

Domestic Public Relations Services RFP 2023/2024

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. How do you prioritize leisure travelers vs MICE as a comms/media audience and what are the KPI expectations for MICE work?

A. Visit California prioritizes leisure travelers overall, but are working to build our program targeting professional meetings & events media, as a newer integrated initiative that started to boost recovery coming out of the pandemic. To ensure PME earned media efforts are incremental to leisure work, the contract is structured to ensure that work is scoped separately, with deliverables determined and outlined each year.

Q. Is the cruise market part of your target audience? If so, what are the expectations of PR support for the cruise market?

A. Not typically. Cruises tend to take visitors out of California to other destinations, so have not been accounted for in our core audience.

Q. Does Visit California have its own team to organize FAM trip logistics or is it expected the AOR do this in addition to media outreach and communication? How many do you currently host per year?

A. Visit California's HQ team is hands on with press trip coordination and partner outreach, but that work is done in close partnership with the agency team. In FY22/23, Visit California hosted 140 media and influencers globally with nearly 120 being domestic.

Q. What is the budget for influencer/KOL fees, broadcast integrations, partnerships, activations and events? Is this billed as separate out-of-pocket expenses and incremental to the agency fee or part of the total budget outlined?

A. Those are billed as separate out-of-pocket expenses, not part of the outlined budget. The full budget is pending approval in May by the Visit California Board of Directors.

Q. Will the AOR manage contracting with paid influencers/KOLs?

A. Yes.

Q. How many media events do you execute per year and do you feel that cadence is productive or not? How many large-scale activations do you execute per year, are these consumer facing or for media only?

A. It depends. In FY22/23, Visit California held three standalone events and integration into others. Activations also are determined depending on need, opportunity and budget available, so some years there may be multiple, some years none. Activations are typically consumer facing with the intention of driving earned media coverage.

Q. How do you define high-impact earned media placements?

A. High-impact placements may reach a broad audience that aligns with Visit California's core target demographics, such as a broadcast integration. Or they might reach a niche audience with high engagement, such as a podcast opportunity. All opportunities that require investment are evaluated against the same standards as a media buy in partnership with our Brand team – and are pursued as an earned media opportunity as appropriate.

Q. Will the scope include in-person trade show support, such as staffing IPW?

A. Not typically, though we have called upon agency support in the past for hosting media around trade opportunities, such as IPW.

Q. How do you work with the regional tourism PR teams? Is there a regional IAT this agency would join in addition to the marketing agency IAT?

A. Agency leads typically join quarterly PR Committee meetings, but that is the only formal meeting of regional PR partners. Ad hoc planning meetings and program-related meetings are commonplace, however.

Q. How many regular interagency meetings are there each month between the brand agency and content development partner?

A. It depends. On average, 2-4 standing meetings per month, but there are times when more are scheduled, such as planning for an activation or new brand launch.

Q. Is there ever collaboration with international AORs on a global scale? If so, what does this look like?

A. There are 2-4 opportunities for global collaboration in planning meetings each year. All agencies also contribute to evolving strategic roadmaps, including a global earned media editorial calendar, marketing work plans and a global influencer marketing strategic document.

Q. How do you currently measure earned, ROI, and its impact to the organization? What metrics are most important to leadership?

A. Number of placements, impressions, media impact score, number of media hosted (and destinations visited), are our top earned media metrics. Leadership is interested in all of those, as well as inclusion of our investing segments in coverage (hotel, rental cars, restaurants, attractions, retail, etc.)

Q. How many agencies have submitted an intent to bid? Who is the incumbent agency? Why have you put the business up for bid? Are you looking for something you weren't getting in the past?

A. Per our RFP policy, we do not disclose this information to create a fair and competitive proposal environment that is not biased or swayed by who participates in the process. We can say we have invited different companies from various backgrounds to participate. Additionally, we are required to go out to RFP every three years for this work.

Q. Will your team be available to answer additional questions in January ahead of the proposal deadline?

A. Questions should be emailed to rfps@visitcalifornia.com for review, and if additional questions outside of this Q&A are answered, we will share these with all bidders.

