



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

**Branded Content Marketing and
Contest Development to Target
International Markets**

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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.

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. The RFP will be posted online and 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 to acknowledge their intent to provide information about their proposal. 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 November 12, 2015
RFP Due	Friday November 26, 2015 @ 4pm
Notice of intent to award contract	January 4, 2016

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 a qualified organization or individual to assume a Project Management role for the organization to develop and implement our International Markets Plan.

Specific components of the plan this role will be responsible for are the development and promotion of branded content, and the development and implementation of a branded contest in the UK and the US.

With the International Markets Plan, Explorers' Edge intends to target the Canadian diaspora in Britain (approximately 80K people) and the USA (approximately 1 million people) in order to ignite the passion for our home and native land that indubitably converts this audience into natural ambassadors of the Canadian brand in their new countries. (The recent popularity of the documentary "Being Canadian" by film maker Robert Cohen testifies to this passionate affinity for our "Canadianism").

The Strategy:

Instead of trying to convince the broader general British and American populations that Ontario, Canada is a great place to travel to (which would take an enormous budget), over the course of the project Explorers' Edge will target ex-pat Canadians living in the UK and the US to awaken their sense of pride in all things Canadian so that they will become fierce ambassadors for and genuine promoters of the Explorers' Edge brand, which also happens to epitomize our collective cultural affinity with "the great Canadian wilderness."

With branded content marketing building interest in the Canadian wilderness just north of Toronto, and a contest encouraging ex-pats to enter their connections in their new countries into the "See For Yourself My Friend" contest [working title only] to win a trip to the Explorers' Edge region, the expected outcome of the plan is that Explorers' Edge will create new international audiences for the region and will position this part of Ontario as offering the quintessential Canadian wilderness experience to international visitors. (Ex-pats who nominate a friend to win a trip to Explorers' Edge will also be nominated to win their own visit to this region – a trip home to Canada).

Considering that the Canadian diaspora population in the US and the UK is over 1,000,000 people, if we reach only .5% of this audience and have them enter one friend in the contest (by requiring email info), we would have a list of 5,000 international travelers to commence ongoing lead nurturing strategies to build travel conversions. By igniting the ex-pats' pride in Canada, we will be able to spread their (and our) passion for our country, and will hopefully, thereby, ignite awareness and desire in their friends and acquaintances to visit Canada – and in particular, the Explorers' Edge region.

The Opportunity

Reporting to the RTO12 Director of Communications and working as part of a greater marketing team, the Project Management role acts as the quarterback for the optimal development and execution of the Explorers' Edge International Markets Plan.

The measurable economic benefits of the project include:

- Increase in long-haul visitors to the Explorers' Edge region
- Increase in extended stays in the Explorers' Edge region
- Increase in room night occupancy in the Explorers' Edge region

Other measurable benefits that relate to the project include:

- International consumer list creation for further and ongoing lead nurturing activities
- Building of interest in the region, in Ontario, and in Canada as a preferred and branded destination in 2016, but also for 150th birthday celebrations in 2017
- The development of specific region-wide itineraries and packages (part of a complementary RFP)

Objective

The purpose of this RFP is to have the successful proponent show how they would develop and implement the following:

- Organization of and implementation of multiple components of the plan, including sourcing and liaising with creative resources and digital support, media trafficking, budget oversight (with the Director of Communications), results tracking, and quality assurance.

The expected deliverable from this RFP will be a proposal for how to bring the multiple components of the plan together for execution in the marketplace.

Corporate Information

A description of previous project management and working methodology. Also include:

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

Assumptions:

The entire project – branded content development and distribution & branded contest - will be fully implemented no later than March 31, 2016.

Selection Process

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

1. Demonstrated experience in developing, managing and implementing a successful multi-faceted Marketing Plan with measurable results using digital, social and content components.
2. Demonstrated industry experience, secure financial standing, and capacity to perform.
3. Implementation approach and methodology, including project timing, scheduling, budgeting, etc.
4. Proposed business relationship with Explorers' Edge throughout the lifecycle of the agreement.
5. Cost competitiveness.
6. References (minimum of three)

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 will be able to demonstrate the following credentials/expertise:

1. Proven results in creating and executing successful branded content strategies and successful contests
2. Excellence and experience in project management
3. Extensive scheduling and budgeting oversight experience
4. Proven use of current technologies, standards, and best practices
5. Demonstrated ability to work with a multi-member team composed of internal and external resources
6. 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:

Marketing Management

- A complete understanding of best practices pertaining to Marketing and program Project Management
- Thorough understanding of international markets, particularly the UK and the US, and an understanding of the Canadian ex-pat diaspora
- 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 project coordination
- example(s) of performance metrics the proponent has delivered for other organizations, in particular tourism agencies if applicable
- a list of clients to whom the proponent has provided a full breadth of services

Score Weight: 35%

Analytics

- Proven approach for implementation of marketing projects and for determining measurable outcomes of branded content initiatives, as well as contest development and implementation
- A description of Project Management approach to ensure all those involved with the project work in symbiosis and are fully informed of progress and deadlines, and to ensure the strategic development of the project runs smoothly, on time and within budget

Score Weight: 35%

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
- Other fees that will impact Explorers' Edge ability to assure quality project coordination

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 taxes and total cost.

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.