



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

TO MANAGE AND OPERATE

LOCAL VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF
MEAFORD

ISSUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Situated on the southern shore of Georgian Bay, the Municipality of Meaford, with a permanent population of 11,000, extends North West to the boundary of the City of Owen Sound and South East to the boundary of the Town of The Blue Mountains. It is located within the Southern Georgian Bay Region which is known as one of Canada's finest four season resort areas.

Meaford...the other big apple.

Catch the buzz...without the bustle. Check out Meaford, Ontario - New York's laid back country cousin, located just two hours northwest of Toronto. We have great theatre and concerts, fresh local food, shopping, nature at your doorstep and a beautiful harbour on Georgian Bay.

Come explore our beautiful parks, harbour, restaurants, scenery and much more. Meaford is a town that welcomes every age group with open arms. We have a wide variety of activities within the municipality and surrounding area for everyone to enjoy. Whether you are a nature enthusiast, business professional, or simply want a weekend away for peace and serenity; there is no better place than the other big apple, Meaford, Ontario.

The Meaford Economic Development Strategy (MEDS) outlines four key economic pillars of the community:

-  Tourism
-  Agribusiness
-  Retail
-  Green Business

Several large and small scale events and festivals are held in Meaford throughout the year which draws many visitors. Regional tourism efforts from neighbouring municipalities such as the Apple Pie Trail also attract visitors to our area. Tourism is viewed as a series of experiences that pay no heed to municipal or political boundaries, but ensure our visitors enjoy their stay and continue to return. Superior front line visitor information service is imperative to providing the best tourist experience with the hopes of garnering future investment in our community. Tourists' expenditures reduce the tax burden on residents by bringing incremental revenue to our community. A vibrant tourism economy improves the quality of life for our residents and expands our experiential offerings. Tourism is a dominant industry in our region which is driving growth in all sectors of the regional economy.

PURPOSE

The Municipality of Meaford is seeking a fee for service contract from an experienced proponent in managing and operating Local Visitor Information Services on behalf of the municipality. It is imperative that the proponent determine the most effective use of designated public dollars in achieving delivery of this service.

The prospective proponent will coordinate efforts with the municipality's Economic Development Professional (EDP), Director of Planning and Building and Community Services Director and various stakeholder groups on a variety of services, events and activities.

Meaford Hall Arts and Cultural Centre, located at 12 Nelson Street, Meaford is a beautifully restored century old landmark which is known as the premier arts and cultural centre in Southern Georgian Bay. The successful proponent will be offered office space in Meaford Hall to operate a Welcome Centre and provide local visitor information.

The municipality will negotiate an agreement with the successful proponent who is most responsive to the Request for Proposals (RFP) and is in the best interest of providing this service. To be considered for this RFP, the instructions must be followed precisely. The Municipality reserves the right to decline any and all responses.

SCOPE OF WORK

In conjunction with municipal staff, the successful proponent will plan and carry out programs designed to greet visitors when they are in Meaford. Visitors can be defined as tourists, residents, weekenders and potential investors.

- ✚ Provide up-to-date information to visitors on all local and regional accommodations, attractions, wineries, dining establishments, shopping, recreational services, festivals and events.
- ✚ Operate and maintain a Visitor information Centre (Welcome Centre) with minimum hours of:
 - July and August – Monday to Sunday – 10am to 5pm
 - Off Peak Months –Thursday to Monday – 10am to 5pm

Hours to be adjusted based on visitor demand.

- ✚ Liaise with community groups and The Municipal Department of Community Services to ensure accuracy and inclusion of all community events and festivals in the delivery of visitor information.
- ✚ The successful proponent will report directly to the municipal Economic Development Professional.
- ✚ Maintain the events and festival calendar on the municipal web portal, and submit event information to local publications as requested.
- ✚ Coordinate, in conjunction with the municipality, content for the municipal lure brochure as well as the privately published Meaford Guide.
- ✚ Participate in industry/regional brochure exchanges and ensure all appropriate and pertinent brochures are available for distribution to visitors at all times. Proponent will also be responsible for regional distribution of Meaford material.
- ✚ Address all visitor related enquiries (including regional) from walk-in traffic, phone calls and emails.
- ✚ Assemble and distribute tourist information mail outs as requested.
- ✚ The Municipality will allow the proponent to be part of the municipal portal at no additional cost and provide training and support for its use.
- ✚ Provide tourism/customer service training to all staff employed by the proponent as well as create a tourism training model/manual for all front line municipal staff.
- ✚ Provide detailed statistics to the municipality on a quarterly basis:
 - April 10th, 2011 for the period ending March 31st, 2011
 - July 10th, 2011 for the period ending June 30th, 2011
 - October 10th, 2011 for the period ending September 30th, 2011
 - January 10th, 2012 for the period ending December 31st, 2011

Statistics must include:

- Number of people in party (with detailed demographics)
- Place of Origin
- Nature of Inquiry
- Length of Stay
- Why Meaford? How did they find out about Meaford?