Q. Please further define your exclusivity terms and which CVBs or other types of tourism agencies are considered to be competitive?

A. California is the No. 1 tourism destination in the U.S., and in many ways different from most other DMOs – so there are few truly considered in the competitive set. If there's another top state or global competitive destination in an agency's portfolio, we would require assurance that the teams responsible and

strategic leadership are totally separate and proprietary strategic intelligence is kept confidential.

Q. We pitched Visit California during the last RFP 2 years ago. We're excited to be invited again. Is there something in particular about our agency that makes you think we'd be a good partner? A specific capability that stands out?

A. As an innovator in the destination marketing world, Visit California is always interested in seeing creative ideas from potential agency partners that would set the destination apart in approach and execution.

Q. Knowing you have an extension clause in your contract, does this RFP signal you won't be leveraging that with your current PR agency partner? (assumes you're currently in year 2 with the agency and 2024 would be year 3)

A. Visit California is required to go out to RFP every three years for this work. The last RFP for this contract was three years ago, in 2021.

Q. Is the incumbent agency invited to pitch?

A. Yes. However, the purpose of the RFP is to review Visit California's strategic goals for the next 3-5 years and ensure we choose the best partner to help us achieve these goals, regardless of our historical relationships.

Q. With the issuance of this RFP, what opportunities do you see for a new domestic PR agency partner to deliver that your current agency is not providing?

A. As an innovator in the destination marketing world, Visit California is always interested in seeing creative ideas from potential agency partners that would set the destination apart, in approach and execution.

Q. Does Visit California have an updated brand manifesto and/or platform that can be shared along with Q&A responses on January 5?

A. Visit California will be rolling out a new brand platform in March. While the latest strategic framework is still under development, you can get a sense of the new brand vision from the [2023 Outlook Forum CEO Keynote address](#).

Q. Does Visit California currently use or license any social media monitoring tools that can be leveraged by the PR agency?

A. Visit California would rely on the agency to supply all monitoring and measurement tools related to content creator campaigns. The team does have access/exposure to insights gleaned from other agencies charged with social media monitoring.

Q. Please clarify the “Global Media Effectiveness Measurement & Monitoring” need. Do you need the agency to monitor coverage in global markets (if so, how many and which ones), or review reports that come in and apply some analysis, OR, is it to monitor US-based media with global reach?

A. Visit California relies on its AOR to take the lead in global media effectiveness measurement. Currently, we work with a third-party vendor to maintain objectivity, which evaluates coverage from 14 markets to score for media effectiveness and media monitoring overall to be able to articulate California’s share of voice across markets. The AOR does provide overall analysis of the reporting, as well as assists with reporting for quarterly board meetings and an annual report.

Q. Does Visit California currently run any brand awareness trackers?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the key measures of success for the Domestic PR agency partner?

A. Delivering KPIs in line with expectations and past performance is always important. Working as an effective extension of the HQ team, and leader in the global network of agencies is paramount. That chemistry is very important, as is the understanding and service-oriented approach when it comes to California industry partners, both regional DMOs and businesses.

Q. Since there are a few mentions of global media effectiveness, are there any specific global regions/markets that are of particular interest to generate travel demand?

A. Visit California is active in 14 markets globally.

Q. How is social media currently being managed for Visit California?

A. Visit California has HQ staff, as well as multiple agencies developing content and monitoring social media accounts – across global markets.

Q. Can you share details on how your inter-agency team (IAT) operates? How often are the partners meeting, how often with/without the brand team? Does the team co-create campaigns and present collectively to the brand or is planning done in silos? Has the brand ever led with a PR-based campaign with the other partners amplifying that work?

A. All of the above. Agencies are expected to collaborate, both as part of IATs that include HQ staff, and separately as programs and opportunities are evaluated. Agencies are encouraged to vet with each other before presenting program concepts to HQ, and also collaborate on execution of programs once they've been greenlit. There is also a lot of planning and execution solely within the earned team, keeping other teams informed. Programs are most successful when they're presented with the integration strategy in mind.

