



Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant Request for Proposals (RFP): Byway Coordinator

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway via the City of Appleton is requesting proposals for a consultant to manage and fulfill requirements for a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant from the Minnesota Historical Society.

November 8, 2024

The City of Appleton is requesting proposals to fulfill requirements of a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society.

Questions about this proposal should be directed to:

507.385.6664

awhite@visitmankatomn.com

Proposal deadline: November 25, 2024

Proposals must be emailed to:

Ashlee White, Byway Alliance Chair

Director of Visit Mankato

507.385.6664

awhite@visitmankatomn.com

The Byway Alliance will review proposals and provide recommendations.

In reviewing the proposals, it is the intent of the city to evaluate the proposals based on the best value alternative as described in Minnesota Statutes 16C.28 Subd. 1, Paragraph A Clause 2 and Paragraph C.

The City of Appleton is the fiscal agent on this project.

Lead Partners on this project are: Lower Sioux Indian Community Tribal Preservation Office, Chippewa County Historical Society, Nicollet County Historical Society, Blue Earth County Historical Society, City of Granite Falls and the Renville County Historical Society,

History of the Byway

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway (Byway) is a partnership that was formed as a result of grass-roots efforts by the people and agencies working and living along the Minnesota River. It was designated in 1996 by the Minnesota State Scenic Byway Commission and as a National Scenic Byway in 2002.

The Byway Alliance is made up of more than 45 members representing cities, counties, historical societies, tourism entities, DNR, MnDOT, Tribal communities, and interested citizens along the 287-mile stretch of the Minnesota River. These representatives collaborate to identify and fulfill objectives as outlined in the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan and the Interpretive Plan. Today, the Byway Alliance remains the only organization working to promote the Minnesota River Valley on a regional scale. The Byway plays an important role in linking and promoting historical sites and stories to better tell the history of the Minnesota River Valley through a variety of efforts, including its programs, website, roadside signs, calendar, brochures, and other marketing materials.

Lead Partners

The Byway Alliance identifies Lead Partners to help shepherd specific projects forward. For this project, the Lead Partners are: City of Appleton (fiscal agent), Lower Sioux Indian Community Tribal Historic Preservation Office (LSIC THPO), Chippewa County Historical Society, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Renville County Historical Society, and the Nicollet County Historical Society.

Each Lead Partner will select a representative to participate through meetings, emails, and conference calls. These representatives will meet eight times during this project and review the project and provide feedback.'

Overall Project Purpose and Goals

This project will hire qualified professionals for shared services to develop a new website and enhance local heritage tourism materials for the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway. The project will pursue 3 main activities:

- Create a new website with added functionality and improved accessibility, including partnering with Dakota reviewers and a professional historian to review and refresh existing interpretive content.
- Update printed materials to meet ADA compliance.

- Hire a Byway Coordinator to organize 8 partner meetings, facilitate communication among 7 partners, and manage 4 contracts.

WEBSITE

Through this project, the Byway will develop a new website that features exciting new tools and improved accessibility.

The website was created in 2014, and its scripting language (PHP 7.4) will no longer be supported or updated after 2024. The plug-ins will not function, and the website will pose a security risk. If left as is, the website will need to be taken offline to prevent security issues. This reality is also an opportunity for the Byway to develop a new website that improves access to the area's history.

The new website will achieve 3 main goals:

First, the Byway's website will be secure and easy to maintain. The Byway will hire a website consultant to build a new website utilizing the most recent and secure version of PHP (8.2). The new website will also feature Gutenberg as the WordPress editor so the Byway can easily maintain and update the website.

Second, the website will improve usability by restructuring the website's information architecture. One challenge with the current website is that the sites of importance (Discovery Sites) are difficult to navigate online. Google Analytics from 2023 show an engagement rate of 61%, which is considered average with room for improvement (attached). Information about Discovery Sites is difficult to find and can require 5 clicks to view. Links are not available for any specific Discovery Sites, and users have commented on the difficulty of exploring Discovery Site content. Restructuring the information architecture will help users to better find and navigate the Discovery Sites online.

