Visit North Carolina NC

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NC State Travel Guide 2028-2030

Official North Carolina Travel Guide: 2028, 2029 and 2030 Editions

Issuing & Approving Agency

Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina

Key Dates

Milestone	Date
RFP issued	November 18, 2026
Deadline for written questions (email only)	Close of business, December 2, 2026
Questions and answers posted online	By December 4, 2026 (within two business days of the question deadline)
Proposals (email) and printed samples (mail) due	3 p.m. ET, December 9, 2026
Proposals opened	Next business day following the close of the RFP
Proposals reviewed and considered	December 10-17, 2026
Contract awarded	By December 18, 2026
Contract term begins	January 1, 2027

Where to Submit

Proposals (email only)	Printed samples and publication examples (mail)
Contact: Scott Peacock **Email:** scott.peacock@visitnc.com **Subject line:** "RFP Response: Visit NC Travel Guide 2028-2030"	RFP: Visit NC Travel Guide 2028-2030 Samples EDPNC/Visit NC Attn: Scott Peacock 150 Fayetteville Street, Suite 900 Raleigh, NC 27601

Questions

Direct all questions concerning this RFP by email to Scott Peacock, scott.peacock@visitnc.com with a subject line of: **"Visit NC Travel Guide RFP"**. Questions concerning the specifications in this RFP will be

received by email only, until close of business December 2, 2026. A summary of all questions with answers will be posted at visitnc.com/industry/resources/rfp within four (4) business days.

Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Scope of Services 4
3. Technical Specifications 7
4. Proposal Requirements 8
5. Proposal Submission 10
6. Evaluation and Procurement Process 11
7. Contract Terms and Conditions 13
Attachment A: Execution of Proposal 13

1. Introduction

Visit North Carolina, a division of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, hereinafter referred to as "Visit NC," is seeking a highly qualified and competent publisher, hereinafter referred to as "Proposer" or "Publisher," to produce the 2028, 2029 and 2030 **Official North Carolina Travel Guide** in both printed and digital format.

The Official North Carolina Travel Guide is the primary consumer fulfillment publication for the State in its national and international efforts to promote North Carolina as a premier travel destination. The printed piece is complementary to the State's official travel planning website, VisitNC.com. Quality, integrity and innovation are key values for Visit NC's fulfillment collateral. The successful Proposer will exhibit, maintain and expand these values.

All versions of the Guide must be comprehensive, divided geographically and topically, have outstanding writing, photography and design, maintain excellence in printing, support the state's messaging, complement the consumer website VisitNC.com, have a clean, user-friendly layout with highly readable fonts, and logical design. Proposers may refer to the *2026 Official North Carolina Travel Guide* for previous standards for editorial, layout, advertising, printing and the online Guide.

Any and all advertising sales for the Travel Guide will be the responsibility of the Proposer.

2. Scope of Services

2.1 General Requirements and Compensation

1. Publisher must produce the Guide in accordance with all applicable state laws.
2. Publisher's primary, and preferably sole, compensation is the advertising revenue from the Guide and from other revenue-generating programs approved by Visit NC.
3. Visit NC will provide Publisher with a letter of introduction and endorsement.
4. Publisher must be a paid sponsor of the annual Visit NC Tourism Conference above the free exhibitor booth given to it.
5. Visit NC will require a meeting with the editorial and management at Publisher's place of business prior to award of contract or during contract period at Visit NC's discretion.

2.2 Advertising

1. The publication shall not be advertiser driven; it must include comprehensive editorial and content without connection to advertising sales agreements, combined with paid advertising. **Publisher is to include ad sizes and costs in proposal.** Visit NC and Publisher will agree on ad sizes, design, placements, premiums, special positions, and corresponding ad rates prior to award of contract and in subsequent years of the contract. Attention to affordable advertising options is a priority. After the first year of the contract, annual increases to any ad rate may not exceed five percent (5%) without Visit NC's written approval.
2. Advertising within the publication must be clean and consistent. Visit NC reserves the right to approve all advertising design, content and photography. Publisher is responsible for collection of advertising materials, design and layout of individual ads. Publisher is responsible for correctness

of advertising copy and must have in place a system allowing individual advertisers to proofread and approve ads created by the Publisher. Advertisers who are allowed to submit their own ads are to proof and approve the ads before they are submitted to the Publisher.