Q. Who would be our point of contact for this work? Where is he/she/they located?

A. Public Relations Manager Kristen Bonilla is the contract lead and day-to-day contact. She works closely with AVP of External Affairs & Media Relations Angie Pappas, and VP of Communications Ryan Becker. Visit California's HQ is in Sacramento.

Q. What is your current team structure?

A. We have three primary departments: Marketing, Communications, and Operations. The core PR team, which includes an AVP, two managers and two coordinators, is overseen by the VP of Communications. The team also works in tandem with Public Affairs, which includes two HQ team members and a separate agency, which collaborates with the AOR on media-focused efforts. All of this work dovetails with our International staff, which sits under the Marketing Department, but manages PR teams in each of the 13 global markets beyond

the U.S.

Q. We see you have engaged other agencies for different scopes of work - have you worked with an agency partner in the past on a scope for domestic PR? If so, what worked? What could have been better that you're looking for in your next partner?

A. Yes. As an innovator in the destination marketing world, Visit California is always interested in seeing creative ideas from potential agency partners that would set the destination apart, in approach and execution.

Q. What is the most important thing you are looking for in an agency partner?

A. Delivering KPIs in line with expectations and past performance is always important. Working as an effective extension of the HQ team, and leader in the global network of agencies is paramount. That chemistry is very important, as is the understanding and service-oriented approach when it comes to California industry partners, both regional DMOs and businesses.

Q. When it comes to media relations, what is currently working? What's not working?

A. California is the nation's No. 1 travel destination and we're telling our state's stories each day through media engagement. As that media landscape evolves, we must evolve with it. So nothing to note that's "not working," but success is an ever-moving target, and having a strategic partner that can position us for the future is critical.

Q. Do you have a dream target outlet?

A. Everyone on the team has a different answer to this question! Just note: We're always looking for bigger and better.

Q. Who are your key audiences/demographics that you're trying to reach? What, if any, are your main concerns with each audience? Are there behaviors or perceptions you're trying to shift?

A. People with money who travel. Every segment within has its own preferences. Generally, we want all potential travelers to see California as the ultimate playground, with an abundance of experiences and destinations they need to come back to see for

themselves. Also, that it's a welcoming, accessible, safe and inspiring destination for people of all kinds.

Q. Do you have an existing media strategy for international audiences (given this RFP is focused domestically)?

A. Yes. Each market has its own PR team and strategy.

Q. What does success look like to you from a proactive media perspective?

A. Delivering KPIs in line with expectations and past performance is always important. Working as an effective extension of the HQ team, and leader in the global network of agencies is paramount. That chemistry is very important, as is the understanding and service-oriented approach when it comes to California industry partners, both regional DMOs and businesses.

Q. Do you have any existing or future partnerships that we might consider leveraging as part of our outreach?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you have any upcoming milestones we should be aware of?

- A.**
- Visit California Industry Referendum in 2025 (when Visit California's paying investors vote on continuing the program, which happens every six years)
 - Route 66 Centennial in 2026

Q. What do you see as the greatest opportunities and the greatest barriers for tourism in California?

A. We are interested in the proposers' analysis and expect it to be built into their proposals.

Q. Do you have some existing data/research on why people are / aren't visiting California?

A. We encourage you to review the research available at industry.visitcalifornia.com, including the [Travel Indicators Report](#).

Q. What stage of the rebranding process to “Ultimate Playground” are you currently in?

A. The Ultimate Playground will launch in early March with the debut of a new consumer spot, “Let’s Play.”

Q. Are there other tourism campaigns that you admire?

A. Tourism is an innovative industry, with new creative campaigns coming out every year. We are interested in what campaigns proposers’ think are strong. Expectations are high for Visit California, and we aim to have the campaigns that others admire.

Q. Will the incumbent (current AOR) be participating in the RFP process?

A. Yes. However, the purpose of the RFP is to review Visit California’s strategic goals for the next 3-5 years and ensure we choose the best partner to help us achieve these goals, regardless of our historical relationships.