Third, the new website will add exciting features to help users travel the Minnesota River Valley. A new tool will be added for building travel itineraries. This new functionality will allow users to create a personal account, save favorite Discovery Sites, and plan trips to historic sites, museums, and other locations along the Byway.

DAKOTA CONTENT

The rich, existing interpretation from the current website will be featured on the new website, and minimal new text will be added, such as introductions and explanations of webpages. The Byway will hire a THPO reviewer to assess any changes to the overall design, themes, and introductory pages.

ACCESSIBILITY & GRAPHIC DESIGN

The Byway will also hire a graphic designer to update printed materials so they match the new website and are ADA-compliant. For example, the Visitor Guide (attached) will be an Accessible PDF that can be used by wide audiences, including people with vision disabilities.

PARTNERSHIPS

This project will hire a Byway Coordinator to facilitate 8 meetings for the Byway partners, guide communication among partners, and manage 4 contracts for website development, graphic design, and content review.

Byway Coordinator RFP Project Scope

The Byway Coordinator will manage the overall project and grant according to the grant contract dates.

The Byway Coordinator will engage partners, coordinate and facilitate meetings, document all findings, facilitate hiring contractors, and work with the partners to collaborate with the Website Consultant, Graphic Designer, and Dakota Reviewer. The Byway Coordinator will also manage the review of the new website and graphic design, manage the addition of content to the website, and promote project results. The Byway Coordinator will ensure that all aspects of the project are carried out per the standards outlined in the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants Manual.

The Byway Coordinator will accomplish all steps as outlined in this proposal. Specific deliverables include:

- Facilitate 8 meetings for the Byway partners, guide communication among partners, and manage 4 contracts for website development, graphic design, and content review as outlined in the MN Historical and Cultural Grant G-MHCG-2405-29248.
- Work with LSIC THPO for Dakota content
- Hire a Website Consultant to create the new website and provide all materials.
- Hire a designer to design a new Visitors Guide that is ADA compliant and matches the new website.
- Fulfill requirements as outlined in the Timeline and the Proposed Payment Schedule for the MN Historical and Cultural Grant G-MHCG-2405-29248. (see below).
- Financial management and payments to fulfil the budget of the grant.

Qualifications of Byway Coordinator

Planning, coordination, and research skills.

Facilitation skills.

Familiarity with the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway and members.

Familiarity with the Dakota groups and Tribes in the Minnesota River Valley.

Understanding of the Byway's website functions.

Ability to add content to a WordPress website.

Budget

The Byway Coordinator will manage the overall budget. The firm will be responsible for procuring subcontractors according to MNHS procurement requirements and will make payments to all subcontractors.

The firm will be reimbursed using the following budget:

GRANT BUDGET (Applicant View)

Budget Item	Amount Requested	Grant Amount	Amend Grant Amount	Match
1. Byway Coordinator	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00		\$3,250.00
2. Website Consultant	\$37,650.00	\$37,650.00		\$3,000.00
3. Graphic Designer – brochure and maps	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00		
4. Dakota Review (Indigenous)	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00		
5. Partner Staff – Meetings and Content Review				\$6,000.00
6. Mileage for meetings	\$250.00	\$250.00		
7. Meeting expenses (Indigenous)	\$950.00	\$950.00		
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
	Total: \$75,450.00	Total: \$75,450.00	Total	Total: \$12,250.00

Timeline

This project will be completed in the 12 month workplan and by grant deadline of June 1, 2026, or sooner if the scope of work is complete.

Work Plan

-Months 1- 2: Launch Project / Hire Byway Coordinator

-Partners meet to launch the project.

-Advertise the Byway Coordinator position, consider candidates, and hire the Byway Coordinator.

