

# MANATEE COUNTY GOVERNMENT INTENT TO AWARD

<b>SUBJECT</b>	Advertising & Public Relations Services	<b>DATE POSTED</b>	MC 8/24/17GD DS 8/24/17GD CC N/A
<b>PURCHASING REPRESENTATIVE</b>	Monica Sell, Contract Negotiator 749-3042	<b>DATE CONTRACT SHALL BE AWARDED</b>	Upon successful negotiations
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	BACVB	<b>CONSEQUENCES IF DEFERRED</b>	Current Contract Expires 09/30/2017
<b>SOLICITATION</b>	RFP 17-1254MS	<b>AUTHORIZED BY DATE</b>	Dennis Wallace, CPPO  August 23 2017

### NOTICE OF INTENT TO AWARD

Notice of Intent to Award for RFP 17-1254ms Advertising & Public Relations Services to the following:

**Aqua Marketing & Communications**  
St. Petersburg, Florida

### ENABLING/REGULATING AUTHORITY

Federal/State law(s), administrative ruling(s), Manatee County Comp Plan/Land Development Code, ordinances, resolutions, policy.

Manatee County Code of Laws

### BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

**BACKGROUND:**

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) was to solicit from qualified individuals, corporations, partnerships and other legal entities to provide expertise in developing and implementing a results-oriented strategy for tourism. The BACVB was seeking a Florida based, preferably West Coast based, firm with expertise in the strategic development of tourism positioning for destinations. The objective was to maintain a consistent influx of visitation on a year-round basis providing potential visitors with content rich and engaging marketing plan, with easy to use travel planning tools that encourage visitation and longer stays.

**SOLICITATIONS:** The RFP was advertised on the Manatee County website, and DemandStar, it was also provided to the Manatee County Chamber of Commerce for release of its members. The following nine (9) proposals were received:

- 1) Zimmerman Agency | Tallahassee, FL
- 2) Evok Advertising | Heathrow, FL
- 3) Groundswell Strategies | Coral Gables, FL
- 4) Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc. | St. Petersburg, FL
- 5) Advance 360 | Grand Rapids, MI
- 6) Noise, Inc. | Sanibel, FL
- 7) Fahlgren Mortine | Columbus, OH
- 8) Paradise Advertising | St. Petersburg, FL
- 9) MediaGarage | St. Petersburg, FL

**EVALUATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Elliott Falcione Director, Bradenton Area Convention & Visitor Bureau  
 Ogden Clark Americorp/Ambassador Coordinator Neighborhood Services Department  
 Monica Sell Contract Negotiator, Financial Management Department, Procurement Division (Chair)

**EVALUATION RESULTS SUMMARY:**

The Evaluation Committee convened to review evaluation committee responsibilities, discuss member's availability for future meetings, and the Florida Sunshine Law as applicable to public meetings. The Evaluation Committee then proceeded to review the nine (9) proposals. The Evaluation Committee deliberated after discussing each of the Proposal and a unanimous decision was made to recommend award to Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc.

**Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc. | St. Petersburg, FL**

Aqua has intimate knowledge of brand elements (they are the current incumbent) which is essential when marketing destination products. Aqua has developed a deep understanding of the community characteristics and developed relationships within the community. Their Proposal demonstrated an increase in visitation success through successful campaigns not only within Manatee County but throughout other Convention & Visitors Bureau locations in Florida. They are recipients of multiple awards in the Advertising industry. They were able to articulate why their company approach will meet the needs of the BACVB. Their methods included measuring and analyzing a variety of data such as: bed tax revenues, visitation by targeted segments, public relations exposure and estimated media value and Media ROI and response analysis. Aqua is a local firm, this ensures face-time with Manatee County BACVB as well as a permanent Aqua staff member assigned to Manatee County. The BACVB's current campaign has proven to be very successful and the creative ads that Aqua designed outperformed within the competitive set in our target markets. These characteristics led the Evaluation Committee to determine that Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc. be recommended for the Intent to Negotiate award.

