

STATE OF WASHINGTON TOURISM

Request for Proposals Rural Tourism Support Program

Program: Rural Tourism Support

Position: Facilitator, Rural Tourism Support

Budget: \$240,000

Term: 2 years/cycles

Status: Contract

Reports to: Director of Tourism Development and Strategic Partnership

Company Location: Virtual office

Introduction

State of Washington Tourism (SWT) is seeking the services of a destination development consultant to design and facilitate the Rural Tourism Support (RTS) program. Launched in 2021, the RTS program fulfills a destination development mandate from the State of Washington and serves as a vital resource for underserved communities. This program focuses on a long-term, community-based approach to sustainable destination development. It does not take the place of a strategic plan; rather, it helps tourism stakeholders organize and collaborate on small projects and specific issues that align with a 10-year vision for destination stewardship. It also aids in the identification of community-shared values and tourism assets.

The destination development consultant will work with SWT and a committee of local stakeholders to tailor the RTS program for their region, according to industry and community needs. This will occur in a phased approach and may include but is not limited to asset mapping, stakeholder surveys, visioning exercises, community workshops, training and coaching, as well as updates on the latest travel trends, research, and data.

Upon completion of the RTS program after six to eight months, tourism stakeholders are encouraged to apply for financial assistance from SWT and other funding sources to support a series of destination development projects in the region. The RTS facilitator will be responsible for coaching tourism stakeholders in preparation for this process and helping them prepare grant documents, project teams, and workflow.

The RTS program involves federal funding from the Economic Development Administration; therefore, SWT and the RTS facilitator must comply with federal procurement standards, reporting requirements, and guidance from the Washington State Department of Commerce. This includes a fair and open, competitive bidding process for the services of the RTS facilitator. To compete for this contract with federal funds, interested parties must obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI) number and register with the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM).

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Previous RTS Program

In late 2021, the Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) in northeastern Washington was selected as the program's inaugural destination partner. As a result of participating in the program, community and industry leaders came away with a clear roadmap to guide short-term and long-term destination development and management, including:

- A 10-year vision for success that tourism stakeholders can work toward
- A destination leadership team consisting of key stakeholders committed to the 10-year vision
- A list of community-shared values the destination leadership team is committed to
- A statement of intent that outlines key strategic focus areas for destination development
- Priority projects vetted by the destination leadership team and ready to implement as part of the 10-year vision

[Summary Report of the RTS Program in Northeast Washington.](#)

[Summary Report of the RTS Program in North Central Washington.](#)

Objectives for the RTS Program

This program should establish a vision for tourism in a regional destination, engage tourism stakeholders, outline strategies and actions for destination development, and deliver outcomes in a timely manner. Through this process, SWT will look to achieve the following for tourism stakeholders in a regional destination:

- Provide an overview of the current state of tourism, including community and visitor sentiment as well as travel trends in relation to social, economic, and environmental conditions
- Define a purpose and scope of work for future phases of destination management and development
- Develop actions for sustainable tourism that foster collaboration and innovation among a wide range of stakeholders

Phases

Phase I: Research and Data. This should include virtual meetings with business and community leaders, overcoming logistical hurdles, information sharing/gathering, site visits, and the production of outreach materials.

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Phase II: Community Engagement. This phase should include one visioning/scenario planning workshop, three strategy workshops, and one action-planning workshop. Meetings with key stakeholders and SWT staff members will continue in Phase II.

Phase III: Priority Projects. The destination development consultant will support the launch of up to three action teams to implement destination development projects. They will continue to liaise with key stakeholders and provide coaching and training for team leaders. Under their instruction, the establishment of a regional network of tourism professionals will form to address ongoing destination development/management needs.

Phase IV: Reporting. In this phase of the program, the destination development consultant will produce a thorough report on RTS activities in the regional destination. This report should include workshop notes and summaries, a vision narrative, strategic focus areas and priority projects, as well as the formation of a tourism working group for the region.

