



Request for Proposal

Visitor Profile Research

Proposals Due by 3:00pm EST on March 21, 2019

CONTACT INFORMATION

Corrina Ferguson

Executive Director

Elizabeth City Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

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****PLEASE DIRECT ANY AND ALL CORRESPONDENCE AND QUESTIONS IN WRITING TO CORRINA FERGUSON ONLY.****

RFP OVERVIEW

Elizabeth City / Pasquotank County is a small destination in northeastern North Carolina. Tourism promotion is carried out through the Visit Elizabeth City name and website. Visit Elizabeth City works under the full name of the Elizabeth City Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (ECACVB) which is funded by North Carolina legislation that created the oversight body: the Elizabeth City - Pasquotank County Tourism Development Authority (ECPCTDA). The purpose of the ECACVB/ECPCTDA is to increase travel to Pasquotank County generating revenues and improving the economy of the county.

Note: ECACVB and ECPCTDA are one and the same, and throughout this RFP may be used interchangeably.

The ECACVB/ECPCTDA seeks proposals for a qualified firm with proven experience, resources, and expertise to complete a Visitor Profile Study of the Elizabeth City area tourism market. This research study may include actual visitor data, economic impact of visitors (per-trip spending, not a repeat of the US Travel TEIM research), intent and awareness information, and brand awareness dependent on time and budget. Proposals are requested from a research firm with significant experience in travel and tourism.

OVERVIEW OF ELIZABETH CITY

Just 50 minutes from Norfolk, Virginia and 50 minutes from the Outer Banks, North Carolina Elizabeth City is the economic, educational, health care and cultural hub for 16 counties in northeastern North Carolina. The city has a unique geographic location on the banks of the picturesque Pasquotank River, which connects to Albemarle Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. Elizabeth City is steeped in history, charming and intriguing—giving both residents and visitors plenty to love about it.

A primary stop on the Intracoastal Waterway, Elizabeth City offers boaters a walkable downtown to visit, free 48-hours of docking and the Rose Buddies welcome reception – a hometown pride program that was started by two EC residents where visiting boaters are given roses and greeted with wine and cheese parties.

Known as the Harbor of Hospitality®, Elizabeth City is on the cusp of a revival. The United States Coast Guard calls the city home and the North Carolina Potato Festival is held here annually. The community features the most antebellum homes in the state as well as six National Register Historic Districts.

Major attractions in Elizabeth City / Pasquotank County:

The **Museum of the Albemarle** is part of the state’s suite of history museums and has exhibits that share the story of the founding of northeastern North Carolina. With a beautiful 7,000 square foot main gallery plus constantly changing exhibit and special events, the Museum of the Albemarle is a must-see attraction in Elizabeth City.

On the North Carolina-Virginia border and open year round, **Dismal Swamp State Park** offers outdoor recreation opportunities like canoeing, hiking, kayaking and mountain biking. Bird watchers also flock to the park to get a glimpse of more than 200 species of birds.

The Lowry-Chesson Building was a hive for entertainment, arts, and culture at the turn of the 20th century during its era as the “Academy of Music” opera house. Now restored, it fills a similar role today as the **Arts of the Albemarle** including the second floor Maguire Theater, one of the few vaudeville theaters left in the state and the first-floor galleries are home to artwork from more than 220 local and regional artists.

Historic Downtown Elizabeth City welcomes residents and visitors alike with walkable shopping, dining and entertainment options all within a block of the harbor. Frequent events including First Friday Art Walks and Third Thursday Jazz plus regular live music at local restaurants and Ghost Harbor Brewery offer even more reasons to enjoy the downtown.

The region is home to **three institutions of higher education**: Elizabeth City State University, the College of the Albemarle and Mid Atlantic Christian University.

Other unique elements of the destination:

One of the U.S. **Coast Guard's** busiest bases, **Support Center Elizabeth City** is home to five commands: Air Station Elizabeth City, Support Center, Aircraft Logistics Center, Aviation Technical Training Center and a small-boat station. The base is the Coast Guard's largest aviation facility and it is the largest employer in Northeastern North Carolina. However – not a leisure tourism draw since the base is not open to the public.

Once a WWII blimp base, Weeksville NAS was in operation from 1941-1957 and its blimps could be seen traveling from Elizabeth City to the Outer Banks. The enormous blimp hangar is now home to **TCOM, L.P.**, a manufacturer of aerostats. Similar in looks to the blimps once housed here, TCOM's aerostats are tethered in place and are quite a sight to see floating high in our Carolina sky.

The **Elizabeth City Regional Airport** is full service, including competitive fuel prices, a mechanic on the field, 7200 foot runway and control tower. There are no commercial flights, but the airport is available for charter and private.

The destination is very close to the Outer Banks and is located in the heart of what some call the Inner Banks. Occasionally we are referred to as the Gateway to the Outer Banks. The region is also sometimes called River City.

OBJECTIVE

Though some informal research has been collected in the past, these surveys have been inconsistent and non-comprehensive in nature. An extensive visitor profile study has never been completed in the ECACVB 14-year history.