- Any other questions or format as requested and/or approved by the EDP

- ✚ Prepare an annual performance report in addition to the quarterly reports to be submitted to the EDP for presentation to council and inclusion in the Municipal Annual Report.

- ✚ Maintain a record of frequently asked and obscure questions or enquiries including trends, problems and insights on visitor needs.

- ✚ The proponent will continually strive to promote the municipal brand of “the other big apple”.

- ✚ Maintain and repair all equipment and furnishings owned and utilized by the proponent operating Local Visitor Information Services.

- ✚ Other responsibilities as designated by the municipality.

PARAMETERS

- ✚ Proponent must be a not for profit entity with no pecuniary interest in visitor referral services.
- ✚ Proponent must allow an annual financial audit by Municipal treasury staff and their auditors
- ✚ Proponent must abide by all mandatory municipal health and safety standards including accessibility of facility.
- ✚ Staff and Directors of proponent must participate in mandatory municipal health and safety training
- ✚ Proponent must have experience providing visitor information services, specifically in the South Georgian Bay region.
- ✚ Proponent must not have any members/employees who have a conflict of interest in responding to this RFP
- ✚ Proponent must have proof of a minimum of \$2,000,000 liability insurance.

EXCEPTIONS

The Municipality of Meaford, through its Economic Development Professional, will represent itself on all regional tourism organizations/committees and at regional tourism events.

Coordination and management of tourism related events, or any other programs, is not considered part of the RFP process. Proponents may apply

separately to the Municipality for funding through its economic development/tourism related special events/programs fund.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

The Municipality of Meaford will utilize the following timetable with the goal of selecting the most qualified proponent. This schedule may be changed solely at the Municipality's discretion.

Release Date of RFP	September 27 th , 2011
Submissions Due	October 17 th , 2011 by 3 pm
Selection Committee Review & Ranking	October 18 th , 2011
Oral Presentations	October 19 th & 20 th , 2011
Council Approval	November 14 th , 2011 (COW) Nov 25 th , 2011 Council
Contract Start Date	January 1 st , 2012

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS

General

All prospective proponents shall provide sufficient information and data to fully allow a complete evaluation of the information provided. Information and data submitted by each proponent will become part of the proposal.

The proponent interested in responding to the RFP must provide the information on qualifications and experience, length of time in business, qualifications of the team, team members' experiences, references and approach to providing services. Submissions that do not respond completely to all requirements specified herein may be considered non-responsive and eliminated from the process.

The Proponent shall submit the following information with their proposal:

Similar Work

- Proponent shall demonstrate an understanding of current trends in tourism and visitor information, as they relate to the needs of the municipality and its regional partners. Include methods/examples of tracking visitor information statistics.

Personnel/Resources

- List and provide background of personnel and other resources available to support the work to be performed by the proponent. If staffing changes occur during the contract term, it is expected that a replacement with similar qualifications will be approved by the municipality.

Creativity

- Provide examples of how creativity can be used in the delivery of visitor information services.

Pricing

- Proponent shall submit a lump sum cost for the entire annual (calendar year) contract. The proposed annual budget for the year for managing Local Visitor Information Services is \$50,000. This contract expenditure will not be increased throughout the term.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proponents are asked to submit the original and three copies of a Proposal in an envelope marked:

“Proposal to Manage and Operate Local Visitor Information Services for the Municipality of Meaford.” Proposals will be accepted at The Municipal Administration Office at 21 Trowbridge Street West, Meaford, ON up to 3pm local time on October 17th, 2011.

THE RFP is a request for proposals only and is not a call for tender. No contractual relationship between The Municipality and any proponent shall arise from the submission of any proposal.

The Municipality expressly reserves the right to:

- Negotiate, or otherwise deal with; at any time, or in any sequence, any proponent,
- Amend the RFP at any time; and
- Not accept any proposals or negotiate with any proponent.

NOTE: Should any potential proponent download this RFP from the municipal website, it is the proponent's responsibility to check for Addenda which may be posted on the municipal website at www.meaford.ca under tenders and bids.

PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE OPENED IN PUBLIC

The following information will be required as part of the response to the RFP:

1. Proponent Information
 - a. Name of organization
 - b. Location of office
 - c. Phone and email
 - d. Person(s) authorized to represent the organization
 - e. Length of time in business

2. Letter of Interest and Approach
 - a. Letter should demonstrate proponents approach to providing Local Visitor Information Services to the Municipality, as well as an understanding of the scope of work and purpose.
 - b. Describe initial approach/philosophy to scope of work.
 - c. Describe areas of creativity.
 - d. Describe the benefits the Municipality could expect should the proponent be awarded the contract.
 - e. Describe goals and measures of performance to be used.

