



## **Market Research Study**

### ***Request for Proposal (RFP)***

**Issued by: Friends of Southwest Virginia**  
**Proposal Deadline: July 18, 2025, at 12:00pm (EST)**



June 18, 2025

Kimberly Davis, Executive Director  
Friends of Southwest Virginia  
One Heartwood Circle  
Abingdon, VA 24201

Dear Prospective Vendor,

Friends of Southwest Virginia (Friends) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a comprehensive market research study to inform regional destination marketing and strategic tourism development efforts. This study will serve as a foundational element in shaping the future of tourism across Southwest Virginia by delivering actionable insights into visitor behavior, travel trends, and consumer sentiment.

We are looking for a firm that brings innovation, data-driven methodology, and a deep understanding of the travel and tourism landscape. This research must leverage emerging technologies, including geolocation analytics platforms and sentiment tracking tools—to provide in-depth analysis of regional visitation, market performance, and public perception.

The RFP that follows outlines the project scope, expectations, deliverables, and submission requirements. This project is supported in part by federal funding, including the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and must adhere to applicable federal procurement standards (2 CFR Part 200). Respondents must demonstrate capacity to meet these requirements.

Proposals are due **Friday, July 18, 2025, at Noon EST**, and must be submitted electronically in PDF format. Questions may be submitted in writing to Catherine Fox at [cfox@myswva.org](mailto:cfox@myswva.org) no later than **Monday, June 30 at Noon**.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity to shape the future of Southwest Virginia. We look forward to reviewing your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Davis".

Kimberly Davis  
Executive Director

## **Request for Proposal – Market Research Study**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Friends of Southwest Virginia invites proposals from experienced firms to lead a market research study that will inform regional tourism strategy and marketing. The selected firm will deliver advanced data analysis, including geolocation tracking, visitor movement patterns, and consumer sentiment insights, and present findings in a user-friendly, visual format for use by regional stakeholders.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

Friends of Southwest Virginia supports economic development across 19 counties, four cities, and over 50 towns through cultural and outdoor tourism initiatives. Over the last decade, the region has seen measurable growth in visitation thanks to strategic branding and marketing.

This new market research effort will build on those successes by supplying real-time, location-based intelligence and sentiment analysis to support continued momentum, future investment, and strategic alignment among regional tourism partners.

### **3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This market research study will:

- Track and analyze visitor flows and behavioral patterns across the region.
- Identify origin markets, length of stay, travel routes, and trip purpose.
- Provide insight into consumer sentiment and perceptions of Southwest Virginia as a destination.
- Inform future branding, digital marketing, and infrastructure investment decisions.
- Provide individual destination reports for each of the 19 Southwest Virginia Counties and four (4) independent cities with usable data for local tourism strategy alignment.

### **4. SCOPE OF WORK**

The selected firm will be expected to:

- Provide or access a privacy-compliant platform capable of analyzing mobile geolocation data to evaluate visitation flows, origin markets, demographics, and trip behavior across Southwest Virginia.
- Assess digital marketing performance tied to Friends' platforms (e.g., web traffic, referral sources, conversions).
- Delivery of findings via interactive dashboards, reports, and presentations tailored for local and regional stakeholders.
- *Optional* - Conduct regional digital and/or on-site surveys to capture visitor feedback. (Firms may also propose alternative or supplemental methods for gathering consumer sentiment or public perception data, such as social media analysis or review aggregation tools.)
- *Optional* - Analyze available third-party tourism data (bookings, ticket sales, partner attendance reports).

## 5. DELIVERABLES

- Kickoff meeting and project work plan
- Access to data dashboard or platform (or integration plan)
- Monthly progress reports with interim findings
- Comprehensive final report, including:
  - Visitor profiles and travel pattern analysis
  - Seasonal and geographic insights
  - Optional: Consumer sentiment and brand perception insights
  - Strategic recommendations for destination marketing and investment
- Final stakeholder presentation
- Data-sharing tools or templates for local tourism partners

## 6. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

To be considered, proposals must include the following information in the order listed below:

### 1. Firm Overview & Qualifications

Brief description of the firm, its capabilities, and relevant experience in tourism, market research, or economic development.

