



Request for Proposals

Marketing Plan for Canalway Challenge Campaign

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Erie Canalway Heritage Fund (ECHF) (the non-profit partner of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor) is seeking a qualified firm to create a comprehensive marketing plan to launch and sustain the Canalway Challenge campaign. The Canalway Challenge is a new initiative that will promote multi-day cycling, paddling, and walking/hiking adventures along the 524-mile NYS Canal System, 365-mile Erie Canalway Trail, and 62-mile Champlain Canalway Trail. Participants can cycle, paddle, run, hike and walk to achieve set mileage goals on the canal/trail. The challenge will include a range of distances, for beginners up to elite endurance athletes. The Canalway Challenge aims to solidify New York's canal corridor as a prime destination for meeting personal goals that reward participants with world-class recreational experiences in one of the nation's most iconic historic places. The Canalway Challenge is slated to begin in spring 2019.

The marketing plan will serve as ECHF's blueprint for promoting a multi-year initiative.

Proposal deadline is **September 30, 2018**.

INTRODUCTION

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, designated by Congress in 2000, spans more than 500 miles across upstate New York. The New York State Canal System, including the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca, and Oswego Canals, forms the spine of the National Heritage Corridor, providing a focus for water-based recreation and connecting more than 200 communities and historic sites across the region. The Erie Canalway Corridor also includes the 365-mile Erie Canalway Trail, which receives traffic volume of more than 1.58 million visits per year.

Capitalizing on the region's rich and distinctive canal history, scenic beauty, and recreational opportunities for the benefit of the region's communities and attractions is among the primary goals of the National Heritage Corridor. Erie Canalway works in partnership with a number of state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations to promote tourism.

ABOUT THE CANALWAY CHALLENGE

The Erie Canal provides the perfect platform for personal achievement. As a national symbol of bold vision, combined with perseverance, hard work, and dedication to achieve an extraordinary feat, the canal offers an inspiring backdrop for personal journeys and aspirational fitness goals. This campaign seeks to solidify the Erie Canal as a "must-do" experience that capitalizes on one of the most unique assets of the Erie Canalway—the length of the Erie Canal and the Erie Canalway Trail. Connecting trails and canals, including the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca are part of the National Heritage Corridor and will be included in the campaign as well.

- The campaign will offer incentives, excitement, and structure for recording miles to motivate and assist people with their journeys.
- Social media components will encourage participants to share their experiences, generating additional momentum.

- Over the next few months, we will be developing promotional collateral, video, online registration, incentives, events, and mileage tracking forms, recognition upon completion, and merchandising.
- Mileage options will include: 15 Miler, 90 Miler, 180 Miler, 360 Miler/End-to-End.

This campaign has potential to expand in the future to include the entire 750-mile Empire State Trail. Our intention is to involve the [Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area](#) and [Hudson River Valley Greenway](#), as well as Empire State Trail staff in initial partner outreach and planning, as appropriate. This will enable us to coordinate efforts and to take advantage of attention and excitement surrounding the Empire State Trail completion in 2020.

The campaign is funded in part by a grant from Market NY through I LOVE NY, New York State's Division of Tourism, as a part of the State's Regional Economic Development Council initiative.

SCOPE OF WORK

We are seeking a qualified firm with destination and adventure tourism experience in New York State, to create a strategic marketing campaign that can be executed by the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund to launch and sustain promotion of the campaign for the next several years.

The scope of work should include:

1) Information gathering, brainstorming, and strategizing with the project team.

This campaign will be led by the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, in collaboration with tourism partners throughout the National Heritage Corridor. We have already engaged several Tier 1 partners to refine initial concepts for the Canalway Challenge. The strategic marketing campaign should take advantage of collaboration and resources among these partners to maximize buy in and reach.

Tier 1 Partners

- New York State Canal Corporation
- Parks & Trails New York
- Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area
- I LOVE NY / Path Through History
- Empire State Trail
- NPS Rivers Trails & Conservation Assistance Program
- NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation
- 2K Design (graphic design firm)

Potential Tier 2 Partners

- Regional/County TPAs
- Regional event coordinators
- Paddling rental outlets and small business owners along the canal system
- New York Bicycling Coalition
- National Park sites
- Veterans groups such as Wounded Warriors
- Disability groups/advocates such as Center for the Disabled, Our Ability, and STRIDE Adaptive Sports
- Youth groups/scouts
- Healthcare providers
- Heritage sites
- Community foundations

2) Strategic Marketing Plan- specific tactics for positioning and packaging the campaign to maximize awareness and participation and measure success.

