

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**

**TRAVEL AGENCY SERVICES FOR GLOBALCONNECT (GC) DIVISION**

**Proposal Title:** GC International & Domestic Travel Services **RFP No.** 001-18

**Date RFP is issued:** 01/24/2018 **Due Submission Date:** 02/14/2018

**Type of Contract:** This is a per-transaction fixed fee contract. GC Division (GC) at Meridian International Center (Meridian) shall pay the contractor a transaction fee based on a fixed rate per transaction (see transaction fee procedures for details).

**Contract Term:** One-year period from the date to start services with two-year options to renew.

**Estimated Annual Air Ticket Sales Value: USD 2,000,000**

**Estimated Annual no. of Official Travelers: 1,800**

In accordance with the requirements of this proposal, the undersigned offers and agrees, if their proposal is accepted to furnish any and all services for which the prices are submitted in accordance with the attached conditions as specified by the proposal.

The bidder assumes sole responsibility for the complete effort required in this RFP. No special consideration shall be given after bids are open due to bidder’s failure to be knowledgeable of all the requirements under this RFP. By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the bidder confirms that it has satisfied itself of all the requirement of this RFP.

**No RFP will be accepted if submitted after the close of business by 6 p.m. on the due date, Wednesday, 02/14/2018.**

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bidder Name & Address:

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Signature and Title of Authorized Individual:

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**Introduction:**

Meridian International Center (Meridian) works with US. Government Agencies, Foreign Governments and private-sector clients worldwide to create lasting international partnerships through leadership and cultural exchanges. Through these partnerships, Meridian has conducted exchange programs for more than 65,000 foreign professionals over the last 50 years and organized cultural exhibitions to 357 host venues in 44 U.S. states and 55 countries.

Meridian connects U.S. and foreign governments with the private sector to respond to global challenges and sustain impact through working with the U.S. government to develop partnerships with emerging powers like China and India and traditional allies like the EU.

Meridian also administers annually 40% of all the International Visitor Leadership Program projects which are sponsored and funded by the bureau of educational and cultural affairs for about 4,000 distinguished visitors to the U.S. every year.

**Purpose of the Proposal:**

The purpose of this RFP is to enter into a contract for the services of non-exclusive travel agency to manage and coordinate the official travel needs for the employees and Federal/Private exchange program participants of the GlobalConnect Division (GC) at Meridian. GC is soliciting proposals from travel agencies who can demonstrate knowledge of the United States Federal Travel Regulations including Fly America Act and other private sector unique regulations; be able to charge costs to multiple internal department cost centers and credit cards; and generate invoices & reports outlining costs related to each cost center and card. Additionally, the bidder must demonstrate, via references, that such travel services have been provided to similar organizations with numerous travelers across multiple countries. Furthermore, GC is seeking a travel agency that will earnestly put forth their best effort in resolving any travel-related problems or emergencies that may arise while traveling, and an agency that can demonstrate the achievement of cost savings for clients in comparable size and complexity.

**Scope of Work:**

The GlobalConnect division (GC) is interested in securing the highest quality of travel services, maximizing service convenience for its employees and various programs participants, while minimizing travel cost and developing a database that will give GC an accurate reference of its travel expenditure patterns. GC reserves the right to use other travel services, when necessary.

The Contractor shall provide corporate travel services for official domestic and international travel of GC employees and various program participants. Domestic and international travel includes travel within the US and travel outside US including all other countries.

The corporate travel services that the Contractor shall provide include the following:

1. Travel reservations, issuance and delivery of E-tickets or paper tickets for air, rail or land transportation with advance seat assignments;
* Arranging charter flight services on as needed basis as per the specification agreed by GC;
* Securing reservations for lodging accommodations either within GSA set per diem for domestic and international locations or as directed by GC;
* Coordinating commercial automobile/bus rental services, as needed;
* Advice on necessary health requirements, including types of inoculations and vaccinations whether required or suggested for foreign travel;
* Detailed travelers' itineraries;
* Management information and billing reports derived from the booking database;
* Reconciliation of travel charges incurred against GC Division’s multiple credit cards;
* Information pamphlets for GC travelers who use the contract;
* Collection & reporting of total expenditures by airline/hotel chain;
* Ability to provide services for approximately 1800 travelers per year.

