



**EXPLORERS'**  
**EDGE**

*Naturally Adventurous*

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**Marketing Strategist**

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## Introduction

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture created 13 Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) in the province to identify and implement regional priorities, allowing for more consistent marketing of Ontario's tourism regions. The RTO12 area includes Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka and Parry Sound.

RTO12 is a not-for-profit agency that is governed by a volunteer board of directors. The mandate for RTO12 includes: providing industry leadership and strategic planning, developing strong, collaborative partnerships and packages, marketing, developing the workforce and skills training.

RTO12 is the administrative name for the region that is known in the consumer marketplace as Explorers' Edge [www.explorersedge.ca](http://www.explorersedge.ca).

Explorers' Edge programs will fuel the new brand with meaning, create awareness, and have measurable components while driving retail sales to our stakeholders.

For more information on Ontario's 13 Regional Tourism Organizations, visit <http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/regions/regions.shtml>.

### The RFP Process

1. The RFP process will take place as follows:
2. Potential bidders will be e-mailed a copy of the RFP.
3. Upon receiving the document and reading its content, potential bidders are requested to send an email to [james@explorersedge.ca](mailto:james@explorersedge.ca) to acknowledge their intent to provide information about their solutions. This step will guarantee that the bidder name is entered in the bidder list.
4. The bidders prepare their formal response and send their document in an electronic format to Explorers' Edge by the specified RFP close date.

### Project Timetable

Request for Proposal Issued	Friday April 11, 2014
RFP Due	Friday April 25, 2014
Notice of intent to award contract	Tuesday April 29, 2014

## **Proposal Submission Guidelines**

### **Restrictions on Communications with Staff**

If you wish to seek clarification on any of the information presented here, please contact James Murphy, Executive Director, by email to james@explorersedge.ca until the due date.

### **Information Submission Format**

All responses to the questions in this document must be submitted in a Microsoft Office Windows compatible format or PDF format.

### **Submit Information to:**

- Explorers' Edge
- 3 Taylor Road Bracebridge, ON
- Bracebridge, Ontario P1L 1R1
- Attention: James Murphy, Executive Director

### **Number of Copies Required / Format of Copies**

- Electronic copy by e-mail

### **Confidentiality**

During the RFP process, the bidder may obtain confidential information in regards to Explorers' Edge businesses and / or its members and employees. The Bidder agrees to keep such information strictly confidential at all times. The bidder may disclose confidential information only when necessary for the submission of a response to the RFP. This does not apply to information known and available to the public.

The Bidder acknowledges that Explorers' Edge will receive many responses to the RFP that might contain information considered confidential by the bidder. The bidder will allow Explorers' Edge to use such information for the purpose of the RFP process.

All information and the responses provided to Explorers' Edge about the RFP will become property of Explorers' Edge and will not be returned to the Bidder.

## Executive Summary

Explorers' Edge is seeking the expertise of a seasoned **Marketing Strategist** to oversee the development, monitoring and reporting of a one-year Marketing Plan. The **Marketing Strategist** will have a thorough understanding of tourism in Ontario and will develop a plan to increase tourism receipts in the region using competitive knowledge and innovative ideas, while building on recent successes and strategies of RTO12. This Marketing Plan developed by the **Marketing Strategist** for the 2014-2015 fiscal year will ultimately differentiate the Explorers' Edge region in the province of Ontario, in order to increase visits to the region.

## The Opportunity

The **Marketing Strategist** will work closely with the RTO's Director of Communications and the Marketing Project Coordinator to develop an innovative one-year Marketing Plan for RTO12.

## Objective

The successful candidate will develop the following:

1. Competitive Landscape Report
2. Consumer Insights Report based on current research
3. Overall Marketing Strategy
4. Media Buy Recommendations
5. Marketing Tactics Recommendations
6. Interim Program Reports & Ongoing Plan Monitoring
7. Final Report

Your proposal will form an integral part of the contract and will be considered the Scope of Work for the Initial Term.

## Role

The **Marketing Strategist** will have significant input into the development of the RTO's Marketing Plan for 2014-2015. After the Marketing Plan is approved for implementation, the **Marketing Strategist** is responsible for monitoring the ongoing results to recommend tweaks, and for providing updates at quarterly Marketing Committee meetings.

