



Ohio History Connection Request for Proposals for a Feasibility Study January 3, 2024

Project Overview

The Ohio History Connection is seeking a qualified independent consulting firm for the purposes of conducting a feasibility study for Ohio's only UNESCO World Heritage site, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. We are looking for a partner who is experienced with planning and conducting a fundraising feasibility study and is familiar with the cultural heritage environment. The plan should assess our current situation, potential fundraising capacity for a campaign and make recommendations on a strategy to maximize our fundraising efforts. A project budget, timeline and action items should be clearly identified.

Background

On September 19, 2023, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks achieved UNESCO's World Heritage list designation. This makes these sites Ohio's first World Heritage site and the United States' 25th site.

Nearly two thousand years ago, American Indians created an awe-inspiring culture rooted in the land we now call Ohio. They built vast earthworks as gathering places that aligned to the sun and moon. People came from near and far, traveling across land and sea to join together. Here, earth, water, sky and people met in sacred connection.

For over a decade, The Ohio History Connection and the National Park Service's Hopewell Culture National Historical Park have led a collaborative effort with stakeholders from across Ohio and the United States to seek UNESCO World Heritage inscription for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. This effort has culminated in creating Ohio's first World Heritage site, comprising earthworks in Warren, Ross and Licking counties.

The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks includes the following sites:

- Newark Earthworks Octagon and Great Circle in Licking County (Ohio History Connection)
- Fort Ancient Earthworks and Nature Preserve in Warren County (Ohio History Connection)
- Five earthworks at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ross County: Mound City, Hopeton Earthworks, Hopewell Mound Group, Seip Earthworks, and High Bank Earthworks (National Park Service)

The inscription addresses the cultural significance of the earthwork sites and includes a comprehensive plan for joint management of the World Heritage property by the two owners (Ohio History Connection and National Park Service). It outlines partnership with American Indian Tribal Nations that were forced to leave Ohio, and collaboration with local governments and organizations in the communities where the sites are located. Tourism and economic impact information has been shared with the three site counties to illustrate how World Heritage status will benefit each and what the counties can do to expand and enhance this authentic Ohio experience for travelers. An Economic Impact Study was completed in partnership with the Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs in 2018, which highlighted the community empowerment strength of the World Heritage designation within the communities of Licking, Ross and Warren counties.

About the Ohio History Connection

The Ohio History Connection, formerly the Ohio Historical Society, is a statewide history organization with the mission to spark discovery of Ohio's stories. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization chartered in 1885, the Ohio History Connection carries out history services for Ohio and its citizens focused on preserving and sharing the state's history. This includes housing the State Historic Preservation Office, the official state archives and the Community Engagement Department and managing more than 50 sites and museums across Ohio.

Mission: We spark discovery of Ohio's stories. Embrace the present, share the past and transform the future.

Our Core Values:

Relevance: Connecting our lives to Ohio's history.

Inclusivity: Representing all Ohioans and all descendants of Ohio's historic communities

Authenticity: Valuing artifacts, oral histories and documented stories of history

Stewardship: Protecting the evidence of Ohio's history and upholding 21st century best practices for public history and historic preservation

Working Together: Pursuing partnerships and sharing authority and responsibility

Current Situation

We believe that we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to raise funds and awareness for the UNESCO World Heritage list's most recent inscription, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. Since this program has global significance, the Ohio History Connection wants to ensure the appropriate strategy and resources are allocated for this effort.

Objectives

Our goal in conducting this feasibility study is to understand what the potential is for a fundraising campaign and to gauge the level of support for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. The feasibility study report should address the following:

- The Ohio History Connection's real and perceived strengths and weaknesses in fundraising
- The community's perception of the Ohio History Connection and the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks
- Identification of potential leaders in the fundraising effort
- Names of potential major donors/funders and what their interests might be
- Determination of the amount of money that can be reasonably raised
- Feedback on the preliminary Case for Support to identify strengths and weaknesses
- Other major fundraising campaigns in the area that might compete for the same donors
- Possible alternatives for raising funds needed to complete the project
- Roles and responsibilities of Board Members, staff and volunteers in a campaign
- Appropriate timeframe for both the campaign planning study and the fundraising itself

Proposal Requirements

Firm Information

Provide the firm's name, address, website URL and telephone number. Include the name, title and e-mail address of the individual who will serve as firm's primary contact. Include a brief description and history of your firm.

Experience and References

Proposals should include a list of 3-5 references for similar projects that your firm has completed.

Project Approach

Please explain your project approach, style and process.

Schedule and Timeline

Proposals should include the proposed work schedule, timeline and deliverables resulting from the feasibility study. The contract is expected to begin on February 26, 2024, and should be completed by May 30, 2024.

Cost

Proposals must include the estimated cost for all work related to tasks and deliverables outlined in the Schedule and Timeline.

Required Deliverables

- **Situation analysis** that includes opportunities and challenges.
- **List of key donor prospects and their potential interest, including giving range.**
- **Case for support** for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, including key areas of the case for support that resonate or hinder.
- **Presentation of findings** to the Board of Trustees and key staff.
- **A written fundraising campaign plan** utilizing all of the data that has been collected.

Project Contact

Please contact Ann Ruege, Chief Development Officer with any questions you may have regarding the project or RFP.

Deadline

Please submit your proposal to Ann Ruege, Chief Development Officer, by 12:00 PM on January 29, 2024. Email or hard copy is accepted with "Fundraising Feasibility Proposal" in the subject line.

Ann Ruege, Chief Development Officer

Phone: (614) 297-2342

Email: aruege@ohiohistory.org

Ohio History Connection

800 E. 17th Avenue

Columbus, OH 43211

Anticipated Timeline

The Ohio History Connection would like to conclude the feasibility study by May 30, 2024. The preliminary schedule is as follows:

Issue Request for Proposal	January 3, 2024
Questions from potential consultants accepted through	January 15, 2024
Responses to questions sent out by	January 19, 2024
Proposal due	January 29, 2024
Organization Announces decision	February 12, 2024

Consultant begins work

February 26, 2024

Consultant Selection

Proposals will be evaluated and scored by a committee set up by the Ohio History Connection, including members of the Board of Trustees, staff and community partners. The committee will have sole discretion based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience of individual(s) to be assigned to the project
- Quality, clarity, and approach to the opportunity