

Request for Proposals



Branding & Wayfinding Plan for the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and Strategic Implementation Plan for Friends of the Riverfront

RFP Issued: March 23, 2026

RFP Due: May 5, 2026



Funded By: PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Local Philanthropic Funders

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Project Background

Submittal Deadline: May 5, 2026

Intro

Friends of the Riverfront (Friends) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building, maintaining, and promoting the Three Rivers Heritage & Water Trails and advancing a vision of interconnected land and water trail networks throughout Allegheny County. Over the past 35 years, Friends has played a central role in transforming Pittsburgh’s riverfronts into vibrant public spaces that support transportation, recreation, economic development, environmental stewardship, and community connection.

Friends of the Riverfront is seeking proposals from qualified, multidisciplinary consultant teams to support two related but distinct planning efforts. As the trail continues to grow throughout the county and Friends’ presence and role shifts in projects, we see these two projects as an opportunity to re-establish our organization in line with the trail identity.

1. **Development of a comprehensive Branding & Wayfinding Plan for the Three Rivers Heritage Trail** that gives this trail a regional identity, signage, and wayfinding plan for Allegheny County.
2. **Development of a new Strategic Implementation Plan** that positions Friends of the Riverfront to lead the planning, implementation, stewardship, and long-term sustainability of a connected, countywide trail system.

Project Background

Branding and Wayfinding

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail was initially established in 1991, as a catalyst for riverfront redevelopment in the city of Pittsburgh. Since the early 90s the trail has expanded to not only a regionally recreational asset, but an alternative transportation option. It has grown beyond the city and to 35 miles. The plan will address three primary areas: navigation, education, and safety as it assesses the existing system and plans for the trail network's future. The Three Rivers Heritage Trail is a non-linear trail which can confuse both novice and experienced users. Our trail spans across many municipalities; this paired with the lack of signage only aids in confusion and can create a frustrating experience for our users. Clearly marked and accessible signage plays a key role in positive user experience and is vital to encouraging users of all experience levels. Friends will engage local stakeholders and community representatives to ensure a wide array of input and representation.

Organizational Background

Friends of the Riverfront was founded in 1991 and works in close partnership with the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and local municipalities, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and numerous community partners. The organization leads trail planning and development, supports capital projects, coordinates maintenance and stewardship, and advocates for equitable access to riverfronts and trails.

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail currently spans more than 35 miles along Pittsburgh’s riverfronts and continues to expand through new segments, connections, and partner-led projects. As the trail system grows in scale and complexity, Friends of the Riverfront seeks to strengthen both the **user experience** (through consistent wayfinding and branding) and its **organizational capacity and strategy** to deliver on an ambitious regional vision.

Friends’ annual operating budget is approximately \$1 million, in addition to capital project funding that fluctuates year to year. Friends employes approximately 10 staff members, in addition to casual and seasonal workers, as well as a 1000+ volunteer network.

General Requirements and Scope of Work

Scope 1: Branding & Wayfinding

1. Executive Summary (Branding & Wayfinding)

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail (the “Trail”) is a premier regional asset that connects communities, celebrates history, and promotes outdoor recreation. This proposal outlines a comprehensive plan to strengthen the trail’s identity, improve navigation, and enhance user experience through three integrated focus areas: **branding, wayfinding signage design, and implementation mapping.**

2. Project Goals (Branding & Wayfinding)

- Create new branding and guidelines for the Three Rivers Heritage Trail (the “Trail”).
 - Design a user-friendly, visually consistent wayfinding signage system that will improve navigation and decision making at key points along the Trail.
 - Support equitable access and ADA-compliant design.
 - Reinforce that the Trail is a regional asset and destination, while also serving as an everyday transportation option.
 - Provide a strategic implementation plan for signage placement across the trail network that is realistic, phased, and fundable.
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3. Scope of Work (Branding & Wayfinding)

Focus Area 1: Branding the Trail

Objectives:

Create a unified brand that reflects heritage, community, and natural beauty. Build community pride and support around the trail as a community asset.

