

Request for Qualifications: Gulf State Park Lodge, Interpretive Center, and Learning Campus Operational Support

February 13, 2016

Introduction

On behalf of the Governor of Alabama and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development is issuing a Request for Qualifications in relation to operational support of the Gulf State Park Lodge, Interpretive Center, and Learning Campus in Baldwin County, AL.

Definitions

ADCNR	Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
GSP	Gulf State Park
GSPP	Gulf State Park Enhancement Project Team
IC	Gulf State Park Interpretive Center
LC	Gulf State Park Learning Campus
LBC	Living Building Challenge
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
Lodge	The Lodge at Gulf State Park: a Hilton Hotel
Operator	The selected firm or team
RFQ	Request for Qualifications
UACED	University of Alabama Center for Economic Development
Master Plan	The Gulf State Park Master Plan – a document describing the long term vision for Gulf State Park

Project Scope

Overview Gulf State Park is a unique place on the Gulf Coast of Alabama. Along the Gulf Coast, it is the only park where a visitor can experience both beaches and forests as a single event. The Gulf State Park Enhancement Project was conceived as a means to preserve, restore and enhance those unique qualities and opportunities. With a focus on balancing environmental and economic sustainability, the new facilities and enhancements will act together to introduce visitors to this place, educate them about the environment, and economically sustain continued operations, maintenance, conservation, restoration and preservation efforts for all facilities and natural resources in the park.

How can an Operator increase enjoyment and use of the area's natural resources for all citizens of Alabama and visitors to the park?

Vision Statement Gulf State Park will be an international benchmark of economic and environmental sustainability demonstrating best practices for outdoor recreation, education, and hospitable accommodations.

What are some examples of projects and mechanisms that allow an operator to maintain a balance between economic and environmental goals?

Education Every moment within the park should be viewed as an educational opportunity. The quality of the educational experiences is a defining characteristic of Gulf State Park. The Enhancement Project has used the design of the facilities and interpretive moments on the trails to highlight and emphasize

those opportunities. However, ultimate success is dependent on programming and events that integrate education into every aspect of the park. Eco-tourists demand impressive educational opportunities tied to local communities, environments, and context.

Please describe how an Operator could become tightly integrated with park staff to create successful collaborative programs. Give examples of how you have created similar programs and how they fit into the long-term success of a project. Also, what organizational structure and positions would support a close relationship with existing park staff?

Marketing

Marketing campaigns will be developed by the Operator in partnership with the park that leverage the Master Plan's brand and the park enhancements to promote a unique and seamless visitor experience. Marketing and communications should reflect the diversity of experiences in the park and should emphasize all of the park's resources, not only an individual component such as the Lodge.

Traditional communications tools such as a website, print media, and videos will be part of the campaign, but other opportunities exist for non-traditional tools. Please give examples of marketing campaigns for projects similar to this one. Include all necessary information that reveals the process used to develop the campaign, materials used, and measureable outcomes of the campaign. Explain how these campaigns might leverage the overarching educational opportunity of the park.

Environmental Goals

Gulf State Park's defining characteristic is its environment. The first project implemented was dune restoration along the park's beach. All new facilities within the park are being designed to a set of rigorous and aspirational certifications as shown below. These certifications represent the commitment of the park to creating facilities that preserve and respect the park's environment. In addition to maintaining all of the certifications for each facility, the Operator will identify, develop, and support programs and procedures that align with the environmental intent of the Master Plan, the Enhancement Project, the Gulf State Park Vision Statement, and the Alabama State Parks mission.

Sustainability Rating Targets

- Lodge: LEED Gold, SITES Platinum, and Fortified Commercial
- LC: LEED Silver and Fortified Commercial
- IC: LBC, LEED Platinum, and Fortified Commercial

How will the Operator maintain environmental certifications and vision?

Provide examples of how an Operator can be respectful of the dune environment and treat it as an educational opportunity.

Give examples of sustainable management and operations practices currently in use across your portfolio. How do these practices define company culture? How are they demonstrated at the executive level? Highlight examples that demonstrate integrated evaluation, measurement, and evolution.

