



City Council
Work Session
4/18/16

Request for
Qualifications “RFQ” –
Operation of a Local
Visitor Information
Center

Local Visitor Information Center

Seeking consultant to provide a service to current and prospective residents and visitors whereby individuals looking for information about the Apache Junction area could have access to free information and resources through a clearly identified center.

Surrounded by Legends

Process:

- February 1, 2016 – Input from city council on any changes to process for 16/17
- March 2, 2016 RFQ released
- March 23, 2016 – Bids due - Two bid submittals received
 - Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center
 - Superstition Mountains Regional Business Alliance
- March 24 – March 31 – Review committee reviews
- April 5 – 6 – Consultant interviews
- April 18 – Work Session summary of results & city council discussion

Process:

- Next Step: May 3 City Council Meeting – New Business item
 - Vote on moving forward with a consultant for visitor center services & a preferred consultant
 - Contract effective date and contract amount

Committee Review Process:

- Committee of five
- Independently reviewed, scored
- Committee convened, reviewed scores
- Consultants participated in a 45-minute interview with committee
- Committee assigned final scores based on:
 - Venue
 - Experience
 - Marketing
 - Business Promotion
 - Accountability/Reporting

Committee Findings:

- In their reviews, five of five committee members awarded their highest score to the Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center
- Out of a possible 100 points, the average score received for:
 - The Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center was 86
 - Superstition Mountains Regional Business Alliance was 57.6

Scoring Summary – AJCOC:

Criteria	Points Possible for this Criteria (Total)	Review Committee Average of Points Awarded for this Criteria
VENUE – Appropriateness of proposed local venue to house the Center within the city limits, consistent with the guidelines established by the Arizona Office of Tourism (“AOT”) and ability to adequately staff the Center during hours of operation	30	28.8
EXPERIENCE – Demonstration of knowledge of current trends, resources, and services demanded by Center patrons, and experience of key staff	20	18.8
MARKETING – Quality/relevance of marketing tools to be utilized, and understanding of needs/trends demanded by today’s tourists and visitors	20	16.8
BUSINESS PROMOTION – Ability to share information about licensed businesses located within the city limits and ability to promote programs that help reduce retail leakage	20	16.4
ACCOUNTABILITY – Type and quality of data to be collected and plan for keeping the city updated on progress made on items contained in the scope of work	10	5.2
Total Possible Points	100	86

Scoring Summary – SMRBA:

Criteria	Points Possible for this Criteria (Total)	Review Committee Average of Points Awarded for this Criteria
VENUE – Appropriateness of proposed local venue to house the Center within the city limits, consistent with the guidelines established by the Arizona Office of Tourism (“AOT”) and ability to adequately staff the Center during hours of operation	30	18
EXPERIENCE – Demonstration of knowledge of current trends, resources, and services demanded by Center patrons, and experience of key staff	20	7.8
MARKETING – Quality/relevance of marketing tools to be utilized, and understanding of needs/trends demanded by today’s tourists and visitors	20	13.8
BUSINESS PROMOTION – Ability to share information about licensed businesses located within the city limits and ability to promote programs that help reduce retail leakage	20	10.6
ACCOUNTABILITY – Type and quality of data to be collected and plan for keeping the city updated on progress made on items contained in the scope of work	10	7.4
Total Possible Points	100	57.6

Competitive Advantages:

- Years of experience specifically providing visitor center services
- Established facility in the downtown with an existing recognition factor as a visitor center
- Existing/updating visitor marketing products (maps, videos, Twitter, Facebook, website, etc.)
- New shop local app, accessible to all Apache Junction businesses with interactive mapping and things to do features (ability to see what works/modify)

Competitive Advantages:

- Ability to be fully functional with all items in Scope of Work July 1
- New center kiosk for searching all Apache Junction businesses – up to date information through Reference USA
- Strong volunteer program, longevity, leverage each volunteer's strengths with operations and training opportunities
- Paid full-time staff also present during operation hours available to assist with visitor center services

Competitive Advantages:

- Existing partnerships with tourism businesses/groups (i.e. Visit Mesa, AOT, Phoenix Mesa Gateway Airport, “Apache Trail Attractions”)
- Designated Local Visitor Information Center by Arizona Office of Tourism (with a reported 10 years of perfect scores) and will remain so for the foreseeable future – provides recognition and marketing of center to visitors through all Arizona Office of Tourism publications, online presence, visitor apps, etc.

Competitive Advantages:

- Seeking to establish 3-year plan for facility improvements (phased additions of patio area, pet-friendly area, hitching post, Apache Trail Diorama, and landscaping)
- Growing social media presence (i.e. Facebook 1400 likes, up from 300 a year ago)
- Redesigned website, community calendar of events
- Welcomes city participation/feedback – come tour center and suggest ideas for improvement



Questions?