Term and Budget of Project

The contract awarded under this request for proposals is for an amount not to exceed \$240,000 over two cycles of the program between 2024-2026, commencing in May and ending in March for each cycle, to include all program costs for the prime contractor and subcontractors (e.g., travel, lodging, meals, materials, research and data, as well as other consulting services). Contractors must have UEI numbers and must be billed on a reimbursement basis after services are rendered. If applicable, some eligible expenses can only be covered at [OFM reimbursement rates](#). The terms of the contract must be finalized by May 1, 2024, and will expire on March 31, 2026. The destination development consultant or SWT may terminate this agreement at any time; provided, however, that all compensation earned or costs incurred before such termination shall be payable to the consultant.

Proposed Schedule

Based on previous cycles, SWT allows for six to eight months for the completion of the RTS program in regional destinations. The exact duration will depend on several factors such as the availability of key stakeholders and consultants, holiday periods, weather conditions, data collection and analysis, etc. Assuming a June start date for the first meeting with key stakeholders, much of the RTS program will be completed by January or February.

Required Qualifications

A consultant submitting a proposal represents that their firm is fully qualified, staffed, and equipped to properly perform the work outlined in this document. The consultant must possess a strong understanding of the tourism sector and destination development/management principles and procedures, including superior research,

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writing, and data skills. They must also demonstrate the ability to engage with large groups of diverse stakeholders across multiple formats. Some overnight travel is required.

Selection Process

All material submitted regarding this bid request becomes the property of SWT and will not be returned to the consultant. Disqualification does not eliminate this ownership right. SWT reserves the right to reject or accept any or all proposals or waive any formalities, informalities, or information therein.

The proposal should cover a TBD-month period. It should specify how each component of the RTS program will be approached and completed, in addition to the following information.

- The title of the proposal should contain the consultant's name, address, telephone number, primary contact, and email address
- Description and history of the consultant/company
- Brief of relevant experience of the consultant/company
- Links to or copies of relevant material showcasing the quality of work and testimonials of the consultant/company
- Consulting team: names, titles, and career briefs of each team member, including their roles and responsibilities for the proposed project
- Understanding of the RTS program and its objectives
- Outline of project approach, strategy, methodology, etc.
- Detailed project timeline
- Financials should include a detailed "line item" breakdown of costs for the proposed project
- Identify possible adjustments to the RTS program that would improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Propose work that could be completed by SWT so that federal dollars are focused on technical expertise
- Any other information deemed appropriate for this project

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SWT will contract with the RTS facilitator based on the merits of their proposal. Criteria for these merits include but are not limited to:

- Demonstrated work experience on similar projects in rural destinations
- Qualifications of personnel
- Understanding of the RTS program and its objectives
- The process, manner, and methods of providing the services outlined in this document
- Fees and costs of the proposal

Method of Submittal

All proposals and their components must be submitted electronically to matthew@stateofwatourism.com. Once submitted, all proposals become the property of SWT and be made available for public record requests.

Background

State of Washington Tourism (SWT) is a 501[c]6 organization established by industry stakeholders with the mission of sustaining Washington State destination tourism marketing. SWT began as an industry advocacy organization following the 2011 closure of the Washington State Tourism Office by the state legislature. Years of subsequent work to re-establish an industry-led statewide tourism marketing program culminated in 2018 when Governor Jay Inslee signed enabling legislation with a private-public sector matching fund program.

SWT was contracted as the state destination marketing and management organization later that year. SWT procures and administers funds for state destination tourism marketing activities and creates and implements a strategic statewide destination marketing plan.

State of Washington Tourism supports social justice, human rights, cultural preservation, and public safety for all. As such, all travelers should feel welcome and safe, and host communities and travel and tourism suppliers should be respected by their guests. At its best, travel offers inherent social and cultural exchange that fosters understanding and acceptance. SWT seeks to advance these values throughout its marketing, communications, and travel advisory programs.