

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Update to National Historic Landmarks Theme Study
Underground Railroad
November 2021

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking the services of a qualified historian through a cooperative agreement with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers to produce a final publication ready draft to replace the National Historic Landmark Theme Study [Underground Railroad Resources in the U.S. \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/underground-railroad-resources) (2000), according to the requirements in this Request for Proposals. The contract will be administered by NCSHPO and the work prepared for and completed in coordination with the NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program.

Interested historians should submit a complete proposal and cost estimate (specified below) in response to this RFP to the NCSHPO no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, December 17, 2021. Electronic copies of proposals may be directed to Ms. Sharon Smith, NCSHPO Business Manager, at smith@ncshpo.org.

Project Background

The primary purpose of the National Historic Landmark Theme Study is to assist in the identification of places associated with the Underground Railroad that are eligible for National Historic Landmark designation and for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1990, the United States Congress authorized the National Park Service to conduct a study of the resources available nationally for the interpretation of the Underground Railroad. A special resource study published in 1995 determined that there were sufficient resources available and suggested a variety of approaches for commemoration of the Underground Railroad. Operating under the 1990 legislation, the National Park Service has produced educational materials and technical support for researchers. An Underground Railroad Handbook was published in February 1997, followed by "Exploring a Common Past: Researching the Underground Railroad." A National Historic Landmark theme study entitled "Underground Railroad Resources in the United States" was published in September 2000.

In 1998, Congress passed the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act creating the Network to Freedom program. Through collaboration with local, state and federal partners, as well as individuals and organizations, the Network to Freedom honors, promotes, and preserves the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight. A key component of the Network to Freedom program is the Network of historic sites, programs, and facilities

with a documented connection to the Underground Railroad. Currently 698 members have been listed in 39 states, DC and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through these stories documented in local communities throughout the country, a new understanding of the Underground Railroad as a resistance movement centered around the experience of self-liberating enslaved people has emerged.

Scholarship in topics related to the Underground Railroad has blossomed in the twenty-four years since the first Underground Railroad Handbook was published. The Network to Freedom has recently sponsored an updated handbook of essays with the latest scholarship that is currently in progress. In the twenty-one years since the original "Underground Railroad Resources in the United States" National Historic Landmark Theme Study was published, many new sites and stories have come to light and the scholarship on the topic has evolved. The updated theme study prepared under this contract will provide an updated historic context for the development of nominations for the Underground Railroad theme and will identify places that may be eligible for National Historic landmark designation.

Required Consultant Qualifications

The selected consultant should be a qualified historian with demonstrated experience in successfully preparing National Historic Landmark nominations and/or theme studies, or be skilled in developing historic contexts, evaluating historic significance using NHL criteria, and developing registration requirements for nationally significant properties, and have the capability to update and revise the National Historic Landmark theme study entitled "Underground Railroad Resources in the United States" which was published in September 2000.

The consultant, at minimum, shall meet the following qualification requirements:

- a) Meet the qualifications for a GS-0170-11/12 Historian as established by the Federal government's Office of Personnel and Management, and approved by NPS staff in its Washington Support Office.
- b) Have demonstrated knowledge of the NHL Program and nomination process, as well as the ways in which theme studies are structured. Previous experience preparing National Historic Landmark theme studies is preferred. Knowledge and experience in developing historic context related to African American history in the United States is required. Experience researching and studying the history of the Underground Railroad is highly desired

If the consultant comprises a consulting firm or team, then a Principal Investigator must be designated for the project. The Principal Investigator must meet the minimum qualification requirements specified above, and must agree to be principally responsible for all work conducted by other consultant personnel for the project. The individual selected as the Principal Investigator may not change during the project without prior written approval of NCSHPO and the NPS.

Preference will be given for a team-based approach that includes a subject matter expert with experience researching and writing about Underground Railroad history.

Scope of Work

Coordinate the solicitation of comments from scholars and the public on appropriate updates/revisions that need to be made to the existing theme study. Comments will be solicited from NPS staff, other Federal agencies, officials of state and local governments, Underground Railroad historians and scholars, stewards of Underground Railroad sites, national historic preservation organizations, professional historic preservation practitioners, and the public at-large.

Compile, review, analyze, and discuss with NPS staff comments collected from the solicitation. This activity is expected to involve consideration of a large quantity of comments, and will require the ability to read, interpret, and sort comments related to the NHL Program and the Underground Railroad.

Prepare a substantially complete, updated draft of the National Historic Landmark theme study entitled “Underground Railroad Resources in the U.S. Theme Study” from the current document incorporating comments from stakeholders and guidance provided by NPS staff. Preparation will involve all research and writing necessary to revise the theme study, drafting registration requirements, researching and compiling study lists, and a bibliography, and readying the theme study for final publication, including the selection of photographs and illustrations.

