



*Southwest Virginia Regional Tourism
Workforce Training Initiative*

Request for Proposal

**Friends of Southwest Virginia
One Heartwood Circle
Abingdon, VA 24210**

**Release Date – January 30, 2026
Proposal Deadline – March 4, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. (noon) EST**



January 30, 2026

Dear Prospective Firm or Vendor,

Friends of Southwest Virginia invites proposals from qualified firms, consultants, or training organizations to design and deliver a Regional Tourism Workforce Training Initiative serving Southwest Virginia.

This initiative will provide professional training for frontline tourism and hospitality workers with the goal of strengthening customer service, increasing regional travel knowledge, improving visitor engagement, and supporting a welcoming and service-oriented tourism culture across the region.

The project is supported in part by public funding and must comply with applicable federal and state procurement and reporting requirements, including 2 CFR Part 200. Respondents should demonstrate experience working with public sector or nonprofit clients and the ability to deliver high-quality training across a large, rural region.

Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format by Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. EST. Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. EST to Catherine Fox at cfox@myswva.org

Friends of Southwest Virginia appreciates your interest in supporting the region's tourism workforce and looks forward to reviewing your proposal.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Davis
Executive Director
Friends of Southwest Virginia

**Regional Tourism Workforce Training Initiative
Request for Proposal
Issued by Friends of Southwest Virginia**

I. Background and Introduction

Friends of Southwest Virginia is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving 19 counties and four cities across Southwest Virginia. Friends works in partnership with local governments, tourism organizations, and regional stakeholders to strengthen the region’s economy through tourism, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, and the creative economy.

A strong, knowledgeable, and welcoming tourism workforce is essential to the region’s continued growth. Frontline employees and managers play a critical role in shaping visitor experiences, supporting local businesses, and encouraging repeat visitation. Friends of Southwest Virginia is seeking a qualified training partner to support this regional workforce development effort.

II. Project Overview

The Regional Tourism Workforce Training Initiative will deliver structured training opportunities for frontline tourism and hospitality workers across Southwest Virginia. The program should focus on improving customer service skills, strengthening understanding of regional assets and communities, and supporting positive visitor interactions.

Training should be designed to meet the needs of a diverse workforce and be accessible across a large rural geography, using a combination of in-person and hybrid delivery formats to ensure broad participation. The training program should include tiered training tracks tailored to different experience and responsibility levels, including, but not limited to, frontline staff, attraction or visitor center staff, and supervisors or tourism managers. Respondents should propose an approach that ensures training content is relevant, practical, and appropriately scaled for each audience.

III. Project Objectives

The selected contractor will design and deliver a workforce training program that accomplishes the following objectives:

- Strengthen customer service skills among frontline tourism and hospitality workers
- Increase participant knowledge of Southwest Virginia’s communities, attractions, and experiences
- Improve visitor engagement and satisfaction through consistent, high-quality service
- Deliver training content that is tailored to varying roles and experience levels within the tourism and hospitality workforce, including frontline employees and management-level staff.
- Support workforce retention by equipping employees and supervisors with practical tools and strategies
- Encourage peer learning and collaboration across communities and tourism sectors

IV. Scope of Work

The selected respondent will be responsible for the following activities:

1. Curriculum Development

Develop a comprehensive training curriculum focused on customer service excellence, visitor engagement, and regional tourism knowledge, structured to support tiered training tracks based on participant roles and experience levels. The curriculum should be appropriate for a range of roles, including frontline staff, attraction or visitor center staff, and supervisors or tourism managers, and respondents should describe how training content will differ for each audience. Curriculum developed under this project shall be customized for Southwest Virginia and owned by Friends of Southwest Virginia, as further defined in the contract.

2. Training Delivery

Design and deliver training using a combination of in-person and hybrid formats. Training locations should be distributed across the region to maximize accessibility. Respondents should propose a reasonable number of training sessions that balance regional coverage with budget feasibility. The contractor will be responsible for delivering all agreed-upon training sessions, materials, and evaluation documentation in accordance with the approved scope and timeline.