Q. Is the budget for agency fees only or all-in, inclusive of expenses required for activations, press travel, etc.

A. There is a separate budget for out-of-pocket expenses.

Q. Is there a specific budget for FAM tours?

A. Yes, it is separate from the agency fee outlined. Final budgets will be approved in May by the Visit California Board of Directors.

Q. What is the extent of hotel, airline, adventure, parks, etc. partnerships with Visit California and will we be able to leverage those relationships for media experiences?

A. Visit California works for an ecosystem of 16,000+ investing tourism businesses across the state and, in an effort to show ROI to each of them, work hard to “share the love” as much as possible, including working with them directly and through DMO partners on media experiences.

- Q.** Are there specific US geographies - regions or cities (tourism feeder markets) that you would like the program to focus on?
- A.** The earned media program is focused on national exposure. The AOR should provide a strategic recommendation on this.
- Q.** Who is California losing travel and tourism dollars from? If they're not spending time visiting California, where are they going instead?
- A.** Travelers who choose to go to Florida, Vegas, New York, Hawaii or Europe instead. This is an ever-shifting dynamic.
- Q.** Is intra-state tourism important?
- A.** Yes. While we don't focus marketing efforts in-state by our charter, Californians still generate the lion's share of travel spending.
- Q.** Can you share anything about the cyclical nature of tourism in California - what are the high/low months?
- A.** California is a year-round destination. You can dig into arrivals data here:
<https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/researchdashboard>
- Q.** Do you have any existing celebrity or high-profile talent partners we can consider leveraging in our earned media strategy and experiential event recommendations?
- A.** Even better if the PR AOR can bring celebrity-level talent to the table.
- Q.** Who are your primary and secondary target audiences (e.g., families, couples, weddings/honeymoons, bachelor/bachelorette parties, leisure, events, etc.)
- A.** Refer to the [FY22/23 Strategic Framework](#) for audience insights.
- Q.** How should we prioritize or think about attracting meetings and conventions, trade shows, etc.
- A.** Coverage in PME media is important, but incremental to the leisure consumer program.

- Q.** What is success to you?
A. In addition to the ad equivalency and ROI goals, success will be measured by the achievement of the goals outlined in the Scope of Work section of the RFP. We are interested in hearing proposers' points of view on additional ways to measure ROI.
- Q.** What other tourism groups do you emulate?
A. California is the No. 1 tourism destination in the U.S., and in many ways different from most other DMOs – so there are few truly considered in the competitive set.
- Q.** Who will serve as the primary spokesperson?
A. Visit California President & CEO Caroline Beteta
- Q.** What is your dream outlet and headline?
A. "Taylor Swift Says Real Fans Only Vacation in California,"
New York Times A1
- Q.** What are the top three barriers for consumer travel to California?
A. Price, price, price
- Q.** Should the "dream big" "out of the box" ideas noted on page 17 of the RFP also fall within the all-in \$770K budget? Is that ask separate from the Future Vision/No Constraints ask on page 19, or is this one and the same?
A. That is one ask, and can go beyond the outlined budget. Looking for your biggest and best wild idea here.
- Q.** Is this RFP part of your regularly scheduled procurement process or is there something else driving the search at this time?
A. Per our policy, Visit California is required to go out to RFP every 3 years.
- Q.** How many agencies are being invited to participate in the RFP? How many will be chosen to present?
A. See answer above on page 2.

Q. We are the agency of record for several hotels and resorts throughout the state of California, as well as two destination marketing offices in the state. While we see it as an opportunity for synergy and collaboration in working with Visit California, we want to ensure there's no issue on your end. Please confirm.

A. No issue on our end.

Q. How many group FAMs do you typically host each year?

A. See answer above on page #1

Q. Which destinations do you consider in your competitive set?

A. California is the No. 1 tourism destination in the U.S., and in many ways different from most other DMOs – so there are few truly considered in the competitive set.

That said, Florida, Hawaii, New York, and Las Vegas domestically.

Q. Do you have a separate budget to engage with influencers as part of the influencer programs, as mentioned on page 18 under the Scope of Work section?

