

*Pensacola*  
FLORIDA  
THE WAY TO BEACH™

**VISITPENSACOLA.COM**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**





# Request for Proposal (RFP)

## Website Design, Development, Hosting, and Support

Organization: Visit Pensacola (Destination Marketing Organization for Escambia County, Florida)

Website: [visitpensacola.com](http://visitpensacola.com)

Launch: January 31, 2027

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### 1. Background

Visit Pensacola is the designated Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Escambia County, Florida. We promote the Pensacola Bay Area as a premier travel destination through advertising, digital marketing, public relations, group sales, a visitor information center, and a film commission. Our website, [visitpensacola.com](http://visitpensacola.com), is the primary digital hub for leisure travelers, meeting planners, and group travel organizers.

In the last fiscal year, the website served over 3.4 million users.

The next-generation site must deliver a modern, high-performance experience, improve engagement and conversion, and support partner content and listings at scale.

Primary audience segments include:

- Leisure drive market
  - Fly-in leisure travelers
  - Meeting planners
  - Sports event planners
  - Group tour operators
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## 2. RFP Purpose

Visit Pensacola seeks proposals from qualified vendors to design, build, host, and support a new website that:

- Reflects our brand identity and destination storytelling
  - Scales for high traffic and seasonal peaks
  - Integrates partner listings, deals/coupons, and events feeds
  - Implements AI-enhanced search and content placement
  - Improves analytics and optimization capabilities
  - Launches by **January 31, 2027**
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## 3. Project Goals and KPIs

### 3.1 Primary Goals

- Elevate brand storytelling with modern visual design and immersive content
- Increase user engagement and conversions
- Improve discovery of partner listings and events
- Enable content personalization and AI-driven search

### 3.2 Key Performance Indicators

Vendors must propose a measurement plan for:

- Engaged sessions
  - Event page views
  - Partner listing views
  - Newsletter signups
  - Visitor guide signups (print order and/or download)
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## 4. Scope of Work

### 4.1 Discovery and Strategy

- Destination discovery
- Content strategy and information architecture

- UX research and user journey mapping
- Accessibility strategy (WCAG 2.2 AA target)

## 4.2 Design

- UX/UI design aligned to brand guidelines
- Responsive, mobile-first layouts
- Component-based design system
- Design for multiple content types: destination pages, partner listings, events, deals/coupons, itineraries, articles, blogs
- Flexible design patterns for campaign landing pages and microsites

## 4.3 Development

- Modern, performant front-end implementation
- Flexible CMS for marketing/editorial teams
- Developer extensibility: ability to customize templates/components and extend functionality without vendor lock-in
- Programmatic access to content and data via a query layer (GraphQL preferred, or equivalent)
- Page templates and reusable components
- Robust editorial workflows and role-based access
- Ability to create, launch, and manage campaign landing pages and microsites

## 4.4 Integrations

The new site must integrate and display data from:

- Granicus Partner listings API
- Granicus Deals and coupons API
- Granicus Calendar of events XML feed

Vendors should describe:

- Data ingestion approach
- Refresh cadence and caching strategy
- Error handling and fallback behavior
- Admin tools for content overrides

## 4.5 AI-Enhanced Search and Content Placement

- AI-powered site search supporting intent-based queries and tourism-specific language

- Search experience must be a native, brand-aligned part of the site (not a generic third-party chat widget)
- Search results must render as a rich, visually designed page, not a chat-only interface
- AI should generate a results layout that blends:
  - Curated top results in card-based modules (images + key details) for the primary intent (e.g., business listings)
  - Contextual content blocks (events, blogs, itineraries, deals, and other related content) that respond to the query
- AI-driven content placement for recommendations and related content
- Governance tools: audit logs, ranking controls, and manual overrides
- Clear policy on data usage, privacy, and model transparency
- AI responses must be grounded exclusively in structured site content and approved data sources
- No open web generative results
- Personalization/data source requirements must be explicitly defined, including:
  - First-party vs third-party data usage and weighting rules
  - Anonymous-session personalization vs logged-in personalization behavior
  - Geo-based targeting logic and geographic precedence rules
  - Campaign-level overrides controlled by internal administrators
  - Seasonal rule sets and scheduling controls (e.g., Blue Angels, holidays, hurricane season)
- Vendors must document decision logic in human-readable terms (no black-box-only personalization)

#### 4.6 GEO/AI Schema Markup

- Implement schema.org structured data optimized for GEO/AI discoverability
- Coverage for destinations, attractions, events, deals, hotels, restaurants, attractions, shops, and editorial content
- Validation and monitoring plan

#### 4.7 Content Model Requirements

Vendors must define a structured content model to ensure long-term scalability and governance for a DMO website.

