

Seeking Consultant Submission—Smithers Coal Heritage Museum

The City of Smithers has been offered the opportunity to apply for a grant to retain a professional consultant to assist in research and installation of a new coal history startup museum. This is not an offer of employment but a request for preliminary submissions from interested parties to see, if and when the grant is awarded, that a qualified consultant can be found to offer a contract. The non-profit Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association (MTSHA) will apply for and supervise the grant.

The consultant will assist an AmeriCorps member currently doing the research for a project underwritten by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE). A WVU student, he is assigned to Smithers, and overseen, in cooperation with the city, by Stewards Individual Placements (Beckley), part of the Conservation Legacy, that places AmeriCorps members through the WV Ready Initiative and other programs.

The AmeriCorps member is gathering mining history, photographs, interviews on recollections of the lives of coal miners and their families (before this information is lost) and other educational elements for the public exhibition with particular focus on pre-regulatory mining, as is asked by the OSMRE, its effect on people and the natural environment, and reclamation efforts.

Consultants are asked to email a resume or narrative description of relevant expertise by themselves or their firm/organization, a quotation of hourly remuneration they would require, and a bullet list of what they would propose to do. More explicit scope of work will be worked out with you depending on your time, talents, and interests.

Those with museum design experience and/or familiarity with mining heritage or related environmental issues will be most favorably considered. Deadline is November 8. We expect the award of the grant to pay for this work to be made as early as December 2025, so that the consultant can meet the AmeriCorps member before his tenure is over near year end. Then the consultancy can continue into early 2026 as agreed to with the city.

Position Details

Responsibilities:

- Design a schematic layout and visual plan for a small exhibit space within City Hall.
- Develop interpretive themes, graphics, and signage that tells the story of Smithers' pre-regulatory coal mining era and environmental recovery.

- Recommend appropriate display materials, technology, lighting and interactive elements.
- Determine the most feasible and accessible methods for presenting oral histories, including audio playback systems, listening devices, or other multimedia displays to engage visitors.
- Collaborate with City staff, the AmeriCorps site service member, and community members to ensure that the proposed exhibit reflects an accurate history.
- Develop a collection care and storage plan that addresses long term preservation, documentation and future expansion.
- Create an installation and setup plan of the exhibit.
- Provide a final report on design recommendations, maintenance guidelines, and proposed expenses.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree (or higher) in Museum Studies, Exhibit Design, Public History, Art/Design or a related discipline.
- Demonstrated experience in exhibit or museum design.
- Familiarity with coal history, environmental remediation, or Appalachian heritage strongly preferred.
- Proven ability to translate research and oral histories into accessible public interpretation.
- Strong communication and collaboration skills.

Deliverables

- Concept design and schematic layout of the pilot museum/exhibit.
- Visual design package (mockups, signage concepts, materials list)/
- Budget and materials estimate for installation.
- Collection care and storage plan.
- Final project report with recommendations for future expansion.

Contract Details

- Independent Contractor (Temporary Consultant)
- Compensation commensurate with experience and project scope.
- Timeline: As will be agreed to with the City.
- Work Location: Primarily on-site at Smithers City Hall with flexibility for remote work as appropriate.