WORLD CANALS CONFERENCE 2025 (BUFFALO, NY)
SUSTAINING OUR MULTI-DIMENSIONAL INLAND WATERWAYS

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:
MEETING PLANNER AND EVENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

OVERVIEW

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and its non-profit affiliate Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc., along with the New York State Canal Corporation, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, and Visit Buffalo Niagara, (collectively the “Hosts”), seek proposals from a full service meeting planner and event management consultant (“Provider”) to provide logistical support and coordination; registration services; exhibition and vendor management; pre- and post-conference event and tour coordination; technical coordination; and planning support and advisement for the World Canals Conference (“WCC 2025”) to be held September 21–25, 2025 in Buffalo, NY and the Western New York (“WNY”) region.

The WCC 2025 represents an opportunity to showcase canals as agents of economic, historical, and cultural transformation, with the Erie Canal, Buffalo, and Western NY as a centerpiece. An international audience of attendees will include canal and inland waterway planners, managers and engineers, land and water trail developers, heritage-based tourism promoters, business operators, advocates, scholars, and the general public. Presentations, tours, and events will address urban and waterfront revitalization, trails, heritage tourism, education, and economic development successes and trends. Pre-/post-conference programs will also be offered, along with public events. (Note: pre and post conference tours will be on days prior to and following the primary conference dates of September 21-25, 2025).

Timing of the 2025 conference coincides with the completion of construction of the Erie Canal in 1825 and is a perfect way to draw attention to past, present, and potential future impacts of canal development. Delegate tours and mobile workshops will showcase projects. Conference events and projects will increase local sense of pride and ownership, and further connections to Buffalo and WNY’s prosperous and flourishing economy and communities.

The WCC 2025 will bring an international audience to Buffalo and Western New York as a world-class tourist destination, while also providing North American attendees the opportunity to see and hear about transformational waterway projects in Europe and Asia. The Hosts’ attendance goal for WCC2025 is 500 delegates, with more people participating in public events before, during and after the conference.

It is anticipated that work will begin around October 1, 2023 and conclude October 31, 2025.
ABOUT THE CONFERENCE CO-HOSTS

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Nearly 200 years after its construction, the Erie Canal remains an iconic symbol of American ingenuity and determination. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor works to preserve the Nation’s extraordinary canal heritage, promote the Corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and foster vibrant communities connected by more than 500 miles of waterway. It achieves its mission in partnership with the National Park Service, New York State agencies, non-profit organizations, local residents, and more than 200 communities across the full expanse of upstate New York. The Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. is an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works hand-in-hand with the federally appointed Erie Canalway Commission to implement and manage endeavors within the Corridor. For more information, visit: www.eriecanalway.org

New York State Canal Corporation

The New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority, oversees the operation and promotion of the New York State Canal System. The Canal Corporation’s mission is to operate and maintain a premier waterway and trail system that honors the historic legacy of the Erie Canal and offers unique recreational and tourism opportunities, while also promoting sustainable economic development throughout the canal corridor. For more information on the New York State Canal System and the Canal Corporation, please visit www.canals.ny.gov.

Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation

The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation is a subsidiary of Empire State Development, the state’s chief economic development agency. The Development Corporation develops and promotes placemaking and experiences at Canalside and the Outer Harbor that is attracting critical mass, private investment and enhancing the enjoyment of the Buffalo Waterfront for residents and tourists in Western New York. Its vision is to revitalize Western New York’s waterfront and restore economic growth to the City based on the region’s legacy of pride, urban significance, and natural beauty.

Visit Buffalo Niagara

Visit Buffalo Niagara is the official and accredited destination marketing and management organization representing Erie County, New York for meetings/conventions, amateur athletics, group tours, as well as domestic and international leisure travel. In 2021, tourism in Erie County generated over $1.8B in overall economic impact to the community, while employing a workforce of over 24,000 and providing a $532 per-household tax relief.

ABOUT WORLD CANALS CONFERENCES
The World Canals Conference is held annually, inviting canal and inland waterway managers and engineers, other professionals, scholars, historians, enthusiasts, and the general public to discuss and examine issues surrounding the world’s canals.

Past conferences have been held in Rochester (2000 and 2010) and more recently in Ghent, Belgium (2015), Inverness, Scotland (2016), Syracuse NY (2017), Athlone, Ireland (2018) Yangzhou, China (2019), Hagerstown Maryland (2021), and Liepzig, Germany (2022).

The 2024 WCC will be held in Bydgoszcz, Poland (World Canals Conference 2024 [wcc2024bydgoszcz.pl). A delegation from NYS will be attending.