Structured content model for:

- Attractions - Restaurants
- Lodging
- Events

- Deals
- Itineraries
- Relationship modeling approach (e.g., attraction -> neighborhood -> tags)
- Taxonomy governance framework
- Tag normalization process

#### 4.8 SEO Strategy

- Technical SEO audit
- URL architecture strategy
- Internal linking strategy
- Faceted navigation approach (events filtering)
- Redirect mapping (1:1 mapping plan required)
- Indexation and crawl budget strategy
- XML sitemap automation
- Core Web Vitals performance plan
- Content gap analysis support

#### 4.9 Analytics and Measurement

- GA4 and Google Tag Manager implementation
- KPI event tracking plan
- Reporting dashboards and performance review cadence

#### 4.10 Hosting, Security, and Performance

- Managed hosting with 99.9%+ uptime SLA
- CDN, WAF, DDoS protection, TLS
- Scalability for seasonal and campaign spikes
- Backup and disaster recovery strategy

#### 4.11 Crisis Management, Alerts, and Notifications

Vendors must describe their approach to crisis communications and operational resilience, including support for hurricane-related disruptions.

- Site-wide, section-wide, and page-level alert/notification system
- Ability to schedule, target, and expire alerts
- Multiple alert styles (urgent crisis vs. routine announcements)
- Support for banners and inline callouts

- Mobile-first behavior and accessibility compliance
- Operational playbook for severe weather or emergency events

#### 4.12 Support and Maintenance

- 24/7 critical incident support
- SLA-based response times by severity
- Ongoing platform updates and security patching
- Optional enhancement and optimization services

#### 4.13 Support Model Requirements

Vendors must provide a clear support model that includes:

- Support hours, escalation paths, and dedicated contacts
- Incident response SLAs and communication expectations
- Maintenance windows and release management approach
- Post-launch support period and ongoing retainer options

#### 4.14 Performance Targets

- Core Web Vitals and page-load targets must be defined and tested prior to launch
- Ongoing performance monitoring and optimization plan

#### 4.15 AI Governance and Safety

- Model/data usage policy and retention practices
- Ability to tune or override AI ranking and placements
- Monitoring for bias, safety, and content quality
- Guardrails for any AI-assisted content placement
- Explainability requirements: clear, auditable rationale for why content was elevated, suppressed, or personalized

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## 5. Content Migration and Training

- Audit of existing content and assets
- Migration plan with prioritization
- SEO-preserving redirect strategy
- Training for internal staff

### 5.1 SEO Preservation and Redirect Requirements

Vendors must deliver an SEO-preserving migration plan that includes:

- Vendor responsibility to migrate all existing in-scope content and assets to the new platform
- Vendor responsibility to update internal link structures as needed to align with the approved URL architecture
- 1:1 redirect mapping for legacy URLs to final URLs
- Preservation strategy for high-value pages identified by Visit Pensacola (organic traffic, conversions, backlinks)
- No redirect chains or loops; all redirects must resolve in a single hop
- Pre-launch validation: crawl testing, redirect QA, canonical checks, and XML sitemap checks
- Post-launch monitoring: 404 errors, indexation, organic traffic, and rankings, including a remediation plan

## 6. Content Governance and Ownership

- Role-based permissions and approval workflows
  - Editorial governance and content lifecycle management
  - Data ownership and portability (full exportability of content and data)
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## 7. Vendor Qualifications

Proposals should demonstrate:

- Experience with tourism, DMO, or destination marketing websites
  - Proven ability to integrate partner listings and events feeds
  - Strong UX/design and content strategy capabilities
  - Experience with AI search, personalization, and schema optimization
  - Capacity for long-term hosting and support
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## 8. Deliverables

- Discovery and strategy documentation
- Wireframes and UI design system
- Development and staging environments
- Migration and QA plan

- Production launch and post-launch support
  - Documentation and staff training materials
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## 9. Project Timeline

Vendors must provide a proposed schedule aligned to a January 31, 2027 launch. Include:

- Discovery and research
  - Design and prototyping
  - Development and integrations
  - Content migration and QA
  - Launch readiness and go-live
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## 10. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

- Company overview and relevant experience
  - Project team structure and key personnel
  - Proposed CMS and hosting architecture
  - Approach to AI search and content placement
  - Integration strategy for APIs and XML feeds
  - Timeline and milestone schedule
  - Cost breakdown (one-time and ongoing)
  - 2–3 client references or case studies
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## 11. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on:

- Understanding of Visit Pensacola goals and audience
- Design and UX approach
- Technical capabilities, integration plan, and implementation quality

- AI strategy, governance, explainability, and personalization controls
- SEO, structured data, and organic growth strategy
- Hosting, security, performance, and support model
- Total cost of ownership and value

Vendors should note that proposals lacking clear responses to required items in Section 4 may be considered non-responsive.

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## 12. Terms and Conditions

- Visit Pensacola reserves the right to reject any or all proposals
  - All proposal costs are the responsibility of the bidder
  - Submitted materials will be treated as confidential
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## 13. Submission Details

- RFP Issue Date: February 13, 2026
- Vendor Questions Due: March 5, 2026
- Proposal Due Date: March 17, 2026
- Print copies due to Visit Pensacola: March 17, 2026, at 5 p.m. (7 copies)
- Committee Meets: March 27, 2026
- Vendor Interviews (in person): April 8, 2026
- Visit Pensacola Board of Directors Vote: April 22, 2026
- Award Date: May 2026
- Target Launch: January 31, 2027

### Submission Contact:

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