



Schuylkill River Greenways NHA

140 College Drive

Pottstown PA 19464

Request for Letters of Interest

Increasing Recreational Opportunities on the Schuylkill River

I. Announcement

The Schuylkill River Greenways NHA (SRG), formerly known as the Schuylkill River Heritage Area is seeking Letters of Interest from private outfitting organizations who are interested in partnering with SRG to establish a recreational hub system connecting various river towns on the Schuylkill River via the water and bike trails. The partnership would involve support and growth of recreational opportunities on the river including kayak and other boat rentals, bike rentals, transportation between hubs and access to food and refreshment.

Letters of Interest are due by December 8, 2017.

II. Scope of Work

Background and History

The Schuylkill River Greenways NHA (SRG) has a long and rich history of being involved with recreational initiatives in southeastern Pennsylvania. Since our founding in 1974, our organization has been committed to preserving and conserving the greenway along the Schuylkill River, creating and building the regional Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) as well as working to return residents, visitors and communities to valuing the river as an important natural and recreational resource for our region.

We have worked with dozens of partners and municipalities up and down the river to complete 65 of the expected 130 mile Schuylkill River Trail. We are also the administrating organization for the state designated Schuylkill River Water Trail, where we work to increase public access to the river, provide user amenities and safety features and also promote the benefits of a healthy watershed.

Over the last five to ten years there has been significant growth in the outdoor recreational industry along the Schuylkill. Over one million people use the Schuylkill River Trail each year, and the SRT was recently named the #1 Urban Trail in America by the USA today. Additionally, each weekend in the summer, hundreds of individuals can be found kayaking, canoeing, tubing and fishing in the river. As a result, many of our communities and river

towns are now recognizing the benefit that the river and the trail brings to their business and residents.

We believe that this growth will only continue as more and more people recognize and fall in love with the Schuylkill River and what this region has to offer recreationally. To that end, we are taking an active role in supporting the infrastructure and programming that will galvanize the increased activity and demand for access and recreation on the river.

Goals for this Project

The SRG is actively seeking to work with a partner to invest in a five year plan to significantly increase recreational opportunities and access to the Schuylkill River and the Schuylkill River Trail. Specifically, SRG is seeking to partner with an outfitter to achieve a concept of connected go-to recreational hubs up and down the river, from which a resident or tourist can easily and consistently rent a kayak, canoe or bicycle and have reasonable access to food and refreshments, and can travel between various locations on the river conveniently and predictably.

The go-to recreational hub concept that the SRG has developed stems from a primary goal in our recently adopted Strategic Plan, Return to the River, <http://www.schuylkillriver.org/Resources/6118/SRHA%20-%20Return%20to%20River%20-%20Strategic%20Plan%202017-2026%20-%20DRAFT%2012-22-16.pdf>, in which our organization seeks to promote connections between the river and our river communities and invest in catalytic projects that promote access to the river.

Within the next five years, the Schuylkill River Trail will be completed all the way from Center City Philadelphia to Reading, and with that connectivity extraordinary opportunities for coordinated recreational activities on the river will exist. Our vision is to work with an outfitter beginning winter/spring of 2018 to create a business plan and begin to make appropriate investments in pilot projects in order to be in the best position to capitalize on the Trail completion and consequent increase in activity on and around the river. The goal is to plan for and support the thoughtful growth of the outfitter organization so that over a five year period the partner has the capacity to provide a coordinated network of recreational opportunities, providing the trifecta of successful river access at several points along the river: a place to rent a bike or boat, a place to enjoy refreshments, and an easy and dependable way to travel between each access point.

Expectations and Project Demands from SRG:

- SRG is seeking to partner with an organization that has or will have the capacity to rent both boats (kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, etc.) and bicycles. SRG anticipates that efforts for the first year of this partnership will concentrate on one central location, to be determined, with the possibility of expanding to other temporary, pop-up locations in the first year. Preferred location will be one in close proximity to the Schuylkill River Trail, a developed launch site on the river, and reasonable proximity to a place to eat and/or drink.
- SRG expects that at a minimum for the first summer of 2018 (May through September) the partner outfitter will provide the above listed services (boat and bicycle rental) every Saturday and Sunday at a consistent location with consistent hours.
- In addition, the partner outfitter will be expected to be the main outfitter supporting the following established SRG programs:

- Pedal & Paddle: Approximately six outings over the summer offering a short bike ride and easy kayak trip to participants, based out of Pottstown or Phoenixville, <http://www.schuylkillriver.org/Detail.aspx?id=5665>
- Bike share programs: Currently SRG offers a free bike share program in several locations, including Pottstown and Hamburg. The partner outfitter will administer and provide the support for this program and incorporate it into the recreational bike rental program. <https://bikeschuylkill.org/>
- The Schuylkill River Sojourn: A seven day river sojourn in early June in which approximately 220 participants paddle from Schuylkill Haven to Philadelphia, with camping and educational programming offered, <http://www.schuylkillriver.org/sojourn.aspx>
- Partner Outings with regional partners: The partner outfitter will assist SRG in designing and providing occasional customized outings (both on trail and on river) with partner non-profit organizations and corporate partners.
- The partner outfitter will work with a paid consultant over the winter of 2017-18 to create a business plan for operations beginning spring 2018 and beyond.
- An important aspect of the business plan will be providing different offerings for residents and tourists in terms of recreational options, including connectivity between access points by shuttle, van, or valet service.
- Planning for connection between sites must take access to food, refreshment and entertainment into consideration. This may involve coordinating with existing establishments or food trucks or exploring the possibility of supplying provisions directly.
- Outfitting organizations who have a strong record of and capability to execute successful marketing programs will be favored.

Support Provided by SRG: SRG can offer the following support to the selected partner outfitter:

- Funding for a business plan, to be completed in the winter of 2018 in the amount of \$30,000.
- Funding for a contract to administer and incorporate the current bike share program for 2018 in the amount of \$10,000.
- Access to and use of an inventory of approximately 30 to 40 cruiser bicycles in good condition.
- Funding to run the Pedal and Paddle program for 2018 in the amount of \$6,000.
- Funding to provide outfitting support for the 2018 Schuylkill River Sojourn in the amount of \$10,000.
- Funding to support the initiation of programming pursuant to the recommendations of the business plan and the commencement of the connected go-to recreational hub concept, including the incorporation of a shuttle, van or valet service. The funding to support the transportation component is in the amount of \$10,000, funding to support new programming will be determined as recommended in the plan.
- SRG will also provide technical assistance and advice, logistical support and support in working with and communicating with our many non-profit, government and corporate partners.
- SRG will support the partner outfitter in marketing and promoting events and offerings to the well-established SRG membership and audience.

III. Letter of Interest Requirements

We ask that respondents to this request for Letters of Interest prepare their response in a format corresponding to the following sections. Two (2) hard copies of the Letter of Interest are required, as well as an electronic submission addressed to both eschaefer@schuylkillriver.org and tfenichel@schuylkillriver.org .

1. Include the name of organization, address, telephone number, email address, name and title of contact person, name of staff and/or officers in the company.
2. Please provide a brief overview of your organization and a listing of your firm's most comparable projects and partnerships. Describe your experience in providing the type of programming and business planning in which you have experience. Please include any familiarity or experience your organization might have with nature based and heritage tourism and educationally based recreational programming
3. Describe your organization's proposed approach to this five year vision, including a timeline that you believe is realistic. Please include such items as staffing, marketing, location scouting, permitting, communications with SRG and outreach to other partners (such as food and refreshment providers).
4. Describe any experience and familiarity your organization may have working with and programming with the Schuylkill River Trail, the Schuylkill River, and/or SRG.
5. Explain any suggested additions or adjustments you would like to see to the proposed vision of a connected system of go-to recreational hubs.

IV. Selection Process

Evaluation Criteria

1. Background, demonstrated experience and organizational capacity will be key factors in the selection process.
2. Demonstrated performance of the individuals proposed by the firm to perform services and any subconsultants the firm would propose.
3. How well the potential partner organization understands the nature of the proposed vision and the nature of the mission of SRG.
4. Quality of the letter of interest and level of innovative but realistic approach contained therein.
5. During the planning phase of this initiative, the partner outfitter will be expected to work collaboratively with SRG and a consultant to develop a business plan. Experience, availability and receptiveness to working within such an arrangement will be considered.

Selection and Award

On the basis of the responses received and qualifications of submittals, several potential partner outfitters may be invited to be interviewed and make a formal presentation to the staff and board members of SRG. Those organizations will be given at least a week to prepare for the presentation.

Two (2) hard copies of the Letter of Interest and any attachments should be delivered to SRG's offices by **DECEMBER 8, 2017**. In addition, an electronic version of the submission should be sent to both Elaine Schaefer at eschaefer@schuylkillriver.org and Tim Fenchel at tfenichel@schuylkillriver.org.

Hard copies to:

Elaine Schaefer, Executive Director

Schuylkill River Greenways NHA
140 College Drive Pottstown PA 19464

ALL LETTERS OF INTEREST MUST BE RECEIVED BY 4 PM ON DECEMBER 8, 2017

After selection of a partner outfitter, the SRG will negotiate a contract with the selected organization to determine final scope and terms of the partnership.

Questions may be directed to Elaine Schaefer, (484) 945-0200 or eschafer@schuylkillriver.org.