3. Experience
 - a. Describe Visitor Information Services experience
 - b. Describe ability to leverage resources

4. Personnel/Resources
 - a. Background/qualifications of personnel assigned to this contract.
 - b. Resources available to conduct work; ability to leverage outside resources

5. Similar Work/References

List of current/previous experience and examples of work performed
Describe proven performance

6. Cost

Breakdown of costs including amount for administration of this contract.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE AND INSTRUCTIONS

The delivery of proposals to the Municipality of Meaford's Clerk's Office at the Municipal Administration Building prior to the specified date and time is solely the responsibility of the proponent. The Municipality shall not, under any circumstances, be responsible for delays caused by any occurrence. All responses must be manually and duly signed by an authorized corporate officer of the corporation. Proposals must not be sent by mail, facsimile or email.

All enquiries related to this RFP, including any requests for information and clarification, are to be directed, in writing, to the following person:

Laurie Mitchell
Economic Development and Communications Professional
21 Trowbridge Street West
Meaford, ON

lmitchell@meaford.ca

Any information obtained from any other source is not official and should not be relied upon. Enquiries and any responses will be posted on the Municipality's website one week prior to proposal due date.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

The following format, sequence and instructions should be followed in order to provide consistency in proponent responses and ensure each proposal receives full consideration. All pages should be consecutively numbered.

1. Completed RFP cover page, including proponent section as per instructions
2. Table of contents including page numbers
3. A short (one or two page) summary of the key features of the proposal

SELECTION CRITERIA AND RANKING PROCESS

All proposals will be evaluated by a Selection Committee to be established by The Municipality of Meaford. The successful proponent must demonstrate an understanding of the project scope and purpose.

The evaluation of proposals shall be accomplished utilizing the criteria described in this section. Information and data included in the proposal shall be considered in the evaluation process.

COMPLETENESS OF PROPOSAL

Following receipt of proposals, the Selection Committee shall review all proposals with respect to completeness and conformance with the instructions and requirements specifically indicated in this RFP. Responses which are deemed incomplete or nonconforming with instructions and requirements of this RFP, may not be given further evaluation or consideration. The Municipality of Meaford reserves the right to reject any and all responses and to waive any irregularity, variance, or informality, whether technical or substantial in nature, in keeping with the best interest of the Municipality.

SELECTION CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated with respect to the completeness of the data provided, support for all claims made and the overall approach. A total of 100 points can be awarded as part of the evaluation.

The following criteria will be utilized in the evaluation and ranking process:

Criteria	Points
Approach to scope of work	10
Proven Performance/Similar Work/References	20
Personnel/Resources	20
Creativity	10
Proposed plan for costs	25
Performance Measurement Indicators	15
Total Points	100

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Top ranked proponents will be asked to present their proposals to the Selection Committee. Final candidates chosen for consideration will be contacted and expected to present their qualifications in person the week of October 24th, 2011. This presentation should include a recommended approach to achieving the goals set forth in the Scope of Work within the confines of the budget for providing Local Visitor Information services.

The presentation will be expected to support and clarify the written proposal. The presentation will not be an opportunity for proponents to provide new information or make proposal modifications. The evaluation committee may also use the presentation as an opportunity to validate any statements made in the written proposal. Proponents are solely responsible for their own expenses for the preparation and delivery of their presentation, including travel where applicable.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Municipality will endeavor to keep all proposals confidential. The material contained in a successful proposal will be incorporated into a contract and any information that is considered sensitive and/or proprietary by the proponent shall be identified as such by the proponent. Technical or commercial information included in the municipal contract shall not be released if the municipal clerk deems such releases inappropriate, subject to the Freedom of Information and Protections of Privacy Act.

CLARIFICATION

The municipality reserves the right to seek proposal clarification with the proponents to assist in making evaluations.

GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Proponents will not offer entertainment, gifts, gratuities, discounts or special services regardless of value, to any employee or council member of the Municipality. The successful proponent will report to the Clerk any attempt by municipal employees or councilors to obtain such favours.

ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL

The Municipality of Meaford shall not be obligated in any manner to any proponents whatsoever until a written contract has been duly executed relating to an approved proposal.

No act of the Municipality, other than a notice in writing signed by the Clerk and the Chief Administrative Officer, shall constitute an acceptance of a proposal. Such acceptance shall bind the successful proponent to execute in a manner satisfactory to the Municipality.

NEGOTIATION DELAY

If a written contract cannot be negotiated within thirty days of notification of the successful proponent, the Municipality may, at its sole discretion at any time thereafter, terminate negotiations with that proponent and either negotiate a contract with the next qualified proponent or choose to terminate the RFP process and not enter into a contract with any of the proponents.