3. Ad rates and sizes must allow for broad participation from industry partners. A strategy for achieving a high level of participation from across NC's 100 counties and the Qualla Boundary should be included.
4. The back cover(s) of the publication will be reserved for Visit NC. Generally, this back cover will be part of a cover wrap using authorized photography, and, unless otherwise agreed, it will include official indicia and return address for mailing purposes.
5. Publisher must supply each advertiser with two print Guide copies.
6. Publisher is responsible for all advertising cost aspects including but not limited to proofreading, marketing, billing, collection and all other activities.

2.3 Editorial, Content and Production

1. Visit NC and Publisher will work jointly and collaboratively to develop layout and editorial. Visit NC will provide listing data on tourism offices and/or contacts for listing in the Travel Guide as free editorial.
2. Publisher will be responsible for editing and proofing all copy and for layout of the Guide in accordance with Visit NC's criteria. With approval of Visit NC, Publisher is responsible for development of all general editorial content not provided by Visit NC.
3. At no charge, Publisher may use images from Visit NC's electronic photography library for purposes of Guide illustration; however, Visit NC's photo library should not be the primary provider of photos. The cost of all additional photography shall be the responsibility of the Publisher. Publisher will not use Visit NC's photography for any uses other than the North Carolina Travel Guide.
4. Publisher may use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to create or alter images, illustrations or text for the printed or online Guide only with prior disclosure to, and written approval from, Visit NC. Publisher must clearly identify all AI-generated or AI-altered content when submitting it for review, must not use AI to depict real places, people or events in a misleading way, and must remain responsible for the accuracy and rights clearance of all such content.
5. Publisher and Visit NC will agree to a timeline/production schedule for printed and online Guides each year. The production schedule should be comprehensive, and it must specify deadlines for Publisher and Visit NC regarding, but not limited to, exports, receipt and return of proofs, and publication and delivery dates.
6. Visit NC must approve all layout and advertising material. Publisher will assume expense of forwarding material to Visit NC. Use of unapproved design, editorial, advertising, or printing aspects of the Guide will result in loss of contract.
7. At the discretion of Visit NC, Publisher must be able to include a pull-out map of the state in the Guide and price such as an add-on option in the proposal.
8. Publisher may have the opportunity to provide additional optional services such as photography or video packages to Visit NC.

2.4 Ownership, Rights and Data

1. Visit NC retains all rights of ownership to all Visit NC-owned materials associated with the Guide, including editorial and photography.

   Further, all materials, text content, editorial, photography, illustration and other content created or commissioned by Publisher for the Guide, including individual component parts and files, as well as the Guide as a whole and the selection and arrangement of the contents of the Guide (hereinafter "Guide IP"), shall be owned solely and exclusively by Visit NC as work made for hire; to the extent any Guide IP is not a work made for hire, Publisher hereby assigns all rights including rights of copyright in such works to Visit NC. Publisher must obtain written assignments of rights including copyright from any photographers, writers or other contributors conveying full ownership to Visit NC and may not use content for which it cannot convey full ownership without Visit NC's written approval.
2. All reader, subscriber and lead data collected through the Guide, the online Guide or related promotions (including Guide requests, email sign-ups and contest entries) is the property of Visit NC. Publisher must include legally compliant privacy notice and consents, and may not sell, share or use this data for any purpose other than performing this contract without Visit NC's written approval, must protect it with reasonable security safeguards, and must return or delete it at the end of the contract as directed by Visit NC.
3. Upon termination or expiration of the publishing agreement, the Publisher must transfer to Visit NC all Guide IP — including native design files, print-ready PDFs, image files, copy, data, art, proofs, state-owned photography, etc. — without cost to Visit NC. No further use of this material will be permitted without the express written consent of Visit NC.