REQUESTED SERVICES AND SCOPE OF WORK

General

The selected Provider will assist the WCC 2025 Hosts with comprehensive event planning and management including planning of the conference, administering conference registration, provision of excellent customer service (for all attendees, including conference delegates, exhibitors, sponsors, other contractors, and all other parties associated with the conference and its Hosts), on-site management of the conference, and coordination of any additional contractors providing conference services.

The Provider will serve as the expert on general meeting planning and event management. The Hosts will look to the Provider to advise on best management practices and offer guidance and provide direction for the planning and successful execution of the WCC 2025.

The Provider will work closely with the Hosts on a day-to-day basis in fulfilling the Tasks identified below. In addition, the Provider is expected to work closely and cooperatively with any other contractors the Hosts identify on all conference-related activities.

A draft conference schedule is provided at the end of the RFP.

Proposals must address the following services and scope of work:

Preparation and Management of Conference Planning Timeline

Based upon experience in prior conference planning and management, propose an initial planning and execution timeline for WCC 2025, recognizing this timeline may be adjusted after consultation with the Hosts. Timeline should include the initiation and target completion dates for all necessary conference tasks and include the area of responsibility for each task and the person or group responsible for completion of task. These tasks will include those of the Provider, Hosts, and other contractors.

Coordination of Registration Planning and Services

The Provider will manage participant registration for the conference and conference-related programming, including all tours.

An online registration site will be developed as part of the WCC 2025 website by a separate contractor (the website development RFP is anticipated to be released in the fall of 2023 and
the site will be live in June 2024; the Provider may make any recommendations on preferred website registration tools or software. The Provider will be required to coordinate with the website developer to ensure that the registration portal fully accommodates registration needs, include accessibility, and that technological support for registration is provided.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- establish fees for registration for the entire conference and single-day or event options and for pre and post conference tours
- determine early-bird and final registration dates
- assure confirmations of registration are sent and timely, friendly, and appropriate communications are maintained with all inquiries
- process and organize registrations
- establish cancellation policies
- coordinate with website developer to ensure all necessary components of online registration are programmed and website maintenance issues are addressed in a timely manner and that registration tools are accessible
- provide online program and registration content that includes items such as meals and dietary requirements, accessibility and accommodation options, transportation needs, sessions and workshops, social programs, additional traveler information, and any additional pertinent or necessary conference participation content
- determine onsite (day of) registration procedures
- staff and manage onsite conference registration and event coordination during the conference
- create and distribute registration packets for all attendees

Proposals must demonstrate the ability to coordinate all aspects of registration, and related activities, with friendly and timely customer service.

**Coordination with Hotel(s) and Other Venues**

The Hosts have secured the Hyatt Regency Buffalo (the “Hotel”) as the primary conference venue. The Provider will be the primary liaison with the Hotel, and all other conference venues, negotiating and coordinating all conference needs, including food and beverages: managing counts, off-site meals, special requests, lunches and/or meals to-go.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- coordinate all food and beverages, including any special needs and other unique accommodations
- manage all conference attendee needs or requests not addressed directly by Hotel or other venues
- serve as primary liaison with Hotel and other venues for all aspects of conference

Proposal must demonstrate the ability to coordinate all aspects of negotiation and coordination with hotels and other venues, including all issues related to accommodations and food and beverages, along with other items identified in this request for services.

**Coordination of Pre & Post Conference Tours**
In addition to the main conference events in Buffalo and WNY from September 21-25, 2025, the Hosts plan to offer optional multi-day pre- and post-conference tours of canal sites at some distance from the primary conference venue. Registration is not likely to exceed 50 participants for either tour. While the Hosts’ will identify the tour locations, the Provider will be expected to coordinate registration, transportation, lodging, meals, and other relevant services and details.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- determine budget and pricing for each tour; with Hosts, determine minimum attendance to break-even
- develop cancellation policies for registrants and Hosts, if necessary
- develop itineraries and contacts with sites to be visited; coordinate guide(s) and tour content
- determine location of overnight and meal stops
- coordinate, manage, and oversee transportation contractors, hotels, and restaurants/caterers
- ensure that information about optional pre and post-conference tours is provided on the conference website
- manage registration for these offerings

**Coordination of Local Events**

Working in coordination with Hosts, local organizations, and contractors, the Provider will be responsible for coordinating, and managing public events. Individual events will be proposed and planned by local entities in coordination with the conference Hosts and the Provider. Coordination and management of event participants, including transportation, is expected.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- coordinate with conference Hosts and local event organizers on logistics needs for conference participants to attend and participate in local events
- ensure that pre- and post-conference event information is provided on the conference website
- coordinate, manage, and oversee events, including transportation contractors for pre- and post-conference community events

Proposals will address the ability, and flexibility, to coordinate these events.

