



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP-2025-09-12)**

**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS  
TRAIL WAYFINDING SIGN GUIDEBOOK UPDATE AND  
NEW TRAIL WAYFINDING SIGN PLANS-PLAN UPDATE**

**Issued:** September 12, 2025

**Address:**

Blackhawk Hills Regional Council  
309 1st Ave  
Rock Falls, IL 61071

**Questions?**

Please contact us at [info@blackhawkhills.com](mailto:info@blackhawkhills.com).

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP 2025-09-12)**  
**BLACKHAWK HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS TRAIL WAYFINDING SIGN GUIDEBOOK UPDATE AND**  
**NEW TRAIL WAYFINDING SIGN PLANS-PLAN UPDATE**  
*Proposals due on or before 5 pm CDT, October 13, 2025*

*Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) invites firms to submit proposals to complete a trail wayfinding sign guidebook update for Northwest Illinois and new trail wayfinding sign plans-plan update for selected Northwest Illinois trails, as described in this scope of work. Please read each section carefully for information regarding the proposal and submittal instructions.*

---

## **SECTION 1. BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **1.1 About Blackhawk Hills Regional Council**

BHRC is Northwest Illinois' regional planning organization and economic development district for Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside counties.

### **1.2 General Background**

BHRC has been awarded funding through the federal State Planning and Research program, administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation, to study and conduct planning concerning active transportation issues – including trails – in Northwest Illinois. To support BHRC's work, firms may to submit their credentials, experience, and proposed approach for completing the project.

---

## **SECTION 2. PROJECT SCOPE**

### **2.1 General Scope**

The general objectives of Northwest Illinois Trail Wayfinding Sign Guidebook Update and New Trail Wayfinding Sign Plans-Plan Update are to update selected existing documents and publish new sign plans.

### **2.2 Project Location**

The project impacts following localities (see <https://www.nwiltrails.org> for more trail detail):

- Northwest Illinois Wayfinding Sign Guidebook: Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside counties
- Four Sisters' Bike Path: Rochelle in Ogle County
- Galena River Trail: in and around Galena in Jo Daviess County
- Great River Trail: in and around Savanna and Thomson in Carroll County; in and around Albany and Fulton in Whiteside County
- Jane Addams Trail: in and around Freeport and Orangeville in Stephenson County
- Pecatonica Prairie Trail: in and around Freeport and Ridott in Stephenson County
- Sterling Multi-Activity Recreational Trail: Sterling in Whiteside County

## **2.3 Specific Scope**

Expected project activities and timelines are described below. Limited flexibility will be allowed regarding specific format and contents of deliverables produced.

In 2020, BHRC completed the Northwest Illinois Trails – Wayfinding Sign Guide and individual sign plans for the Galena River, Hennepin Feeder Canal, and Joe Stengel trails (See <https://www.blackhawkhills.com/transportation>). The individual trail plans were based on the guidebook and helped communities by assessing existing trail conditions, suggesting points for new sign placements, and creating destination hierarchies. Multiple comments gathered by respondents during trail user intercept surveys either asked for additional signs on trails or more promotion of trails (also a function of wayfinding).

### **2.3.1 Project Components**

While staying engaged with stakeholders that are representative of Northwest Illinois and the selected trail systems, the Firm will create outputs that:

- Update the Northwest Illinois Trails – Wayfinding Sign Guide
- Create trail wayfinding sign plans for the following trails:
  1. Four Sisters’ Bike Path
  2. Great River Trail
  3. Jane Addams Trail
  4. Pecatonica Prairie Trail
  5. Sterling Multi-Activity Recreational Trail
- Update the Galena River Trail – Sign Plan

### **2.3.2 Project Tasks**

#### **Project Management**

The firm will be responsible for holding regular project coordination meetings, including producing all meeting materials, notices, attendance lists, minutes/summaries, etc. A project timeline/schedule for each component should be provided in the proposal.

#### **Public Outreach**

Public outreach is expected throughout the planning process. The firm must create an engagement framework addressing both the public and key stakeholders. The framework should include an overall summary and identify stakeholders, approaches, and events. It should also anticipate content and materials needed to implement the framework, such as press releases, social media posts, public meeting presentations, display boards, project website, etc.