2.5 Promotion and Cooperative Marketing

1. Publisher must demonstrate ways to promote the Guide that will require no additional costs or expense. Examples may include, but are not limited to, mailing lists, newspaper inserts, or web promotions.
2. Publisher will attend the annual Visit NC Content Roadshow, where partners across the state present upcoming initiatives and considerations for the editorial content.
3. Publisher will be available for cooperative marketing opportunities, including the Content Roadshow (January/February), Visit NC Tourism Conference (March/April) and webinars (throughout the year), which may require working with Visit NC's marketing agency (Luquire) and/or other designated entities.

2.6 Reporting and Performance

1. Via email, Publisher must provide Visit NC with a monthly status report on advertising sales and editorial/layout production schedule.
2. Publisher shall provide monthly reporting to the satisfaction of Visit NC regarding usage of electronic versions of the Travel Guide, including at a minimum: total and unique views, average time spent, page-level engagement, clicks to advertiser and VisitNC.com links, QR code scans, and traffic sources where available. Publisher shall give Visit NC access to the underlying analytics upon request.

3. If Publisher fails to meet Visit NC guidelines in production or delivery of Guide, Visit NC shall have the right to suspend or terminate the contract in its sole discretion immediately.

3. Technical Specifications

3.1 General Production Requirements

The following are minimum technical specifications.

Publisher is responsible for all production and development costs including but not limited to copy, layout, design, proofreading and printing. Each and every aspect of the Guide production is the financial responsibility of the Publisher.

Visit NC, in partnership with NC Welcome Centers and the 1-800-VisitNC call center, will distribute the Guide through the traditional outlets at no cost to the Publisher. Publisher may offer alternative no-cost distribution options subject to Visit NC's approval.

Throughout production, Publisher is to allow for alterations as necessary to ensure that the Travel Guide is as accurate and complete as possible.

Publisher is required to have competent quality control staff present at printing and Visit NC retains the right to be on premises during printing if deemed necessary.

Publisher should use vendors and sub-Publishers that are carbon neutral; FSC or FSC Chain of Custody Certified are preferred. Please specify and provide documentation supporting any carbon neutrality claims and certifications.

3.2 Print Specifications

QUANTITY: 350,000 Guides, unless otherwise specified by Visit NC at the annual meeting between Publisher and Visit NC.

PAGES: Each edition must include a minimum of 80 editorial pages (excluding covers). Paid advertising may not exceed 40 percent of total pages, and the total page count may not exceed 160 pages, including covers. For purposes of this RFP, "editorial" means content produced without connection to advertising sales agreements; paid advertising, advertorial and sponsored content do not count toward editorial minimums. "Feature editorial" means stories, itineraries and regional and topical content, and excludes service pages such as the table of contents, indexes, maps and listings. Publisher will submit an annual editorial plan for Visit NC approval that provides balanced coverage of the Mountains, Piedmont and Coast regions of North Carolina.

COVERS: Provisions for up to three (3) different covers printed to represent one (1) each for the Mountains, Piedmont and Coast regions.

ART/PRODUCTION: Publisher is responsible for completing all aspects of production from concept and design through layout, color and proofs, with Visit NC having final approval on all aspects of production.

TRIM: Size is restricted to no larger than 8 3/8" x 10 7/8" in order to be inserted into a standard response envelope if necessary. Must be perfect bound. Trim sizes differing from these boundaries might be considered with appropriate rationale.

PAPER: Prefer a minimum of #4 grade text and #1 grade cover stock. Paper must be certified as recyclable. Publisher should provide sample paper stock as a part of the proposal. Visit NC has final approval on paper selection.

INK: Four-color process required throughout. Covers must be aqueous coated, unless Visit NC approves otherwise.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Quality, high-resolution reproduction of all photography is critical.

TYPE: Font and size must be readable and will be agreed upon by Visit NC and Publisher.

PROOFING: Publisher is required to provide digital. Visit NC reserves the right to make corrections and approve revised proofs. Publisher must provide professional proofreading services for the entirety of the Guide.

AD ACCURACY: Visit NC has no responsibility for content accuracy of ads. The Publisher shall be responsible for securing ad materials and final advertisement approval from advertisers. Visit NC will approve advertising and Guide layout and design.

3.3 Packaging and Delivery

PACKAGING: Sturdy cartons no heavier than 40 lbs., clearly marked with contents and quantity of Guides. Custom cartons to exact size, or additional packing, are required to prevent cartons from crushing.

