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This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks proposals for a provider to assess the current outdoor recreation industry in the Northwest Region of Pennsylvania and provide a toolkit to grow that industry into the future.

Any organization with appropriate expertise and in good standing with both the state and federal government may respond. Proposals that include partnerships between multiple organizations with applicable areas of expertise are allowable. Parties submitting proposals in response to this RFP are referred to herein individually as “consultant.”

The contracting agency will be the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (Northwest Commission).

Northwest Commission, a nonprofit corporation that serves eight counties in Northwest Pennsylvania, has been determined to be exempt from Federal income tax.

Northwest Commission is the grantee for the Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) and Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). Funds to be awarded to the consultant submitting the proposal selected by Northwest Commission pursuant to this RFP are state and federal funds.

Proposals must be submitted no later than 4 p.m. EST November 14, 2025.

The budget for this project should be an amount less than \$101,000. Consultants are encouraged to prepare proposals in accordance with this budget.

Proposals and supporting materials must be submitted in electronic format via e-mail to Jennifer Feehan at jenniferf@northwestpa.org. A confirmation of receipt will be provided by Northwest Commission.

It is the responsibility of the consultant to ensure that Northwest Commission receives the proposal by the date and time specified above. Late proposals will not be considered.

Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to Jennifer Feehan at jenniferf@northwestpa.org by 4 p.m. EST November 10, 2025.

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal responding to this RFP will be the responsibility of the consultant submitting the proposal and shall not be reimbursed by Northwest Commission.

Northwest Commission reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP. A contract for the accepted proposal will be based upon the factors described in this RFP. If only one proposal is received, Northwest Commission may accept it if:

- the proposal is complete
- the consultant can perform the required work
- the consultant meets minimum RFP qualifications
- the cost is reasonable and within the project budget

Efforts will be made by Northwest Commission to utilize small businesses and minority-owned businesses. A consultant qualifies as a small business firm, if it meets the definition of “small business” as established by the Small Business Administration (13 CFR 121.201), by having average annual receipts for the last three fiscal years of less than six million dollars.

Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful consultant, all other consultants submitting proposals in response to this RFP will be informed, in writing, of the name of the successful consultant.

Northwest Commission will prepare a written agreement for execution between the consultant and Northwest Commission. The general provisions of this agreement, the final work study and requirements placed on the project shall be made as part of this agreement. The consultant shall have authorization to proceed with a written notice from Northwest Commission.

The project budget should include all fees, and the negotiated contract will be a fixed price.

The period of performance for this project will be from December 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

Payments will be made in a timely manner after approval of contractor invoice. Invoice shall be submitted no more than once per month and no less than quarterly and after completion of plan with invoices detailing work performed that allows Northwest Commission to determine that satisfactory progress is being made. Upon delivery of the final copies to Northwest Commission and its acceptance and approval, the consultant may submit a bill for the balance due on the contract.

Should Northwest Commission reject the products, Northwest Commission's authorized representative will notify the consultant in writing of such rejection giving the reason(s). The right to reject the document shall extend throughout the term of this contract and for ninety (90) days after the consultant submits the final invoice for payment.

At the discretion of Northwest Commission, this contract can be terminated at any time or extended beyond the specified contract period.



Proposals should not exceed ten (10) pages in length and should be typed on 8.5 X 11-inch pages with margins no smaller than one (1) inch. Font size should be no smaller than twelve (12) point. Supporting materials can be provided in addition to the ten (10) page scope of work. Proposals must be submitted electronically to Jennifer Feehan via e-mail at jenniferf@northwestpa.org. Northwest Commission will provide a confirmation of receipt.

Northwest Commission may also require a prospective consultant to attend a meeting and/or participate in a conference call to discuss the proposal.

Each consultant should demonstrate their understanding of why this project is needed and how it will meet the needs of Northwest Commission and partner organizations. Consultants should not repeat the Statement of Work but rather describe how the consultant will accomplish the tasks defined within the work program and the specified time limits.

Each proposal must describe how the consultant proposes to complete all tasks identified in the Statement of Work included in Section IV of this RFP. The consultant must also include a timeline that demonstrates the completion of each task within the limits of the specified period of performance and explain the mechanisms within the agency to track, monitor, and ensure the attainment of work elements. The timeline should include project milestones that detail the completion date of each task outlined in the Statement of Work.