A. The total scope encompasses the budget for influencer programs.

Q. What was your biggest PR win in the past two years?

A. The media rollout of a new Visit Native California initiative generated 725+ placements and 1.5 billion impressions to date in the first few months.

Q. The RFP states a total budget of US\$770,000 for the July 1 starting FY24/25 for planning purposes. To confirm, total budget refers to the agency retainer only? Or is the US\$770,000 amount to incorporate agency retainer and an out-of-pocket expense budget?

A. The \$770,000 budget covers the agency's fee alone. Additional program expenses, such as media trips, event costs, etc., are separate line items managed by Visit California staff. Pre-approved expenses such as travel and travel-related expenses and trade show fees will be paid separately.

Q. If the latter, what scope of work activity costs need to be covered by the out-of-pocket expense budget (e.g. all media event costs, visiting influencer/journalist visits, influencer partnerships, activations etc.)

A. N/A

Q. Are additional budgets available to be accessed to activate big ideas outside of the proposed scope of work, should a concept be approved?

A. Out-of-pocket expenses or hard costs for executing programs and “big ideas” will come from a different budget. However, we are still looking for the proposers’ projection on costs for any big ideas within their proposal.

In real-life execution, much more internal conversation would need to go into securing additional budget for an out-of-scope opportunity, but those are highly encouraged to be presented on a rolling basis.

Q. How many domestic individual media visits did VCA host in FY22/23?

A. 74

Q. How many group press trips did VCA host in FY22/23?

A. Domestically, group press trips are very limited to special circumstances, such as post-IPW FAMs, California Luxury Forum, PME media, etc.

Q. On average, how many media participated in each group press trip hosted by VCA in FY22/23?

A. Visit California’s domestic media strategy has focused on individual trips the last several years. We’re interested in proposers’ recommendations here.

Q. How many domestic U.S. individual influencer visits did VCA host in FY22/23?

A. 43

Q. Did VCA host any group domestic U.S. influencers visits in FY22/23? If so, how many?

A. Visit California's domestic influencer strategy has focused on individual trips the last several years. The exception is Visit California's Global Influencer Advisory Board meetings, which are once or twice a year. We're interested in proposers' recommendations here.

Q. On average, how many influencers participated in each group trip?

A. N/A, with the exception of a few influencers that choose to travel together.

Q. Does VCA pay content partnership fees with domestic US influencers? If so, does VCA have any budget limits to these partnerships?

A. Yes. Each is vetted and considered on an individual basis.

Q. What is the budget range of paid partnerships with domestic U.S. influencers in FY 22/23?

A. \$0-\$10,000+

Q. Does VCA's partnership at IMM North America, taking in the branded section for in-state destination partners, substitute for the NYC media event? Or is the IMM partnership in addition to an NYC media event?

A. Visit California partners with IMM North America and hosts standalone NYC media events as part of a multi-day media mission with delegates to the market.

Q. In fiscal year 24/25, when will VCA activate the New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles media events?

A. Currently, Visit California activates in NYC annually, and in San Francisco and Los Angeles every 18 months. We're interested in the proposers' recommendations here.

Q. How many attendees were secured for the last activation of the New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles media events?

A. Each event varies, you can find more details in recaps on Visit California's newsroom at industry.visitcalifornia.com. The most recent LA event hosted 77 media and influencers.
<https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/more/newsroom>

Q. Does VCA have any boot camp or other smaller media events slated for FY 24/25? If so, how many and in which domestic US market(s)?

A. Visit California would rely on the AOR to make a recommendation on this. In FY23/24, media dinners are being held in Chicago and Dallas.

Q. How many attendees were secured for the last boot camp event and other smaller media events implemented by Visit California in FY22-23 and the first half of FY23-24? Please list the location, event format and number of secured attendees.

A. You can find summaries of past events in the Newsroom at [industry.VisitCalifornia.com](https://industry.visitcalifornia.com):
<https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/more/newsroom>

Q. What PR activations has Visit California implemented in FY22-23 and the first half of FY23-24, what markets and activation focus?