3. Training Materials

Provide participant materials in printed and or digital formats, including training guides, reference materials, and evaluation tools.

4. Program Evaluation

Collect and report participation data and feedback to measure program effectiveness. Evaluation methods may include surveys, attendance tracking, and post-training assessments.

5. Coordination

Coordinate training logistics in collaboration with Friends of Southwest Virginia staff and local partners, including scheduling, locations, and participant outreach. Friends of Southwest Virginia will support outreach and coordination, while the contractor will be responsible for ensuring trainings are effectively scheduled and delivered.

V. Timeline

The program is expected to launch in Spring 2026 and be implemented over a twelve-month period. Respondents should include a proposed timeline with key milestones, including curriculum development, training delivery, and evaluation.

VI. Budget

Respondents must submit a detailed budget with cost breakdowns by task. Budgets should include, at a minimum:

- Curriculum development
- Training delivery
- Materials and supplies
- Travel and lodging, if applicable
- Project management and administration

Proposals should be scaled appropriately for a regional workforce training program delivered over a twelve-month period. Costs must be reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with applicable federal cost principles. Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to, capital purchases, entertainment expenses, gifts, and lobbying activities. All travel costs must follow Friends of Southwest Virginia travel policies and applicable federal guidelines.

VII. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must not exceed 20 pages, excluding appendices, and should be submitted in 8.5 x 11 format.

Proposals should include the following sections:

A. Title Page and Cover Letter

Include the organization's name, address, website, primary contact, and a brief statement of interest.

B. Executive Summary

Provide an overview of the proposed approach to delivering the workforce training initiative.

C. Organizational Qualifications

Describe the organization's experience, capacity, and relevant expertise. Include resumes of key staff and a minimum of three professional references.

D. Relevant Experience

Provide examples of comparable workforce training projects, preferably in tourism, hospitality, or customer service. Describe experience working in rural or multi-community regions. Please provide a minimum of 3 references.

E. Project Approach and Methodology

Describe the proposed curriculum, training methods, delivery formats, and evaluation approach. Identify any anticipated challenges and how they would be addressed.

F. Budget and Timeline

Provide a detailed budget and proposed timeline aligned with the scope of work.

G. Additional Information

Optional section for any additional information or recommendations.

VIII. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Experience delivering workforce training, preferably in tourism or hospitality
- Quality and clarity of the proposed training approach
- Provide documentation necessary to support participation tracking and grant reporting, including attendance records and summary evaluation results.
- Demonstrated understanding of training delivery in rural, multi-community regions
- Capacity to deliver training across a large geographic area
- Proposals that rely exclusively on virtual delivery are not preferred.

- Cost effectiveness and feasibility
- References

IX. Important Dates

- RFP questions deadline: February 18, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. EST
- Proposal submission deadline: March 4, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. EST

X. Proposal Submission

Friends of Southwest Virginia reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, to waive informalities, and to cancel this RFP at any time. This RFP does not obligate Friends of Southwest Virginia to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in preparing a proposal.

Friends of Southwest Virginia may request additional information from respondents for clarification purposes. Failure to provide requested information may result in disqualification

XI. Contract Structure

Friends of Southwest Virginia anticipates awarding one contract under this RFP. The contract will be structured as a fixed-price or not-to-exceed agreement, with payments tied to defined deliverables and milestones. Friends reserves the right to negotiate final scope, deliverables, and budget with the selected respondent prior to contract execution.

XII. Intellectual Property and Ownership

All curriculum, training materials, tools, templates, presentations, recordings, and related work products developed specifically for this project under the resulting contract (“Work Product”) shall be considered a work made for hire and shall be the sole and exclusive property of Friends of Southwest Virginia.

Friends of Southwest Virginia shall retain full ownership rights to use, reproduce, modify, adapt, and distribute the Work Product for future training, internal use, and regional workforce development purposes without restriction.

Contractors may retain ownership of pre-existing proprietary materials; however, any such materials incorporated into the Work Product must be clearly identified in the proposal, and the contractor shall grant Friends of Southwest Virginia a perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive license to use such materials for non-commercial, educational, and workforce development purposes.



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.