**Coordination of Logistical Support**

This will include logistical arrangements necessary to transport attendees to off-site conference events including field trip excursions and tours, off-site meal functions, and other activities as part of conference programming, and facilitating information for delegates regarding transfers to and from the conference hotel.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- identify and contact potential transportation providers that can provide transportation for airport services, conference delegates and event participants between events and venues, and boat transportation for local and regional tours
develop appropriate options for people with disabilities
coordinate, manage, and oversee transportation contractors for all conference events, including pre- and post-conference and community events
convey transportation and tour information to conference delegates and event participants via the conference website, registration packets, by phone and via electronic messaging
negotiate contract conditions with potential transportation providers and facilitate execution of contracts on behalf of Hosts
other canal related tours, historical and art exhibitions, tours, paddling expeditions, and bicycle tours may be made available to conference participants and attendees; coordination with vendors/contractors will be required.

Proposals must demonstrate the ability to coordinate logistical support and travel efficiently for groups up to 500 people.

**Coordination of Exhibition**

The Provider will manage and coordinate all aspects of the associated trade exhibition including exhibitor registration and payment via website registration portal, serving as point of contact for registered and potential exhibitors, exhibitor and poster session space layout, exhibitor and poster session space assignment, exhibitor needs, and serving as liaison for exhibitors to hotel and facility staff during conference.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- ensure that Exhibitor registration information is provided on the conference website
- establish fees for exhibitors and generate a standard exhibitor registration contract
- facilitate contract completion between Exhibitors and Hosts
- create and send out information package for Exhibitors containing point of contact, conference information, procedural instructions, and floor space allocation
- directions for loading/unloading areas and parking
- assess floor space requirements of Exhibitors and coordinate with venue; map out and assign floor space for Exhibitors based upon space requirements identified by Exhibitors
- manage Exhibitor setup needs including coordinating and ordering of necessary Exhibitor furniture and support materials, serve as liaison for Exhibitors to conference venue staff and management

Proposals must provide a description of capabilities and prior experience and may include any initial recommendations to maximize the impact of the exhibition for the delegates, sponsors, and other participants.

**Coordination of Technical Support and Other Contractors**

The Provider will provide coordination of all technical or other professional needs for the conference.

In consultation with the Hosts, the following tasks will be performed:

- identify all Audio/Visual needs; these may include, but not be limited to, portable computers, digital projectors, power strips, extension cords, laser pointers, manual
pointers, and microphone and public address system requirements; identify potential Audio/Visual equipment providers
  o clarify translation services required from Hosts and identify potential providers for translation services
  o generate contracts for A/V and Translation Services and facilitate execution of contracts on behalf of Hosts

Proposals should provide a full description of prior experience and capabilities in this regard.

**Communication and Meetings with Hosts**

In addition to the Host organizations, primarily through Erie Canalway, being available to the Provider on a day-to-day basis via telephone, email, and video conferencing, it is anticipated that a series of regularly scheduled monthly meetings will be established, in addition to as-needed meetings, during the contract term.

**Additional Information:**

  o Final approval of all conference contracts will be at the discretion of the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. (“Erie Canalway”) on behalf of the Hosts. All conference contracts for vendors and conference-related services will be executed by Erie Canalway.
  o A primary conference venue has been selected: **Hyatt Regency Buffalo**.
  o Solicitation and selection of conference program content and presentations will be managed by the Hosts. Conference program information will be conveyed to the Provider as scheduled. Provider will be responsible for communicating with speakers and presenters regarding travel and lodging coordinating logistics.
  o Erie Canalway will secure sponsors. Provider will communicate with sponsors on sponsorship benefits, including speaking opportunities, signage, and exhibition.

**PROPOSAL FORMAT AND CONTENT**

The Hosts reserve the right to disqualify a proposal that does not include all the information required below.

**Cover Letter**

A cover letter must be signed by the individual or individuals authorized to bind the contractor. The letter must indicate for each signatory that the signer is so authorized and the title or position the signer holds in the contracting organization. The cover shall include the following:

  o The organization’s name, nature of organization (e.g., corporation, partnership...), location of main office, mailing address, telephone numbers, email addresses, and the name and above listed contact information of the person within the organization who will be the primary contact concerning the proposal.
  o A statement that the proposal is irrevocable for 120 days from the date when proposals are due, or longer by mutual agreement.
  o A statement that, if awarded the contract, the provision of services to the Hosts, including Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc., will not create a conflict of interest. If it is believed that
a conflict, or even the potential of conflict of interest may arise, the nature of the conflict should be described.

Table of Contents

A Table of Contents that organizes the content of the submittal.

