



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – UK & IRELAND & GERMAN SPEAKING MARKETS

ISSUED: OCTOBER 15, 2024

CLOSING: NOVEMBER 15, 2024 @5PM CST

The Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) unites the chief executives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Québec and Wisconsin. The Governors and Premiers work as equal partners to grow the region's \$6 trillion economy and protect the world's largest system of surface fresh water. GSGP manages two partnerships aimed at increasing tourism to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region—Great Lakes USA (GLUSA) and Cruise the Great Lakes (CTGL).

GLUSA conducts international marketing and sales of the Great Lakes region for the member States with the goal of increasing economic impact through tourism.

CTGL is the region's cruise marketing partnership and a collaboration of the region's States, Provinces and partners working together to grow regional cruising via advocacy and policy. Its mission is to promote cruising in the region through an optimized and unique brand targeted towards current and potential passengers.

Each program is overseen by a board consisting of representatives from each of the participating member States and Provinces. Each program also has a fee-based partnership program open to interested organizations (e.g., Conventions and Visitors Bureaus; Cruise Ship Operators; and Ports).

For more information on GLUSA and CTGL, visit:

<https://greatlakesusa.co.uk/>
<https://www.greatlakes.de/>
www.cruisethegreatlakes.com

GSGP is now accepting applications and seeking information from interested individuals or agencies who will serve as in-country representation who would help support the GSGP's tourism programs, including GLUSA and CTGL in the United Kingdom/Ireland and Germany/Austria/Switzerland. You may submit information for one or both markets and please clearly specify.

All proposals must be submitted by email to gsgp@gsgp.org by November 15, 2024 @5pm CST.

1. PROCUREMENT OVERVIEW:

Great Lakes USA (GLUSA) is seeking the services of a marketing organization to develop and implement programs/campaigns to position Great Lakes USA as a preferred travel destination in United Kingdom and secondarily, Ireland and/or German speaking markets of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. GLUSA is looking for a vendor or vendors that will increase the volume of travelers to Great Lakes USA with highly cost-effective results driven programs. The prospective vendor(s) must clearly illustrate how their recommended programs will increase visitors and the economic impact to Great Lakes USA states and the region’s return on investment, showing quantifiable results.

2. GENERAL CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS:

All proposals must be submitted by email to gsgp@gsgp.org by November 15, 2024 @5pm CST.

3. ACQUISITION METHOD:

Purchase of Services.

4. EXPECTED DURATION OF CONTRACTS:

First operational contract duration:	January 1 – June 30, 2025
Option to renew beyond first year:	Three consecutive 1-year options to renew operational contract, subject to the evaluation of the contract performance and GLUSA budget.

Total anticipated duration:	January 1, 2025 – June 30, 2028.
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5. ANNUAL BUDGET REQUEST:

FEE REQUEST FOR THE FOLLOWING SCOPE OF WORK (excluding OOP costs) –

We would like you to focus on 4 core areas –

- Always on Product Audits – Understanding the market and what product is where to determine need areas and provide gaps to the Tourism Director and Board of Directors. This will help us make smart marketing and investment decisions and assist with goals setting for the future.

- Product development - ongoing & new. Seeking new product placement, distribution of itineraries and marketing opportunities across trade and PR.
- PR & Trade Pitching – ongoing, active, and always on approach with monthly reporting.
- Managing and executing (minimum 4) pre-approved FAMS/sales mission per the marketing plan mutually agreeable to the board.

We will discuss websites and social media (and any other functions) with the awardee separately as part of the OOP costs.

OOP= travel costs, third-party pass-through costs and/or subscriptions or any approved administrative costs (but not limited to)

FEE= all associated labor or time to perform the scope of services defined above.

6. SCOPE OF SERVICES:

- Increase overall visibility of Great Lakes USA and create consumer favorability of the region as a travel destination.
- Increase stakeholder collaboration and expand partner participation and investment.

This RFI asks responding vendors to:

- Recommend a marketing strategy and annual or short-term project program of work for GLUSA including consumer-first, trade, and media projects. Provide suggested metrics for activities and initiatives.
- Plan may also include trade co-ops, public relations, managed media, website and social media activities, trade and consumer education, trade, and media familiarization tours to the region.
- Workplan must include an annual report, annual detailed travel trade product audit and earned media report.
- Summarize goals and deliverables under representation retainer fee, including planned trade and media activities, education, and other services. Include information on frequency of reporting and provide an example of reporting.
- Identify potential opportunities for expansion of individual state and membership buy-in activities, and proposed partner pricing structure for each opportunity.
- Provide complete budget, detailing monthly retainer fee and/or estimated fee per project, associated travel costs and other expenses.

