



WELCOMING, FUTURE-ORIENTED, PROUD PAST, YOUTHFUL SPIRIT, EDUCATED
UNEXPECTED SURPRISE

Stillwater is a college town with spirit, culture, energy, youthfulness, diversity, and unity; we are anything but still; we are alive and vibrant.

The City of Stillwater, Oklahoma is undertaking a selection process to find an organization to move Stillwater's travel and tourism industry forward with a fresh perspective that provides an analysis of our community and a plan to incorporate up-to-date and innovative industry standards and practices. The City is seeking to engage an energetic firm or organization to provide and execute a modern, technology-based marketing/public relations plan that will grow visitors. This plan and the professional services provided, should target visitors, have real-time assessment of how our messaging influences decisions to visit, be capable of showing a return on investment and performance measurements, and inspire visitors to extend their visit and return again in the future.

Stillwater's civic leaders are committed to developing community partnerships that improve artistic, historic, wellness, educational, cultural and recreational opportunities that create a sense of pride among citizens and draw visitors to Stillwater.

Stillwater Overview

Located in north-central Oklahoma, Stillwater is the area's shopping, dining and recreational hub.

Stillwater is a vibrant city of approximate 50,000 residents, conveniently located just 20 miles east of I-35, one hour from Oklahoma City and Tulsa and one and a half hours from Wichita, Kansas.

Numerous community events and activities are hosted year round, including festivals, concerts, marathons, cultural exhibits, musical performances, and athletic events. Attractions abound in Stillwater and in the North-Central Oklahoma region. Being home to Oklahoma State University (OSU) affords athletic and cultural events that are primary attractions for a large percentage of Stillwater's visitors as well as residents. On OSU game days, the city bleeds **orange**. Everyone is proud of OSU and the color **orange** is incorporated into store signage, advertisements, and clothing. Stillwater's population doubles for every OSU home football game with homecoming being its biggest weekend. In addition to hosting Division I sporting events, 2019 brings the opening of OSU's McKnight Center for the Performing Arts, a new world-class facility suitable for traveling Broadway shows.

Stillwater is an education community as evidenced by OSU, Northern Oklahoma College–Stillwater, Meridian Technology Center, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology, and a high-quality K-12 public school system. Stillwater's public school system is recognized as one of the most desirable in the state. We excel at educating our youth and preparing them as our future. Stillwater's graduation rate of 89% exceeds the state's of 84.5%; there are 35 national board certified employees; 42% of employees hold master's degrees and 5% hold doctoral degrees.

Stillwater is a growing community as demonstrated in its recent economic development growth: the number of hotels has almost doubled bringing the number of rooms to around 1,400; Stillwater Regional Airport (SWO) began commercial air service to and from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. In less than two years, more than 100,000 passengers received air service to and from Stillwater.

In 2018, the City Council approved the Stillwater (Re) Investment Plan (A Stillwater Downtown / Campus Link Project Plan) to achieve the City's development objectives, improve the quality of life for its citizens, stimulate private investment, and enhance the tax base. At the heart of this project is the nourishment of the downtown as a special and unique place within Stillwater and to seamlessly link the campus and downtown.

Recently, a city-owned block in the heart of Downtown Stillwater gathered momentum as a public gathering space, inspiring pride in Stillwater to visitors and residents alike. A grassroots cultural district looks to attract visitors by capitalizing on the Prairie Arts Center, Modella Art Gallery, OSU Museum of Art, Stillwater Public Library, Sheerar History Museum, and the Stillwater Community Center; each located in the heart of the Downtown/Campus Link Project Plan.

A few Quick Facts on Stillwater, Oklahoma:

- 2017 population estimate of 49,829
- Gender makeup is equally divided between male and female
- 77% of residents are high school graduates or higher
- Labor force of 25,000 people
- 3,336 businesses and firms
- World-renowned industries and technologies: Stillwater Design/Kicker, Interworks, Frontier Electronic Systems, ASCO Aerospace USA, National Standard, Armstrong, SST Software
- Grassroots upstarts: Aspen Coffee Company, Billy Goat Ice Cream, Iron Monk Brewery, Holy Cow Couture, OnCue, Ocean Dental
- Home to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame
- Stillwater Medical Center serves all of north central Oklahoma with more than 1,200 employees and 100+ physicians representing more than 30 specialties
- Stillwater Medical Center, through expansion of their medical campus, offers services from cancer treatment through wound care, fitness through nutrition.
- Consumer spending averages \$2,422 per household for retail, service and entertainment
- Young Professionals of Stillwater exists to organize cultural and educational options locally
- Stillwater provides the services and opportunities for all ages and walks of life: raise a family, earn a degree, obtain employment, be involved in the community, retire in place.

Did you know?