Key Activities:

- Review existing wayfinding, signage, branding, and prior studies.
- Stakeholder engagement sessions, including with municipalities and agencies, to define brand values.
- Develop visual identity (logo, color palette, typography, graphic elements, messaging).
- Create of brand guidelines for consistent applications.
- Mockups for key touchpoints (trailhead signs, brochures, digital assets).
- Public campaign for the selection of trail logo. This phase should include digital vote, on-trail campaign, public and media outreach (Some of this outreach can be done by Friends of the Riverfront Staff)

Deliverables:

- Brand identity package.
- Comprehensive brand guidelines document.

Focus Area 2: Designing the Wayfinding Signage Family**Objectives:**

Develop a signage system that enhances navigation and user experience.

Key Activities:

- Audit existing signage related to the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and Interpretive Signage and identify gaps.
- Define signage hierarchy (trailheads, directional, interpretive, regulatory).
- Design concepts for each sign type, ensuring ADA compliance and durability.
- Material and fabrication specifications.
- Signage design manual for future consistency.

Deliverables:

- Existing conditions and opportunities summary
- Signage family design manual.
- Detailed design specifications for fabrication.

Focus Area 3: Implementation Mapping**Objectives:**

Provide a clear roadmap for signage installation.

Key Activities:

- Inventory and assess existing trail conditions and decision points in a GIS-based system.
- Map proposed signage locations in a GIS-based system.
- Prioritize locations based on user flow and points of interest.
- Develop phased implementation plan with cost estimates.

Deliverables:

- GIS-based location maps.
- Phased rollout plan with budget estimates.

Assumptions (Branding & Wayfinding)

- Stakeholder input will be conducted during all phases.
- Trail data (user counts), GIS files, and prior signage designs will be provided to the consultant from Friends of the Riverfront.
- Fabrication and installation costs should be included, but implementation will occur outside of this project.

Workflow Steps (Branding & Wayfinding)

- 1. Phase 1 – Branding Development:**
 - Stakeholder workshops → Logo & identity design → Brand guidelines.
- 2. Phase 2 – Signage Design:**
 - Audit existing signage → Develop hierarchy → Design prototypes → Finalize manual.
- 3. Phase 3 – Implementation Mapping:**
 - GIS mapping → Location prioritization → Phased rollout plan.

Scope 2 – Strategic Implementation

1. Executive Summary (Strategic Implementation)

Friends of the Riverfront is seeking to develop a forward-looking Strategic Implementation Plan that establishes the organizational strategy and roadmap needed to operationalize a bold, countywide vision for trail connectivity in Allegheny County. This effort will help Friends determine how it must evolve internally to implement, steward, and promote a rapidly expanding trail system over the next decade.

This strategic work is intentionally sequenced with the comprehensive Wayfinding and Branding Plan currently underway for the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. While the wayfinding effort will define how the trail presents itself to the public, the Strategic Implementation Plan will define how Friends of the Riverfront organizes, staffs, partners, and operates to deliver, maintain, and promote that system as it grows. Aligning these initiatives ensures that the organization’s external identity and internal structure advance in lockstep—setting clear expectations for what the trail is, how it functions, and the role Friends plays in stewarding it.

Friends and its partners have completed extensive, data-driven planning to advance regional trail connectivity, including the Three Rivers Heritage Trail Economic Impact Study, the Allegheny County Trail Fund Feasibility Study, the Allegheny Trails Gap Analysis, integration with the City of Pittsburgh’s Bike(+) Plan, and the countywide Allegheny Green Web Vision. At the same time, Friends has advanced more than 35 miles of trail through planning, design, engineering, and construction, with several complex, high-priority segments now positioned for final design and construction.

The Strategic Implementation project should be focused on developing the internal strategy for how to implement this bold vision at scale. Key questions remain regarding what formally constitutes the Three Rivers Heritage Trail as it expands across jurisdictions, and what Friends' responsibilities should be in developing, maintaining, stewarding, and promoting this growing regional asset.