The consultant additionally will be expected to:

- i. Solicit and compile comments from the stakeholders identified above. Provide NPS with a written synopsis of comments that groups common themes and suggestions. Participate in a discussion with NPS and NCSHPO on how the comments will inform the theme study revision.
- ii. Develop an outline with sections and content identified along with preliminary sources for approval by NTF staff.
- iii. Prepare and deliver a preliminary draft of the National Historic Landmarks theme study to NCSHPO and the NPS for review electronically in MS Word format.
- iv. Prepare a revised draft of the National Historic Landmarks theme study in consultation with NTF and NHL staff that appropriately addresses comments received, following NTF and NHL review of the preliminary draft theme study. Additional research may be required to address any questions, comments, or concerns.
- v. Deliver the revised draft of the National Historic Landmarks theme study to NCSHPO and the NPS for review electronically in MS Word format. The NTF Program will send the revised draft theme study to select scholars for peer review.
- vi. Prepare a final National Historic Landmarks theme study following and based on comments received from the peer review, in consultation with NTF and NHL Program staff. This draft will be substantially complete in content and format, including the selection and

placement of photographs and illustrations. Consultant will obtain image permissions and obtaining high resolution electronic copies of images.

- vii. Deliver the final National Historic Landmarks theme study to NCSHPO and the NPS electronically in MS Word format with final editing and formatting for publication by the NTF Program. The theme study will fully comply with Section 508 accessibility standards (<https://www.section508.gov/content/build/create-accessible-documents>) for electronic documents.

Frequent interaction with NPS staff will be required. This interaction will most likely occur via email and video calls.

Proposal Submissions

For evaluation purposes, proposals should provide sufficient information as to assist NCSHPO and the NPS in determining the most qualified consultant for the project. Consultants interested in bidding should submit a written proposal that includes the following elements:

- Name of the individual(s) that would be working on the project and their proposed area(s) of responsibility. If proposing as a firm or project team, describe the team's structure and how it is organized to provide the services requested by this RFP.
- Documentation that the consultant (or principal investigator, if a firm/team) meets the qualifications for a GS-0170-11/12 Historian as established by the Federal government's Office of Personnel and Management.
- Description of the specific, relevant education, experience, and qualifications of the principal Investigator and any consultant staff, demonstrating knowledge of the NHL Program and National Historic Landmark nomination process and history of African Americans and the Underground Railroad.
- Information on projects of a similar nature and of significant work completed by the consultant in the past five (5) years. Include specific dates and types of services provided, and highlight success in meeting work schedules, project budgets, and product deadlines.
- A list of references (at least three, but not more than five) that may be contacted.
- A short narrative that responds to the scope of work as described in this RFP, which demonstrates the consultant's proposed approach to the project and capability to accomplish the desired goals.
- A proposed budget that includes hourly labor rates of project personnel, the number of hours required to complete each task or product, and any necessary and appropriate project travel or supply costs.
- A proposed project schedule.

All proposals must be received **no later than** 5:00 p.m. EST on December 17, 2021. They should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of the consultant's qualifications and capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this RFP.

Proposals may be submitted via email in electronic format (MS Word or PDF format) to Ms. Sharon Smith, NCSHPO Business Manager, at smith@ncshpo.org. NCSHPO will confirm receipt of submissions. However, if there are any issues (e.g., with attachments working correctly), the consultant is responsible for resolving these issues with an alternative submission method acceptable to NCSHPO and the NPS.

Selection Criteria

Submittals will be evaluated and ranked based on the following factors, presented in no particular order:

- Qualifications of Principal Investigator and other key personnel.
- Responsiveness of the proposal to the project's purpose and scope of work.
- Experience preparing theme studies and/or historic context studies.
- Experience evaluating and nominating nationally significant properties.
- Knowledge of the NHL Program and nomination process.
- Knowledge and experience in Underground Railroad history.
- Demonstrated capability of meeting projected deadlines and successfully completing contracts of this type.
- Past performance and references.
- Proposed project schedule and budget

Terms and Conditions

- A. NCSHPO reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, and to waive minor irregularities in any proposal.
- B. NCSHPO reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted, and to request additional information from any consultant.
- C. NCSHPO and NPS shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by consultants in preparing, submitting or presenting its response to this RFP.

- D. All completed documents must fully comply with Section 508 accessibility standards (<https://www.section508.gov/content/build/create-accessible-documents>) for electronic documents.
- E. Any and all rights to work produced through this project will be vested in the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, including any copyrights.
- F. The selected consultant must also comply with all applicable provisions of OMB Circular A-110, REVISED 11/19/93, As Further Amended 9/30/99.

Questions

Respondents are invited to submit written questions requesting clarifications or explanations of the information contained in this RFP. Please direct all proposal or contract-related questions to Sharon Smith, NCSHPO Business Manager, at smith@ncshpo.org. Questions pertaining to the project may be directed to Diane Miller, Program Manager, Network to Freedom at diane_miller@nps.gov