

SULLIVAN COUNTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

Sugar River Region Destination Development Consultancy and Website Creation

Issue Date: September 10, 2021

Proposal Submission Deadline: 4:30pm ET, October 1, 2021

Proposals shall be emailed to: manager@sullivancountynh.gov

Sullivan County Board of Commissioners' Office

14 Main Street
Newport, NH 03773

I. OVERVIEW

Sullivan County seeks proposals from qualified tourism consultants to support the development of the Sugar River Region via coordinated planning, management, and marketing to include the development of a website and organizational guidance for the newly established Sugar River Region Destination Council (SRRDC). The SRRDC, a public body of Sullivan County government, is structured as a steering committee of volunteers that aim to define, develop, coordinate, and market the region's assets to build a visitor economy and attract new residents and businesses.

Proposals, corresponding to the sequence and formatting indicated in Section III, must be submitted in PDF format via email to manager@sullivancountynh.gov and received by no later than 4:30pm ET, Friday, October 1, 2021. Emails will not be opened or reviewed prior to the bid opening. Late proposals will not be reviewed.

Proposals will be opened, evaluated, and ranked by the Sugar River Region Destination Council, which will recommend an awardee to the Board of Sullivan County Commissioners (BOC). The BOC shall select the awardee at a regular business meeting (scheduled on the first and third Mondays of each month). Formal notification of the award to all proposers will occur immediately thereafter. We anticipate the award will be made at the meeting on October 18th, however, this is subject to change.

The County reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals, to waive any technicalities, informalities, or irregularities, to accept or reject all or part of a proposal, and to be the sole judge of the suitability of the proposals offered.

In the event the successful awarded provider should default in the observance of the stipulations set forth in this Request for Proposal and such default is not corrected within 30 days of written notice, the County shall have the option of canceling the bid.

Sullivan County is aware of the time and effort required to prepare responses to proposals and invites vendors to let us know of any proposal requirements that are unclear and/or create difficulty in responding. Sullivan County reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals and to waive any informalities or irregularities in procedure.

Questions regarding the proposal will be accepted until **Friday, September 24, 4:30 pm ET**, and should be directed to County Manager Derek Ferland at manager@sullivancountynh.gov. Copies of this RFP are available at www.sullivancountynh.gov. If appropriate, a summary of questions will be posted online as an addendum to this RFP.

II. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Sullivan County, in the west central area of New Hampshire, is comprised of fourteen towns (Acworth, Charlestown, Cornish, Croydon, Goshen, Grantham, Langdon, Lempster, Newport, Plainfield, Springfield, Sunapee, Unity, Washington) and one city (Claremont). Once known as a flourishing mill manufacturing region harnessing the power of the Sugar River, Sullivan County has struggled to redefine itself in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Low statewide rankings for income per capita and school district quality, and high statewide ranking for property taxes and poverty have fed negative perceptions. Tucked between better known regions including the Upper Valley anchored by Dartmouth College to the north, the New London-Lake Sunapee area to the east, and the Monadnock Region to the south, Sullivan County has been defined by what it is near and what it is not. In the past several years, community stakeholders led by county government and UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) have identified an opportunity to define, develop, and market the region based on its many positive assets. A [crowdsourced asset mapping project](#) launched by UNHCE in 2018 collected resident “favorite places,” which overwhelmingly reflected the region’s wealth of natural resources, scenic views, recreational amenities, and strong quality of life. A new brand: the Sugar River Region, a logo, and a slogan: “New Hampshire Made Here,” have been developed via numerous community engagements led by the county government and UNHCE between 2020 and 2021.



In June 2021, the Sugar River Region Destination Council (SRRDC) was established as an appointed public body of Sullivan County government to define, develop, coordinate, and market the region's assets to build a visitor economy and attract new residents and businesses. The SRRDC will serve as the governance structure for the region's destination management/marketing organization (DMMO). Thirteen volunteers have committed to a one-year term as council directors.

The objectives of this consultancy are to: (i) Support the development of the Sugar River Region via collaborative planning for product development, management, and marketing, (ii) conduct institutional strengthening of the newly established council, and (iii) design and configure a website to share information and raise the profile of the destination.

III. DELIVERABLES and EXPECTED OUTCOMES

In collaboration with the County Manager, the UNHCE technical advisor, and the SRRDC board, the consultancy will:

- 1) Gain an understanding of the regional assets, organizational network, constraints, and opportunities for the destination via in-person visit(s) and meetings with key stakeholders.
- 2) Deliver and present a project inception and situational assessment to propose opportunities and a strategic direction in person to the SRRDC and associated stakeholders no later than 45 days following the contract award.
- 3) Guide the formalization of the SRRDC as the region's destination management and marketing organization (DMMO), strengthen its organizational structure and board, and provide guidance on its strategic activities.
- 4) Provide written plans and trainings to SRRDC and stakeholders as relevant to advise on the following:
 - a) A tourism plan to include priority activities and short and longer-term product development opportunities
 - b) SRRDC sustainment and possible funding streams including private sector engagement and membership/partnership program
 - c) Brand development to flesh out the SRR identity and key pillars (outdoor recreation, arts, cultural heritage, etc.)
 - d) Marketing strategy to include target markets and activities, social media strategy and content marketing approach
 - e) Visitor services and information provision
 - f) DMMO performance monitoring structure and designated indicators to measure performance and impact.
- 5) Create an intuitive and engaging Sugar River Region website with advanced technology capable of engaging the private sector, visitors, residents, council members, and staff.
- 6) Assist with website content development.

- 7) Provide staff training and technical assistance for website content management for a specified period following the conclusion of the project.