DELIVERY: Publisher is to deliver the Guides to 10 North Carolina sites no later than December 15 of each contract year and must coordinate deliveries with Visit NC. **Inside delivery is required at all points.** Main warehouse delivery is on packed skids; all others require breakdown of skids and hand delivery. Publisher is prohibited from selling the Guide and may distribute it only for free through the outlets outlined by the State or through alternative distribution approved in writing by Visit NC. See a list of Welcome Center locations at VisitNC.com. Warehouse address: 3221 Durham Drive, Raleigh, NC 27603.

DISPLAY BLOW-UP COVER REPRODUCTIONS: Publisher is required to produce blow-up cover reproductions for presentation and display by Visit NC at Welcome Centers and for promotional uses. Visit NC reserves the right to mandate the number and size of reproductions needed.

DELIVERY COSTS: Publisher is responsible for all delivery costs.

3.4 Online Guide

ONLINE: Publisher must provide an online version of the Travel Guide as a responsive digital edition that works in all current major web browsers on desktop, tablet and smartphone, with working links to advertiser and VisitNC.com pages, at no cost to Visit NC. The online Guide must conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA.

ONLINE DELIVERY: The online Guide and all its content must be delivered to Visit NC's advertising agency no later than December 15 prior to each contract year to be integrated within VisitNC.com. Online deliverables include the hosted digital edition, embed code for integration within VisitNC.com, and a downloadable PDF version of the Guide.

4. Proposal Requirements

The response to this RFP shall consist of the following sections, in this order:

1. Corporate Background and Experience
2. Financial Statement
3. Project Staffing, Leadership Team and Organization
4. Technical Approach
5. Outsourcing
6. Cost Proposal
7. Added Value
8. Sustainability

4.1 Corporate Background and Experience

This section shall include background information on the organization and should give details of experience with similar projects. A list of references (including contact persons and telephone numbers) for whom similar work has been performed shall be included, and the list shall include all similar contracts performed by the Proposer in the past two years. The evaluators will randomly select at least three of these references, but the evaluators reserve the right to contact all the references listed if information from the three references contacted warrants further inquiry. The failure to list all similar contracts in the specified period may result in the rejection of the Proposer's proposal.

4.2 Financial Statement

The Proposer shall provide the following financial information:

- The most recent audited or reviewed financial statements prepared by an independent certified public accountant (CPA) that shall include, at a minimum: a balance sheet, income statement (i.e., profit/loss statement), and cash flow statement; and, if the audited or reviewed financial statements were prepared more than six (6) months prior to the issuance of this RFP, the Proposer shall submit its most recent internal financial statements (balance sheet, income statement and cash flow statement or budget with entries reflecting revenues and expenditures from the date of the audited or reviewed financial statements to the end of the most recent financial reporting period (i.e., the quarter or month preceding the issuance date of this RFP)).
- Recent shall be defined as financial statements that were prepared within the 12 months preceding the issuance date of this RFP.

Proposers are also encouraged to explain any negative financial information in their financial statements and to provide documentation supporting those explanations.

All information submitted in proposals could be deemed public records. As such pages deemed to include trade secrets should be clearly marked as such on all originals, copies and PDF versions of the proposal.

4.3 Project Staffing, Leadership Team and Organization

This section must include the proposed leadership team and staffing, deployment, and organization of personnel to be assigned to this project.

The Proposer shall provide information as to the qualifications and experience of all executive, managerial, legal, and professional personnel to be assigned to this project, potentially including resumes citing experience with similar projects and the responsibilities to be assigned to each person.

4.4 Technical Approach

This section shall include, in narrative, outline, and/or graph form, the Proposer's approach to accomplishing the tasks outlined in this RFP. A description of each task and deliverable and the schedule for accomplishing each shall be included.

4.5 Outsourcing

The Proposer must detail the manner in which it intends to utilize resources or workers located outside of the United States and those outside North Carolina. Visit NC will consider the additional risks, costs and other factors associated with such utilization to make the award for this proposal as deemed by the awarding authority to be in the best interest of Visit NC.