A. Check out the annual report here:
<https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/about/plans-publications>

Q. The RFP states that a suggested plan for demonstrating ROI leveraging VCA's Media Quality Index strategy must be included in the response, stating how this measurement model can be used to outline short and long-term goals. Can VCA please share this strategy for review?

A. See below for a brief outlining the model and the MQI.

Q. Are social influencer fees part of the annual PR budget of up to \$770,000?

A. No.

Q. Please confirm if the onsite visits are at the proposer's office or if they are at Visit California's office.

A. Oral interviews for finalists will be conducted at Visit California's headquarters in Sacramento, CA.

Q. Can you please share the global media measurement tool you are currently using? Related to this, is there an annual fee for the tool and, if so, does that fee come from the annual PR budget?

A. We work with a third-party vendor on media effectiveness scoring for all placements secured globally to ensure objectivity. There is a separate contract for this service, as well as administration by the AOR.

Q. Can you please share more about what you are seeking from "valuable industry platforms"?

A. Opportunities that industry partners can tap into to leverage Visit California's investment for their own gain – whether that's joining a VCA-hosted media event or mission, or an opportunity with a large-scale editorial opportunity with a paid component that partners can join in a co-op program. Building industry platforms is a huge priority for the organization.

Q. Is there additional information you can share on Visit California's Media Quality Index?

A. See below for a brief outlining the model and the MQI.

Q. Where can we learn more about the new Ultimate Playground brand positioning?

A. While the latest strategic framework is still under development, you can get a sense of the new brand vision from the [2023 Outlook Forum CEO Keynote address](#).

Q. What are the key domestic markets/regions of focus nationally for the PR program?

A. The AOR should provide a strategic recommendation on this.

Q. Does Visit California have a preference on the balance between in-state vs. out-of-state PR activities (e.g., 30% in-state and 70% out of state)?

A. Visit California's charter is to bring people from outside the state into California. That said, California is home to major media hubs in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, and Californians do drive a lion's share of travel-spending in the state. While we focus primarily on driving national coverage, there are times when in-state promotion is appropriate and necessary.

Q. Page 18 of the RFP indicates "regular media events in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco" and "semi-annual Media Boot Camps". Does Visit California plan these events and the PR contractor's responsibility is securing media?

A. The AOR makes strategic recommendations on event approach, supports planning the events and securing media.

Q. Does Visit California have a primary spokesperson for media interviews? Does Visit California have spokespeople that can conduct interviews in languages other than English? If so, what languages?

A. Visit California President & CEO Caroline Beteta is the organization's primary spokesperson.

Q. Can you please clarify the budget line items to be defined on Attachment C?

A. That is for the proposer to outline.

Q. Would crisis support fall within the \$770K budget?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you please provide a best-guess priority weighting to the three workstreams of Domestic PR Services, Global Media Effectiveness Measurement & Monitoring, Professional Meetings & Events Media efforts?

- A.**
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Domestic PR Services | 100% |
| 2. PME Media Efforts | +5% |
| 3. Media Effectiveness & Monitoring | +5% |
- (This is mostly administrative, with some consultative and analytical elements required)

Yes, this totals more than 100%. Only to reinforce that while the \$770K outlined in the RFP is inclusive of the measurement administration and PME work, we consider those pieces incremental to the core domestic PR services scope.

Q. On page 16, number 2: can you please define what you mean by “integrations” and clarify how this differs from the ask on page 16, number 3, which is to create/execute PR campaigns?

A. An integration has paid, owned, earned and trade components, versus pure editorial/PR campaigns.

Q. Are you happy with your current measurement program?

A. Our current measurement program rolled out domestically in 2020, and globally in the last year, so we are still working to understand how that trendline will materialize and inform our strategy in the long-term. We believe it is a groundbreaking model that goes farther than what most DMOs are relying on today to meaningfully measure the effectiveness of the program. That said, we’re open to discussion if an agency brings an alternative recommendation to the table – with the understanding that the model must be scalable across 14 global markets.

See below for a brief outlining the model and the MQI.

Q. Who would you define as your competition?

A. We are interested in the proposers’ analysis and expect it to be built into their proposals.

Q. Can you share any additional information about the “Ultimate Playground” positioning?

A. While the latest strategic framework is still under development, you can get a sense of the new brand vision from the [2023 Outlook Forum CEO Keynote address](#).

