REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S HERITAGE AREAS PROGRAM

Addendum: Response to submitted questions

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Pennsylvania
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Program Authority and Scope Clarification

This RFP is issued for the development of a Strategic Plan and Program Manual for DCNR's State Heritage Areas Program.

DCNR is the program administrator and retains authority over program structure, grant administration, and final approval of deliverables. The purpose of this project is to clarify, strengthen, and operationalize DCNR's statewide Heritage Areas Program, including its policies, expectations, evaluation tools, and coordination mechanisms.

Heritage PA's role in this project is to facilitate coordination, learning, and engagement among the Heritage Areas and project partners. The coordination of Heritage PA is managed through a contract with Preservation Pennsylvania. Heritage PA is not the subject of the strategic plan and is not seeking an organizational strategy through this RFP.

The 12 designated Heritage Areas are essential stakeholders and participants in the process. The strategic plan and program manual are intended to support their work by providing clarity, consistency, and guidance within DCNR's program framework, not to redesign or govern individual Heritage Areas.

Questions & Clarifications

1. Collaborative Models, Frameworks, and Network Approaches

Q: Are there collaborative networks, evaluation frameworks, or models DCNR or Heritage PA prefers or expects proposers to use?

A: The RFP does not prescribe a specific collaborative, evaluation, or network framework. Proposers are encouraged to draw upon relevant best practices and professional experience and to clearly describe the rationale for their proposed approach. Innovation is welcome, provided it aligns with the scope, objectives, and constraints outlined in the RFP.

2. Purpose and Use of the Program Evaluation Tool

Q: What is the primary intended use of the evaluation framework, and are there existing tools or metrics it should align with?

A: The evaluation framework is intended to support consistent program learning, internal improvement, and accountability across the Heritage Areas Program. Proposers should consider existing data sources and performance metrics currently used by DCNR, Heritage PA, and the Heritage Areas, where relevant. The framework is not intended to independently determine funding or designation decisions. Final design details are expected to be informed by the planning process.

3. Format of the Evaluation Tool

Q: Should the evaluation tool be digital/interactive or a static framework?

A: The RFP does not require a specific format. Proposers may recommend an appropriate format (digital, hybrid, or static) based on usability, scalability, and long-term program needs, and should describe the implications of their recommendation.

4. Engagement Language and Accessibility

Q: Will engagement activities be conducted in English only, or should proposers budget for interpretation services?

A: Engagement activities are anticipated to be conducted primarily in English. Proposers may identify accessibility considerations or contingencies as part of their proposed approach.

5. Priorities, Rankings, and Selection Criteria

Q: Are certain objectives, outcomes, audiences, or selection criteria higher priority or weighted more heavily than others?

A: All objectives, outcomes, audiences, and selection criteria identified in the RFP are considered important. Proposers should address them holistically and describe how their approach balances these elements. Selection criteria are applied as described in the RFP.

6. Governance, Roles, and Authority

Q: Does the project anticipate changes to governance structures, and how are roles divided among DCNR, Heritage PA, Preservation Pennsylvania, and the Steering Committee?

A: It is anticipated that the strategic planning process will clarify and refine the roles and responsibilities of key program partners. For the strategic planning process/project, Heritage PA will facilitate the project as the contracted client, DCNR will be the leading member of the client team and will provide final approval of the plan as it is a DCNR Grant deliverable, and the steering committee will provide guidance and input at key points in the process. Preservation Pennsylvania is not directly involved in this planning project.

7. Stakeholder Engagement Expectations

Q: What level and type of engagement is expected with Heritage Areas and other stakeholders?

A: Engagement with all 12 Heritage Areas is expected during Segment 1. Engagement during Segment 2 may come in multiple forms. Proposers may recommend a mix of input and engagement strategies, consistent with the proposed budget and timeline. Engagement beyond partner organizations should be limited and purposeful, as described in the RFP.

8. Scale of Engagement

Q: Approximately how many stakeholders are expected to be engaged?

A: The exact number of stakeholders is not prescribed. Proposers should describe an engagement strategy sufficient to meet the objectives of the project, including representation from all Heritage Areas, while remaining feasible within scope and budget.

9. Meetings, Timeline, and Logistics

Q: Are there fixed dates, milestones, facilities, or logistical supports provided by DCNR?

A: Key milestones, including anticipated plan completion and approval, are identified in the RFP and should be treated as firm unless otherwise noted. DCNR and/or partner organizations may provide facilities for in-person sessions such as the Segment 1 Learning

Session. DCNR will manage grant administration and core logistics, with coordination support from the selected consultant as appropriate.

10. Documents and Background Materials

Q: Will background documents be provided, and are prior strategic planning materials available?

A: The 2015 Strategic Plan and other relevant materials will be made available at project initiation. Proposers may also identify additional documents they believe would support the process.

11. Program Scope Definition

Q: How is the "Heritage Areas Program" defined for the purposes of this project?

A: For the purposes of this RFP, the Heritage Areas Program includes DCNR, Heritage PA, and the 12 designated Heritage Areas, along with their coordinated efforts to support heritage conservation, interpretation, and community development in Pennsylvania.

12. Segment 1 Learning Session Outcomes

Q: Should Segment 1 produce a draft vision statement or foundational inputs only?

A: Segment 1 is intended to establish shared understanding, learning, and foundational inputs to inform the strategic planning process. Refinement and formalization of vision and strategy will occur during Segment 2.

13. Prior Strategic Plan

Q: How has the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan and its evaluation matrix been used in practice, and are there known limitations the Steering Committee hopes a new plan will address?

A: The 2015–2020 Strategic Plan provided important foundational direction for the State Heritage Areas Program during an earlier phase of its development. Since that time, the program, its operating environment, and expectations of the Heritage Areas have evolved. While elements of the plan remain informative, it has not functioned in recent years as a comprehensive, actively used operational or evaluative framework.

This planning process is intended to reflect on prior approaches, assess the applicability of existing strategies and evaluation tools, and identify where additional clarity, alignment,

and operational guidance are needed. The goal is not to replicate or extend the previous plan, but to develop a more durable, practical framework that reflects current program realities, supports consistent implementation, and strengthens long-term program management. The process is designed to re-establish a shared, actionable foundation rather than assume continuity of implementation from past planning efforts.

14. Communications Strategy Scope and Intent

Q: What is DCNR seeking through the requested communication strategy for the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program?

A: The requested communication strategy is intended to establish a clear, consistent, and conservation-oriented statewide narrative for the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program. Its purpose is to support DCNR communications staff, Heritage PA, and program partners in confidently describing the role, value, and public benefit of Heritage Areas alongside other DCNR conservation programs.

The communication strategy is not intended to function as a marketing or tourism promotion plan, nor to replace or direct communications conducted by individual Heritage Areas. Rather, it should provide a shared framework, vocabulary, and guiding principles that enable Heritage Areas to be routinely and accurately represented within DCNR's broader communications ecosystem, including communications directed to the public, legislators, the administration, and key state agencies.

Proposed strategies should emphasize Heritage Areas as living cultural landscapes and conservation assets that integrate cultural, natural, recreational, and community resources, using approaches comparable in clarity and confidence to those employed for state parks, state forests, conservation landscapes, and related DCNR initiatives. Deliverables are expected to focus on narrative alignment, consistency, and long-term usability, rather than time-limited campaigns or tactical implementation plans.