



Request for Proposals Erie Canalway Tourism Marketing and Event Research

PROJECT SUMMARY

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is seeking a qualified firm to refine its visitor profile, identify target audiences and tourism trends, evaluate and recommend marketing strategies, and calculate the economic impact of canal-related events annually throughout the 500-mile-long canal corridor in upstate New York. Proposal deadline is March 1, 2017.

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. We have developed a suite of promotional materials and products and employ a variety of strategies to drive visitation.

In addition, canal-related events are a major driver of visitation to the Corridor. The number of events has increased dramatically over the last 10 years and includes annual concerts, arts festivals, cycling and paddling events, celebrations of local foods and beverages, and events that focus on history and heritage.

SCOPE OF WORK

We are seeking a qualified firm to help us answer questions related to three primary areas of focus:

1. **Profile Visitors, Identify Target Audiences and Tourism Trends-** What visitors (past and prospective) are most likely to visit the Erie Canalway? What can we glean from recent and relevant visitor surveys to help us understand and capitalize on tourism trends in the region? Do we need more specific sampling?

Recent research includes:

- *Central New York Travel Market Research* (Young Associates, July 2015)
- *Visit Syracuse Onondaga County, New York Travel Market Research* (Young Associates, May 2015)
- *Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail* (July 2014)
- *International Travel and Tourism Exports and the New York Economy* (Baruch College/CUNY, October 2011)

Note: Older studies that specifically focused on the canal corridor include: *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Economic Impact Report–East Region Case Study* (Camoin Associates, July 2010) and *Economic Impact Study of New York State Canal Tourism* (Mower + Associates, March 2008). In addition, Chapter 8 of the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan (2006) specifically addresses Tourism Development and Marketing. The selected firm will be expected to review this information for background and strategies that are applicable to the Erie Canalway.

2. **Marketing Strategies-** How effective are existing outreach/marketing materials in helping targeted audiences find experiences here? What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing materials? What are the best methods of reaching our target audiences?

Primary Marketing Materials include:

- Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor- Website, Annual Map & Guide, Site Directory, Itineraries, Calendar, Social Media, event sponsorship, e-newsletter
- NYS Canal Corporation- Canalway Trail map, website, attendance at tourism shows
- Parks & Trails New York- Cycle the Erie Canal Guidebook, Cycling the Erie Canal website, Cycle the Erie Canal annual bike tour
- I LOVE NY (Path Through History, Heritage Weekend, website, app)

3. **Event Attendance-** How can we quantify the role that events play in bringing people to the Erie Canalway Corridor today? What is the economic impact of canal-related events?

We expect the answers to these questions to result in concrete recommendations for priority target markets, tourism outreach initiatives and marketing strategies for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

DELIVERABLES/REPORTING RESULTS

- Periodic progress reports as requested.
- Clear profiles of past and prospective visitors by activities, geography and other demographics.
- A final report will summarize the key findings and contain a series of recommendations regarding specific strategic, programmatic, and operational initiatives indicated by the findings from the research.
- Executive summary of report.

A formal in-person presentation to volunteers and staff of the Erie Canalway is also expected.

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 \$60,000 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

February 1, 2017	Release of RFP
March 1, 2017	RFPs must be received by Erie Canalway by 4:00 p.m.
March – April 7, 2017	Review proposals and perform selected interviews
April 14, 2017	Target date to notify selected Provider
September 30, 2017	Targeted project completion and deliverables submitted

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

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

Facebook: www.facebook.com/eriecanalway

Twitter: www.twitter.com/ErieCanalway