The Strategic Implementation Plan will translate years of planning and design into on-the-ground progress, positioning Friends to leverage major public and philanthropic funding, guide coordinated action among partners, and deliver a connected, equitable, and resilient trail network that strengthens mobility, recreation, environmental outcomes, and economic opportunity across the city and county.

2. Project Goals (Strategic Implementation)

- Establish a clear, implementation-focused strategy that integrates trail development, stewardship, and promotion, and provides a practical roadmap for organizational decision-making.
- Define the scope and identity of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail Network as it expands across jurisdictions and partners.
- Clarify Friends of the Riverfront's role within the regional trail ecosystem, including responsibilities related to planning, implementation, stewardship, and promotion, and where leadership should reside with public agencies and partner organizations.
- Align organizational capacity—including staffing, systems, governance, and partnerships—with near-term implementation demands and long-term sustainability and maintenance needs.
- Develop a strategic framework for sequencing projects to capitalize on time-sensitive funding and construction opportunities while ensuring consistent stewardship and a high-quality user experience.
- Strengthen stewardship and volunteer-based programs that support trail care, safety, and overall user experience.
- Establish actionable priorities, metrics, and decision-making frameworks that support sustainable organizational growth, accountability, and regional visibility.

3. Scope of Work (Strategic Implementation)

Anticipated Tasks:

- Design and manage the process from start to finish
- Work with an advisory team consisting of staff and board members (approx. 8 people)
- 15 stakeholder interviews (board, staff, volunteers, public partners, funders, and community partners)
- Assess organizational strengths, gaps, and opportunities related to trail development, stewardship, and promotion
- Analyze the regional trail development and maintenance landscape, including partner roles and responsibilities
- Develop a strategic alliance matrix to identify partner organizations for closer strategic alignment and partnership

- Evaluate existing stewardship programs (including volunteer engagement and maintenance partnerships)
- Evaluate trail promotion, communications, and public engagement strategies
- Facilitate board and staff workshops focused on program implementation and organizational alignment
- Develop strategic priorities and implementation pathways across trail development, stewardship, and promotion
- Identify organizational capacity needs (staffing, systems, governance, partnerships)
- Develop metrics, timelines, and accountability structures
- Prepare final Strategic Implementation Plan (print-ready and digital formats)

Deliverables (Strategic Implementation)

- Summary of findings and strategic context
- Clear vision and integrated implementation framework
- Strategic priorities with associated actions for trail development, stewardship, and promotion
- Organizational and capacity recommendations
- Metrics and evaluation framework
- Final Strategic Implementation Plan (print-ready and digital formats)

Complete Budget for Scope 1 & 2

Proposals should include a detailed budget and fee structure for each of the scope(s) separately.

Budgets should clearly identify:

- Total project cost by scope
- Breakdown budget task
- Hourly rates by staff role
- Anticipated reimbursable expenses (if any)

Budget for scope of work 1 (Branding and Wayfinding) should not exceed \$150,000

(Funding for this scope is provide through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources)

Budget for Scope of Work 2 (Strategic Implementation) should not exceed \$50,000

Complete Project Timeline (Branding & Wayfinding/Strategic Planning)

Procurement Process:

March 23, 2026 - RFP Issued

May 5, 2026 - RFP Due Date (5PM)

April 2, 2026 – Pre-Bid Meeting (Microsoft Teams)

May 18, 2026 - Short List Notification

June 5, 2026 - Consultant Interview Conclusion

June 8, 2028 - Notification of Selection

Organization Qualifications and Required Submittals for Proposal

Submission Instructions

One digital version must be received by Friends of the Riverfront by May 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM. All submissions should be sent to Courtney Mahronich Vita at courtney@friendsoftheriverfront.org.

Pre-Bid Meeting

Friends of the Riverfront will host a pre-bid meeting on April 2, 2026 at 1pm – 2:30, to answer consultant questions. This meeting will be held via Teams. Please register at [this link](#) for login information.