Stillwater is home to Eskimo Joe's restaurant and bar whose legendary Joe and Buffy smiles are known world-wide from the iconic Eskimo Joe's t-shirts. On Campus Corner you will find the Original Hideaway Pizza; America's First Sonic Drive-In is on Main Street. Located on The Strip on Washington Street is Willie's Saloon, known for launching the career of Garth Brooks. Stillwater hosts an annual Red Dirt Music festival, Red Dirt Film Festival, Land Run 100, and Oklahoma Special Olympics' Summer Games.

Iron Monk Brewing Company, the city's first craft brewery, opened in 2014.

Stillwater has an extensive amount of parkland with more than 20 parks, playgrounds, ball fields, splash pads and more. We are home to Lake McMurtry, Lake Carl Blackwell, and Boomer Lake; each with great walking and biking trails. The Botanic Garden at Oklahoma State University covers more than 100 acres

with thousands of species of flowers, shrubs, grasses and trees. It features specialized gardens like butterfly and organic gardens, turf and nursery research centers, and a Centennial Grove. It also has a 4.5 acre studio garden where OETA's show *Oklahoma Gardening* is filmed.

Summary

For more than 20 years, Stillwater has been served by a traditional brick-and-mortar Convention and Visitor's Bureau / Destination Marketing Organization. The City is seeking new answers to the questions: Where do we go from here? How do we differentiate Stillwater from other communities? How do we measure return on investment?

Stillwater invites interested organizations to submit their qualifications for evaluation and potential selection as our partner and consultant in this effort.

Responding to this RFQ

We understand the importance of PROMOTING activities, events and opportunities to extend the stay of visitors, INCREASE the infusion of visitors, MARKET unique opportunities for visitor spending, and DEMONSTRATE an appropriate Return on Investment.

We are looking for forward-thinking organizations that understand the modern tourism industry, the changes it faces with increasing use of internet and social media, and methods to successfully leverage those changes.

Responses must be submitted as an electronic file. Responses are due by **December 14, 2018, 5:00pm CST**.

Responses must be delivered to:

Patti Osmus, Assistant to the City Manager
City Manager's Office
City of Stillwater
PO Box 1449, 723 S Lewis St
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74076
(405) 742-8209
posmus@stillwater.org

Questions should be directed to Patti Osmus via email. The questions and answers will be posted on our website.

Stillwater will evaluate responses based on your insights and demonstrated expertise in addressing the questions in this section. Responders are encouraged to address any issue and provide information that you feel is important based on your expertise. Many of the questions are intentionally open-ended to allow you to demonstrate your creativity and innovative ideas. A high quality and thorough response is worth up to the point value listed for each section.

Where would you start? (20 points)

Stillwater is interested in organizations that make the effort to get to know the community they serve. Based on the community overview and, more importantly, your own research in preparing a response to this RFQ, tell us what you think are our best assets, where would you start building and selling our community brand to visitors? What is our “**IDENTITY**” to existing and perspective visitors?

Who are you? (20 points)

Let us get to know you.

- Why does this RFQ **APPEAL** to your firm?
- **SHARE** who you are.
- **DISCUSS** the type of work you typically perform for your clients?
- What is your area of **SPECIALTY** and how is it uniquely suited to Stillwater?
- **DESCRIBE** your greatest success story in your efforts to help your clients?
- **INTRODUCE** us to your key staff and their qualifications?
- What are the current **TRENDS** in the tourism industry and how do they guide your work?

What do you do? (20 points)

For your clients, how do you:

- **MEASURE** and **REPORT** return on investment to your clients?
- **EVALUATE** a community to determine current strengths, weaknesses, and realistic tourism goals?
- **LEVERAGE** existing community amenities and assets?
- **DIFFERENTIATE** a community as a place people should go over some other destination?
- **HELP** a community determine, develop, disseminate, and promote its identity?
- **MANAGE** a destination to achieve goals and enhance and promote the brand?
- **LEVERAGE** user-generated marketing (posts, reviews, blogs, etc.) and social media?

What have you done? (40 points)

Stillwater wants to know your relationships:

- **PROVIDE** references and contact information from at least three clients.
- **LIST** all clients for the past three years.

- **IDENTIFY** at least two case studies detailing your successful efforts to increase visitors to other communities and/or enhance the visitor experience. At least one of those communities should be a university town similar to Stillwater.
- Case studies **INFORMATION** should answer the following questions, at a minimum.
 - Why select this particular community as an example for us?
 - What services did you provide?
 - What was successful and how was it successful?
 - What would you do different and why?
 - How did you measure and report return on investment?

Evaluation Process

In order to fully evaluate the responses to this RFQ from a community-wide perspective, a committee will be established. The makeup of the committee may include members of Stillwater City Council, City staff, community leaders, and representatives of OSU.

In-person interviews will be held with the selected responders.

The top responder selected will enter into contract negotiations including detailed scope of services and fee structure.

We anticipate the selection to occur by March 31, 2019. Contract for services will begin no later than July 1, 2019.

RESPONSES DUE DECEMBER 14, 2018, 5:00PM CST