

Request For Proposal (RFP)

WEBSITE REDESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND HOSTING SERVICES FOR SANTABARBARACA.COM



Table of Contents

Introduction & Timeline	03
About Visit Santa Barbara	04
Project Overview	05
Current Website Ecosystem	06
Scope of Work	07
Budget	10
Proposal Requirements	11
Submission Instructions	13
Proposal Evaluation Criteria	15

INTRODUCTION

Visit Santa Barbara is seeking proposals from qualified digital agencies to serve as a strategic partner for the redesign, development, launch and ongoing support of SantaBarbaraCA.com, the official destination website for the Santa Barbara South Coast.

While Visit Santa Barbara seeks a website that reflects the beauty, ease and sophistication of the destination, this project is not intended to be solely a cosmetic refresh. This is a foundational investment in our digital ecosystem. The goal is to create a high-performing, future-ready platform that supports brand storytelling, trip planning, partner visibility and measurable economic impact, while evolving alongside changing technologies, traveler expectations and business needs.

The selected agency will bring demonstrated experience working with destination marketing organizations, navigating complex stakeholder environments and building high-performing digital platforms.

TIMELINE

RFP Released: April 5, 2026

Agency Questions (submitted via email): by April 15, 2026 at 12 p.m. PST

RFP Deadline (submitted via email): by May 11, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.

Finalist Notifications: No later than June 17, 2026

Finalist Presentations: Week of July 13, 2026

Contract Awarded: Week of July 27, 2026

Project Kickoff (estimated): August 2026

Project Duration (estimated): 8-12 months, based on discovery outcomes and final technical approach

See submission details on page 13 for more information



ABOUT VISIT SANTA BARBARA

Visit Santa Barbara is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) organization funded through a partnership with the City of Santa Barbara, the County of Santa Barbara, the South Coast Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), and a membership of hospitality-related businesses. As the official destination marketing organization for the Santa Barbara South Coast, representing the communities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, Montecito and Summerland, Visit Santa Barbara is contracted by the City of Santa Barbara to market the region as a premier destination for leisure and business travel.

Known as The American Riviera®, Santa Barbara offers a distinctive blend of coastal beauty, Spanish-inspired architecture, outdoor adventure, wine country access, walkable neighborhoods and an elevated yet relaxed lifestyle. The destination appeals to a wide range of travelers, from luxury and wellness seekers to families, couples, group visitors and drive-market leisure audiences. Visit Santa Barbara's marketing work is designed to capture both the emotional appeal and practical trip-planning value of the destination, inspiring travelers while connecting them to local businesses and experiences.

Visit Santa Barbara is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors composed of local business owners and professionals who bring deep industry expertise and a strong commitment to community stewardship. The Board provides strategic oversight, shapes organizational policy, builds relationships with local government, and helps guide how Visit Santa Barbara delivers on its mission and evolves to meet the needs of the destination.

Mission

Visit Santa Barbara inspires overnight travel to the Santa Barbara South Coast to enhance the community's economy and quality of life.

Role of SantaBarbaraCA.com

SantaBarbaraCA.com serves as Visit Santa Barbara's primary owned digital platform and the central hub for destination storytelling, trip planning, partner visibility and visitor conversion for the Santa Barbara South Coast. The site, which is primarily operated by three core staff members, attracts over 4 million users annually, generates more than 900,000 qualified referrals to local hospitality businesses, produces approximately \$55,000 in private-source digital advertising revenue and functions as a key landing destination for brand, content and campaign traffic across paid, earned and owned media channels. The site also serves as an important performance and insights tool, helping inform marketing strategy, content optimization and investment decisions.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The objective of this project is to create a mobile-first, conversion-oriented and visually elevated website that reflects the Santa Barbara brand while supporting the organization's evolving marketing, research and partner needs.

The last major redesign of SantaBarbaraCA.com took place in 2015. Over the past decade, the site has continued to perform strongly as a tool for building destination awareness, inspiring travelers and driving qualified referrals to local hospitality businesses. At the same time, advances in technology, shifts in travel-planning behavior and rising expectations from increasingly savvy travelers have created the need for a new phase of evolution.

Visit Santa Barbara seeks an agency partner to lead the strategy, design, development and launch of a fully reimagined website. The redesigned website must be built on an open-source platform that supports long-term flexibility, efficient content management and reduced reliance on proprietary systems.

This next-generation website should build on the strengths of the current platform while introducing more modern, intuitive and high-performing user experiences that better serve visitors, partners and Visit Santa Barbara's internal team.