-Months 2 – 12: Strengthen Partner Relationships

The partners will work closely with all partners, including the THPO partner, strengthening the collaborations and relationships between partners and the Tribes. All partners will be involved. As we create positive experiences and develop relationships, we will increase trust among the partners. Two in-person meetings will be held at the Wicoicage Oti (Incubator) Building at LSIC with a meal provided by an Indigenous vendor. Partners will also attend 6 virtual meetings to build collaborative relationships and review project progress. Throughout the project, the Byway Coordinator will invite ideas for potential future collaborations, including with the Dakota community.

-Months 2 – 3: Review Existing Website & Materials

-Reach out to partners, all other active Byway members, and Discovery Sites to solicit feedback about the website's functionality and graphic design for tourism materials.

-Summarize feedback for partners to review.

-Develop contract for Website Consultant.

-Months 2 – 6: Develop New Website

-Work with Website Consultant to build the new website and add functionality, such as a tool for building custom itineraries.

-Months 4 – 10: Complete Website / Update Brochure and Maps

-Advertise Graphic Designer position, consider candidates, and hire Graphic Designer.

-Update the brochure, maps, and other items identified by partners.

-Work with Dakota Reviewer to assess overall design, themes, and introductory pages.

-Review and finalize graphic design work and confirm ADA compliance.

-Transfer the new brochure, maps, and other content to Website Consultant, who will update the website.

-Complete revisions to the website, brochure, and maps as directed by partners and upon review from MNHS.

-Months 10 – 12: Promote Website / Conclude Project

-Publish updated website and share materials with partners, all other Byway members, and Discovery Sites.

-Promote updated website, brochure, and maps with Explore Minnesota and local media.

-Summarize recommendations for future partner collaborations, including with the Dakota community.

-Archive project materials.

Proposal content

The proposal prepared in response to this RFP shall contain at a minimum the following information and be organized in the following manner:

1. The name, address and contact information of the firm submitting the RFP and identification of a parent company, if any;
2. The name, office location, qualifications, and experience of the individual who would be designated as overall project manager as well as any other team members, partners or sub-contractors contributing to the project. Include identification of work performed by these individuals in the last three to five years in projects of similar scope and their role in the master planning process;
3. Summary listing of projects that are similar in size, type, scale and complexity to this project with current contact information for clients who could serve as references. Responder's with the following client experience shall be the most desirable:
 - a. A proven work history with Dakota groups and Tribes in the Minnesota River Valley.
 - b. A proven work history with Byways
 - c. Familiarity with the Minnesota River Valley and members of the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.
 - d. Experience in integrating the planning goals and objective of multiple agencies charged with working together to achieve common goals.
 - e. Experience with updating a WordPress website.
4. The Cost Proposal involves submitting the following:
 - A. Acknowledgement of the firm, not to exceed price for the complete scope of services as described in the budget.
5. The response to items 1 through 3 in this list shall be limited to 10 numbered pages not counting the transmittal letter, table of contents or any title pages; resumes may be placed in an Appendix and will not be included in the 10-page limit; summaries of projects illustrating similar work may also be placed in an Appendix and will not count towards the 10-page limit, but should be limited to no more than five recent and relevant projects.

Proposal Evaluation

The initial evaluations will be based on the content of the Proposals. The proposals will be ranked based on the following factors (weighting of each factor listed in parenthesis):

1. Demonstrated understanding of the project's goals and objectives (25%);
2. Qualifications of proposed project team related to Planning, research, facilitation and website management. (35%)
3. The Responder's experience with tribes and byways (25%);

4. The Responder's experience with the communities that the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway serves. (15%)

Following a review of proposals, the selection committee will select the preferred firm with whom negotiations will be opened regarding a final scope of work. Other firms will be notified of the selection results. If negotiations with the preferred firm are unsuccessful, the selection committee will identify an alternative selection and extend an offer to that firm to open negotiations on development of a final scope of work.

Contract Development

The city intends to enter into a contractual agreement with the apparent successful Responder for providing the needed professional services.

The content of this Request for Proposal and the successful Responder will be become integral parts of the contract but may be modified by the provisions of the contract.