## **2.4 Project Timeline**

November 1, 2025 to October 31, 2026.

## 2.5 Project Costs

The project should not exceed \$51,000. Firms should produce a project scope that involves a level of effort consistent with this cost. Any amount proposed in excess should be accompanied with a detailed explanation of costs and services.

## SECTION 3. SELECTION PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

**Proposals must be received by BHRC on or before 5 pm CDT, October 13, 2025.**

### 3.1 Timeline

RFP Issued	September 12, 2025
Last Date to Submit a Question	October 6, 2025
Last Date to Submit a Response	October 13, 2025
Review Committee Evaluation, Ranking, and Recommendation	October 2025
Selection/Contract Authorization	October 2025
Contract Preparation, Amendment, and Approval	November 2025
Contract Work Begins	November 1, 2025
Contract Work Ends	October 31, 2026

### 3.2 Pre-Proposal Meeting and Interviews

There is no pre-proposal meeting, and interviews are not scheduled. However, if BHRC finds it necessary to conduct interviews, BHRC will schedule the interviews between the review/ranking and contract portions of the RFP process and amend the timeline as it sees fit to do so. In general, BHRC reserves the right to modify the RFP timeline as necessary.

### 3.3 Proposal Requirements and Evaluation

A review committee will rank proposals using the criteria in the subsequent table. The BHRC Board of Directors will ultimately select a proposal and authorize work.

### Proposal Information

Requirement	Points	Addressing the Requirement
Project Understanding and Work Plan	25 points max.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate project understanding, including scope of work items</li> <li>• Explain how planned tasks will accomplish the project</li> <li>• Illustrate previous relevant work and coordination with stakeholders</li> <li>• Enumerate organizational tools available for use during the project</li> </ul>
Project Schedule and Timeline	20 points max.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicate time required to complete individual tasks</li> <li>• Note relationships between tasks, including any dependencies</li> <li>• Describe key events, as well as associated items to deliver</li> <li>• Set input points from BHRC and stakeholders</li> </ul>
Organization Description	15 points max.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe background and organizational stability (years in business, etc.)</li> <li>• Describe relevant projects completed</li> <li>• If applicable, similarly describe subcontractors</li> <li>• Provide up to three (3) references from individuals or organizations that can attest to your organization's ability to accomplish this project; include name, address, and email addresses</li> </ul>

Proposer Experience with Similar Projects	25 points max.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List staff and hours assigned to each</li> <li>Describe extent of principal or project manager involvement</li> <li>Describe key staff roles and responsibilities</li> <li>Explain experience or qualifications of principals (including technical and managerial), project managers, and key staff with similar projects</li> <li>Each portion of the project is assigned to a particular staffer or subcontractor</li> </ul>
Desired and Value-Added Capabilities	15 points max.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit any information believed relevant to proposal</li> <li>Submit any innovative approaches to working on the project</li> <li>Submit any complimentary approaches not anticipated or known</li> </ul>
TOTAL	100 points max.	

**Cost Information**

Requirement	Points	Subrequirements
Cost Information	Meets/ Does Not Meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm availability for each contractor and subcontractor</li> <li>Estimate total hours and cost to complete individual work elements and entire project</li> <li>List tasks not performed by the contractor or subcontractor that must be performed by BHRC</li> <li>Identify what your organization considers reimbursable expense and detailed costs of each</li> <li>Does not exceed \$51,000 for contractor services.</li> </ul>

Proposals above the project’s not-to-exceed amount will be considered but potentially re-ranked at BHRC’s discretion.

**3.4 Proposal Requirements and Evaluation**

BHRC must receive all proposals on or before 5 pm CDT, October 13, 2025. Late proposals will not be considered. Email proposals to:

To: [info@blackhawkhills.com](mailto:info@blackhawkhills.com)  
 Subject: NWIL Trail Wayfinding Sign Guidebook Update and New Trail Wayfinding Sign Plans-Plan Update

**SECTION 4. PROPOSAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

**4.1. RFP Document**

Information provided in this RFP is intended solely to assist proposers in the preparation of their proposals. To the best of BHRC’s knowledge, it is accurate. However, BHRC does not warrant such accuracy and any errors or omissions subsequently determined will not be construed as a basis for invalidating this RFP.