IV. PERFORMANCE PERIOD

This project is funded through grants that must be expended in a timely fashion. It is expected that all work, except for website hosting services, will be completed no later than 19 months after contract award. The performance periods for major lines of effort are as follows:

- 1) Website development: 12 months from contract award.
- 2) Technical assistance: 12-15 months from contract award.
- 3) Website content management training: 3 months from completion of website development.
- 4) Website content development: Up to 18 months from contract award (pending availability of funds).
- 5) Website hosting: This will be an ongoing requirement and pricing must be provided in accordance with Section V.2.b.

V. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

To ensure that proposals are evaluated consistently, consulting firms must submit a signed proposal that corresponds to the following sequence and format:

- 1) Technical Proposal
 - a) Organization and Experience
 - i) Primary contact, phone numbers and office address that will support this project.
 - ii) Provide background and description of your organization and your ability to complete the desired services, providing examples of relevant projects that highlight your experience and particular strengths.
 - iii) Provide no more than three (3) recent references of similar projects you have completed with a brief summary description. Include full contact details. Inclusion implies permission for the County to contact references.
 - b) Proposed Approach
 - i) Describe your understanding of the objectives of this project, your proposed technical approach and the methodology you will use to implement the described tasks. Describe the structure and composition of your team. Include a project timeline for milestones and deliverables.
 - ii) Describe the overall approach to project management as it relates to this contract including but not limited to:
 - (1) Staffing plan

- (2) Minimum number of in-person visits to the region during the period of contract.
 - iii) Describe any County resources and support that may be required for your successful completion of the project including administrative support, local transportation, equipment, data, background reports, etc.
 - c) Personnel and CVs
 - i) Identify the project manager for this effort and key members of the proposed team. Include the resumes/CVs of key staff offering expertise, experience and skills to support the project. (If unexpected situations require the substitution of team members, the CVs of proposed new staff must be submitted to the County for approval.)
 - d) Schedule
 - i) Identify your available timeline to begin work assuming a contract award is made in October including a draft list of proposed milestones associated with major deliverables for this project.
- 2) Price Proposal
 - a) Lump Sum Cost: Provide a total cost for the assignment inclusive of all expenses in the form of an offer letter to provide the consulting services. The offer is to be binding, subject modifications from any Contract negotiations, up to the expiration of the validity period of the proposal, which ends 45 days following the submission date (November 15, 2021). The cost of any item or service not requested in the RFP but adding value to the consultancy should be shown separately.
 - b) Cost Break Down: Provide a breakdown of deliverables and costs shown with the time input by person/month, hourly rates, and the total estimated hours for all personnel identified and activities proposed. ***Website hosting services must be provided in 1-, 3-, and 5-year increments to provide flexibility to pick an option based on available funding.***
 - c) Payment Schedule: Submit a payment schedule based on project milestones and deliverables as described under Sections III and IV.1.b.
- 3) Guarantees/Warranties: Provide a list of any applicable guarantees or warranties, especially in reference to the website.
- 4) Consultant firm should acknowledge that it is an independent contractor and as such, shall receive no other compensation or considerations, such as those benefits, indemnifications and other considerations normally extended to employees of the County and is responsible for providing any required or voluntary benefits to its employees. The

firm shall not compensate, in any way, a County officer or employee or any member of the family of such officer or employee in the performance of any work under this contract.

- 5) Insurance: The Contractor shall secure and maintain general liability coverage in an amount of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate, vehicle liability coverage for bodily injury and property damage in an amount of not less than \$1,000,000 combined single limit, and workers compensation coverage as required by state law. The firm shall have professional insurance/errors and omissions insurance with limits of not less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence. Within 15 days of selection, the firm shall provide an insurance certificate confirming the above insurance coverage demonstrating that the County and its officials, agents, volunteers and employees are named as an additional insured on the general liability and automobile liability insurance coverage.. The insurance certificate and the underlying insurance coverage shall be issued by a carrier authorized to do business in the State of New Hampshire and having A.M. Best Company rating of “A” or better.

- 6) INDEMNIFICATION OF OWNER – To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Contractor shall protect, indemnify, save, defend and hold harmless the Owner and its officials, agents, volunteers and employees from and against any and all liabilities, obligations, claims, demands, damages, penalties, causes of action, loss of services, compensation, costs and expenses, including but not limited to reasonable attorney and paralegal fees, which the Owner and its officials, agents, volunteers and employees may become obligated by reason of any accident, bodily injury, death of a person or loss of or damage to tangible property, which may in any way arise directly or indirectly in connection with or out of the services performed by Contractor or anyone directly or indirectly employed by Contractor or any other person or company retained in any way to carry on all or any portion of the services necessary to abide by the terms of the Agreement, including but not limited to any negligent, intentional, or wrongful act or omission by the Contractor or its officers, employees, or agents.

- 7) A 30-day notice is required for cancellation and /or material change of coverage, sent directly to the Sullivan County Commissioners Office, 14 Main Street, Newport, NH, 03773.

VI. EVALUATION & SCORING CRITERIA

The County seeks a consultancy that offers the best value. Technical Proposals will be reviewed and ranked initially without cost considerations, according to the following matrix:

<u>Technical Proposal Elements</u>	<u>Weighting</u>
Qualifications and Experience	40%
Understanding of Requirements	30%
Proposed Schedule	20%
Quality of Proposals	10%

Price Proposal:

Time/cost efficiency and value of proposed activities.

The best value approach will allow the County to measure competing proposals against each other to determine the best mix of technical sufficiency and cost for those proposals that are within the County's budget for this project.