## Specific Duties Include:

- Meets regularly with Director of Communications to develop marketing plan development and execution

- Effectively presents, sells and defends all RTO work/proposals to client and industry stakeholders
- Keeps apprised of the competitive tourism landscape other RTOs, provinces, etc., relevant to branding/products/services/marketing, and advises the Director of Communications of any developments
- Identifies optimal media and negotiates significant and valuable media buys
- Assists in preparing RTO12, proposals, marketing/media/public relations planning.
- Makes recommendations for optimal tracking, measurements and ROI.
- Regularly checks for and responds promptly to all RTO12 communications, including calls and emails.
- Coordinates with media on interactive opportunities to ensure traditional/interactive synthesis of marketing efforts.
- Checks creative/production materials, copy, layouts, and production art, and coordinates client approval of same in order to ensure alignment of strategy.
- Coordinates project timing and budgets with all relevant RTO personnel.
- Keeps apprised of progress of client's projects through production and traffic managers or other relevant personnel.

**Reports to:**

Director of Communications

**Corporate Information:**

Please provide a synopsis of your qualifications, including a detailed summary of previous successful planning and training for comparable clients. Also include:

- A description of the respondent's company, including location(s), business operations, financial security, and corporate history
- A standard contract proposal

**Note:**

Proponents shall identify, within their submission, all excluded items.

**Assumptions:**

*The entire project will be fully implemented no later than March 31, 2015.*

## **Selection Process**

The following aspects of your proposal will be used to evaluate the proposals:

1. Demonstrated experience of key personnel in a project of similar scope and nature
2. Demonstrated strong corporate history and presence, financial standing, and capacity to perform;
3. Implementation approach and methodology, including project timing, scheduling, staff training, and transition from the existing application;
4. Proposed business relationship with Explorers' Edge throughout the lifecycle of the agreement;
5. Cost competitiveness;
6. References (minimum of four).

**As part of the selection process, respondents may be asked to present their proposal to an Explorers' Edge staff representative.**

## **Proponent Qualifications**

Proponents considered for this project must be able to demonstrate the following credentials/expertise:

1. Extensive experience in marketing strategy development with ongoing proven, successful results that met business objectives of the related projects
2. Clear understanding of the RTO model in Ontario, the business objectives of RTO12 in particular and the ability to differentiate RTO12 in the marketing place by increasing consumer visits significantly
3. Experienced, professional in-house project team (including Project Manager) to meet all project deadlines
4. Proven use of current technologies, standards, and best practices
5. Demonstrated ability to become familiar with a brand and as a result, be able to recommend appropriate strategies to increase key performance metrics specifically capture rate and conversions.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. A complete understanding of strategic development best practices including demonstration of qualifications outlined in “Proponent Qualifications” section above.

- A description of the proponent’s business(es)
- A description of the services the proponent has previously and/or is currently delivering, with an emphasis on relevant experience in providing an industry leading strategic facilitation
- example(s) of performance metrics the proponent has delivered for other tourism destination marketing organizations;
- a list of clients to whom the proponent has provided a full breadth of services

Score Weight: 10%

2. Proven approach for implementation and outcomes

- A description of approach, to ensure all those involved with the project are well coordinated and fully informed of progress and deadlines, for the strategic development to run smoothly, on time and within budget.
- An outline of the metrics that are associated with the proposed training that Explorers’ Edge can reasonably expect to achieve through its application.

Score Weight: 25%



### 3. Dedicated Strategic Development

Outline roles and responsibilities of the proponent and all of its agents, employees and sub-contractors who will be involved in providing the services (as outlined in the “Objective” section above), along with the identity of those who will be performing the roles identified, and their relevant expertise

Score Weight: 25%

4. Consumer Outreach Integration including a brief description of proponent’s methodology related to the integration of social media and other interactive features related to the strategy and training.

Score Weight: 10%

### 5. Proposed Costs, including:

- Estimates for all elements of the projects as listed above within the “Objectives” section
- Estimates for any and all additional fees that may be incurred including (but not limited to):
- Technical development
- Legal fees
- Administration fees
- Other fees that will impact Explorers’ Edge strategic planning

Score Weight: 30%

Explorers’ Edge is not obligated to select the proponent with the lowest proposal cost. We will evaluate the proposals in a comprehensive manner based on the above-listed criteria.