Community and State Parks Coordination

Gulf State Park is a significant member of several communities. As one of nineteen parks, it is part of the Alabama State Park System. The campground has enough campers on a regular basis to be



considered a small town. The coastal communities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach border the park. The number of environmental, natural, and community organizations that enjoy and use its grounds are too numerous to list here.

These numerous communities represent an opportunity for engagement and education that can only be realized through effective organization and coordination with ADCNR, park staff, Orange Beach, and Gulf Shores. The Operator will support ADCNR and park staff in efforts to achieve their overall mission, including coordinating regional and community efforts with Gulf Shores, Orange Beach, and other nearby municipalities.

Give models of community engagement that currently exist across your portfolio and explain the organizational structure that supports them. What positions has your organization created to effectively demonstrate a commitment to acting as a part of the local community? How can an operator effectively assist park staff with managing their volunteers? Also, provide models of collaboration and communication with governmental agencies that created a positive relationship between everyone.

Master Plan

The Gulf State Park Master Plan outlines a vision for the park and organizes that vision into several key principles. It contains existing conditions, aspirations, and a vision for the park defined as the result of a yearlong collaborative process that involved an online survey with over 2,500 responses, 12 stakeholder meetings, and 6 public open houses. The Operator is expected to align with the ideas and intent contained in the Master Plan.

How can the Operator provide long term support for the park as outlined in the Gulf State Park Master Plan?

Mobility

Gulf State Park is a place best experienced as a pedestrian. Priority is given to walkers, bikes, and people outside of their vehicles. To facilitate the pedestrian experience and preserve the natural experience of the park, several projects are being developed including a parkwide tram system and an expansion of the popular trail system.

Provide examples of your projects and programs that effectively reduce visitor dependency on cars. How can an Operator support and leverage the parkwide tram and trail system? It is expected that at a minimum the Operator will operate and financially support the tram and develop a comprehensive system that allows tram stops to occur in preferential locations at the respective facilities. In addition, how can the Operator support the maintenance and upkeep of the trail system?

Hospitality

A positive visitor experience is central to successful implementation of all components of the Gulf State Park Master Plan. Hospitality is the core function that will define that visitor experience. There are a wide variety of meeting spaces throughout the park. To better facilitate reservations for events such as weddings, professional meetings, and family gatherings, the operator will manage the reservation system for the meeting facilities at the Lodge, Learning Campus, and Interpretive Center.

How do the Operator's values align with hospitable accommodations in support of the Park's economic and environmental vision?

The Lodge is going to be a Hilton hotel. They are involved because of their high standards for hospitality, environmental focus, and drive to create economic value. How do you maintain their



standards, develop familiarity with the area, and demonstrate an understanding of the Enhancement Project? How will you collaborate and comply with Hilton standards for preopening and operation?

Food & Beverage A wide variety of F&B opportunities exist throughout the park. The Operator will work with the client to develop concepts and branding for several locations as described below. The restaurants will be open to the general public and are expected to be destinations in their own right. Beyond seafood, opportunities exist to emphasize the culinary assets available in the park itself and within the region.

Describe opportunities for each of the following F&B functions that leverage the existing assets of the park and support its connection to its user communities.

- Banquet Kitchen
- Lodge Restaurant
- Lobby F&B
- Pool Grill
- LC Restaurant
- Other (Catering and support for park events such as weddings, festivals, races, etc...)

Facilities

Lodge The Lodge at Gulf State Park is a demonstration site for the Park's commitment to sustainable design and operations. This facility acts as one of several hubs throughout the park for launching public education programs. It also contains a variety of interpretive and educational components throughout its landscape and public areas.

- 350 rooms
- Meeting Space
- F&B
 - o Restaurant
 - o Pool Grill
 - o Lobby Services
 - o Banquet Kitchen
- Beach Access

Learning Campus The Learning Campus is a collection of buildings that provide a central location for Education programs throughout the park. The Student Lodge will provide overnight accommodations for educational programs such as schools, community programs, and other organizations. The Classrooms and Meeting Space provide teaching space for those programs as well as offices and laboratories to be used by university research students, academics, and scientists. The Restaurant will act as a gathering and communal place for park visitors, campground guests, and community members.