The purpose of this RFP is to have the successful proponent complete visitor research to provide the ECACVB and our partners further insight regarding visitation to our region. The final Visitor Profile study will provide critical information concerning the tourism region's overall ability to: attract the right visitors, provide the best experiences, and generate longer and more frequent visits, while working to sustain and nurture existing stakeholders, and attracting new, potential tourism growth.

The successful proponent will be required to provide research services for the ECACVB consistent with the following objectives:

- Research and data and assumptions should be methodologically sound
- Research documentation should be accurate, cogent and understandable to non-technical readers
- Research survey and data collection methods should meet the marketing research standards and codes from the Council of American Survey Research Organization (CASRO), Marketing Research Association (MRA), or other similar professional organizations
- Research should be objective, independent and balanced
- Research should be verifiable and defensible to peer review or audit

Your proposal will form an integral part of the contract.

SCOPE OF WORK

The successful proponent shall furnish all equipment, labor, materials, supplies, licensing, transportation, and other components necessary to provide professional marketing and research services that will meet the requirements of the ECACVB. The services should include but not be limited to providing the following specific services for travel studies:

- Visitor Profile Report - This visitor profile should provide detailed origin, economic, demographic, and motivational profiles of Elizabeth City's overnight visitors
- Visit estimates, average party size, average length of stay, day trip or overnight, average party spending, attractions visited.
- Seasonality and regional boating impact should be factored in as well
- Destination awareness and overall perceptions of the region
- The selected firm may be requested to make a formal presentation in Elizabeth City to present the course of the research, summarize the project and communicate findings, before the ECPCTDA board, community leaders and stakeholders, and elected officials. *(This item is TBD. Please provide a budget amount so we can determine feasibility.)*

EXPECTED OUTCOME:

Research provided will result in a detailed report; this report will provide valuable information to the ECACVB for current and future planning. The report may include but is not limited to:

- Determine our core feeder markets
- The estimated number of visitors from the Elizabeth City area's core feeder markets
- The estimated per capita spending of Elizabeth City area visitors from key origin
- Length of stay in the destination
- Estimated economic impact of each visit
- Season of visit
- Does the visitor profile change by season
- Demographic and psychographic profiles of visitors by market

PROPOSAL PACKAGE

In order to provide an equitable review of the proposals received, please follow the below proposal template:

- 1) Cover Page
- 2) Bidder Certification form
- 3) Business Profile- location of main office and any branch offices, year established
- 4) Brief summary of company background / history
- 5) Professional Tourism Experience (with a minimum of 2 recent tourism references)
- 6) Personnel (identify lead and support roles)
- 7) Research Approach
 - a. Well-formulated procedures
 - b. Knowledge of the tourism industry
 - c. Related research practices & validation
 - d. Sound methodology for collecting & analyzing data
 - e. Organized approach for results documents used to communicate with stakeholders, elected officials and public
 - f. Metrics, both quantitative & qualitative
 - g. Quality measures to assure the accuracy of the final product
- 8) Timeline of Work
- 9) Total Cost (including a breakdown of services)

Additional Questions

- i. What will your proposed research offer that others do not?
- ii. How can your proposed research help us accomplish our objectives on a very tight budget?
- iii. Please provide one to two examples of completed similar projects with other small destinations

GEOGRAPHY

There are no geographic restrictions upon the location of service providers allowed to submit responses. All service providers however, must demonstrate their ability, recommended plan and commitment to serve the account, regardless of location. Any costs associated with travel to complete the project should be included in the cost proposal.

SELECTION PROCESS & CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated by the ECACVB Executive Director and marketing committee, in consultation with the ECPCTDA Board. During the evaluation process, the ECACVB reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from those submitting proposals.

The ECACVB will award the contract based on the following selection criteria:

Completeness, technical competence, and clarity of the proposal	100
Cost	100
Knowledge & experience working similar projects including demonstrated effectiveness with similar projects	90
Proposed methodology and implementation approach, including project timing	90
Tourism related references and the depth of their study	60
Quality and experience of the personnel to be assigned to our project	60
TOTAL	500

Based on the number of responses, a short-list may be selected for telephone interviews. The ECACVB may interview none, one or all agencies who submitted proposals. The final selection decision rests with the ECACVB Executive Director.

The ECACVB reserves the right to negotiate modifications to proposals that it deems acceptable, reject any and all proposals, and to waive minor irregularities in the procedures.

RESPONSE GUIDELINES

- Written proposals must be submitted on or before March 21, 2019 before 3:00 pm Eastern Standard Time for consideration. **Late proposals cannot be accepted.**
- Supporting materials including USBs are welcome and should be referenced within the written presentation.
- Response must be dated and signed by principal of firm.
- Team must be available to present in-person, if required.

Please submit 6 printed copies of your proposal (including USBs) to:

Corrina Ferguson, Executive Director
Elizabeth City Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
501 S Water Street
Elizabeth City, NC 27909
252.335.5330

Please also submit one electronic version of your proposal via Dropbox or other file-sharing means to:

Corrina@VisitElizabethCity.com

BIDDER CERTIFICATION

(Bidder must sign and return with proposal)

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