**Bidder Certification**

(Bidder must sign and return.)

I certify that this information is complete and correct to the best of my understanding and that I am authorized to submit this information on behalf of the company.

Authorized

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Print/Type

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Print/Type Company Name

Here \_\_\_\_\_ 10

## **Proposal Preparation and Format**

The Bidder must ensure that the proposal meets the following mandatory requirements.

- An intent to Bid email is received by email before the “Closing Date and Time” as outlined in the RFP Timelines
- A complete bid is received by email “before the “Closing Date and Time” as outlined in RFP Process and Timeline
- Includes a cover letter including Bidder’s name, address, telephone, e-mail address and primary contact person with a note of date and time of submission. The letter should be submitted by a person authorized to sign on behalf of and to bid the Bidder to its Proposal and the terms of the RFP.
- Includes a statement that the Project Conditions outlined in the RFP have been reviewed and understood.

### **Pricing**

Bidders must provide a detailed/line-itemed breakdown and summary of costs to provide the proposed services with total price shown. Prices must be quoted in Canadian dollars, including freight and delivery charges, and taxes.

Notes: Be advised that taxes are considered within the project budget. Prices must remain valid for at least 120 days. Bidders are required to provide their payment terms as part of their proposal.

### **Bidder Qualifications and References**

Bidders shall provide the following information:

- Company profile outlining history, capabilities, qualifications, and experience as well as other information you deem relevant
- Summary of prior experience (within last 3 years) in providing the goods or services similar to those described in this RFP.
- Identification of all key personnel, including sub-contractors, who will be assigned to this project. Please include their relevant experience and qualifications and their roles and responsibilities in the project, as well as their level of efforts
- References including names, position, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for which the Bidder has performed similar work. These references might be contacted during the proposal evaluation phase to determine their satisfaction with the work carried out.

### **Cost of Proposal Submissions**

- The Bidder is responsible for all and any costs associated with the preparation and submission of the Proposal. Explorers’ Edge will not be liable to pay any such costs or reimburse the Bidders in the event Explorers’ Edge decides to reject all Proposals.

## **Information Indicative Only**

- The information that is provided in this RFP is indicative only. Through the review of the proposals and subsequent finalization of an agreement with the successful Bidder Explorers' Edge reserves the right to request further information or clarification of information. Explorers' Edge reserves the right to request new or additional information regarding a Bidder and any individuals or other persons associated with a response.

## **Confidentiality**

- If the Bidder does not want the documents that are submitted in response to this RFP to be made available to the public, the Bidder must indicate that the documents are submitted in confidence. The documents contain trade secrets, technical, commercial, financial or labor relations information that disclosure of the documents could reasonably be expected to result in harm, as specified in Section 10 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act. While Explorers' Edge will endeavor to maintain the confidentiality of all such information, the Bidder must realize that such information may well become public or be disclosed.

## **Other Considerations**

- Explorers' Edge in its sole and absolute discretion, may discuss or negotiate with any Bidder, the terms and conditions of its response without any obligation to other Bidders and without giving rise to any rights of other Bidders to amend or negotiate their response.
- Explorers' Edge shall not have any obligation to notify any of the Bidders of discussions or negotiations with any other Bidder, to invite amended responses from any other Bidders, to disseminate other information disclosed to any one Bidder, or to approve a further submission made as a result of such information.
- Conflict of Interest.
  - The bidder must declare any actual or potential conflict of interest including situations or circumstances that could give a bidder an unfair advantage during a procurement process or compromise their ability to perform
  - Explorers' Edge reserves the right to disqualify a vendor's quote due to a conflict of interest
  - The bidder must avoid and disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest during the performance of their contractual obligations
  - Explorers' Edge reserves the right to terminate an agreement where a vendor fails to disclose an actual or potential conflict or where such a conflict cannot be resolved.
- In the event of any discrepancies appearing, or differences of opinion, misunderstanding or dispute arising between the Bidder and Explorers' Edge respecting the intent or meaning of this RFP, or accompanying documents, or as to any omission there from or misstatements therein, the decision and interpretation of Explorers' Edge shall be final and binding upon all parties. There shall be no review or appeal of such decision.

End of RFP. Thank you for your time.