

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development
Division of Economic Development

PRE-RFP Analysis for Website Development & Maintenance

PLEASE NOTE: This is not a Request for Proposals (RFP) solicitation. The state is seeking telephonic input from qualified contractors on the best way to craft a scope of work and deliverables for a future RFP process. Proposals, bids, quotes and/or company information submissions regarding the pre-RFP meeting will not be accepted.

OVERVIEW

The Division is seeing a vendor for website development and maintenance of existing State of Alaska tourism websites to ensure they provide accurate and up-to-date Alaska travel information, tools for planning an Alaska trip, conform to findings from website research performed under this contract, website usability best practices, and accessibility requirements.

- Website Development/Hardware/Software
- Website Hosting/Subscriptions/Contractor Travel
- Website Management/Maintenance
- Website Research
- Social Media/Pay Per Click advertising
- Consumer Newsletter/Cooperative Leads Program
- North to Alaska Highway program Website Development, management, maintenance, Research, social media/Pay Per Click advertising and consumer newsletter

BACKGROUND

TravelAlaska.com was created in 2011 using ASP.NET and Microsoft SQL Server on a windows deck. The content management system currently being used is Sitecore Professional Edition CMS and DMS. All code is written in C#, JavaScript, HTML and CSS. Analysis and reporting are provided using SQL Server data and Sitecore data. Email reporting is done through Lyrus Email Lab. TravelAlaska.com has secure administrative consoles for DCCED staff, contractors, tourism businesses, travel trade, media and site users. The website is integrated with online transaction processing and membership management software. The State of Alaska currently owns a database and search server, along with a failure server. The State uses Lyrus elab for the email server and a google analytics package for reporting.

TravelAlaska.com provides consumers, primarily those 25 to 65 years of age, a robust and reliable site to learn about Alaska's varied activities and communities. The site includes a photo gallery, video library, maps, sample itineraries, weather information, travel tips, special offers, My Alaska Trip planning tool,

state anniversary information, and a calendar of events. Other sections of the site allow potential visitors to search for Alaska business listings, categorized under Things to Do, Places to Stay, Getting to + Around, and Package Tours. Potential visitors may also access an online Vacation Planner, order a printed Vacation Planner, access Alaska's social media sites, or download the TravelAlaska App. DCCED organizes three meetings a year with the tourism industry to solicit input on DCCED websites, along with other marketing initiatives.

The TravelAlaska app is the travel companion to the State's official website TravelAlaska.com. The app is a tool for itinerary planning and draws data from website information and advertisers. The existing app map is found at: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/travelalaska/id525092076?mt=8>

Website localization exists for Germany, Japan and Korea.

- Alaska-travel.de
- Alaska-japan.com
- Alaska-korea.com
- Alaska-china.com

Spanish localization will be launched October 2013.

Work related to the NorthtoAlaska.com website is also part of this contract. The website focuses on driving vacations and provides information that would be helpful to visitors driving north through Canada and into Alaska.

Proposed SCOPE OF WORK

The proposed scope of work performed under this contract includes the following elements:

Website Development

The contractor prepares and implements an annual strategic plan based on a long-range vision with clearly defined objectives. The goal is to keep the websites relevant and performing for the State of Alaska, tourism businesses that are advertising on the site, and potential visitors that are researching the destination or planning a trip. A scalable approach is preferred, with discrete deliverables to ensure positive website evolution regardless of funding shortfalls and technology changes. Enhancements should be recommended by the contractor throughout the year based on research findings. The contractor is responsible for all programming, coding and scripting, creative multimedia content including digital videos and audio to strategically generate interest in activities, attractions and events offered throughout the state. The contractor is also responsible for development and maintenance of administrative tools within the content management system to include new features and usability enhancements.

Website Hosting, Hardware/Software, Subscriptions, Contractor Travel

The contractor is responsible for recommending and selecting a cost-effective, professional website hosting subcontractor and/or host the websites in-house. Adequate backup plans must be in place

to ensure stability and 24/7 operation, to include scalability, peak traffic, backup power and data circuits, fire suppression technology, physical security, online security, business continuity planning and time to recovery from complete server destruction. Essential subscriptions used on the website(s) must be maintained to include, but not limited to Sitecore, Lyris email lab, and Weather Underground. The State of Alaska meets annually with Alaska tourism businesses and contractor will be required to attend three meetings in Alaska each year along with two meetings each year in Canada to meet with Canadian partners involved with NorthtoAlaska.com.

Website Management & Maintenance

Ongoing review of the websites is required to ensure links are operational, to add refreshed copy links, make corrections to copy, add new content, photo replacements, etc. General day-to-day troubleshooting is also required to ensure site visitors have an optimal site experience. The contractor is required to work with DCCED's advertising agency each year to upload a comprehensive advertiser database and unique URL codes. Additional work with the advertising agency includes unique coding for specific ad campaigns so performance can be tracked. The contractor also analyzes logs for server failures and applies hardware patches as needed.