- a.) **Identification of priority target visitors and corresponding marketing opportunities, with estimated costs for each.** The marketing plan will prioritize potential participants in the campaign, with recommended tactics to reach each audience. While the campaign goal is to generate multi-day, multi-activity, multi-location adventures along the Canalway, we recognize different groups will be drawn to this type of activity in different ways and for different reasons (e.g., avid paddlers vs. casual cyclists vs. scout troops vs. wellness seekers). The firm's knowledge of local, state and national tourism promotion will help identify both new and existing marketing opportunities. By tying them to corresponding audiences, the plan will ensure the Canalway Challenge is leveraging partnerships, existing and potential funding, and opportunities to reach the largest number of potential visitors.
- b.) **A multi-year, step-by-step marketing plan, with concrete objectives and tactics to grow awareness and build participation through 2025.**

The plan will be designed in consultation with the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, so it can serve as a living blueprint to drive marketing and outreach. Funding for costly marketing tactics (paid search, television spots, print ads) does not exist at this time. Instead, the plan must focus on "low hanging fruit" – ways the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund and our partners can "plug in" to existing opportunities and generate effective social media sharing. Please note that funding for graphic identity, promotional videos, and a merchandising plan has been secured and is outside the scope of the marketing plan.

The marketing plan will help establish the Canalway Challenge as a brand, with completion of the 360 Mile/End-to-End as a sought after recognition. It will connect target audiences to specific marketing tactics that maximize awareness and participation in the campaign. Ideally, its impact will outlast the campaign, by generating greater awareness and affinity for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the Erie Canalway Trail, NYS Canalway Water Trail, connecting trails and adjacent communities.

DELIVERABLES

- A strategy session with key partners to gather information and begin development of the strategic plan.
- A multi-year, step-by-step marketing plan that emphasizes low cost tactics and partnerships as a means to generate awareness and build excitement for the Canalway Challenge.
- A formal, in-person presentation of the campaign and marketing plan to the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund and relevant partners.
- An executive summary of the campaign.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Please include the following in your proposal:

- **Methodology:** Please describe how you plan to approach each component of the project.
- **Project Fees:** Please itemize fees for each component of the project, and provide a total of project costs.
- **Estimated Completion Time:** Please include a proposed time frame in your proposal.
- **Qualifications:** Please include qualifications of your project team (brief summary preferred, please don't include resumes) and three samples of similar work performed. Executive summaries for research projects preferred. We will request additional details if needed after reviewing proposals.

BEST VALUE AWARD

Projects will be evaluated on quality of proposal, cost of services and contractor's experience in projects of similar scope. No more than \$9,000 will be made available for this project. Those certified by NYS as Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises are encouraged to submit proposals.

CONTRACT

Erie Canalway is managed by both a federal commission and its non-profit partner, the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. **The contract will be awarded through the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc.**

PROJECT CONTACT/SEND SUBMISSION VIA E-MAIL TO:

Jean Mackay, Director of Communications and Outreach

E-mail: jean_mackay@partner.nps.gov

Phone: (518) 925-6721

Project submissions should be emailed and provided in PDF format. Please combine multiple files (proposal, sample materials and references) into a single PDF document. Files should not exceed 10MB. If submissions exceed this e-mail limit, an FTP site will be provided upon request.

SCHEDULE OF KEY EVENTS AND KEY DATES

August 30, 2018	Release of RFP
September 30, 2018	RFPs must be received by Erie Canalway by 4:00 p.m.
October 2018	Review proposals and perform selected interviews
October 30, 2018	Target date to notify selected Provider
February 28, 2019	Targeted project completion and deliverables submitted

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Websites: www.eriecanalway.org; www.nps.gov/erie

Facebook: www.facebook.com/eriecanalway

Instagram: [@ErieCanalway](https://www.instagram.com/ErieCanalway)

Erie Canalway Visitor Profile Study: <https://eriecanalway.org/our-work/promote-tourism>

ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR MAP