**Contractor’s other Service Requirements:**

In addition to providing the services listed under the scope of work, the Contractor shall perform the following:

**A.** When requested, provide on an open-market basis, complete personal travel services and support for GC employees requesting personal (unofficial) travel arrangements. However, no individual is required to use the services under this contract for personal travel.

**B.** Comply with mandatory U.S. Government Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) including but not limited to the Fly America Act for all air travel conducted against federal award funds. The Fly America Act generally precludes use of non-US flag carriers, except as provided in the FTR and the Foreign Affairs Manual, Volume 14 Section 500.

Also, the contractor will follow the instructions provided by the program officer/associate for the conduct of other non-federal and private travel.

**C.** Except for the constraints listed in the FTR including the Fly America Act, the Contractor shall book the lowest available or the requested class of service fare that satisfies the agency’s mission requirements. If reservations made by the Contractor are not at the lowest available rate or at the requested class of service rate allowed by policy, the Contractor shall refund the agency the difference. Full coach fares may be used if no reduced fares are available.

**D.** Promotional or other types of discount fares can be used under this contract provided that the contractor shall not use any restricted fare which provides for a monetary penalty for itinerary changes or flight cancellations without consulting the program officer/assistant in charge of the relevant official travel arrangements first.

**E.** When GC official travelers include personal legs of travel in their official itineraries, the contractor should be able to separate the official cost from the personal cost on a cost construct basis and coordinate payment of the personal difference with the traveler directly.

**F.** The Contractor shall provide GC with the reservation and ticketing services which industry practice normally accords corporate or private travelers, to include new and improved reservation and ticketing technologies.

**G.** The Contractor shall provide GC with a 24-hour phone number accessible by travelers to perform emergency itinerary changes and emergency services outside regular business hours. The Contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that any subcontractor providing such emergency service complies with all conditions of the contract.

**H.** The Contractor may only issue business or premium class tickets for which GC will have to pay an additional amount only with advance approved official travel authorization providing the authority for that travel. This does not apply to situations in which frequent flyer benefits will be used to obtain the premium class tickets.

 **I.** The Contractor shall provide delivery of tickets, itineraries, and boarding passes (if applicable), and other travel documents, as determined necessary. Tickets shall routinely be provided no earlier than five days in advance of travel unless GC requests otherwise. The Contractor shall deliver tickets in the form of either E-tickets or Paper tickets (if no E-tickets are available) only to employees designated by GC.

**J.** The Contractor shall provide off-site service, **Monday through Friday, compatible with GC standard workday schedule from 9:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.** excluding the official holidays observed by Meridian (a list of the holidays will be provided separately to the bid winner). The Contractor should provide GC with exact physical address and other branches of operation in case in-person service is requested by GC official travelers.

**K.** In the event of emergencies (e.g., Presidential-declared disasters, airline strikes, fires, natural disasters, terrorist attacks including evacuations, etc.), the Contractor shall maintain operations necessary to support GC under the contract. This includes maintaining services 24 hours a day as required by GC responding to the emergency situation and providing necessary delivery of tickets.

**L.** The Contractor is required to identify qualified personnel for project management and for handling reservation requests. They should be fluent in English (writing and reading) and experienced in providing international travel and management services for US. Government and/or other well recognized entities and demonstrate knowledge of the Federal Travel Regulations and any other private company travel operating procedures.

Contractor's Project Manager – The Contractor shall assign a Project Manager who shall be responsible for the administration, supervision, and coordination of GC travel operations. The Project Manager shall have experience in the management of travel services and shall have adequate authority to make decisions for the timely resolution of problems. The Project Manager shall coordinate closely with the designated person in GC Division at Meridian.

Travel Counselors/Reservationists - The Contractor shall assign full-time travel counselors/ reservationists. The Travel Counselors/Reservationists shall have been trained in operating the proposed automated reservation and ticketing equipment. The Contractor shall provide qualified substitute personnel for absent employees, or when service levels are negatively impacted, as determined by GC.

**Reporting and monitoring:**

The Contractor is required to provide management cost reports or access to online reporting to include spend analysis for GC various cost centers (projects) incurred against individual or multiple credit cards, activity management, reconciliation analysis, etc. The reports should have the capability of detailing specific expenditures related to ea. project/credit card, i.e. Airfare, car rental, hotel and designated travel locations, as well as individual travel expenditure.

The Contractor is also required to provide quarterly summary reports.

In addition to the above, the Contractor is required to maintain an internal monitoring process for identifying and correcting deficiencies in the quality of service furnished to GC. This may include but is not limited to generating quality service survey forms that address travel services to be furnished under this contract.

