

**SONOMA COUNTY**  
• CALIFORNIA •  
**LIFE OPENS UP**

Request for Proposal  
**CANADA**  
Travel Trade/Media Relations Representation

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS:  
Friday, February 1, 2019

Presented By:  
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Sonoma County Tourism  
400 Aviation Blvd, Suite 500  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**Request for Proposal**  
**Canada Travel Trade/Media Relations Representation**  
**Sonoma County Tourism**

Sonoma County Tourism hereby solicits proposals from qualified representation companies to support the destination's cooperative sales, marketing and media relations efforts in Canada. The Representative will develop, execute and deliver a comprehensive program designed for the **travel trade** and **media relations** that supports tourism to Sonoma County and generates increased demand for the destination.

Candidates must bid on the entire Request for Proposal (RFP). Candidates must provide pricing (in US\$) on the full scope of the RFP.

**ABOUT SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM**

Sonoma County Tourism (hereafter referred to as 'SCT') is the official destination marketing organization for California's Sonoma County. SCT is a private, non-profit marketing and sales organization dedicated to promoting overnight stays and creating a sustainable hospitality economy in Sonoma County, California.

Just 48 kilometers north of San Francisco, Sonoma County sits in the heart of Northern California's renowned wine country. It's a place for travelers who want to immerse and connect, whether it be with the earth, nature or, most importantly, with each other. Here you can hike through ancient redwood forests, explore the rugged Pacific coastline, stroll small towns, shop boutiques and artist galleries, taste your way along farm and cheese trails, meet with winemakers and sip glorious wines, or simply sit back and take it all in.

The hospitality and tourism industry in Sonoma County:

- Comprises one out of every ten jobs – 22,700 jobs
- 85% of tourism businesses are locally owned
- 77% of tourism businesses are small (fewer than 25 employees)
- 43 percent have been in business for more than 20 years, 35 percent have been in business for 10 or fewer years
- Contributes \$2 Billion to the local economy
- Collects \$177.7 million in local and state taxes

With a staff of sales, marketing & public relations, communications, and administrative professionals, Sonoma County Tourism promotes Sonoma County as a desirable overnight destination to three main markets: leisure, meetings and groups (incl. weddings) and tour and travel.

The core values of SCT are: Transparent, Strategic, Service Centered, Collaborative and Innovative. These values drive our strategic planning, and affect decisions for sales, marketing, and operations.

SCT is currently funded through two main sources:

- Business Improvement Area (BIA) – this source is derived from a 2 percent assessment on lodging properties with annual gross revenues of more than \$350,000. This is collected from

properties throughout Sonoma County, except for the incorporated areas of Healdsburg and Sonoma.

- Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) – 1.25 points of the first nine points of TOT collected in unincorporated Sonoma County.

For more information visit: <https://www.sonomacounty.com/about-sonoma-county-tourism>

Review a copy of the current Strategic Plan here:

[https://www.sonomacounty.com/sites/default/master/files/pdf/sct\\_2018-19\\_stratplan.pdf](https://www.sonomacounty.com/sites/default/master/files/pdf/sct_2018-19_stratplan.pdf)

### **TRAVEL TRADE OVERVIEW**

SCT develops and implements a year-round, targeted global travel trade-based program that effectively:

1. Builds continued awareness across the travel trade industry of the Sonoma County ‘Life Opens Up’ brand and proposition as a desirable year-round destination.
2. Increases the number of Wholesaler/Tour Operators, Retail Agencies and distribution channels that feature, promote and sell Sonoma County and its product range.
3. Creates and establishes partnerships with Wholesalers/Tour Operators, Retail Agencies, Airlines, Visit California, Visit USA Committees, Brand USA, OTA’s and emerging distribution channels with the aim of increasing demand for the destination and room night production.
4. Strengthens travel professionals’ knowledge of the destination through educational programs including sales calls, trade shows, webinars, newsletters, in-market presentations, familiarization trips to the destination and an engaging online training platform (to be launched 2019).
5. Identifies new initiatives to promote Sonoma County to the travel trade.