Each consultant should describe its organization, size (in relation to the proposed services to be performed), and structure. Indicate if appropriate, if the consultant is a small or minority-owned business. The consultant should also describe its prior experience that qualifies the consultant to fulfill the tasks described in this RFP based on past performance of the same or similar projects and programs. Include all prior experience with similar projects and the operation of programs financed by the Federal/State Government. The consultant must identify any subconsultants and their qualifications.

Each consultant should identify all personnel that will be assigned to the project, including contact information, and specifically identify the project manager. Each

consultant should also describe the relevant qualifications of staff to perform the proposed service, including technical, educational, and work background. This section of the proposal should include descriptions of staff team makeup, overall supervision to be exercised, and prior experience of the individual staff team members. Once the contract period starts, the consultant may not change staffing for the project unless agreed upon by Northwest Commission. The consultant must submit the requested staffing change to the Northwest Commission in writing.

Administrative Assurances are included in Section V of this RFP. Proposals must contain a statement verifying that the Offeror will agree to these assurances if selected for award.

All consultants must submit their total project cost, along with a task-by-task cost breakdown for each of the major tasks defined within the Statement of Work in Section IV of this RFP. A budget by task and total budget for the entire project should be included with itemized direct, indirect, and subcontract expenses where applicable. Identification of any additional costs for additional services or materials should be included.



All proposals must follow the specified format and include all required elements listed in Section II of this RFP.

Proposals may be judged non-responsive and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur: The proposal is not received timely in accordance with the terms of this RFP; the proposal does not follow the specified format; or the proposal does not include a statement of agreement with Administrative Assurances.

Evaluation of each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Value
PROPOSER'S METHOD FOR PROVIDING REQUESTED SERVICE	75
Demonstrated understanding of the overall project and its goals	15
Process described to perform economic impact analysis of the outdoor recreation economy	15
Process described to engage stakeholders and perform county-driven SWOT analysis of the outdoor recreation economy	15
Process described to identify outdoor recreation assets in relation to outdoor recreation supporting organizations and outdoor recreation businesses	10
Process described to identify and evaluate outdoor recreation businesses and provide toolkit strategies to ensure sustainability and growth	10
Process described to identify outdoor recreation supporting organizations and provide toolkit strategies to ensure sustainability and growth	10
PROPOSER'S QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE, AND STAFFING	20
Qualifications of the designated project manager and other key personnel to carry out the project	10
Relevant past projects with a focus on implementable/action plans and	
GENERAL INFORMATION	
Cost relative to the proposed services and deliverables provided	
TOTAL	10

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the Project Steering Committee using the above evaluation criteria. Northwest Commission may, at its discretion, request meetings with any of the consultants to clarify or negotiate modifications to the consultants' proposals. However, Northwest Commission reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms, from both technical and price standpoints, that the consultant can propose. Northwest Commission contemplates award of the contract to the responsible consultant with the highest total points.

Northwest Pennsylvania is rich in historical significance, natural resources, and recreation opportunities that are unique to the area in a way few regions can match. We are the birthplace of the oil industry and known as “the Valley that Changed the World” that also reshaped North America as a result of George Washington’s 1753 mission that ignited the French and Indian War. We showcase charming downtowns of Victorian architecture, offer Pennsylvania’s only Great Lakes port which is famous for Presque Isle, encompass rolling farmlands and Amish countryside, feature the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail along the Allegheny River and mountain bike loop among the boulders at Jakes Rocks, and cherish a county in our footprint appropriately named ‘Forest County.’ We are blessed to experience a four-season climate that offers a unique rhythm of variety and renewal which also lends to a wide range of activities year-round.

The Northwest region unites the counties of Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, and Warren. These counties are almost entirely situated in the Allegheny Plateau section of the Allegheny Mountains, except for the Central Lowland landforms along the Lake Erie coastline. The region’s terrain within the Allegheny Plateau is rugged and heavily dissected by streams that have carved deep valleys and steep hillsides. The Wild and Scenic Allegheny and Clarion Rivers; the biologically diverse French Creek corridor; the bluffs and Presque Isle Bay along the Lake Erie shore; Oil Region National Heritage Area; Pennsylvania Wilds; Lumber Heritage Region; and Allegheny National Forest are all part of defining the region’s character. Furthermore, Northwest Pennsylvania encompasses eight state parks, two forest districts, twenty-two historic districts, and numerous lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and trail systems.