**Payment Method:**

All travel services including transaction fees (listed below) are paid upfront via GC dedicated credit card(s). However, bi-weekly or monthly documentation detailing tickets issued, or other travel reservations made, are required to be provided to GC.

**Transaction Fee Procedures:**

A. These procedures apply only to official GC travel, not personal travel. Any transaction fee charged to an individual on personal travel shall be between the traveler and the Contractor.

B. As directed by GC, when the Contractor is required to arrange for official air transportation of one or more individuals, the Contractor may charge only one transaction fee per itinerary per individual when the ticket is issued. The individual’s itinerary could involve multiple tickets, but only one transaction fee is charged for this itinerary regardless of the no. of ticket(s) issued (the transaction fee is not based on the number of tickets needed to complete the individual’s itinerary). Until such time as GC requests the Contractor to issue and the Contractor actually issues a ticket for transportation, no transaction fee shall be charged for any services associated with that transportation, including but not limited to:

* the original transportation reservations;
* changes to the original transportation reservations;
* lodging reservations;
* car rental reservations; and

C. Upon issuance of the transportation ticket, the Contractor shall debit GC’s credit card assigned for the relevant project the applicable transaction fee for one transaction, that transaction being the ticket issuance.

**If the Contractor is to charge a transaction fee for any other service beside air travel such as the services listed above or any other ones, the transaction fee for each service should be explicitly listed in the proposal submitted to GC.**

D. Once the official ticket is issued, if the traveler requests a personal change in that ticket that requires ticket reissuance, the Contractor shall charge the traveler directly any additional transaction fee associated with the ticket change. However, if the change is requested by GC for official purpose, GC will cover the additional transaction fee. No additional transaction fee shall be charged for any other services.

E. After ticket issuance, if the Contractor must change and/or change and reissue the ticket because the Contractor or GC discovers a Contractor-caused error in the routing, carrier or other problem, there shall be no additional transaction fee charge.

**Cost Liability:**

GC assumes no responsibility and bears no liability for cost incurred by bidders in the preparation and submittal of proposals in response to this RFP.

**Joint Venture:**

If a joint venture is submitting a bid, the agreement between the parties relating to such joint venture is required to be submitted with the joint ventures proposal. Authorized signatures from each party compromising the joint venture must sign the bid proposal.

**Business Registration Notice:**

Any travel agency submitting a proposal is required to be in good business standing and should adhere to all US. Federal and State Regulations and to all other applicable registrations laws. Proof of a valid business registration is required prior to conducting business with GC. Failure to submit such valid registration with a bid will render the bid materially non-responsive.

**License and Permits:**

The contractor shall obtain and maintain in full compliance and effect all required licenses, permits, and authorizations necessary to perform this contract. The Contractor shall supply GC with evidence of all such licenses, permits and authorizations. This evidence shall be submitted subsequent to the contract award.

In addition to the above, the Contractor should be a registered and certified member in the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airline Reporting Corporation (ARC), and must have worldwide recognition and acceptance by major airlines, hotels, car/bus rental companies, restaurants and other travel related industries.

**Ownership of Material:**

All data, technical information, materials gathered, oriented, developed, prepared, used or obtained in the performance of the contract, including but not limited to, all reports, surveys, plans, written procedures which are completed for or are a result of services required under this contract shall and remain the property of GC and shall be delivered to GC upon a 30 day notice.

**Data Confidentiality:**

All financial, statistical, personnel and/or technical data supplied by GC to the contractor is confidential. The contractor is required to use reasonable care to protect the confidentiality of such data. Any use, sale or offering of this data in any form by the contractor, or any individual or entity in the contractors charge or employ, will be considered a violation of this contract and may result in termination for cause. In addition, such conduct may be considered a breach of contract that is liable to litigation.

The contractor shall not use Meridian or Global Connect (GC)’s name, logos, images, or any data or results arising from the contract without first obtaining the prior written consent of Meridian/GC.

**Suspension of Work:**

GC may, for a valid reason, issue a stop order directing the contractor to suspend work under the contract for a specific time. The contract services shall be paid until the effective stop date of the stop order.

**Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions:**

The bidder is required to follow the instructions contained in this RFP and in the bid cover sheet in preparing and submitting its bid proposal. The bidder is advised to read thoroughly and follow all instructions.