Q. Which past Visit California PR campaign would you say has been the most successful and/or one you are most proud of?

A. We are interested in hearing the proposers’ thoughts on this. For a sampling of past campaigns, please review our annual report, Year in Review, which can be found here: <https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/en/About/Plans-Publications>.

Q. Can you give us one or two examples of other brands or destinations in the tourism space whose work inspires you?

A. Tourism is an innovative industry, with new creative campaigns coming out every year. We are interested in what campaigns proposers’ think are strong. Expectations are high for Visit California, and we aim to have campaigns that others admire.

Q. We see global market profiles on your industry site, but do not see a profile of your domestic visitor. Can you please provide more detail and insight into the target personas/demographics/psychographics of your domestic visitor along with key geographic markets?

A. Refer to the [FY22/23 Strategic Framework](#) for audience insights.

Q. Will we be able to ask additional questions along the way?

A. Please email your inquiries to rfps@visitcalifornia.com, and we will determine if the question can be answered outside of the Q&A deadline. Should we answer additional questions, these will be shared with all bidding on this RFP.

Q. Is the incumbent participating in this search?

A. Yes. See answer above on page 4.

Q. On page 17, Visit California’s “Media Quality Index” was referenced with a note to “see below for context.” We did not see any additional detail or context about this Index; can you please share more information on the Index and whether this is a program/tool you intend to continue using moving forward?

A. See below for a brief outlining the model and the MQI.



2019 Visit California Earned Media Measurement

EVOLUTION PHASE I BRIEF – OCTOBER 2019

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

For more than three years, Visit California has worked to revolutionize and standardize the organization’s earned media measurement process, keeping pace and setting a new bar in the field of public relations.

In the face of new technologies, changing consumer habits, a constantly evolving media landscape, and historically low levels of trust in institutions, public relations has transformed into a more powerful and nuanced tool than ever before. But despite the critical role of public relations within the marketing toolkit, or perhaps due to its increasing nuance and degree of sophistication, demonstrating the effectiveness of earned media on an organization’s bottom line is a well-recognized challenge that the industry has failed to adequately address.

General consensus to estimate the “worth” of an earned media placement based on its equivalent advertising value. The obvious flaw in this approach is that there are no standard industry or global rates for advertising value. Advertising rates vary dramatically and clipping services often report different values for the same advertising space, making it difficult to compare the success of media campaigns over time.

Further, the concept of advertising equivalency fails to reflect the reality of today’s evolving media landscape. As media consumption shifts to online platforms, engaging online media and digital influencers has become increasingly important for influencing consumer perception and purchasing habits. Traditional advertising equivalencies are severely limited in reflecting the meaningful impact of online content.

Measurement and evaluation have become pressing issues for the PR profession. PRWeek in partnership with Cision, reports that 63 percent of senior communications professionals cite the inability to measure impact effectively as one of the three most difficult challenges they face, and three-quarters of survey respondents feel the industry can do a better job of measuring and proving its impact on business objectives (2017 Global Comms Report: Challenges and Trends).

In 2017, Visit California created a Measurement Task Force to evaluate trends in measurement and to survey how industry partners across the state measure public relations efforts. Visit California conducted a survey of partner DMOs and attractions to gain insight into perspectives on measurement best practices and perceived challenges within the California tourism industry. Among the challenges reported by partners with current measurement systems, two key themes surfaced: limited resources in terms of time and budget, and consistency or accuracy in reporting.

A review of reporting styles across the public relations industry finds that quantitative and qualitative measurements are often blended, with a second dimension of variability being that of scale: whether reporting is focused on individual placements, campaigns, or programs.

In FY19/20 Visit California will implement and refine a new approach to measurement, working to standardize earned media metrics across Visit California markets and across the destination marketing industry.

A NEW APPROACH

After much research, Visit California is moving forward with implementing a more accurate and more meaningful way to measure our earned media progress – which also will play a key role for the organization as it moves toward a more holistic, integrated measurement process for the entire marketing program of work.