Executive Summary

A summary of the company’s interest in working with the event Hosts, its “vision” for a successful conference, its prior experience, and qualifications – why is your company best suited to provide these services.

Statement of Proposal

Each proposal shall contain a full description of how the Scope of Work listed above will be accomplished. Please address each task including a proposed schedule of implementation and milestone deliverables.

Method of Payment

Submittals should include requested payment milestones and amounts.

Statement of Qualifications

A description of qualifications to provide the requested services:

- A brief description of organizational structure including size, scope of services, capability and area(s) of specialization.
- Documentation of qualifications and experience related to the scope of work contained in the RFP.
- Bios or resumes of key management and any sub-contractors who will be directly assigned to provide the services to Erie Canalway and Hosts, and a description of the specific function(s) each will perform.

At least three (3) client references including a description of the size, total dollar value, and specific services provided. Specify the name, address, telephone number and email of the individual responsible at the client organization for the supervision of such services and acknowledge that we are authorized to contact them.

M/WBEs

NYS-certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) are encouraged to submit proposals. Prospective Providers should identify if they are a NYS-certified M/WBE and/or how they plan to incorporate any M/WBEs as subcontractors (with a goal of at least 30%
of total contract amount). If sub-contractors will be used, please indicate those components of the contract that they will fulfill.

**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

**General**
The Evaluation Committee will evaluate each proposal using the criteria for selection set forth below (not necessarily in priority order):

i. Overall approach to conference, work plan and timeline.

ii. Demonstrated ability to provide superior customer service to conference attendees, exhibitors, and other contractors/parties.

iii. Demonstrated willingness and ability to coordinate effectively with the conference Hosts and other contractors/consultants.

iv. Demonstrated record of experience and capability, including availability of the lead person(s) and other staff who would be assigned to provide services.

v. Plan to meet NYS-certified M/WBE goals.

vi. Familiarity with the NYS Canal System, Buffalo, and Western New York

vii. Total cost and fee schedule.

viii. Overall completeness, clarity, quality, and responsiveness of the proposal to the RFP.

The Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. and Hosts retain all rights to submitted proposals and may (1) reject any or all proposals or (2) propose modified scopes of work to any prospective Provider(s).

**INQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Hosts will accept written questions through July 7, 2023. Please direct inquiries and requests for additional information to:

Bob Radliff  
bob_radliff@partner.nps.gov  
518-237-7000 x 203

And/or,

Andy Kitzmann  
andy_kitzmann@partner.nps.gov  
518-237-7000 x 201

Also, Diane Jennings at 518-237-7000 x 219 (diane_jennings@partner.nps.gov) may be contacted and she will make sure any messages are transmitted.

**PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND KEY DATES**

Proposals must be received by 4:00pm (ET), July 28, 2023, via email to: bob_radliff@partner.nps.gov and andy_kitzmann@partner.nps.gov
(Please reach out to discuss submission requirements for any large files, over 10 MB, if applicable).

**Schedule of Key Events and Key Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2023</td>
<td>Release of RFP</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 7, 2023</td>
<td>Deadline for written questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2023</td>
<td>Proposals received electronically by 4:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 31, 2023</td>
<td>Target date to notify selected Provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2023</td>
<td>Finalize Provider contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2023</td>
<td>Provider initiates services</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2025</td>
<td>Pre-conference tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 21 – 25 2025</td>
<td>Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2025</td>
<td>Post-conference tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2025</td>
<td>Close-out reports</td>
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World Canals Conference 2025

Working Program Schedule

DRAFT
As of June 12, 2023

Friday, September 19th – Saturday, September 20th
  a) Pre-Conference Tour

Sunday, September 21
  a) Delegates, including Pre-Conference Tour, converge on Buffalo
  b) Public events and activities to raise public interest in greater Buffalo region and Canalside.
  c) International Opening reception for WCC delegates

Monday, September 22
  a) Land Acknowledgment – (Guest speaker)
  b) Morning – Opening plenary session (speakers)
  c) Lunch at the hotel (Speaker)
  d) Breakout sessions
  e) Afternoon study tours
  f) Welcome dinner (speakers)

Tuesday, September 23
  a) All day Field Sessions
  b) Lunch – trip specific.
  c) Dinner on-your-own

Wednesday, September 24
  a) Morning – breakout or plenary sessions
  b) Lunch at the Hotel (Speakers)
  c) Seneca Chief voyage launch event (time TBD)
  d) Afternoon study tours
  e) Banquet – Dinner – location TBD

Thursday, September 25
  a) Closing plenary sessions and lunch (Speakers)
  b) Post-Conference Tour departure

Friday, September 26 – Saturday, September 27
  a) Post-Conference Tour