Each bidder is given wide latitude in the degree of detail it elects to offer or extent to which plans, designs, systems, procedures are revealed. However, insufficient detail may result in a determination that the bid proposal is materially non-responsive or may lower its technical score.

**Number of Bid Proposals:**

Each bidder is required to submit one (1) complete original bid proposal, utilizing PDF, MS Excel or MS Word format, and to include all the relevant documents, registration and other membership certificates such as but not limited to the IATA and ARC certificates, via email to Ghaith Ghabra, Grants & Contracts Manager, at e-mail: gghabra@meridian.org

**Proposal Form and Content:**

The bidder shall set forth its overall technical approach and plans to meet the requirements of the RFP in a narrative format. The narrative should convince GC that the bidder understands the objectives that the contract intends to meet and the nature of the required work level necessary to successfully complete the contract while adhering to Federal Travel Regulations and GC’s travel policy including other private agency regulations.

The proposal should follow the format indicated alphabetically below. The bidder should limit their response to 20 pages:

**A**>The Bidder’s ability and plan to handle approximately 1,000 international airline reservations a year.

**B>**The Bidder’s ability to report on frequency & US. Dollar spent sorted out by airline and/or hotel chain.

**C**>Company capabilities and financial statements for the prior three years of operation

**D**>Number of employees/staff handling such travel service needs

**E>**References from clients with similar needs including names and titles for contact purposes

**F**>The Bidder’s ability to reconcile centrally billed airfare against multiple credit cards used for various cost centers, and the ability to separate personal from business travel arrangements

**G**>Description of management information system AND the airline reservation system(s)

**H**>Twenty-four hour emergency service capacity.

**I**>Identification by name and title of the key individuals, especially an account representative, who would direct and provide the services including a resume of each individual that describes his or her experience and responsibilities

**J**>The Bidder’s approximate waiting time to respond to a call and or return a voicemail message

**K**>A description of the bidder’s plans for e-ticket confirmation or door-to-door delivery if necessary

**L**>Sample copy reports the bidder is capable of producing to GC

**M**>A description on how the bidder will ensure the utmost customer satisfaction

**N**>A list of the Bidder’s proposed service enhancements unique to the Bidder including any franchise agreements, discounts or rebates. GC is interested in any arrangements that can be made to eliminate or minimize penalties when legitimate reasons exist for ticket cancellations, or to waive the “Saturday stay over” often required on fares

**O**>The bidder’s philosophy and approach to securing air travel and other travel services at the lowest most logical available fare or rates

**P**>The Bidder’s approach to quality control

**Q**>The bidder’s approach to identifying projected savings for GC and the methodology and format that would be utilized to present this information to GC. In addition, GC is interested in the type of recommendations the bidder would provide regarding the ways to achieve future savings

**R**>The Bidder’s normal business days and hours, and description of how international travelers may obtain assistance after the normal work hours

**S**>The Bidder is required to include the location of the bidder’s office that will be responsible for managing the contract. The Bidder should include the telephone number and name of the account representative.

**T**>A description of any special procedures or unique features, i.e., VIP services, development of traveler profiles, meet and greet services, etc.

**U**>Alternate offerings deemed by the Bidder to be of added value to this proposal may be submitted in addition to the preceding technical requirements.

**V>**Please identify whether bidder belongs to any of the following Vendor’s categories:

-Small Business

-Minority Business

-Women-owned business

**W>** Bidder’s certification that their agency is not listed on federal government’s excluded parties list as identified on the System for Awards Management (SAM) databased – [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)

**Implementation Plan:**

It is essential that GC move forward quickly to have the contract in place. Therefore, the Bidder must include as part of its proposal a travel company profile that would be forwarded to GC.

**Price Sheet and Supporting Detail:**

Please submit a price schedule of the per-transaction fixed fee services that will be provided to GC division.

**Resumes:**

Detailed resumes should be submitted for all supervisory and key personnel to be assigned to the contract.

**Cost Effective Proposals:**

All responsive proposals will be evaluated to determine which offers GC Division at Meridian International Center the greatest return on its travel expenditures against the offered services.

**Questions:**

GC will only accept written questions and inquires from all potential bidders receiving this RFP. Written questions should be emailed to Ghaith Ghabra at gghabra@meridian.org

The deadline to submit questions is **by no later than close of business on Wednesday, 02/07/2014**

Thank you for your interest in working with GlobalConnect (GC) Division at Meridian International Center.