In the next generation of earned media measurement, Visit California will begin measuring media coverage through three lenses – quantitative, qualitative and competitive.

QUANTITATIVE INPUTS

Quantitatively, this new method will evolve beyond the traditional Advertising Equivalency Value (AVE) that has been relied on in the past, for a more meaningful snapshot that reflects the quality of both the outlet and the coverage itself.

Visit California will continue to track AVE to have a baseline comparison – as well as **number of placements** – counting only the proactive and reactive work Visit California undertook to secure a placement, from hosting media in market to providing research, interviews and other assets. Counting each placement also provides some context for how the program is working month to month, or year over year.

Additionally, the overall metrics will factor in a more concrete **“opportunity to see” an article figure** will be more a more accurate picture than traditional impressions.

This methodology examines each outlet’s current period when determining reach, so it’s a better depiction of how many people had the opportunity to see the article versus a standard subscription or circulation figure that remains static over time.

QUALITATIVE OVERLAY

The **Media Quality Index (MQI) Score** will be an excellent barometer and counterpart to a sheer volume-based approach, applying a qualitative overlay reflecting our organizational priorities for earned media coverage.

As the media landscape continues to shift and contract, this kind of MQI metric will be imperative in informing how Visit California’s program of work is truly performing in the evolving ecosystem – scoring coverage based on its likelihood to convert to incremental travel to and within the state.

While this is inherently introducing a qualitative overlay to an assessment-based approach, the use of a third-party auditor will ensure minimal subjectivity or bias in the scoring. In short, this approach would value secured coverage on whether or not a specific piece of earned media coverage is helping to move the needle – or push a reader toward actually booking a trip or otherwise follow a call to action.

In early beta testing of the qualitative index, auditing will rate articles on a 20-point (-10 to +10) based on a variety of factors including:

- Sentiment
- Theme or topic of a story and how that relates to Visit California’s objectives
- Whether a feature solely focuses on California
- Whether a story is in a “most wanted media” outlet, and thus reaching our target audience
- Whether a story includes a sense of urgency or reasons to explore beyond the gateways
- Whether the piece includes a desirable California image to further inspire readers.

Additional factors that might result in negative scoring include:

- Negative sentiment or messaging that opposes key priorities, such as homelessness or overtourism
- Recommending other destinations to visit over California
- Blatantly discouraging travel to California
- Negative headlines or undesirable visuals depicting wildfires, crowds, litter, etc.

Internal testing of a small sampling of coverage resulted in scores averaging 5-7 on the -10-to-10-point scale. Third-party audit findings are underway examining coverage secured from July 1, 2019 and will be presented at Outlook Forum 2020.

COMPETITIVE, OR SHARE OF VOICE

The third component to be factored in would mirror the measurement work already underway in the brand space, but through an earned media lens.

While Visit California has always engaged in a robust media monitoring program, implementing a universal dashboard approach will allow the organization to track how the California brand is faring in the media at any given point in time, and especially over time. This will be a critical component toward the future of our crisis messaging development and response strategy.

An overall **“share of voice”** metric will allow Visit California and its stakeholders to determine how dominant the California brand is faring against competing destinations within the larger context of overall global media coverage.

Visit California Media Impact Score Matrix			
Perfect 10 Criteria	Score	Worst Nightmare	Score
Story includes at least one pillar/priority message	1.0	Negative sentiment/opposite of key message (homelessness, crowding/overtourism)	-2.5

Item is in a Most Wanted Media Outlet	1.0		
Story is a feature that only includes California	2.5		
Call to action (to the VCA website, social channels, guides or other owned channel)	0.5	Recommends other places to visit and explore over California	-1.0
Gives the reader a reason to visit (urgency) or explore (beyond the gateways)	3	Discourages travel to California (crisis)	-3.5
Contains a desirable visual	1.0	Contains an undesirable visual (Wildfires, dirty city, the homeless, crowds, etc.)	-1.5
Desirable headline mention	1.0	Negative headline mention	-1.5
TOTAL	10.0	TOTAL	-10.0