For any proposed or actual utilization or contract performance outside of the United States, the Proposer's proposal must include:

- The location of work performed under contract by the vendor, any sub-Publishers, employees, or other persons performing the contract.
- The corporate structure and location of corporate employees and activities of the vendors, its affiliates, or any sub-Publishers.

Visit NC may disqualify a vendor from participation in the bid process and from contract award if it is determined that the vendor has refused to disclose or has falsified any information.

4.6 Cost Proposal

This section shall include the Proposer's proposed advertising sizes, rates, premiums and special positions (see Section 2.2), any proposed costs to Visit NC outside of time and labor, and pricing for optional items, including the pull-out state map and cover reproductions. The signed Cost Proposal/Execution of Proposal page (Attachment A) must also be included.

4.7 Added Value

The Proposer must detail any added value opportunities to promote Visit NC and/or the Guide, including the estimated U.S. dollar amount associated with the placements.

4.8 Sustainability

This section must include any sustainable practices or environmental considerations given by the Proposer during the production and promotion of the Guidebook.

5. Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted electronically. Printed materials must be sent by mail. See the Key Dates and Where to Submit tables on the cover page.

- **Proposal:** One electronic proposal, submitted by email to scott.peacock@visitnc.com with the subject line "RFP Response: Visit NC Travel Guide 2028-2030."
- **Printed samples:** Printed sample publications and publication examples, sent by mail to EDPNC/Visit NC, Attn: Scott Peacock, 150 Fayetteville St., Ste. 900, Raleigh, NC 27601.
- **Deadline:** Proposals must be received by email, and printed samples must be received at the address above, prior to 3 p.m. ET on December 9, 2026.

6. Evaluation and Procurement Process

6.1 Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be scored according to the following criteria:

Criterion	Weight
Demonstrated experience in producing high-quality publications and Proposer's capacity to fulfill the agreement and produce a high-quality product	35%
Other relevant experience and knowledge in publishing, travel and tourism industry and leadership team	20%
Demonstrated experience in innovation to expand the scope, reach and usability of the Travel Guide, including added-value opportunities	20%
Familiarity with North Carolina's tourism industry, attractions and a working knowledge of the mission and operations of Visit NC	10%
References from clients for which similar services have been provided	10%
Sustainability and environmental efficacy	5%
Total	**100%**

6.2 The Procurement Process

The following is a general description of the process by which a firm will be selected to provide services.

1. The Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued in November 2026 to prospective Publishers.
2. A deadline for written questions is set. (See Key Dates on the cover page.)
3. All proposals must be received by the issuing agency not later than the date and time specified in the Key Dates on the cover page.

4. Parties are cautioned that the costs and their components are subject to further evaluation for completeness, correctness and understanding, and therefore may not be an exact indicator of a Proposer's pricing position.
5. The evaluators may request oral presentations or discussion with any or all Proposers for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in any part of the proposal. However, Proposers are cautioned that the evaluators are not required to request clarification; therefore, all proposals should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the Proposer, recognizing that the submitted proposal may stand alone as the source of evaluation and award.
6. Proposals will be evaluated according to completeness and the criteria outlined above. Candidates must also separately meet financial fitness requirements. Financial information, statements and/or documents submitted with a proposal shall be evaluated to determine: whether the Proposer has sufficient ability to perform the contract; whether the Proposer is able to meet its short-term obligations, debts, liabilities, payroll, and expenses; whether the Proposer has provided complete, reliable and accurate financial information regarding its business operation; whether the Proposer is financially solvent; and whether the Proposer has sufficient cash flow and/or available financing from a financial institution to perform and complete the proposed contract for up to 60 days without receiving payment from Visit NC if such is due.
7. The evaluators may randomly select at least three of the Proposer's references, but the evaluators reserve the right to contact all the references listed if information from the three references contacted warrants further inquiry.
8. The failure of the Proposer to list all similar contracts in the specified period may result in the rejection of the Proposer's proposal. Award of a contract to one Proposer does not mean that the other proposals lacked merit, but that, all factors considered, the selected proposal was deemed most advantageous to Visit NC.
9. Proposers are cautioned that this is a request for offers, not a request to contract, and Visit NC reserves the unqualified right to reject any and/or all offers when such rejection is deemed to be in the best interest of Visit NC and the EDPNC.