Partners throughout our eight-county region understand that thoughtful planning for the preservation and utilization of these regional assets and the value they provide is vital for ensuring their future and the future economic benefits they generate.

The Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Plan, originally adopted in 2009, is a multi-county planning effort undertaken by the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (Northwest Commission). This comprehensive resource compiled county greenway planning efforts, catalogued ways to conserve and enhance natural system greenway corridors, and itemized recommendations to establish new recreation and transportation greenway corridors to benefit current and future residents. As a result of this planning effort, the Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Block Grant Program was established to assist with implementing the projects outlined and has been able to help complete more than 100 of them so far.

In 2022, Northwest Commission facilitated an update of the Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Plan to capture and guide ongoing efforts made in conserving the region's essential natural resources, to identify projects that would foster economic development through recreation and recreational partnerships, and to determine techniques that would strengthen regional resiliency in ways that both enhance quality of life as well as promote sustainable growth. It was shared at the time of this update that according to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, Pennsylvania had the sixth largest outdoor recreation economy in the country with outdoor recreation contributing \$14 billion dollars to the state economy and supporting approximately 150,000 jobs. These numbers have since increased and our partnership seeks to better articulate these contributions to Pennsylvania's economic competitiveness and better understand the foundation to solidify its framework for building out.

The outdoor recreation industry is a broad sector that encompasses all activities and businesses related to outdoor leisure, encompassing everything from equipment manufacturing and retail to tourism and conservation. Outdoor recreation is an extremely impactful and influential economic driver in the state and especially in rural communities where the industry can authentically improve quality of life and creatively counteract outmigration, recruiting young professionals and attracting business development. The rise in demand for opportunities to engage the outdoors ushered by the Covid pandemic together with this increased recognition that outdoor recreation is an industry of value by the economic development community, provided the synergy for the Tourism Development Committee Action Team (formed as a result of the 2022-2026 Northwest Pennsylvania Comprehensive Economic Development Study) and the Northwest Pennsylvania Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) Partners to sharpen focus in further developing the region's outdoor recreation industry in a more intentional and purposeful way.

Northwest Commission serves as a regional-based resource for business and economic development as well as community development and planning to better the lives of current and future generations. As the convenor for the Northwest Pennsylvania CEDS Tourism Development Committee Action Team and the Northwest Pennsylvania PREP Partners, Northwest Commission secured funding to kick off this planning project identified by these two coalitions as the Northwest Pennsylvania (NWP) Outdoor Recreation Economy Study and Toolkit. Partners allied behind this effort and garnered several more regional champions to guide this project forming the NWP Outdoor Recreation Economy Study and Toolkit Steering Committee. The kickoff meeting was held in October 2025 and now the Project Steering Committee actively seeks a knowledgeable and passionate consultant to lead planning study and toolkit efforts to assess the current outdoor recreation economy in the Northwest Region of Pennsylvania and provide directives to grow the industry into the future.

Northwest Pennsylvania is organically positioned to capitalize on outdoor recreation assets and its evolving industry sector contributing to overall economic diversification and growth. Better understanding the Northwest region's outdoor recreation industry and ways to grow it more effectively will help us achieve the following economic and community development objectives:

- Support the retention and expansion of existing outdoor recreation-based businesses.
- Attract new outdoor recreation businesses such as manufacturing, retail, lodging, hospitality, and experience-based services.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and the creation of new outdoor recreation-based businesses.
- Address seasonal employment challenges and increase resiliency.
- Improve connectivity between communities and recreation assets.
- Advocate for investments and sustainable solutions.
- Retain residents and employers by improving quality of life.
- Differentiate the region from competing outdoor hub destinations to attract visitors as well as the settlement of young professionals, households, and remote workers.

One electronic copy of the final study to include executive summary, study purpose and scope, methodology and data sources, recreation asset and business inventories, economic impact analysis, stakeholder input findings, and toolkit. To be completed by June 30, 2026.

- 1.1 Incorporate outdoor recreation assets identified in the 2022 Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Plan Update and build upon inventory.
- 1.2 Outdoor recreation businesses including but not limited to gear manufacturers; retail and wholesale outlets for gear, guides, trainers, transportation, repair, rentals and other services; lodging and hospitality; and any other businesses that support and engage with outdoor recreation enthusiasts.
- 1.3 Outdoor recreation supporting organizations that steward the assets.

