Request for Proposal for Exhibit Design and Fabrication
For the Brown County Historical Society

Early Brown County Exhibit

December 16, 2019

Introduction

The Brown County Historical Society (BCHS) in New Ulm, Minnesota, is soliciting Request for Proposals (RFP) from contractors interested in designing and fabricating the exhibit Early Brown County for the BCHS Museum first floor gallery space. The exhibit will interpret the history of Brown County, Minnesota from pre-history to World War I.

Proposals should contain designs or plans for an engaging exhibit that features interactive or hands-on learning for visitors. Research for the exhibit has been completed and interpretive text will be provided by museum staff. Museum staff will also assist in selection of artifacts and photographs or images. The selected contractor is expected to collaborate with BCHS staff to create imagery for the exhibit.

Background

The BCHS museum lacks a permanent exhibit that comprehensively interprets the history and formation of Brown County. The goal of Early Brown County is to summarize Brown County’s history prior to World War I. The exhibit is expected to inform visitors about the history of human habitation in Brown County, which created the foundations for the county’s contemporary sense of place. Early Brown County will be a permanent exhibit, but may be updated in future years to highlight other stories or incorporate new means of conveying history.

The museum currently has a permanent, award-winning exhibit Never Shall I Forget interpreting the U. S. – Dakota War of 1862, installed in 2012. While Never Shall I Forget addresses one of the most significant events in Brown County’s history, its scope is limited to the events of 1862 and their origins. BCHS plans to update Never Shall I Forget in 2022. Since that exhibit will remain, Early Brown County will address the U. S. – Dakota War and its causes in a short summary, but not repeat the same information.
Exhibit Concept

*Early Brown County* will tell the story of Brown County during the eras of early human habitation, European settlement, and post-Civil War to World War I. Specific topics will include: geographic composition of the county and how it affected human settlement; Native American cultures who occupied the area; the fur trade; settlement by Europeans; the organization of Brown County; early towns, industries, and businesses; ethnicity and culture of inhabitants; and significant events. If space allows, small portions of the exhibit will contain other minor themes, such as transportation, early education, health care, or recreational activities. These minor themes may be rotated out of the exhibit every two years as a way of keeping the exhibit fresh.

Target Audiences

The general audience for *Early Brown County* is visitors of Elementary school age and higher. While all visitors to the BCHS should be engaged by this exhibit, the target audiences are tourists, school age children, or those who are unfamiliar with Brown County’s history.

Project Budget and Size

The budget for this project is $100,000 – $150,000 and includes design, labor, installation, and exhibit materials. *Early Brown County* will cover about 1350 square feet on the first floor of the BCHS Museum. It will share space with a visitor reception area and the museum store.

Project Scope

The contractor selected for this project will develop the exhibit concept designs for review and approval by the BCHS. The contractor will be responsible for all exhibit and exhibit related components, including fabrication, installation, and audio-visual or interactive components. The contractor will work in collaboration with the BCHS Collections Curator as needed.

Exhibit elements will include text panels with accompanying illustrations or images that will explain the history of Brown County through the major exhibit themes and subjects, and interactive components that will engage visitors. Examples of suitable interactive elements include an interactive map of Brown County showing the boundary changes over time or videos featuring interviews or voiceovers.

Completion of the design phase is set for June 8, 2020, with installation proposed to begin December 2020.
Contractor Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the contractor are:

- Make an estimated budget for creation and installation of the exhibit based on approved conceptual designs. The budget must provide an itemized list of expenses for the design phase, fabrication phase, and installation.
- Create an exhibit floor plan and renderings to show exhibit components.
- Finalize a projected design, fabrication, and installation schedule.
- Design and fabricate the exhibit.
- Produce video or audio content and exhibit interactives.
- Fabricate and install the exhibit.

Client Responsibilities

As the client for the project, the BCHS will provide the following:

- BCHS staff will write all exhibit text
- Assistance in selecting photographs or images for use on exhibit panels
- Assistance in artifact selection
- Assistance in writing or narration of video content
- Exhibit installation is not guaranteed but may be negotiated

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

- Resume, background, history, and project experience
- A proposed work plan to include consultation and progress meetings with BCHS staff
- Cost estimations with a fee schedule outlined
- Scheduling
- Identify any other contractors or consultants who will be working on the project and which portions of the exhibit will be subcontracted, if any.
- Provide client references and examples of previous work
- Proof of Insurance
Submission of Proposals

Proposals are preferred to be sent as electronic files in .pdf format to collections@browncountyhistorymn.org.

Hard copies should be sent to:

Brown County Historical Society  
c/o Collections Curator  
2 North Broadway Street  
New Ulm, Minnesota 56073.

Proposals must be received by February 28, 2019.

All materials created for the exhibit will remain the property of the BCHS. The request for proposal does not commit BCHS to award a contract or pay for costs incurred in the preparation for the proposal. BCHS reserves the right to extend the due date for the proposal, to accept or reject any proposals received.

RFP Schedule

Call for proposals: December – February 28, 2020

Deadline for submissions: February 28, 2020

Selection of applicant and award of contract: March 2020

Contact Information

Questions about the project or RFP requirements should be directed to:

Ryan Harren, Collections Curator  
Brown County Historical Society  
2 North Broadway Street  
New Ulm, Minnesota 56073  
507-233-2616  
collections@browncountyhistorymn.org