**4.2. Ownership of Records**

BHRC will retain ownership of all interim and final documents and related materials that are either produced or developed in conjunction with the firm’s contract. The firm is prohibited from copying or distributing any of these documents or other reports developed in conjunction with BHRC without written permission from BHRC.

### **4.3. Inquiries**

Email all inquiries to [info@blackhawkhills.com](mailto:info@blackhawkhills.com) no later than before 5 pm CDT, October 6, 2025. BHRC will review all inquiries received prior to, and respond to questions as soon as possible, publishing responses to <https://www.blackhawkhills.com/opportunities>. If a proposer discovers any errors, omissions, or ambiguities within the RFP document, that proposer should identify and email them to BHRC prior to the RFP submission deadline.

### **4.4. Acceptance of Proposal Content and Public Information**

As much as possible, BHRC will treat all proposals as proprietary and confidential from the time of receipt and throughout the review process; however, the proposer agrees that all submitted proposals become the property of BHRC and information included in or attached become available to the public after recommendation for endorsement of contract is made. Any specific portions of the proposals which the submitting firm desires to remain confidential due to legitimate “proprietary information” or “trade secret” must be identified in an attachment to the proposal entitled “Attachment C - Request for Confidentiality.” In the event that BHRC judges the information to be non-confidential, the proposer will be notified and given the opportunity to change the designation or withdraw the proposal prior to evaluation.

### **4.5. Withholding Content**

To the extent permitted by law, it is the intention of BHRC to withhold the contents of the proposal from public view until such times as competitive or bargaining reasons no longer require non-disclosure in the opinion of BHRC.

### **4.6. Proposal Costs**

BHRC is not liable for any costs or expenses incurred by any proposer in responding to this RFP. BHRC is not liable for payment of any amount to the selected proposer until the contract has been awarded and executed by BHRC and the firm has performed services pursuant to the contract that entitle the firm to receive payment under the terms of the contract. Proposed firm costs for each phase (as described in Section 3.3) of this project must be submitted in XLSX format (please use Attachment A) with a file name as follows: “Attachment A - Project Costs.” The spreadsheet should be password protected with the password “sealed.”

### **4.7. Subcontractors**

It is intended that a single contractor will have total responsibility for all services identified in this RFP. Therefore, any proposer desiring to use a subcontractor(s) must identify each on a document supplied as an attachment to the proposal entitled “Attachment B - Subcontractor(s).” It should include:

- The company’s name and principal owner(s)
- A description of their involvement in the project
- Qualifications for each aspect of the scope of work with which they are involved

The subcontractor(s) cannot be changed after submission of the proposal except with the written permission of BHRC. The firm is responsible for all subcontractor actions, workmanship, performance, and payment.

#### **4.8. Rejection of Proposals**

BHRC reserves the right to waive any informality, and/or to reject, at any time and for any reason, proposals received as a result of this RFP. BHRC's intent is to enter into a contract following this process. However, if after reviewing the proposals received BHRC determines that it should not enter into any contract or to enter into a partial or different contract from the contract contemplated by this RFP, BHRC will act in accordance with what BHRC determines at that time to be in its best interest. No proposer or any other party has any entitlement, interest, or right in this decision by BHRC and by submitting a proposal, acknowledges BHRC's right to exercise its discretion in this regard without any right of recourse by the proposer.

#### **4.9. Insurance and Hold Harmless**

The successful proposer will be required to provide proof of insurance prior to contract execution. In addition, "hold harmless" provisions will be contained in the contract with the successful proposer.

#### **4.10. Contract Negotiations**

BHRC reserves the right to negotiate the award and conditions of the proposal prior to entering into a written agreement.

#### **4.11. Applicability of State and Federal Regulations**

The selected firm will comply with all applicable terms and conditions of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), and other relevant authorities. This includes policies related to nondiscrimination, equal employment opportunity, and lobbying.

#### **4.12. Rights Reserved**

BHRC reserves the following rights if using them will be more advantageous to BHRC:

- Withdraw this RFP at any time without prior notice
- Accept or reject any and all submissions or any item or part thereof
- Postpone due dates
- Not award a contract to any proposer
- Discuss a proposal or negotiate a contract with any proposer
- Award a contract without discussions or negotiations