Strategic Objectives

- Inspire visitation and enable seamless trip planning across both leisure and group audiences
- Preserve and grow organic visibility across traditional search and emerging AI-driven discovery platforms
- Strengthen partner visibility and referrals through integrated editorial content, CRM-driven listings, events and offers
- Increase engagement and drive conversion, improving time on site and downstream actions that support local businesses
- Modernize core trip-planning experiences, including event discovery, business listings and on-site search
- Deliver a flexible, future-ready digital experience with integrated personalization, AI-powered trip planning and multilingual capabilities
- Empower internal teams to manage content, reporting and optimization in real time with minimal developer reliance
- Implement a privacy-first measurement framework that enables meaningful performance tracking without dependence on third-party cookies or consent-based limitations

CURRENT WEBSITE ECOSYSTEM

The current site is maintained and operated by in-house staff using WordPress, with development support provided by Visit Santa Barbara's website agency of record.

Simpleview powers both CRM and membership extranet, feeding listings, events, forms and offers via API.*

Visit Santa Barbara works with two primary agency partners: Miles Partnership, which supports website maintenance, strategy, SEO and paid search advertising, while Sparkloft Media leads brand creative development, organic and paid social advertising.

Current third-party platforms and tools include:

- Analytics & Attribution: GA4, DataFy and Symphony by Tourism Economics
- Content & Media: Crowdriff, BookDirect
- Infrastructure & UX: MapTiler, Typography
- Privacy & Marketing: Osano, Act-On
- Personalization and AI: Bound and Mindtrip (launching June 2026)

Additional research on the Santa Barbara South Coast visitor profile and website performance metrics is available upon request.

**While not a requirement for this RFP, we are open to CRM recommendations outside of Simpleview that improve reliability and usability.*



SCOPE OF WORK

The following section outlines the anticipated scope of work for the SantaBarbaraCA.com website redesign. Visit Santa Barbara expects the selected agency partner to provide strategic leadership, UX design and technical execution to deliver a high-performing, scalable website.

While the components below represent Visit Santa Barbara's current understanding of project needs, agencies are encouraged to recommend additional strategies, technologies or approaches that will help achieve the project's strategic objectives and deliver the best possible visitor and partner experience.

Discovery, Audit and Strategic Recommendations

The selected agency shall deliver a comprehensive set of discovery outputs that include, at minimum:

- Stakeholder interviews and requirements gathering
- Review of analytics, KPIs and conversion pathways
- Technical audit of current CMS, hosting environment, integrations and dependencies
- SEO audit including indexation, metadata, schema, URL structure, redirects and top-performing content
- Accessibility audit
- Mobile UX audit
- Content audit and strategy recommendations, including opportunities for consolidation, migration and improvement
- Review of competitor and peer destination websites
- Recommendations for future-state user journeys, information architecture and template strategy

Information Architecture and UX

The selected agency shall develop:

- A revised sitemap
- Mobile-first navigation and menu strategy
- A structured category taxonomy for listings, events and special offers
- Audience- and intent-based user journey recommendations
- Search and discovery strategy
- Structured content relationships between articles, itineraries, listings, offers and events
- Wireframes for key page templates and major user flows
- Ability to set pages for password protection

Visual Design

The selected agency shall create a responsive, brand-aligned visual system for the redesigned website, including:

- Homepage design
- Major landing page templates
- Category landing page templates

- Article/itinerary page templates
- Member listing and detail page templates
- Events calendar and event detail templates
- Special offer templates
- Neighborhood and trip-planning templates
- Templates for B2B user groups such as weddings, meetings, PR and stakeholders
- Campaign specific templates (Example: Third Night Free lodging promotion)
- Templates for multilingual/translated pages
- Map and discovery modules
- Reusable content block/component library
- Flexible text and media content blocks
- Filterable lists of members, events and offers
- Featured content/highlights/callouts
- Support of video
- Integrated media library
- Form integration
- BookDirect integration
- Crowdriff integration
- Style guide and design system documentation

Development and Technical Implementation

The selected agency shall build and configure the new website, including:

- CMS setup and implementation
- Component-based page-building capabilities
- Integration with Simpleview or comparable CRM-fed content systems
- Planning for caching/feed stabilization approach
- Events, listings and offers feed integration
- Analytics and tag management implementation
- Consent/privacy management
- Multilingual readiness
- Performance optimization
- Accessibility-compliant front-end development
- Structured data/schema implementation

Search, Discovery and Planning Functionality

Proposals should include recommendations and implementation planning for:

- Improved sitewide search
- Predictive search and recommended results
- Related content logic
- Tag-based content discovery

- Personalized content surfacing
- Strong cross-linking between inspiration and conversion-oriented content
- Enhanced map-based discovery
- Support for itinerary-building workflows
- Integrated design for Mindtrip planning experiences

Partner, Events and Referral Experience

The selected agency shall propose improvements and implementation for:

- Business listing design and UX
- Member detail page performance and outbound referral strategy
- Contextual partner placement within editorial content
- Event calendar UX, filtering and administration
- Event submission or review workflows, if applicable
- Improved offers visibility and conversion paths

Migration, SEO Transition and Launch

The selected agency shall provide:

- Detailed migration plan
- Content migration recommendations and execution support
- Redirect map and launch sequencing
- SEO preservation strategy
- Analytics validation plan
- QA, accessibility testing and performance testing
- CMS training
- Launch support and defined post-launch warranty period.

Ongoing Support

Proposals should distinguish between required and optional ongoing services, including:

- Hosting
- Maintenance and support
- Content development support
- Enhancement hours
- SEO support
- Analytics/reporting support
- Training refreshers
- Roadmap planning for future phases

Technical and Functional Requirements

The proposed solution should support and implement, at minimum:

- Responsive mobile-first performance

- Intuitive CMS for non-technical staff
- Integration with CRM-fed listings, events and offers
- Map integration
- Alt text and accessibility controls
- SEO fields including metadata, canonicals and indexing controls
- GA4, GTM and Search Console compatibility
- Migration of existing GA4 tagging and event tracking
- Event tracking for outbound clicks and key interactions
- Privacy and cookie consent tools
- Role-based user access and permissions
- Editorial workflow supporting draft, review, approval and publishing
- Scalable architecture for future enhancements, including AI-supported planning tools.
- Integration with email marketing platform

Visit Santa Barbara must retain full ownership of all website data, content and codebase, with no platform lock-in.

BUDGET

Visit Santa Barbara is seeking a partner that not only executes against the scope outlined in this RFP, but also brings strategic thinking, innovation and industry best practices to elevate the overall digital experience.

The total budget for this project is expected to fall within the range of \$300,000 to \$350,000.

Respondents should provide a detailed, phase-based budget that clearly outlines:

- Alignment with the proposed scope of work and project objectives
- Realistic and well-supported cost estimates
- Transparency and clarity across all budget line items
- Cost-effectiveness relative to the overall value delivered

Respondents should clearly distinguish between required scope and any optional recommendations, enhancements or future-phase work.

Ongoing Site Maintenance

Respondents will need to provide detailed hourly costs for an ongoing site maintenance contract post launch.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should be submitted in digital format (PDF recommended) and follow the structure outlined below. Responses should be clear, concise and focused on relevant experience and approach.

Executive Summary

Provide a brief overview of your agency, including:

- Core capabilities and differentiators
- Relevant experience with similar projects
- Why your agency is uniquely suited for this project

Agency Overview & Team

Include the following:

- Company background, years in operation and primary office location
- Overview of services and core offerings
- Total number of employees and key disciplines
- Identification of the core team assigned to this project, including:
- Project lead/account lead
- UX/UI lead
- Technical lead/solution architect
- Any key supporting roles
- Brief bios and relevant experience for each team member

Relevant Experience & Case Studies

Provide a minimum of three case studies that demonstrate:

- Experience with destination marketing organizations, travel or content-rich websites
- Scope of work, approach and metric-driven outcomes
- Examples of complex integrations (e.g., CRM, listings, events, booking engines, personalization tools)

Project Approach & Methodology

Describe your approach to delivering a project of this scale, including:

- Discovery and research process (stakeholder engagement, audience insights, etc.)
- UX and information architecture approach, including handling of complex content relationships
- Design process and how brand and storytelling are translated into digital experiences
- Development approach, including CMS recommendation and rationale
- Approach to collaboration, feedback and iteration

Technical Approach & Integrations

Provide an overview of:

- Recommended CMS and rationale (must support an open-source framework)
- Recommended CRM and/or experience integrating with CRM platforms (e.g., Simpleview or similar)
- Approach to third-party integrations (e.g., booking engines, UGC, maps, AI tools)
- Approach to site performance, scalability and security

SEO, Content Migration & Optimization

Outline your approach to:

- Preserving and improving organic search performance during migration
- Content migration strategy, including QA and redirects
- On-site search and content discoverability
- Ongoing optimization and performance improvements