### **MEDIA RELATIONS OVERVIEW**

General Media Relations Goals:

1. Increase outreach to top national, regional, and local wine, travel, and lifestyle print, broadcast, and online media.
2. Increase Sonoma County exposure in top national, regional, local wine, travel, and lifestyle print, broadcast, online media/ blogs, and influencers.
3. Increase awareness of Sonoma County as a top tourist and meeting destination.
4. Increase awareness of Sonoma County as a premier wine-producing region, a place of growers, creators and artisans.
5. Create opportunities for Sonoma County Tourism to partner with like brands/personalities on promotions that generate significant buzz for travel to Sonoma County
6. Develop collaboration opportunities with other travel/destination clients that mutually benefit from the partnership.
7. Monitor stories about CA wildfires, and work with SCT on the placement of stories that re-invite visitors to the destination as we work to regain traffic after the Sonoma County wildfires of 2017, and ongoing misconceptions about fires in our area.

### **SCOPE OF SERVICES DESIRED**

During the term of the agreement, the Representative will provide the following **travel trade services** for the Canada markets that include, but are not limited to:

1. Develop and implement an annual travel trade plan that supports activities mentioned in the Travel Trade Overview section. The plan shall include a proposed budget, recommended promotional activity and suggested advertising recommendations.
2. Assist in scheduling and escorting at least quarterly SCT sourced educational/familiarization visits and any additional requests by travel trade professionals during the contract period totaling no less than 12 per year. The Representative will seek airline participation (i.e. - seats) and qualify agents.
3. Provide support and assistance for in-market marketing campaigns. The Representative will act as a resource to seek campaign opportunities aligned with the SCT campaign budget, review and evaluate programs including insights and recommendations on how to optimize travel trade partnerships and ROI.
4. Jointly coordinate an annual SCT in-market sales mission during the contract period, to include airline participation, function organization and invitations to industry representatives. The function will include, but is not limited to, meals, seminars, workshops, presentations, and other activities and logistics.
5. Jointly coordinate and attend key industry trade shows, product launches, seminars and annual visits to the top tour operators & travel agents.
6. Work to increase the range of product featured in tour operator programs and set targets.
7. Develop, maintain and grow an accurate and up-to-date database (on an ongoing basis) of tour operators, travel agencies, airline and travel trade contacts to be used for the distribution of the SCT Travel Industry newsletters.
8. Develop and maintain an editorial calendar for SCT Travel Industry newsletters and send out monthly newsletters.
9. Provide monthly reports of Representative's activities to include: a list of sales calls conducted, with pertinent discussion points; general market information to include economic conditions; competitor observations/perceptions of the Sonoma County brand; trade/roadshows or seminars attended or conducted; Tour Operator/Wholesale program development; a summary of miscellaneous contacts made, number of agents trained, requests and inquiries serviced during each reporting period.
10. Provide support and assistance to SCT partners by providing a list of wholesalers, incentive buyers, as requested by SCT and/or partners.
11. Coordinate and conduct in-market presentations, webinars and seminars in partnership with Airlines, Tour Operators, and Wholesalers to educate travel industry about the destination and its products. Minimum 500 agents trained.
12. Analyze state and national tourism plans; complete an inventory of Visit California, and Brand USA Plans in Canada, to identify areas of coordination and use of best practices. The plan should incorporate coordination with state and national brand development.
13. Provide a dedicated travel trade account manager assigned to the SCT account.
14. Maintain in-office inventory of SCT collateral material for distribution to travel trade clients.
15. Ensure all SCT activities comply with brand standards and quality levels.

During the term of the agreement, the Representative will provide the following **media relations services** for the Canada markets that include, but are not limited to:

1. Develop a strategic and integrated media relations program designed to generate publicity in local consumer and trade publications, and to reach annual PR goals.
2. Respond to all media enquiries.
3. Build and maintain relationships with in-market media.
4. Create, translate and distribute press releases and other relevant media content as requested. Provide analytics from content distribution.
5. Represent SCT at media and consumer events.
6. Create and maintain a database of key lifestyle, trade and news media including print, online, broadcast, social media outlets and influencers.
7. Activate untapped media contacts to create new media opportunities and open-up new media channels.
8. Source, vet and facilitate individual media visits and group press trips with guaranteed coverage over the course of the year. Track and report the coverage resulting from these visits.
9. Track organic coverage promoting Sonoma County as a tourist destination.
10. Identify coverage directly resulting from SCT/partner efforts.
11. Provide monthly PR activity and results reports, reflecting media evaluation benchmarks and using data sets as defined by SCT.
12. Provide small-scale crisis management as required.
13. Assist with localization of Sonoma County positioning and key market messages.
14. Create at least one partnership promotion or activity per year
15. Identify one tourism partner and potential joint activity per year
16. Ensure a dedicated PR account manager is assigned to the SCT account.