The Content Management System administrative console must be maintained so DCCED has direct access to make updates on all pages of the site. Monthly web statistics and analytics reporting is required to include detailed traffic statistics (pageviews, visits, visitors), usage trends (clicks to Alaska advertisers, Vacation Planner downloads, pages per visit), site rankings, A/B testing, and trend analysis through online advertising tracking portals (i.e., Google Analytics). These reports must show year-over-year comparisons. The contractor will also work with DCCED contractors involved in advertising, research, public relations, fulfillment and those representing the state overseas (Australia, Germany, Japan, Korea, United Kingdom) as needed. Monthly project status reports are required so that work conducted is documented.

Website Research

The contractor recommends website research studies that will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the website(s). Cost of each study must be clearly identified, along with anticipated outcomes and how the study will result in actionable data that can be used to enhance or further evolve DCCED websites. Reports are prepared following each study and findings are presented at industry meeting along with recommended action.

Social Media & Social Marketing

The contractor is required to provide support for DCCED Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest accounts, and to collaborate with DCCED advertising and public relations contractors on cross-channel marketing programs that may include contests or other marketing campaigns. The contractor is also responsible for strategic oversight of DCCED's external presence on the internet, which includes search engine optimization and implementation of pay-per-click campaigns. The contractor will also strive to improve rankings for TravelAlaska.com and NorthtoAlaska.com in

search engines' natural (organic) search results and conduct Search Engine Marketing (SEM) to increase the amount and quality of leads generated by search engines. The contractor will manage the annual pay-per-click budget, distribution of keywords to ensure web traffic remains equitable, and make revisions to descriptions and keyword categories based on response and season.

Newsletters & Consumer Leads Email Program

The contractor is responsible for developing email templates, compiling content/images and configuring messages being sent out through the Consumer Leads for Email program. Programming and list management services must be provided using in-house staff or appropriate vendors. The contractor is also responsible for writing content for monthly newsletters that highlight various Alaska activities, attractions and communities to encourage potential visitors to make the decision to travel to Alaska the state. The contractor will collaborate with DCCED staff and other contractors as needed on newsletter editorial calendars and email schedules so they are deployed on optimal dates and times.

Proposed DELIVERABLES

Website development

- Comprehensive annual plan for TravelAlaska.com (and localized websites).
- Comprehensive annual plan for NorthtoAlaska.com.
- Presentation of plans to DCCED and industry marketing committee.
- Copywriting, web design, programming, coding and scripting.
- Ongoing input for improvement/enhancement of DCCED website(s).
- Cost estimates for all projects (time and pass-through costs), along with project timetables.
- Prepare and submit to DCCED a monthly project status report.
- Prepare and submit to DCCED monthly traffic reports showing how well online and offline advertising performs at driving traffic to TravelAlaska.com and NorthtoAlaska.com.
- Develop or modify existing online advertising forms as required.
- Modify and import advertiser database to TravelAlaska.com.
- Post new ads to TravelAlaska.com upon request.
- Develop micro-sites for specific programs upon request.

Website hosting, hardware/software, subscriptions, contractor travel

- Maintain website hosting.
- Assist with installation, configuration and maintenance of servers as needed.
- Maintain annual subscriptions.
- Travel to Alaska for a minimum of 3 meetings.
- Travel to Canada for a minimum of 2 meetings.
- Additional travel may be required based on DCCED request.

Website management and maintenance

- Ongoing review, analysis and troubleshooting of DCCED websites.
- Annual upload of advertising database.
- Additional uploads of ads as requested.
- Unique coding on marketing programs to ensure trackability.
- Maintain CMS administrative console.
- Provide monthly web statistics and analytic reports.
- Attend meetings to collaborate with DCCED contractors on web-related issues as requested.
- Prepare monthly project status report to document work performed, program performance, budget status and production schedules.

Website Research

- Recommend website research studies.
- Develop online questionnaires
- Deploy online surveys
- Present research results to DCCED and industry marketing committee, and outline marketing implications.

Social media and search marketing

- Provide support for social media contests and other social media campaigns.
- Attend meetings to collaborate with DCCED contractors on cross-channel programs as requested.
- Search engine optimization.
- Pay-per-click advertising.
- Work with online advertising vendors.
- Provide guidance on new technology and email marketing tools.

Newsletters and Consumer Leads for Email program

- Develop email templates.
- Compile content/images and configure messages for Consumer Leads for Email program.
- Coordinate with the DCCED fulfillment contractor to receive a custom database for each mailing.
- Manage email distribution to ensure deliverability.
- Maintain distribution calendar to ensure optimal performance and to maintain program integrity
- Send campaign results to each business and document performance data in the master file.
- Provide programming and list management services.
- Copywriting.
- Send opt-out requests to DCCED fulfillment contractor so records are not included in future newsletter distribution.

KEY DEADLINES

July State of Alaska fiscal year begins

October	Advertising database must be uploaded
December	Annual marketing retreat with DCCED and Alaska tourism industry businesses to review pertinent research findings and discuss upcoming year priorities, goals, and objectives
January	Preliminary marketing plan presented to DCCED and Alaska tourism industry businesses
March	Detailed marketing plan presented to DCCED and Alaska tourism industry businesses
June	State of Alaska fiscal year ends