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

February – March 2027

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway (Byway) is looking for a Dakota content specialist to work on the itineraries on the Byway's website.

Questions about this proposal should be addressed to:
320.289.1981 x106
kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org

Proposal deadline: December 3, 2026 (extended)

Proposals must be emailed to:
Kristi Fernholz, Byway Coordinator
kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org

The Byway Alliance will review proposals and provide recommendations.

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

Project Scope

February – March 2027

- Edit, expand, and/or revise the chosen itineraries and stories (4-6)
- Use common professional standards for citations and bibliography.

Note: the historian will mostly likely be able to create all historic backgrounds/introductions based on pre-existing published histories of the valley. If additional primary source research is needed, the historian will conduct research at the state historical society and at the county historical society, which are our partners.

Qualifications

This person will meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standard for a historian and will have strong familiarity with the history of the Minnesota Valley, as well as extremely strong editing skills.

Budget

The firm will be reimbursed for no more than $3,500 for all expenses including staff time, mileage, supplies and other incidentals.

Timeline

This scope of work should be completed by March 30, 2027

Proposal content

The proposal prepared in response to this RFP shall contain:

1. The name, address and contact information of the firm submitting a proposal.

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.

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. Responders 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.

4. Identify the deliverables and propose how to accomplish the scope of work identified.

5. 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.

6. Limit of 10 pages in proposal.

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 leadership; successful experience and technical competence in the type of skills necessary in planning projects of a similar size and scale (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%)

Overall Project context

Specifics for this scope of work are highlighted.

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.

Project Purpose and Goals

For this project, our goals are to:

1) Establish a standard for "itineraries" (Define minimum/maximum number of days, and number of recommended stops within a day; Identify and define the sections within an itinerary, such as: Introduction/Context/Background, Stops with Descriptions, web-based map, pdf map, images for web or pdf and "additional links for more information")

2) Review the five existing itineraries and three existing stories to identify which can be easily expanded or combined and revised to match our new standard for itineraries. Develop philosophy and guidance for inclusion or treatment of stops that are not "Byway Discovery Sites. Identify which itineraries or stories should be archived or transferred to different formats or to

different organizations. Work with Dakota experts for guidance on the Dakota story in all itineraries.

3) Identify topics for future itineraries.

4) Revise, expand, strengthen the chosen itineraries and submit all content to MNHS for review.

Overall Work Plan

Oct – Nov 2026: **Bidding, Contracting, and Launch** [Byway Alliance Members and Project manager]

- Create RFPs for
    - Historian
    - Dakota historian
    - Graphic design (later)
- Review bids, choose contractors, create and sign contracts
- Host launch meeting with all project members

Dec 2026 – Feb 2027: **Establish a Standard for "itineraries" and develop a list of itineraries** [Byway Alliance Members and Project manager]

- Confirm the minimum/maximum number of days within an itinerary, and number of recommended stops within a day
- Identify and define the sections within an itinerary, such as: Introduction/Context/Background, Stops with Descriptions (establish word count), images (establish max.), and "additional links for more information".
- Develop philosophy, guidance and examples for inclusion or treatment of stops that are not "Byway Discovery Sites."
- Review the five existing itineraries and three existing stories to identify which can be easily expanded or combined and revised to match our new standard for itineraries.
- Identify a list of itineraries and prioritize what can be completed as part of this project, and what will be ideas for future itineraries.
- Identify which itineraries or stories should be archived or transferred to different formats or to different organizations. Create "Future Website Revisions" to-do list.

Dec 2026 – Feb 2027: **Gather Dakota input and revisions** [Dakota Content Expert, Dakota elders and Project manager]

- Identify goals for strengthening and centralizing Dakota history into itineraries
- Identify which existing Dakota-related itineraries and stories can be easily merged or expanded into updated itineraries.
- Develop philosophy and guidance for inclusion or treatment of Dakota history content that will not migrate into an "itinerary"
- Finalize the written standard for itineraries, review and approve

March 2027: **Revise existing itineraries and stories to match new standard for itineraries** [Historian and Project Manager]

- Coordinate with historian to write, revise or edit sections of itineraries, and to write the "Backgrounds" for 4 - 6 itineraries.

  Note: our qualified historian will follow conventional citation models for writing the anticipated Backgrounds and will include footnotes and a bibliography for each Background. As the Backgrounds will be extremely short (150-300 word) introductory summaries, these pieces are unlikely to need new primary source research efforts but will rely on pre-existing secondary sources such as published histories. Should new research be required, the historian will conduct research at the state Historical Society and within the archives of the local county historical societies that are our partners.

March 2027: **Coordinate with Dakota History Content Expert to write, revise or edit sections of Dakota-related itineraries** (Anticipated to be 1-2 Dakota related topics) [Dakota Content Expert and Project Manager]

April 2027: **Create draft PDF versions of itineraries in preparation for content review** [Graphic Designer and Project Manager]

- Coordinate with graphic designer to create a PDF version of itineraries with graphics and maps. Anticipated to be
  - "River Towns"
  - "Prohibition"
  - "Family, Fun, and Photography"
  - "Natural History"
  - 1-2 Dakota-related topics

May 2027: **Submit all content, including text and graphics, for review by the MNHS Grants staff.** [Project Manager]

June-July 2027 **Make changes as directed by MNHS Grants staff.** [Project Manager]

Aug – Sept 2027: **Archive project documents in paper and digital form. Complete final report and identify next steps** [Project Manager]

Oct 7, 2027: Grant end date