 November 13, 2020 (due by 5:00 PM EDT), 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.

Presentations may not exceed 30 pages in total. Do not assume anything beyond page 30 will be reviewed.

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 **November 18th, 2020** (due by 5:00 PM EDT).

The notice shall be sent by email 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. A submission of this form does not obligate you to submit a proposal, but you may not submit without it.

2. **RFP Responses** must contain the following information:

- a. Executive Summary.
- b. No Conflict of Interest: Client relationships that could potentially be considered a conflict of interest must be listed.
- c. Contract Manager/Team: Identify one individual on your team who will manage the project. Include resumes, or descriptions of anyone to be involved.
- d. At least one case study.
- e. Direct answers from the "Questions For You" section. Include the question and your answer. Do not assume we will locate answers to these questions spread throughout your proposal. Failure to provide direct answers may negatively impact your submission.
- f. Specific Monthly/Annual Budget.
- g. If you start the project January 25, 2021, what is the projected completion date?

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	November 9, 2020
B. Written Questions (due by 5:00 PM EDT)	November 13, 2020
C. Written Questions Answered and posted to Brand USA website	November 16, 2020
D. Notice of Intent to bid is due (due by 5:00 PM EDT)	November 18, 2020
E. Proposal Due (due by 5:00 PM EDT)	December 9, 2020
F. Notification and Scheduling of Finalist Interviews	December 23, 2020
G. Finalist Presentation/Interviews	January 6 & 7, 2021
H. Notice of Intent to Award Contract and Public Posting	January 13, 2021

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: November 18, 2020

SEND TO: rfpadmin@thebrandusa.com

NAME OF BIDDER / COMPANY:
CONTACT PERSON:
MAILING ADDRESS:
TELEPHONE:
FAX (if you have one:
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 (if you have one)

Email Address

Street, City, State, Zi

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 website development success. More points may be awarded for development of conference specific websites	60	
Answers to Questions and Case studies	20	
Cost effectiveness	20	
TOTAL POINTS	100	