

Request for Proposals Heritage Tourism Consultant

May 12, 2010

Deadline for Receipt: May 24, 2010, 5:00PM

Submit to:

Anita Johnson, Project Development
NC's Northeast Commission
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Edenton, NC 27932

or

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For questions about this project contact any of the following:

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NC's Northeast
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Project Overview

The Heritage Tourism Consultant will work with the Heritage Tourism Committee from the three regional partnerships for tourism growth resulting in economic development in eastern North Carolina. The qualified person will interact with local tourism professionals in the 40 included counties to obtain site information, consult on improvement opportunities, to establish a brand and marketing theme for the heritage area, and to take necessary steps to submit a federal application for a National Heritage Area.

Local and state tourism promotion organizations are currently joining with Eastern North Carolina's three regional economic development commissions to harness the strategic guidance, financial resources and technical expertise needed to clarify and elevate the area's heritage tourism branding and marketing in a way that spurs new jobs, businesses and infrastructure from which all Eastern North Carolina residents can benefit. Regional leaders are seeking to gain designation as a National Heritage Area -- paving the way for federal funds to develop, package and promote historical, natural and cultural sites and unleash the full potential of its tourism economy.

Obtaining federal status as a heritage corridor is a multi-year campaign that begins with an inventory of the region's historic, cultural and natural assets – a catalogue of existing and potential product. Eastern North Carolina's vast size and rich diversity necessitate a careful, thorough identification of all the region has to offer as a heritage area. Conducted by a qualified consultant, a credible assessment of the region's product will provide federal legislators and policy planners the evidence needed to secure their support.

In the event that a National Heritage Designation is not achieved, as a result of this project we will have created a rich inventory of heritage tourism assets, a resulting searchable database that will be used to identify newly bundled assets for marketing opportunities, and a strong and sustainable marketing power through the bundling of the tourism assets of three distinct economic development regions.

This individual will use a set of established national cultural heritage criteria to compile a list of visitor ready assets, which will create a strategic plan that ties the entire eastern part of the state into a singular thematic organization of like assets. This database will be a resource unlike anything that has existed in the eastern part of the state before, and will serve as a resource for developing regional heritage trails, for promoting new and exciting special events, and delivering the message of the unique brand of this area.

Subcontracts are permitted for this contract. The Consultant should use subcontractors on to encourage creativity, and to ensure timely completion of objectives.

Purpose of Project

1. Statement of Purpose

This project will bring together the marketing power of forty counties rich in natural, historical, and cultural heritage. By working together, we can leverage additional funds, and promote a theme that encompasses the entire area.

2. Reporting Structure

The Heritage Tourism Consultant will report directly to Anita Johnson, VP of Project Development at NC's Northeast Commission and Project Director for the grant from Golden LEAF that is covering the cost of this project. The Consultant will work with the Presidents of the three regional partnerships (Northeast Commission, Vann Rogerson; Eastern Region, John Chaffee; and Southeast Region, Steve Yost) and their staff to collect data and establish plans for working in each region. Anita Johnson is responsible for contract oversight of the project. Consultant also needs to be knowledgeable of GL reporting guidelines and needs to provide information for biannual reports to GL

1.2 Key Deliverables

1. Tri-Regional Heritage Tourism Website Portal

A tri-regional tourism website portal will continue our unifying tourism theme to provide visitors with information about the heritage area.

As the Consultant collects tourism asset information and images for the Heritage Project, the Consultant will organize the data in such a way that it is easily converted to website information. Even though the creation of a tri-regional website is not encompassed within this RFP, the data must be organized in such a way that it is ready to be used by a web developer for later inclusion in a web portal. The consultant is responsible for consulting with the appropriate web developer to ensure these criteria are met.

2. Marketing Theme and Branding Message

The Heritage Tourism Consultant will develop a marketing theme and brand for the large regional tourism area. The branding will promote the virtues of the region and its appeal to potential visitors, particularly with international travelers, who are known for seeking heritage tourism sites.

This needs to be accomplished by January 2011.

The method of identifying the themes for natural, historical, and cultural heritage should be identified by the Consultant in the Proposal.

A set of universal practices will be established that will allow individual counties to participate and feed into larger set of goals and objectives. This theme will be easily recognizable, will help drive tourism traffic to eastern NC, and be easily adapted for use by each county and tourism site.

Inventory Assets

The Heritage Tourism Consultant is responsible for providing an inventory of tourism and heritage assets throughout the 40-county area. This is to include the natural, historical, and cultural asset inventory. This will involve research, review of existing heritage asset databases, and personal contact with tourism professionals throughout the 40-county area.

National Heritage Area (NHA) Expertise

The Consultant must research NHA requirements to be able to provide a long-term strategy for marketing, asset identification, and for a competent application for the NHA. The Consultant will pass knowledge and requirements on to the interested parties and train the three regional partnerships so that they are able to present ideas for the NHA to various groups. As part of this extensive project, the consultant will prepare the application for the NHA and present to the three regional partnerships the application in a format ready for federal submission.

Selection Process

Selection of the Heritage Tourism Consultant will be made by the Heritage Tourism Committee made up of representatives from the 40-county heritage area. The final notification of selection will be made by June 15 with Consultant work to begin by July 15th.

Qualifications – candidates will be evaluated based on the following:

- A demonstrated understanding of the NHA program,
- A demonstrated ability to organize local stakeholders and understand relationships among all groups,
- A working knowledge of the natural/historical/cultural assets of the 40-county area
- Experience with long-term development project management.
- Clear demonstration of the ability to complete the project on time and within budget.
- Knowledge or ability to understand databases, web portals, website development

Final Product

- A searchable, workable database of inventory assets.
- A report of the status of current heritage assets including the ability level of each to accept visitors.
- A marketing theme/brand that encompasses the 40-county area, and that has passed through an approval process with the three regional partnerships.
- A completed application for the NHA and demonstrate support from at least two US Senatorial or Congressional Representatives.

- A proposed NHA Management structure and determine budgets and schedules.
- Multiple meetings completed with NHA committees and interested county representatives to ensure collaboration and support of a large project.
- A means of generating reports required by Golden LEAF to show economic impact of project.

1.3 Term of Contract

This is an eighteen-month contract. Beginning July 15, 2010 through January 15, 2012. The funds available for this project are limited to \$125,000 received from the Golden LEAF Foundation. With this proposal, the Consultant must demonstrate in writing that the scope of work and deliverables can be completed within this timeframe and within the funds available.

Contractual Terms and Conditions

The successful candidate must maintain and show proof of Liability Insurance Coverage to cover any work related or travel related injuries or accidents.

Requirements for Proposal Preparation

A completed proposal will include a resume or curriculum vitae demonstrating requisite experience and education related to the consulting work. A written description of the items requested in this RFP.

Deadline is **May 24, 2010 at 5:00PM** to be received in the NC's Northeast Commission Office on that date. ajohnson@ncnortheast.com

Revised May 11, 2010