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Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka,
Parry Sound & South Algonquin
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Expression of Interest: Marketing Strategy Development & Execution

RTO12 is one of 13 regional tourism organizations established by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport. Known by its consumer-facing name of “Explorers’ Edge,” RTO12 represents six sub-regions in Ontario: Algonquin Park, the Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka, west Parry Sound district, and South Algonquin. The company is an independent, not-for-profit, destination development organization that is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors.

The organization is supported by the provincial government with a \$1.1 million annual transfer payment agreement and is responsible for measurable outcomes in multiple areas: Governance, Investment Attraction, Industry Relations, Workforce Development, Product Development and Consumer Marketing.

Company Mission (from the 3-Year Regional Tourism Strategy, 2023-2026): *To steward the regional tourism industry’s recovery, rebuild and renewal by developing innovative regenerative programs to ensure long-term sustainability and success for all stakeholders.*

To review the 3-year Regenerative Strategy, [click here](#).

The Project:

In the upcoming fiscal year (April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025), RTO12 will commence a new marketing approach in order to 1) increase destination competitiveness and to 2) reduce duplication of output currently in the marketplace for greater efficiencies and impact.

Known as “the higher yield strategy,” the intended long-term outcome is a significant increase in regional tourism and hospitality revenues that will not require an exponential increase in mass visitation.

For more background of the rationale for establishing the new marketing approach, [click here](#) (recommended).

Explorers’ Edge invites interested parties to provide an Expression of Interest (EOI) to assist with the development of the higher yield marketing strategy and with the subsequent execution of its components.

A significant part of this project will be to research and assist in identifying “**high yield, specific-interest markets**” to pilot for growth.

Additionally, RTO12 requires a service provider that will assist with: developing user-generated/business generated content programs; identifying potential pay-to-play revenue streams; and identifying internal roles/responsibilities/frameworks to ensure the long-term execution and success of the strategy.

Respondents are asked to provide examples of acumen and proven success in the following areas (which are essential):

- Marketing strategy
- Creative
- Digital / social marketing
- Media purchasing
- Storytelling
- Photography/videography
- User/business-generated content
- Purchase funnel conversions (top tier to bottom tier strategies)
- Lead nurturing (non-traditional approaches)
- Research
- Branding
- Tech innovation and AI potential
- Setting measurable objectives targeting domestic and international markets

Knowledge of the region is also essential, and the winning bidder will be expected to meet with the RTO12 team on-site in the region throughout the course of any collaboration.

Knowledge of the RTO model and the provincial tourism and hospitality sector is not essential, though it will be expected over the course of the EOI process and in order for interested parties to ultimately be considered.

Timeline:

RTO12 is subject to annual funding by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport and, as such, cannot commence work on the new higher yield strategy until the next fiscal year (starts April 1, 2024).

Budget:

Also subject to annual funding, RTO12 is required to wait for final approval of the Draft 2024-2025 Business & Operational Plan by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport before committing to a budget for this program.

It can be noted that, based on preliminary planning sessions of the RTO12 Board of Directors in early 2024, the organization will see a significant increase in investment for consumer marketing in the upcoming fiscal year’s Business & Operational Plan.

The overall investment in multiple marketing initiatives (including fees) is expected to be in excess of \$300K CDN (subject to Board and Ministry approval). RTO12 may modify this before the next fiscal year start.

Expectations for Future Work:

It is expected that the winning bidder will work with RTO12 staff over a 6-month probationary period to ensure a good fit between the organization and the service provider, and then potentially move to AOR status.

Next Steps:

Please forward by February 16, 2024 an Expression of Interest letter in PDF format via email to:

Kate Monk
VP, Strategy & Corporate Programs
RTO12/Explorers' Edge
Email: Kate@explorersedge.ca

Please indicate the following in your EOI:

- Name of Company
- Location
- Name and role of EOI respondent
- Full-service agency or principal with sub-contractors?
- Synopsis of acumen and proven success pertaining to requirements listed above
- Relevant past clients
- Rationale for submitting an EOI for this project (be specific)
- Preferred payment framework
- What you like in a client – your expectations
- Any additional insights you would like to provide

Please note: Platform-only providers will not be considered for this EOI process. RTO12 staff will acknowledge all submissions. All submissions will be received in confidence.

If you have questions or would like further information, please email Kate@explorersedge.ca. Inquiries will not be responded to until starting the week of January 29, 2024.

Thank you very much for your interest in working with RTO12/Explorers' Edge!