- Student Lodge
 - o 64 bunk beds
 - o Common Area
- Classrooms & Meeting Space
 - o Auditorium
 - o 2 Classrooms & Labs
 - o 1 Outdoor Classroom
 - o 4 Offices
- Restaurant



Interpretive Center The Interpretive Center acts as a launching point and welcome center for the entire park. It is the pedestrian gateway into the park. This facility is seeking certification as a full Living Building that requires a high standard for operational efficiency.

Submittal Documentation

Content All content should be relevant and brief. However, the organization of the response and graphics contained within it are opportunities to demonstrate the communicative and collaborative abilities of your firm.

Introduction

Provide a brief narrative describing your understanding of the project, your firm or team's perspective on it, and any other information you would like to highlight.

Firm or Team Description

Provide a broad explanation and history of your firm or team. For team responses, in addition to the individual firm descriptions, describe any previous collaboration and note collaborative projects.

Team Structure and Bios

Describe the organizational structure for this project and provide bios for individual team members.

Fee Structure

Provide an understanding of your fee schedule and an estimate of your cost for this project. These estimates may be presented as a range. Prior to the final Operator selection, the scope of work will be finalized and the fee structure negotiated. Please include a statement of your willingness and ability to contribute any necessary capital to the project.

Project Examples

Include a minimum of 4 project examples per firm that demonstrate your capacity and experience with projects of this type. Select examples that address how you handled complex challenges in highly visible situations. Identify individual roles and team members proposed for the Gulf State Park Project. Include references for each project with name and current contact information.

Format Do not vary from the format listed below. No additional materials will be reviewed with the exception of online services used as examples responding to RFQ issues.

- Coil bound 8-1/2" x 11" – landscape or portrait format (There is a 12 page limitation on proposals not including appendices with project examples, references, and other supporting materials. Clarity through brevity and conciseness is expected in achieving a complete package.)
- 6 printed copies
- 1 digital pdf (CD or Flash Drive)

Send to The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development
Attn: Gulf State Park Project
621 Greensboro Avenue
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401



Questions and Clarifications

Email questions to info@mygulfstatepark.com
Subject line should read: Questions for GSPP Operator RFQ
Questions and answers as well as clarifications will be posted to www.mygulfstatepark.com/rfq
No phone calls.

Cone of Silence

Any vendor or lobbyist for a vendor is prohibited from having any communications concerning this solicitation for a competitive procurement with any member of the office of Governor, the Gulf State Park Project Committee, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, University of Alabama System Board of Trustees and the University of Alabama Administration. This “Cone of Silence” shall go into effect and shall remain in effect from the time of release of the solicitation until the contract is awarded. All communications regarding this solicitation shall be by way of written Request for Information pursuant to the instructions above. Any vendor or lobbyist who violates this provision shall cause their Proposal to be considered not responsive and therefore be ineligible for award. This prohibition does not apply to: 1. Telephone calls to the Gulf State Park Project Team staff to request copies of this RFQ, to confirm attendance, or request directions regarding an interview notification received; 2. Delivery of the Respondent’s Submittal; 3. Discussion at the interview; 4. Delivery of written questions about the RFQ; and/or 5. Review of background/contract documents with the Gulf State Park Project staff.

Ethnic Diversity

The employment of engineers, architects, attorneys, contractors, subcontractors, consultants or other employees or agents should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the State of Alabama.

Schedule

Timeline

This schedule is tentative and may be adjusted at the sole discretion of UACED.

RFQ Released	Feb 13
Deadline for RFQ Submittal	March 15
RFQ Review & Selection for Interviews	March 16 – March 20
Firms Notified & Prepare for Interview	March 20 – March 31
Interviews at Gulf State Park	April 3 – April 14
Selection Analysis & Possible Site Visits	Begins April 17
Notification, Contract Negotiation, & Approval	May

Resources

Websites

Project: mygulfstatepark.com
Park: alapark.com/gulf-state-park

Information

Please utilize all public information available to you and familiarize yourself with the project videos and documentation found on the project website. For additional information, please email info@mygulfstatepark.com with the subject line “GSPP Operator RFQ additional information.” Include the company name and contact email in the body of the email.