Questions

Please submit any addition questions **after** the pre-bid meeting in writing to Courtney at courtney@friendsoftheriverfront.org.

Conditions of Proposal

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal responding to this RFP will be the responsibility of the consultant and will not be reimbursed by Friends of the Riverfront.

Proposal Format

Proposals **should not exceed** 35 pages in length and should be typed 8.5 x 11-inch pages with margins no smaller than 3/4 inch. Font size should be no smaller than 11 points. (Page count does not include title page or nondiscrimination disclosure)

Notification of Award

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

Consultant will prepare a written agreement for execution between the consultant and Friends of the Riverfront. The general provisions of this agreement, the final product and requirements placed on the project shall be made a part of this agreement. The consultant shall have authorization to proceed upon a written notice from the Friends of the Riverfront.

Proposal Outline

- A statement indicating your understanding of the work to be performed;
- The proposal must describe how the consultant proposes to complete all tasks identified in the Scope of Work;
- An affirmation of the firm's qualifications for professionally and expertly conducting the work as understood; This should include staff qualifications and past projects;
- List of at least 3 prior customers for who related work was performed with contact information;
- The firm's contact person concerning the proposal and a telephone number where that person can be reached; and,

- A clear statement of the relationship that the firm and/or principal(s) of the firm have with, or knowledge of, any officials or employees of Friends of the Riverfront and the nature of this relationship or knowledge.

Failure to state and fully disclose any of the information required in the letter of transmittal shall be grounds for Friends of the Riverfront to reject the firm's proposals and will be grounds for immediate cancellation of any contract entered into between Friends of the Riverfront and the firm without payment of work completed.

Profile of Firm

This should be a brief statement indicating the firm's experience in conducting work of the nature sought by this RFP. Advertising brochures or website addresses on the firm may be submitted as a part of this profile as long as they specifically address the experience of the firm related to the work to be performed. Additionally, this profile should include:

- The location of the firm's office that will provide the proposed service;
- Resumes of individual consultants or key employees proposed to conduct the work and the specific duties of each consultant or employee relative to the work;
- A brief reference list of other municipalities, county or state agencies served by the firm with contact names and telephone numbers;
- Any other information describing the office may be included if it relates to the capabilities and expertise of the firm in doing comparable work.
- MBE/WBE participation and subcontracting including ownership of the firm, employment levels of minorities and women in the firm, use of minorities and women on this project, and use of minority or women-owned businesses as subcontractors.

Explanation of Work to be Performed

The proposal must include a detailed description of the procedures and methods you propose to use to complete the work requested by Friends of the Riverfront. This is important because the methods and procedures proposed will receive primary consideration in evaluating your proposal. Examples of similar work will be helpful and may be included.

Work Schedule

Provide a project work schedule that includes time frames for each major work element, target dates for public meetings, and dates for completion of draft and final documents.

Cost

Full cost information should be provided that shows the minimum number of hours to be provided by each person assigned to the proposed work by the firm's organizational levels. The proposed hourly rate for billing shall be included for each person. The hours of work and cost shall be itemized for each major work element of the proposal. An itemized estimate of reimbursable expenses must be included. The total amount of maximum payment must be stated.

The cost shall be based on the hours of work provided and “out-of-pocket expenses” and shall not exceed the maximum cost proposed unless an amendment to the contract is negotiated and approved by the proper authority of Friends of the Riverfront.

Your method of billing must be indicated. The preferred practice of Friends of the Riverfront is to pay for this type of consulting service through bi-monthly billing and receipt of the Final report.

F. Other Submittals **(Required)**

Additionally, documents attached as appendices to this RFP *shall be fully executed and returned with the proposal* as follows:

- Nondiscrimination Certification (from proposing firm and any subcontractors)

Failure to follow guidance could result in proposal disqualification.