AJ Chamber of Commerce Summary

Criteria	Points Possible for this Criteria (Total)	Review Committee Average of Points Awarded for this Criteria
VENUE – Appropriateness of proposed local venue to house the Center within the city limits, consistent with the guidelines established by the Arizona Office of Tourism (“AOT”) and ability to adequately staff the Center during hours of operation	30	25, 30, 29, 30, 30 (144/5) Avg = 28.8
EXPERIENCE – Demonstration of knowledge of current trends, resources, and services demanded by Center patrons, and experience of key staff	20	20, 20, 18, 18, 18 (94/5) Avg = 18.8
MARKETING – Quality/relevance of marketing tools to be utilized, and understanding of needs/trends demanded by today’s tourists and visitors	20	10, 18, 18, 20, 18 (84/5) Avg = 16.8
BUSINESS PROMOTION – Ability to share information about licensed businesses located within the city limits and ability to promote programs that help reduce retail leakage	20	15, 15, 17, 18, 17 (82/5) 16.4
ACCOUNTABILITY – Type and quality of data to be collected and plan for keeping the city updated on progress made on items contained in the scope of work	10	5, 5, 5, 6, 5 (26/5) 5.2
Total Possible Points	100	86

AJ Chamber of Commerce Summary

Proposal/Interview Strengths:

- Years of experience specifically providing visitor center services
- Established facility in the downtown with an existing recognition factor as a visitor center
- Existing/updating visitor marketing products (maps, videos, Twitter, Facebook, website, etc.)
- New shop local app, accessible to all Apache Junction businesses with interactive mapping and things to do features (ability to see what works/modify)
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- Redesigned website, community calendar of events
- Welcomes city participation/feedback – come tour center and suggest ideas for improvement

Proposal/Interview Weaknesses:

- Minimal reporting on progress, initiatives proposed
- Venue has seen little physical change/updates

Superstition Mountains Regional Business Alliance Summary

Criteria	Points Possible for this Criteria (Total)	Review Committee Average of Points Awarded for this Criteria
VENUE – Appropriateness of proposed local venue to house the Center within the city limits, consistent with the guidelines established by the Arizona Office of Tourism (“AOT”) and ability to adequately staff the Center during hours of operation	30	15, 20, 20, 15, 20 (90/5) Avg = 18
EXPERIENCE – Demonstration of knowledge of current trends, resources, and services demanded by Center patrons, and experience of key staff	20	5, 10, 5, 5, 14 (39/5) Avg = 7.8
MARKETING – Quality/relevance of marketing tools to be utilized, and understanding of needs/trends demanded by today’s tourists and visitors	20	10, 14, 10, 20, 15 (69/5) Avg = 13.8
BUSINESS PROMOTION – Ability to share information about licensed businesses located within the city limits and ability to promote programs that help reduce retail leakage	20	10, 10, 10, 10, 13 (53/5) Avg = 10.6
ACCOUNTABILITY – Type and quality of data to be collected and plan for keeping the city updated on progress made on items contained in the scope of work	10	8, 7, 8, 5, 9 (37/5) 7.4
Total Possible Points	100	57.6

Superstition Mountains Regional Business Alliance Summary

Proposal/Interview Strengths:

- Year-round consistency in hours (including Saturday's)
- Proposed location on a main tourism thoroughfare
- Lots of creative marketing ideas (foresight into acquiring domain names for visitor center), standalone visitor center website, reaching winter visitors while at their "other home", digital signage at center, testimonials from visitors
- "Accurate" door counts for visitors
- Year-round shop local includes all city businesses invited to participate (but "scan card" idea of concern – costly, time to implement)
- Take into account user experiences and build on improvements from feedback
- Gift shop sales will subsidize visitor center operations
- Will make referrals through local business list (they've been building and would like city to assist with sharing of information) and categorize all businesses (will not give SMRBA members priority when making referrals)

Superstition Mountains Regional Business Alliance Summary

Proposal/Interview Strengths:

- Believes they can run center based on established Arizona Office of Tourism guidelines
- Philosophy about customer services and genuine care for people
- Partnership with Arizona Winter Visitors Association

Proposal/Interview Weaknesses:

- Short-time presence in the community
- Variety of experience but none in visitor center services, and very little in operating a facility
- Reliance on city clerk's office for new business information
- All volunteers with plans to hire staff at some point (no specific plan for actual recruitment, lots of "supporters" but uncertain of ability to cover 49 hours week/2-3 volunteers at a time)
- No past performance to know if all proposed ideas can be realized
- Cannot attempt to get Arizona Office of Tourism visitor center designation (requires non-profit status) but they may consider creating an entity or converting SMRBA into a non-profit in the future

Superstition Mountains Regional Business Alliance Summary

- Very uncertain as to what could be implemented on July 1 (contract start date) for deliverables. They hope to have access to racks & publications for opening and will start publicity campaign about new AJ visitor center location. Apps will need to be approved by Apple, videos (will use others initially) and create new throughout the year, website in development can go July 1
- App functionality a bit unclear in terms of how the user would interact with it, no strategic plan of how they'd get the word out about the availability of the tools they'll create
- Some concern about who might be sharing space with Visitor Center and creating identity confusion (talk about Diane & Judy's office there, but not SMRBA, but Diane is a SMRBA employee, SMRBA might move nearby)