- 2.1 Perform SWOT analysis through public survey and focus groups in each of the eight counties.
- 2.2 Create economic profiles for each of the eight counties to include economic impact analysis, economic contribution of the industry sector, total jobs supported, total sales output, total tax revenue, visitor spending patterns,

real estate and tourism impacts, workforce and job creation trends, and return on investment for outdoor recreation assets.

- 3.1 Include collection of case studies of successful outdoor recreation initiatives, accompanied by analysis and recommendations for adaptation and replication.
- 3.2 Project examples could include connecting main streets with nearby outdoor recreation amenities, establishing technical assistance programs tailored to outdoor recreation businesses, formally recognizing and marketing outdoor towns throughout the region, creating trail friendly business programs, increasing broadband coverage throughout the region for outdoor safety as well as business attraction, establishing county and/or regional outdoor recreation business alliance groups, addressing barriers that prohibit growth of the outdoor recreation economy, developing roadmaps for careers in outdoor recreation, etc.

Minimum of four progress meetings with the Northwest Commission (discussed and planned with the consultant and Project Steering Committee).

Presentation of the NWPA Outdoor Recreation Economy Study and Toolkit to Northwest Commission Board of Directors and Project Steering Committee on

One electronic copy of the final study to include executive summary, study purpose and scope, methodology and data sources, recreation asset and business inventories, economic impact analysis, stakeholder input findings, and toolkit.

Visually engaging one-page summary of the NWPA Outdoor Recreation Economy Study and Toolkit.

Visually engaging one-page advocacy tool designed for elected officials, economic development organizations and boards, and grant funders and partners.

The purpose of emphasizing the following assurances is to highlight specific requirements and does not limit the consultant's other responsibilities in any way. The consultant is required to ensure that all state and federal laws, regulations, and policies are adhered to.

The consultant assures that:

- The consultant must follow and agree to all policies and regulations detailed in the attached Exhibits of this RFP.
- The consultant will designate a Project Manager to be responsible for the overall implementation of the project, direct interaction with all project partners, resolution of all issues and concerns, and attendance at required meetings.
- The consultant-designated Project Manager will attend project meetings and address any related issues or concerns raised by the project participants. The Project Manager may send a representative to attend meetings in their place as long as prior arrangements have been made with Jennifer Feehan, Northwest Commission.
- The consultant will submit monthly progress reports to the Northwest Commission that document the work performed during the past month, work planned for the next month, and all issues or concerns that are pertinent to the project. These progress reports and invoices will be submitted electronically to Jennifer Feehan, Northwest Commission, before the fifth day of each month.

During the term of the contract, Consultant agrees as follows:

- 1) In the hiring of any employee(s) for the manufacture of supplies, performance of work, or any other activity required under the contract or any subcontract, the Consultant, subconsultant, or any person acting on behalf of the Consultant or subconsultant shall not, by reason of gender, race, creed, or color, discriminate against any citizen of this Commonwealth who is qualified and available to perform the work to which the employment relates.
- 2) Neither the Consultant nor any subconsultant nor any person on their behalf shall in any manner discriminate against or intimidate any employee involved in the manufacture of supplies, the performance of work, or any other activity required under the contract on account of gender, race, creed, or color.
- 3) Consultants and subconsultants shall establish and maintain a written sexual harassment policy and shall inform their employees of the policy. The policy must contain a notice that sexual harassment will not be tolerated and employees who practice it will be disciplined.
- 4) Consultants shall not discriminate by reason of gender, race, creed, or color against any subconsultant or supplier who is qualified to perform the work to which the contracts relates.
- 5) The Consultant and each subconsultant shall furnish all necessary employment documents and records to and permit access to their books, records, and accounts by the contracting agency and the [Bureau of Contract Administration and Business Development], for purposes of investigation, to ascertain compliance with provisions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause. If the Consultant or any subconsultant does not possess documents or records reflecting the necessary information requested, the Consultant or subconsultant shall furnish such information on reporting forms supplied by the contracting agency or the [Bureau of Contract Administration and Business Development].
- 6) The Consultant shall include the provisions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause in every subcontract so that such provisions will be binding upon each subconsultant.

The Northwest Commission may cancel or terminate the contract and all money due or to become due under the contract may be forfeited for a violation of the terms and conditions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause. In addition, the agency may proceed with debarment or suspension and may place the Consultant in the Consultant Responsibility File.