6.3 Evaluation of Work Performed Outside the United States

In addition to any other evaluation criteria identified in this solicitation, the Proposer shall, for purposes of evaluating proposed or actual contract performance outside of the United States, consider the following factors to ensure that any award will be in the best interest of Visit NC:

- Total cost to Visit NC
- Cost of advertising for Visit NC partners (DMOs, attractions, hotels, etc.)
- Level of quality provided by the vendor
- Process capability across multiple jurisdictions
- Protection of Visit NC's information and intellectual property
- Availability of pertinent skills
- Ability to understand Visit NC's business requirements and internal operational culture as a Publisher for the State of NC

- Risk factors such as the security of Visit NC's digital information and database
- Relations with citizens and employees
- Contract enforcement jurisdictional issues
- Sustainability and environmental impacts
- Added value opportunities to further reach travelers and promote the Guidebook

7. Contract Terms and Conditions

7.1 Contract Term

The contract term shall be January 1, 2027, or on the date of the signed contract if later, and ending on December 31, 2029. Visit NC will have the option for up to two (2) one-year renewals. This term shall pertain to the 2028, 2029 and 2030 editions of the Guide.

7.2 Contract Administrator

Visit NC shall designate one person as the Contract Administrator for the contract. This person will be responsible for the following duties:

1. The Contract Administrator and liaison for the contract will be Wit Tuttell, Economic Development Partnership of NC, VP of Tourism. The Contract Administrator will approve the timeline and purchases made for Visit NC.
2. Oversight of the project, once the contract is initiated, shall be assigned to the Visit NC Director of Tourism Marketing.
3. The Contract Administrator shall have the authority to determine whether the Publisher is satisfactorily performing the services delineated in the contract. In the event that performance is unsatisfactory, the Contract Administrator shall be responsible for initiating notifications to the Publisher as outlined in the contract. Any desired change in the contract must be approved by the Contract Administrator.

7.3 Insurance

Publisher shall include in its proposal a statement of insurance coverages it will maintain in place for the duration of the contract. Visit NC will expect Publisher to have adequate commercial general liability, publisher/media liability, and cyber liability and data breach coverage naming EDPNC as an additional insured. Insurance coverage in material Certificates of Insurance must be provided within 10 business days after notice of award and are subject to approval by EDPNC.

7.4 Indemnity

Publisher must agree to indemnify, defend and hold harmless Visit NC for claims of any kind for injuries, whether arising under statute or common law, related in any way to editorial content or ads provided by Publisher, or claims of third parties arising from Publisher's conduct.

7.5 Performance Guarantee

Should Publisher fail to fulfill its obligations under the agreement, it must reimburse Visit NC for its costs of obtaining fulfillment from third parties, in addition to other potential damages.

Attachment A: Execution of Proposal

By submitting this proposal, the potential Publisher certifies the following:

- This proposal is signed by an authorized representative of the firm.
- It can obtain insurance certificates as required within 10 business days after notice of award.
- The cost and availability of all equipment, materials and supplies associated with performing the services described herein have been determined and included in the proposed cost.
- All labor costs, direct and indirect, have been determined and included in the proposed cost.
- The Proposer is aware of prevailing conditions associated with performing these services (if applicable). The Proposer can and will provide the specified performance bond or alternate performance guarantee (if applicable).
- The potential Publisher has read and understands the conditions set forth in this RFP and agrees to them with no exceptions.

Therefore, in compliance with this Request for Proposals, and subject to all conditions herein, the undersigned offers and agrees, if this proposal is accepted within 90 days from the date of the opening, to furnish the subject services as described in its proposal.

Proposer _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Principal place of business (if different) _____

Will any of the work under this contract be performed outside the United States? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(If yes, describe in the Outsourcing section of the proposal.)

Signature _____

Printed name _____

Title _____

Date _____

THIS PAGE MUST BE SIGNED AND INCLUDED IN YOUR PROPOSAL.

Acceptance of Proposal (Visit NC / EDPNC authorizing agent)

Signature _____

Printed name _____

Title _____

Date _____