Evaluation Criteria

Submittal Evaluation Criteria

All prospective bidders must provide an email address to which responses to questions may be sent. Should the consultant have questions concerning the RFP they must be in writing and received by the Friends of the Riverfront (courtney@friendsoftheriverfront.org). All responses to questions will be in writing. Friends of the Riverfront will make every effort to provide the written responses in a timely fashion, but failure to do so will not affect the sole authority of Friends of the Riverfront to complete the RFP process.

Submittals received by Friends of the Riverfront will be evaluated according to the criteria listed below:

1. Specialized experience and competence of the consultant, including principal firms, joint venture partners, and sub-consultants, considering the types of service required; and the strength of the key personnel who will be dedicated to this contract;
2. Appropriateness of approach;
3. The organization, presentation, and content of the submittal;
4. Proposed methods and overall strategic plan to provide the services in a timely and competent manner;
5. Knowledge and understanding of the local environment and a local presence for interfacing with Friends of the Riverfront;
6. A willingness to make meaningful wide-range subcontracting and employment opportunities available to all interested and qualified firms and individuals in the market place.

Appendix B. - Nondiscrimination Certification

Nondiscrimination Certification for Friends of the Riverfront - Branding & Wayfinding Plan for the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and Strategic Implementation Plan for Friends of the Riverfront

NONDISCRIMINATION

Nondiscrimination and equal opportunity are the policy of the Commonwealth/Friends of the Riverfront in all its decisions, programs, and activities. The purpose is to achieve the aims of the United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions. Executive Order 1972-1, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, Act of October 27, 1955 (PL. 744), as amended, (43 P.S. & 951, et. seq.), and (43 P.S. & 153), by assuring that all persons are accorded equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, religious creed, handicap, ancestry, national origin, age or sex.

During the term of this contract, the Contractor agrees as follows:

- A. Contractor shall not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, independent contractor, or any other person because of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, or handicap. The contractor shall take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees or agents are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, or handicap. Such affirmative action shall include but is not limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer; recruitment or recruitment advertising; layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training. The contractor shall post in conspicuous places, available to employees, agents, applicants for employment, and other persons, a notice to be provided by the contracting agency setting forth the provision of this nondiscrimination certification.
- B. Contractor shall, in advertisements or requests for employment placed by it or on its behalf, state all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religious creed, handicap, ancestry, national origin, age, or sex.
- C. The contractor shall send each labor union or workers' representative with whom it has a collective bargaining agreement or other contract or understanding, a notice advising said labor union or worker's representative of its commitment to this nondiscrimination certification. Similar notice shall be sent to every other source of recruitment regularly utilized by the bidder.
- D. It shall be no defense to a finding of noncompliance with this nondiscrimination certification that the contractor has delegated some of its employment practices to any union, training program, or other sources of recruitment that prevents it from meeting its obligations. However, if the evidence indicates that the contractor was not on notice of the third-party discrimination or made a good faith effort to correct it, such factor shall be considered in mitigation in determining appropriate sanctions.

- E. Where the practices of a union or any training program or other source of recruitment will result in the exclusion of minority group persons, so that contractor will be unable to meet its obligations under this nondiscrimination certification, the contractor shall then employ and fill vacancies through other nondiscriminatory employment procedures.
- F. The contractor shall comply with all state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination in hiring or employment opportunities. In the event of the contractor’s noncompliance with the nondiscrimination certification or with any such laws, this contract may be terminated or suspended, in whole or part, and the contractor may be declared temporarily ineligible for further Friends of the Riverfront contracts, and other sanctions may be imposed, and remedies invoked.
- G. The contractor shall furnish all necessary employment documents and records to, and permit access to its books, records, and accounts by Friends of the Riverfront for purposes of investigation to ascertain compliance with the provisions of this certification if requested. If the contractor does not possess documents or records reflecting the necessary information requested, it shall furnish such information on reporting forms supplied by Friends of the Riverfront.
- H. The contractor shall actively recruit minority and women subcontractors or subcontractors with substantial minority and women representation among their employees.
- I. The contractor shall include the provisions of this nondiscrimination certification in every subcontract so that such provisions will be binding upon each subcontractor.
- J. The contractor’s obligations under this clause are limited to the contractor’s facilities within Pennsylvania or, where the contract is for the purchase of goods manufactured outside of Pennsylvania, the facilities at which such goods are produced.