#### **DETAILED COST**

Please provide Representative's proposed fee structure (i.e. including expense estimates) for managing a destination account requiring full service. This must be provided, or proposal will not be considered, no markups allowed.

The scope of services outlined are expected to be included as part of the fee. State all services that the Representative would be willing to perform as part of the fee and list any services that would not be included. Please also state any additional routine monthly expenses identified that would not be included within the fee and would be passed on to SCT.

#### **REFERENCES**

Will be required if you are selected to move forward.

#### **STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS**

Proposals submitted must contain, at a minimum, the information described below. The evaluation of the proposals and presentation will include, but not be restricted to, these points. Please respond to each numbered section in order, numbering the responses in the same sequence as below to make the review process easier.

## **1. COMPANY BACKGROUND**

Describe your firm's internal organization and the manner in which services will be furnished to SCT. Include and identify those services which may not be available in the local office but are available from your firm and explain how you will access those services. Provide an example of the structure of servicing used for an account similar to SCT. Please include the following:

- Details on the corporation background and each known subcontractor, its size, and resources
- Date established
- Name(s) and Type of Ownership (public company, partnership, subsidiary, etc.)
- List and provide bios for the key individuals in the company
- Physical locations including addresses of all branches

## **2. COMPANY EXPERIENCE**

- List of key accounts including all current tourism, destination and hospitality accounts
- Details of contracted client experiences within the last three (3) years relevant to the services requested in this RFP
- List of experience in extensive Travel Trade and Media Relations Representation
- Identify the staff person(s) who would be the appointed SCT Account Manager for Travel Trade and Media Relations, describe their qualifications, credentials, experience and responsibilities and specifically, work and experience on similar accounts

## **CONTRACT TERM**

Initial Contract Term: 16 months

- March 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020
- After which the contract will be awarded/renewed on an annual basis.

## **CONTRACT VALUE**

- A maximum \$40,000 (US\$) budget has been allocated for March 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019 to cover initial research, benchmarking and enhanced services for an aggressive entry to market for the partial year. Please include a detailed scope of what this fee would cover in your proposal.
- A maximum \$40,000 (US\$) annual fee for Services has been allocated July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE**

SCT is to be advised of all new business solicitations by the Representative that could be perceived to constitute a conflict of interest by SCT. With regards to the matter of branch or subsidiary offices of the Representative, it should be clear that all such offices are considered as part of the total corporate entity. List any accounts the Representative would perceive as a potential conflict.

## **USE AND DISCLOSURE**

SCT reserves the right to use information submitted in response to this document in any manner it may deem appropriate in evaluating the fitness of the services proposed. Materials that are submitted by the Representative that should be considered highly confidential should be marked as such. If confidentiality is requested but cannot be afforded, the Representative will be notified and will be permitted to withdraw their proposal.

Additionally, and at its discretion, SCT agrees to maintain confidentiality of any product information developed by and offered by the Representative. All information provided in this RFP shall be deemed confidential and shall not be shared by the Representative.

**RFP SCHEDULE**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
RFP distributed and posted to SonomaCounty.com	Monday, Jan. 7, 2019
Questions Due no later than	Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2019
Answers provided to those who submitted questions no later than	Friday, Jan. 18, 2019
Submission Due	Friday, Feb. 1, 2019

Submit questions to [LOwsley@SonomaCounty.com](mailto:LOwsley@SonomaCounty.com)

Questions will be answered only during the timeframe allowable. All questions and answers will be provided to all interested respondents via email and/or SonomaCounty.com.

Submissions may be provided electronically at [LOwsley@Sonomacounty.com](mailto:LOwsley@Sonomacounty.com) or via regular mail (must be received by Feb. 1, 2019) to:

**Lilly Owsley**  
**Sonoma County Tourism**  
**400 Aviation Blvd, Suite 500**  
**Santa Rosa, CA 95403**