**Paradise Advertising | St. Petersburg, FL**

The firm's proposed philosophy did not demonstrate the understanding that the current BACVB brand would not be changing and taking the time to align philosophies and "get up to speed" with the current campaign would be time consuming and costly for the BACVB. In addition, a five (5) year plan has been established for our destination and it would severely slow down operations to get any firm up to date on our plan, objectives and goals especially at the cusp of our fall tourist season. Moreover, some of the firm's current clients included Naples, Marco Island, Amelia Island, and the Everglades which are direct competitors to Manatee County. As a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Evok Advertising | Heathrow, FL**

An important objective within the RFP was the attempt to contract with a West Coast located firm that had experience and knowledge of our markets and communities. In review of Evok's creative work with current clients it was the Committee's opinion that it would take time for Evok to become familiar with the County's campaign and direction as a BACVB. Evok did have experience with a variety of Counties in Florida however most of them were in the middle of the state which is very different tourist landscape than that of our coast. In addition, a five (5) year plan has been established for our destination and it would severely slow down operations to get any firm up to date on the current marketing/advertising plan, objectives and goals especially at the cusp of fall tourist season. As a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Zimmerman Agency | Tallahassee, FL**

An important objective within the RFP was the attempt to contract with a West Coast located firm that had experience and knowledge of our markets and communities. The County's desire was for a local firm to be immersed in the community, unfortunately proximity plays a key role in a firm's ability to do that. Although Zimmerman Agency's brand development approach was appealing to our organization, however as a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Media Garage | St. Petersburg, FL**

In the evaluation of the proposal there were no indicators that Media Garage had the experience to understand best practices of working with a CVB. It would also have been beneficial to see the agency's creative work history especially the creative aspect which is vital to the process in advertising. There was also no evidence that the Media Garage understood the importance of the current brand and campaign remaining so that BACVB could maintain consistency moving forward especially with a new Agency. As a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Fahlgren Mortine | Columbus, OH**

Fahlgren Mortine is a large firm with a variety of experience that was awarded the BACVB website redesign award in 2016. They put together a unique and creative proposal that included some of our current destination elements. However, an existing campaign is in place that would require any new firm a lengthy amount of time to transition and fully understand. Fahlgren has an office in Fort Lauderdale that was listed as their local office. However, the BACVB was searching for an agency that has a local presence in the area, and a firm that can maintain the current marketing campaign with no costly transition period; as a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Noise, Inc. | Sanibel, FL**

Noise appears to have a niche with resorts, hotels, parks and brands on the west coast of Florida, however, they do not appear to have enough experience with CVB's. They provided some general marketing ideas and a list of sub consultants however it was unclear as to their roles and responsibilities. As a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Groundswell Strategies | Coral Gables, FL**

The proposal met the minimum requirements but there were no creative examples and no indication that they had any previous CVB experience. They are located in Coral Gables with no local offices nearby and having local contacts who understand our community is instrumental in a good campaign. They primarily focus on political advertising and marketing not destinations. As a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

**Advance 360 | Grand Rapids, MI**

Advance has a local office in Fort Lauderdale; their proposal met the minimum requirements but there were limited number of creative examples and no experience working with a Florida based CVB. As a result, it was not evaluated as high as the selected firm.

Upon completion of the Evaluation Committee meeting the Committee unanimously recommended the Intent to Negotiate award to the County Administrator for **Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc., St. Petersburg, FL.**

**REMAINING RESPONDENTS:**

The remaining respondents, although well qualified, were not selected based on a comparison of capabilities of the selected firms:

- 1) Zimmerman Agency | Tallahassee, FL
- 2) Evok Advertising | Heathrow, FL
- 3) Groundswell Strategies | Coral Gables, FL
- 4) Advance 360 | Grand Rapids, MI
- 5) Noise, Inc. | Sanibel, FL
- 6) Fahlgren Mortine | Columbus, OH
- 7) Paradise Advertising | St. Petersburg, FL
- 8) MediaGarage | St. Petersburg

**ESTIMATED COST OF SERVICES:** The estimated annual expenditure is \$450,000.00

**Funding:** CVB-Direct Market-Other Contractual Services

*The above justifications are a generalized summary of major observations intended only to provide the County Administrator a sufficiently detailed overview of the main observations of a majority of Committee Members. Each Committee Member may have considered one or more facts or factors more or less important than the other Committee Members when voting, and this summary of the Evaluation Committee's decision is not an attempt to exhaustively describe each of the relevant factors which motivated each of the Committee Members to select the rankings described.*

The Evaluation Committee voted unanimously 3-0 to proceed with the award to the following:  
**Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc., St. Petersburg, FL.**

The resulting agreement will be managed by the BACVB.

	<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b> (Acct Number & Name)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Funds Verified <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Funds
<b>COST</b> \$450,000.00	<b>AMT/FREQ OF RECURRING COSTS</b> (Attach Fiscal Impact Statement)	N/A