Please note: Any subcontracting of work must be specified in the bidder's response and will be evaluated by GLUSA as part of the proposed program. GLUSA must approve sub-contractors in advance, but the primary contracted vendor will be responsible for performance.

7. COMPENSATION:

Contractor invoices will be **paid in US dollars**. Value Added Tax (VAT) does not apply to services invoiced to and rendered on behalf of GLUSA. Payments will be made by GLUSA directly to the contractor(s).

Compensation will be on a cost reimbursement basis. Contractor will submit an invoice accompanied by relevant documentation that supports the successful completion of services. Any pre-payments will be agreed upon on a project-by-project basis. Contractor will execute billing for buy-in according to GLUSA state request.

Invoices will be paid monthly after the completion of the month and receipts are submitted and reviewed, along with the monthly program status report. The agency will be required to produce detailed receipts of all expenses. GLUSA will have 30 days after receipt of the invoice to process payment.

8. CONTRACTOR(S) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

International organizations that are selected to market Great Lakes USA are considered eligible if they meet the following *minimum* qualifications:

- Minimum 5 years in destination marketing experience.
- Demonstrated effectiveness of programs for current or previous travel clients.
- An office located in, or with access to, a major metropolitan area in the United Kingdom and/or Germany through which activities will be coordinated and managed. Please specify the number of full- and part-time employees that work in the designated office.
- Account Team must demonstrate experience and ability to work within the community in the travel and tourism field and have the necessary network of contacts to initiate and implement this program. All account staff must be fluent in written and spoken English.
- Experience in marketing and developing travel brands for any United States travel destination.
- Familiarity of Great Lakes USA as a travel destination.

9. ELEMENTS OF PROPOSAL

To be considered a valid response to this RFI, submissions must include:

- Description of your business including, a general overview, years in business, annual current client billing for the past five (5) years, including an estimate for current year, organizational flow chart, number of full and part-time employees and consultants/contract employees by functional area, list of clients for the past three years, indicated those that are current and length of relationship for all, and contact person for this RFP and address, phone and email.
- Organization's capabilities as they relate to GLUSA's marketing opportunities and challenges.
- Provide three examples of past projects like those outlined in Section 6 Scope of Services. Outline the key goals, objectives, and outcomes. Attach any examples of creative and/or supporting materials. Provide client contact information. Indicate who from the agency team was responsible for the project.
- Proposed account team including any subcontractors & proposed partners/subcontractors: names, credentials, length of employment, work status (permanent vs contract employee). Clearly identify the person who will have primary responsibility for managing the account and the person who will be the primary day-to-day contact with the GLUSA team.
- Overview of latest market trends with a broad overview explaining the general strategy of how your business would address these trends to put Great Lakes USA in the best position.

POST AWARD (within 90 days):

- Recommended strategies and tactics and methods of measurement to Scope of Services in Section 6. Must include a Year 1 action plan with an itemized budget.
- Provide a list of all current travel destination and travel industry clients, if any: client name, work performed, and contract status. GLUSA reserves the right to disqualify Bidders who have travel-related clients that, in the opinion of GLUSA, could pose a conflict of interest.

10. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be evaluated based upon bidders' responsiveness to this RFI in terms of compliance with all eligibility requirements as detailed in Section 8.

- Demonstrated ability to perform all required services as detailed in Section 6
- Relevant experience of marketing agency and subcontractors, if any

- Demonstrated results
- Marketing agency and account team credentials
- Proposed compensation
- Overall quality of the submission

Any response, regardless of the submission formats specified, that fails to meet a mandatory specification of this RFI may be found non-responsive without further evaluation unless GLUSA, in its discretion, determines that the non-compliance is insubstantial, can be corrected or that an alternative proposed by the bidder is acceptable.

Proposals will be evaluated by the Great Lakes USA State Tourism Directors (Board of Directors) or their designees and the Tourism Director of GLUSA. This review panel will determine eligibility and select agencies invited to present capabilities (if required). This will be arranged via teleconference or webinar.

All expenses related to the presentation, if required, will be at the Bidder's cost, not GLUSA's.

The panel will then make the final selection of a marketing agency. GLUSA reserves the right to reject proposals if it is deemed in the best interests of Great Lakes USA.

11. GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Proposals, excluding any resumes, should be no more than 10 pages including supporting exhibits. Materials exceeding this limit will not be considered.

All proposals must be submitted by email to gsgp@gsgp.org by November 15, 2024, by 5pm CST.

Proposals will be evaluated based upon:

- Demonstrated ability to perform all required services.
- Relevant experience.
- Demonstrated results.
- Overall quality of the submission.

GSGP will conduct virtual interviews, and notify finalists/awardees as appropriate, with an estimated start date of January 1, 2025.

Note: No phone or email inquiries during the application or selection process for all respondents.