Name of Contractor	
Name of Authorized Official	
Title	
Date	

Name of Contractor	
Name of Authorized Official	
Title	
Date	

Name of Contractor	
Name of Authorized Official	
Title	
Date	

DCNR NONDISCRIMINATION/SEXUAL HARASSMENT CLAUSE

1. **Representations.** The Grantee represents that it is presently in compliance with and will remain in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies relating to nondiscrimination and sexual harassment for the term of the agreement. The Grantee shall, upon request and within the time periods requested by the Commonwealth, furnish all necessary employment documents and records, including EEO-1 reports, and permit access to its books, records, and accounts by the Commonwealth for the purpose of ascertaining compliance with provisions of this Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Clause.
2. **Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment Obligations.** The Grantee shall not:
 - a. in any manner discriminate in the hiring of any employee(s) for the performance of the activities required under this agreement or any subgrant agreement, contract, or subcontract, by reason of race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or in violation of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (“PHRA”) and applicable federal laws, against any citizen of this Commonwealth who is qualified and available to perform the work to which the employment relates.
 - b. in any manner discriminate by reason of race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or in violation of the PHRA and applicable federal laws, against or intimidate any of its employees.
 - c. in any manner discriminate by reason of race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or in violation of the PHRA and applicable federal laws, in the provision of services under this agreement or any subgrant agreement, contract, or subcontract.
 - d. in any manner discriminate by reason of race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or in violation of PHRA and applicable federal laws, against any subgrantee, contractor, subcontractor, or supplier who is qualified to perform the work to which this agreement relates.
 - e. in any manner discriminate against employees by reason of participation in or decision to refrain from participating in labor activities protected under the Public Employee Relations Act, Pennsylvania Labor Relations Act, or National Labor Relations Act, as applicable, and to the extent determined by entities charged with the Acts’ enforcement and shall comply with any

provision of law establishing organizations as employees' exclusive representatives.

3. **Establishment of Grantee Policy.** The Grantee shall establish and maintain a written nondiscrimination and sexual harassment policy that complies with the applicable law and these Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment provisions and shall inform its employees in writing of the policy. The policy must contain a provision that states that sexual harassment will not be tolerated and employees who practice it will be disciplined. For the entire period of this agreement, the Grantee shall: (1) post its written nondiscrimination and sexual harassment policy or these Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment provisions conspicuously in easily accessible and well-lighted places customarily frequented by employees at or near where the grant activities are performed; or (2) provide electronic notice of the policy or this clause to its employees not less than annually.
4. **Notification of Violations.** The Grantee's obligations pursuant to these provisions are ongoing from the effective date and through the termination date of the agreement. Accordingly, the Grantee shall notify the Commonwealth if, at any time during the term of this agreement, it becomes aware of any actions or occurrences that would result in violation of these provisions.
5. **Cancellation or Termination of Agreement.** The Commonwealth may cancel or terminate this agreement and all money due or to become due under this agreement may be forfeited for a violation of the terms and conditions of these Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment provisions. In addition, the granting agency may proceed with debarment or suspension and may place the Grantee in the Contractor Responsibility File.
6. **Subgrant Agreements, Contracts, and Subcontracts.** The Grantee shall include these Nondiscrimination/Sexual Harassment provisions in its subgrant agreements, contracts, and subcontracts with all subgrantees, contractors, and subcontractors providing goods or services under this agreement. The incorporation of these provisions in the Grantor's subgrants, contracts, or subcontracts does not create privity of contract between the Commonwealth and any subgrantee, contractor, or subcontractor, and no third-party beneficiaries are created by those provisions. If the Grantee becomes aware of a subgrantee's, contractor's, or subcontractor's violation of these provisions, the Grantee shall use its best efforts to ensure the subgrantee's, contractor's, or subcontractor's compliance with these provisions.