

Virginia Tourism Corporation

Non-Competitive Award Justification

Revision May 2025

NOTE: This form shall be used for all purchases of goods and non-professional services \$15,001 or more that are not being competed or do not fit under one of the other procurement methods outlined in the Policies and Procedures Manual. It is also required for Non-Competitive Award Marketing Exception Awards for goods and non-professional services when the dollar amount is \$200,000 or more, and professional services or non-transportational related construction is \$80,000 or more.

To: Procurement Office

Date Request Submitted: **October 22, 2025**

Name of Person Submitting Request: **Heidi Johannesen**

OVERVIEW

VTC's Policies and Procedures Manual recognizes several procurement methods, one of which is a Non-Competitive Award. (See Section 4.8 of VTC's Purchasing Policies and Procedures Manual.) A purchase of goods or services may be considered for a Non-Competitive Award if there is one source more feasible to meet VTC's immediate needs, even if there are multiple sources available. Authorization of a Non-Competitive Award indicates that in management's judgment, the chosen vendor best meets VTC's needs to supply the required good or service and in a timely manner.

A non-competitive award procurement is based on the need to procure a unique good or service and that unique good or service is not widely available, or has limited availability, or is essential to meet VTC's requirements. As a result, a non-competitive award procurement represents a unique exception to the requirements for competition. Completion of this form is intended to document, affirm, and justify the need for this product or service to be provided by a specific vendor in order to meet VTC's essential requirements.

Please note:

- Non-competitive awards are subject to VTC policy, audit, FOIA, and public review.
- Vendors are **not** permitted to complete this form on behalf of VTC.
- Price and delivery are **not** factors determining if a product/service is a non-competitive award.
- The final determination of non-competitive award justification validity will be made by the VP of Operations and Finance.
- Submission of this form constitutes acknowledgement the requester, or any VTC staff, has no personal, financial, or fiduciary relationship with the recommended vendor.

Pursuant to Section 4.8 of the VTC Purchasing Policies and Procedures Manual, this is a request to award the goods and services listed below to the vendor listed below without competition as justified below.

DOCUMENTATION

Proposed Vendor to Receive Award: **SLC Representation**

Vendor Point of Contact (name and email): **Kate Bifield-Haraldsson,**
kate@slcrepresentation.com

Detailed Description of Product/Services: **SLC Representation will maintain a fully staffed London office with personnel capable of managing the VTC account and free from competing U.S. destination contracts. By June 30, the firm must complete two staff familiarization trips to ensure deep product expertise. The scope of work includes trade and sales marketing, serving as Virginia's official in-country representative to manage tour operator and agent relationships, conduct trade engagements, negotiate and deliver tour operator campaigns, oversee Visit USA membership and IPW scheduling, organize an annual sales mission, and host a group familiarization trip. Public relations responsibilities include managing all UK and Irish media relations, distributing press releases annually, securing top-tier media for a familiarization trip, conducting proactive media engagements, delivering an annual media mission, and participating in key Visit USA media events.**

Expected/Approximate date of Award. If services, duration/period of performance: **November 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026 with four one- year options to renew.**

Anticipated Value of Award. Note: If it is for a one-year period with optional one-year renewal periods, provide details on the anticipated initial dollar amount along with costs for renewals and how many. The initial period is not to exceed one year with no more than 4 one-year renewal options, unless otherwise approved by the VP of Operations and Finance. Automatic renewals are not allowed:

The contract is for an 8-month term, with four one-year options to renew. The base amount is \$100,000 per year, for an estimated total of \$550,000 over five years, excluding expenses. Additional costs may include advertising, media monitoring, travel, campaign support, conferences, familiarization tours, events, meetings, and media engagements.

1. Please provide a brief background summary for why you need the product/services. Why is the requested product/services the only one that can satisfy your requirements? Provide specific details on any unique features of the product/services that are not available in any other product/services and are essential to your required minimum performance.

Virginia Tourism Corporation requires in-market representation in the United Kingdom and Ireland to expand brand awareness, drive visitor demand, and strengthen engagement with the travel trade and media. These markets are highly competitive, with many U.S. destinations already investing in local offices to secure visibility and partnerships. Without comparable representation, Virginia risks being overshadowed by competitors who have daily, face-to-face access to operators, agents, airlines, and journalists. A dedicated representative ensures Virginia maintains a consistent presence and remains top-of-mind when itineraries, promotions, and media coverage are determined.

What makes this service essential is the unique combination of local expertise, established industry relationships, and the ability to act immediately on opportunities that arise. An in-country representative delivers on-the-ground market intelligence, provides direct access to trusted trade and media contacts, and ensures Virginia is represented at key events, training sessions, and meetings that cannot be managed from the U.S. This approach is also more cost-effective than relying on repeated transatlantic travel, offering continuous coverage and credibility that only a local presence can achieve.

2. Why is this vendor the most feasible available source from which to obtain this product/service? Provide specific details on the expertise, experience and/or capabilities that support why the requested vendor is the most feasible, unique, and best choice without seeking competition to provide the required product/service that best meets VTC's needs. Note that if this product/service is available through multiple distributors, then provide specific details on why this product/service should not be competed.

SLC Representation is the most feasible partner for VTC because it offers exclusive tourism specialization, a London-based presence, and a boutique scale that ensures Virginia will receive both priority attention and senior-level expertise. Unlike MMGY Hills Balfour or Black Diamond, which represent multiple U.S. destinations and divide resources across a wide client base, SLC provides Virginia with conflict-free positioning in the UK and Irish markets. Other agencies such as Four Communications and Fox Communications operate primarily in corporate or luxury PR and lack the trade activation strength essential to driving measurable visitation. Rocket Marketing, while creative, is too small to sustain the scale of year-round engagement that Virginia requires.