Project Timeline

Provide a detailed timeline that includes:

- Key phases (discovery, UX, design, development, migration, launch)
- Major milestones with defined deliverables and review points at each phase
- Estimated total project duration

Budget & Fee Structure

Provide a detailed, phase-based budget that includes:

- Discovery and strategy
- UX and design
- Development and integrations
- Content migration
- Testing and launch
- Ongoing hosting, maintenance and support post launch

Please also include:

- Fee structure (fixed vs. hourly components)
- Payment schedule
- Hourly rates for out-of-scope work

Client References and Destination Familiarity

Provide at least three client references, preferably within the tourism or destination marketing industry. Please also note your level of familiarity with the Santa Barbara South Coast and surrounding regions.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals must be submitted in digital format (PDF recommended) and **received no later than May 11, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.**

Please submit proposals via email or file-sharing link to: Emily@SantaBarbaraCA.com

Submission guidelines:

- Proposals should follow the structure outlined in the Proposal Requirements section
- File size should be manageable for email or shared via a downloadable link (e.g., Dropbox, WeTransfer)
- Late submissions may not be considered

All questions related to this RFP must be submitted in writing to the contact above by April 15, 2026 at 12 p.m. Responses to submitted questions may be shared with all participating agencies.

Selection Process

Visit Santa Barbara will review all submitted proposals and will invite a shortlist of agencies to participate in finalist presentations.

The selection process may include:

- Initial proposal evaluation
- Follow-up questions or clarification requests
- Finalist presentations and interviews

Visit Santa Barbara reserves the right to request additional information at any stage of the process.

Reserved Rights

Visit Santa Barbara reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals
- Cancel or modify this RFP at any time
- Request additional information or clarification from any proposer
- Negotiate with one or more proposers
- Not select any agency as a result of this process

All proposals submitted become the property of Visit Santa Barbara and will not be returned.

Confidentiality & Communications

- All communication regarding this RFP must be directed to the designated contact listed above
- Proposers should not contact Visit Santa Barbara board members or staff outside of this process. Failure to comply may result in disqualification
- Information provided by Visit Santa Barbara should be treated as confidential and not shared externally

Conflict of Interest

Proposers must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including work with competing destinations or tourism-related entities, and describe how such conflicts would be managed.



PROPOSAL CRITERIA EVALUATION

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria. Visit Santa Barbara may request clarification or additional information during the review process.

Strategic Approach & Understanding of Project (15%)

- Demonstrated understanding of Visit Santa Barbara's goals, audiences and challenges
- Strength of proposed approach to discovery, UX and overall digital experience
- Ability to think beyond execution and provide strategic guidance

UX, Design & Content Experience (15%)

- Approach to user experience, information architecture, and content relationships
- Ability to translate brand storytelling into an engaging, high-performing digital experience
- Strength of design thinking (not just visual aesthetics)

Technical Approach & Platform Capabilities (15%)

- Strength and scalability of proposed CMS and technical architecture
- Experience with complex integrations (CRM, listings, events, booking engines, etc.)
- Approach to site performance, security, and future-readiness (AI, personalization, etc.)

Performance Measurement & Optimization (10%)

- Approach to analytics, KPI tracking and reporting frameworks
- Recommended KPIs aligned to business goals (e.g., engagement, partner referrals, conversions)
- Approach to ongoing optimization and how insights translate into improvements
- Consideration of privacy-conscious measurement

SEO, Migration & Optimization Strategy (10%)

- Approach to preserving and improving organic search performance
- Strength of content migration and redirect strategy
- Understanding of ongoing optimization and performance measurement

Relevant Experience & Destination Familiarity (15%)

- Demonstrated experience with destination marketing organizations, travel brands or similarly complex, content-driven websites of comparable scale
- Strength and relevance of past work, including case studies that show measurable outcomes and impact
- Understanding of Santa Barbara as a destination, including audience, positioning and competitive context

- Thoughtfulness of ideas and perspectives brought forward in the proposal

Project Management & Team (10%)

- Clarity and strength of project management approach
- Experience and qualifications of assigned team members
- Ability to collaborate effectively and manage timelines
- Approach to ongoing support and partnership

Budget & Value (10%)

- Clarity and transparency of pricing
- Alignment of budget with proposed scope and approach
- Overall value relative to investment



Thank you for your interest in partnering with Visit Santa Barbara. We appreciate the time and thoughtfulness that goes into each proposal and look forward to reviewing your vision on bringing this next chapter of SantaBarbaraCA.com to life.

VISIT
SANTA BARBARA

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