### 2. Methodology & Tools

Detailed explanation of the proposed research approach, including data collection methods, analysis tools, and sources.

*Optional Enhancements:* Firms are encouraged (but not required) to include proposals for consumer sentiment analysis, such as review aggregation, social listening, or survey-based feedback.

### 3. Relevant Project Experience

Examples of comparable work, preferably involving regional tourism or destination marketing. Include outcomes and client references where applicable.

### 4. Project Team

Names, roles, and brief bios of team members assigned to the project, highlighting relevant expertise.

### 5. Project Timeline

Estimated schedule with key phases, deliverables, and milestone dates.

### 6. Budget Breakdown

A detailed line-item budget organized by task or deliverable (see Section 7 for budget guidelines).

### 7. References

Contact information for at least three professional references familiar with the firm's work on similar projects.

## 7. FEDERAL FUNDING & COMPLIANCE

This project is funded in part by the Appalachian Regional Commission and must adhere to all applicable federal regulations, including but not limited to 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Guidance for Federal Awards). All proposed costs must be:

- Reasonable and necessary to project objectives
- Allowable and allocable under the grant
- Compliant with federal cost principles

Firms must demonstrate knowledge of or willingness to comply with federal procurement standards.

## 7. BUDGET GUIDELINES

Proposals should include a detailed budget that accounts for:

- Data acquisition and software/tools
- Personnel time (if applicable)
- Travel and onsite activities (optional, not required)
- Data analysis and reporting
- Presentation and stakeholder engagement (optional, not required)

All proposed costs must be reasonable, allowable, and allocable per federal grant guidelines under 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards). Friends reserves the right to negotiate final scope and budget with the selected vendor.

## 8. EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated by a selection committee using the following weighted criteria:

Criteria	Weight
Understanding of Project Scope and Goals	20 points
Methodology and Technical Approach	25 points
Relevant Experience and Qualifications	20 points
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Clarity	15 points
Project Timeline and Feasibility	10 points
References and Past Performance	10 points
Total Possible Points	100

## 9. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit proposals electronically in PDF format to:

Catherine Fox

Director of Regional Destination Development

Friends of Southwest Virginia

[cfox@myswva.org](mailto:cfox@myswva.org)

(no phone calls)

Proposal Deadline: **Friday, July 18, 2025, at 12:00p.m. (EST).**

Late submissions will not be considered. (no exceptions)

## **10. QUESTIONS**

All questions must be submitted in writing to the contact above no later than June 30, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. (noon) EST.

*Important Note:* Friends of Southwest Virginia reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any informalities or irregularities in the proposals received. This RFP does not commit Friends of Southwest Virginia to award a contract, nor pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal.



# Appendix A

## About Friends of Southwest Virginia

**Mission** - The mission of Friends of Southwest Virginia is to preserve, promote, and present the cultural and natural assets of Southwest Virginia; to work in partnership in the region to generate economic development through these efforts; to provide educational and cultural opportunities for the general public and students of the region; to showcase the cultural assets of SWVA at the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace (formerly Heartwood).

**About Us** - Friends of Southwest Virginia, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was established in 2-11 to operate alongside the Southwest Virginia Heritage Cultural Foundation and serve as the primary fiscal and operational body. The two organizations work in tandem under the leadership of a single Executive Director reporting to two separate boards that oversee their individual authorizations. The majority of the organization's employees, grant development programs, and all operations of the SWVA Cultural Center & Marketplace are housed within the non-profit.

Website - <http://friendsofswva.org/>



## Appendix B

Friends of Southwest Virginia fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information, or to obtain a Title VI Discrimination Complaint Form, contact (276) 492-2400 ext. 2422.