What sets SLC apart is the combination of credibility, independence, and immediate readiness to deliver. With longstanding relationships across UK tour operators, OTAs, and media, the firm has the proven ability to convert awareness into bookings while advancing Virginia's competitive standing against other East Coast destinations. Their focus, resources, and flexibility make a competitive process unnecessary, as no other agency can provide the same level of alignment with VTC's strategic objectives.

3. Alternative vendors and products/services should be researched to substantiate why this is the most feasible source. What are the names of the vendors and products/services that were researched? What were the specific performance requirements that could not be met to make conducting a formal solicitation unnecessary or not in the best interest of VTC.

Virginia Tourism Corporation reviewed several alternative agencies, including Black Diamond, MMGY Hills Balfour, Four Communications, Fox Communications, and Rocket Marketing. While each has strengths, none could deliver the full alignment required for Virginia's objectives. Some already represent U.S. destinations, creating conflicts of interest, while others operate as broad communications firms with limited focus on tourism or lack the scale for sustained trade engagement. A formal solicitation process would risk awarding the contract to a firm unable to provide undivided attention, specialized expertise, or immediate activation in market. Virginia's performance requirements include senior level access, measurable trade activation, and readiness to represent Virginia from day one. Only SLC meets all of these requirements, while alternatives either dilute focus, present conflicts, or lack the operational capacity to execute effectively.

4. If no other vendors were considered, please denote **at least** one of the following:

- ☐ Exclusive distribution
- ☐ Integral part or accessory compatible with existing equipment
- ☐ Maintenance service for existing equipment
- ☐ Renewal License to existing software/services
- ☐ Upgrade or maintenance for existing software
- ☐ Used in research and is required to provide continuity of results
- ☐ Copyrighted or patented and only available from the recommended source
- ☐ Considerable re-orientation and training would be required
- ☐ Vendor specifically named in a grant and/or grant proposal
- ☐ Other [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

5. Will this purchase obligate the VTC to this vendor for future purchases (e.g., annual support/maintenance and/or future upgrade requirements)? If yes, provide details regarding the duration of any potential commitments as well as the estimated costs for such commitments.

No

6. Based on my professional experience and knowledge of the marketplace, submission of this document constitutes acknowledgment that the price offered is considered to be fair and reasonable based on **at least** one of the following:

- ☒ Prices charged for similar items
- ☐ Prices paid by other customers
- ☐ A Public price list or public catalog
- ☐ Historical/past pricing
- ☐ Other/stakeholder justification: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

7. In certain circumstances negotiations may have already taken place. Has the department already negotiated with the vendor or secured discounts? If so, please provide additional details.

No

8. Additional Information not already provided above.

N/A

If purchase request above is for goods or non-professional services under \$200,000 or professional services or non-transportational related construction under \$80,000, skip to approval section below.

If purchase request above is for goods or non-professional services of \$200,000 or more or for professional services or non-transportation-related construction of \$80,000 or more, and not already addressed elsewhere in the policies and procedures, then in addition to completing the requested information above, please provide the information requested below in items 9., 10., and 11, along with the approval section.

Pursuant to Section 4.15 of the VTC Purchasing Policies and Procedures Manual, for purchases of goods or nonprofessional services of \$200,000 or more or for professional services or non-transportation-related construction of \$80,000 or more, not already addressed elsewhere in these policies and procedures, VTC shall not be required to seek competition or competitive negotiations if VTC determines in writing that such purchase contributes to the public purpose and mission of the VTC as described in §2.2-2315. VTC shall state in such writing (a) an explanation of such determination, (b) that which is being purchased, (c) the contractor selected for such purchase, (d) the date of the award of such contract and (e) the relationship of such purchase to the public purpose and mission of the Authority. The determination and justification shall be approved by the VP of Operations and Finance prior to any such purchase taking place. Such notice shall be posted for a period of one year on VTC's website (vatc.org) on the day the VTC awards or announces its decision to award such contract, whichever occurs first.

9. Please provide an explanation of the determination that such purchase contributes to the public purpose and mission of the VTC as described in §2.2-2315.

The determination to select SLC Representation reflects VTC's obligation to expand inbound travel and generate measurable economic benefit for Virginia.

Representation in the UK and Ireland is essential to achieving these goals because these markets consistently deliver high spending visitors who contribute directly to revenue growth and job creation. Engaging a firm with proven expertise in destination marketing ensures Virginia's visibility in a competitive international environment, and the measurable benefits of increased tourism contribute to the state's economy.

10. Please provide the relationship of such purchase to the public purpose and mission of the VTC.

This purchase is directly tied to VTC's broader mission of strengthening Virginia's global position as a premier travel destination. By contracting with SLC Representation, Virginia secures an in-market representative capable of building long term relationships with the travel trade, elevating media coverage, and expanding consumer awareness in the UK and Ireland. These efforts translate into increased visitation that supports small businesses and employment growth across Virginia. The representation firm actively advances VTC's mission by ensuring that tourism continues to drive economic growth statewide.

11. Additional Information not already provided above.

N/A

Department Approval:

I am the authorized approver of my department and on behalf of my department, I certify that the information submitted is accurate and complete. I understand that this document is subject to VTC policy, audit, foia, and public review.

Department: **Global**

Name: **Heidi Johannesen**

Signature: Heidi Johannesen

Date: **October 22, 2025**

Appropriate VP Approval: Catherine Marshburn

Final Approval of VP of Operations and Finance is required below in order to proceed.

VP of Operations and Finance

☐ Approved: _____

☐ Not Approved: _____
Comments: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)