Lake of the Woods County Historical Society  
Request for Proposal (RFP)

Project Location: Lake of the Woods County Historical Society  
119 8th Ave SE  
Baudette, MN.  56623

Closing Date: May 3rd, 2020 5:00pm CST

Primary Contact: Lindsay Marshall  
Executive Director, Lake of the Woods County Historical Society  
218-634-1200   Lowhsociety@gmail.com

Purpose
The Lake of the Woods County Historical Society seeks proposals from qualified firm/contractors/consultants to provide a detailed exhibit planning document, including an accompanying scriptwriting document for use in the exhibit planning document, for the redesign of the Lake of the Woods County Historical Society’s exhibit spaces.

This RFP describes the basic services required and the process for selecting the qualified consultant/contractor/firm for this project.

Submission of Proposal
All proposals must be sent electronically to Lindsay at Lowhsociety@gmail.com. All proposals must be received no later than 5:00pm CST on Sunday May 3rd, 2020 for consideration. Incomplete and late submissions will not be considered.

When submitting a proposal, please use “Exhibit Planning and Scriptwriting RFP” in the subject line of the email. All proposals must be sent in Adobe PDF format.

Background Information
Lake of the Woods County is Minnesota’s northern-most and Minnesota’s youngest county. Approximately 3,758 people call Lake of the Woods County home. Roughly 18.5% of this population are under 18 years old and nearly 25% are 65 years old or older. Lake of the Woods County’s economy relies heavily on tourism – much in part to the rich natural resources available. As such, there are many times during the year where the county’s population soars.

Lake of the Woods County Historical Society [LWCHS] was founded in 1965. The mission of LWCHS is to collect, preserve, interpret, and disseminate the history of Lake of the Woods County. In 1978, the current museum was built, with additions completed in 1989 and 2016. The building is one story and does not have a basement. The exhibit space is comprised of two large rooms connected by a large fire rated garage door. The first room measures approximately 48’ by 47’. The second room also measures 48’ by 47’ but has a storage space in
the room which measures roughly 10’ x 37’, making the total exhibit space roughly 4,142 square feet. A floor plan is attached in Appendix A. An annex building is located across the alley from the museum and houses largely oversize agricultural equipment. This building is not climate controlled. This building is not part of this project (though the objects in it can be moved into the main museum building for interpretation, if desired).

The museum’s current permanent displays feature displays on the county’s agricultural history, the history of a few local businesses, a logging display, and examples of a country school, an early 20th century kitchen scene, sewing display, Native American display and a display featuring military history. Larger objects, which are on display and cannot be easily moved, include a 1908 Lee newspaper printing press, a bar from a former establishment which measures nearly 20 feet in length and includes a backbar with mirrors. Additionally, LWCHS also has a working Nickelodeon, a few larger paintings created by a local artist, and a fire hose cart, which are favorite pieces among visitors. Photographs are included in Appendix B. A temporary exhibit, which changes each May, is also on display. Many of the exhibits and displays have been up for over 10 years. While there is some interpretation, the majority of objects labeled simply share what the object is and by whom it was donated. The general flow of the exhibit spaces lack a cohesive and engaging story of the county’s history.

For years the museum has only been open May – October. This year, the museum will start opening the first full weekend in each of the winter months. Staff works at the museum year-round.

**Interpretive Plan**

With the Lake of the Woods County’s centennial approaching in November of 2022, it seemed like a perfect time to do a large update to the museum’s exhibit space. In 2019, LWCHS received a grant to fund the creation of an interpretive report. Upon completion of this report, LWCHS decided to self-fund the next step; an interpretive plan. This plan was completed in January 2020.

One of the challenges addressed in the interpretive plan was the lack of a cohesive story and overarching narrative throughout the exhibits. Another challenge is that there is a heavy focus on objects and topics from the first half of the 20th century largely from Baudette and Spooner (two towns in the county). There is a lack of stories and objects on display from the island communities, and more rural parts of the county, as well as stories from the more recent past. Currently the existing exhibits fall into three broad categories: local businesses and industries, life in Lake of the Woods, and historic milestones.

The overarching theme which emerged from the interpretive plan was a strong relationship between people of Lake of the Woods County and the natural environment. This relationship can be found in the reasons early settlers came to the area, the reliance upon the natural environment for various long-lasting industries, the hardships that residents went through (such as the 1910 fire), and the important role that Lake of the Woods plays for the tourism industry today. While some historical research was completed during this phase, it is expected that the hired consultant/contractor/firm will complete additional historical research.

With the knowledge of what stories are currently shared through the museum displays, what main themes the community would like to see told, what stories our collection (both on display and in storage) could tell, and major themes and subthemes outlined through the
interprative plan, LWCHS is looking to move on to the next step of exhibit planning and script writing. LWCHS opted to put these two projects together into one large project because of the overlap between the two. If during the exhibit planning it is discovered that part of the scriptwriting needs adjusting, having the scriptwriting written into this project will allow for easier changes to be made than having two separate projects.

Please contact Lindsay at Lowhsociety@gmail.com to obtain a copy of this interpretive plan or if you are interested in visiting the museum.

Scope of Services
Lake of the Woods County Historical Society seeks a qualified museum professional consultant/contractor/firm to develop an exhibit plan with complementing exhibit narratives. The LWCHS is looking for plans and narratives which will be used in creation of more engaging displays and exhibits with an overarching cohesive story/theme. This is a large project with two major project outcomes: an exhibit plan (including concept drawings) and a scriptwriting narrative (to coincide with the exhibit plan). The idea of combining the two projects into one proposal is that the two will work off of each other; if during the exhibit planning, it is discovered a story might need to be a different length it can be easily changed.

The consultant/contractor/firm will be expected to conduct research from a variety of sources. While some historical research was completed during the writing of the interpretive plan, the consultant/contractor/firm will be expected to expand upon this previous research. It would be preferred if the ideas and themes from the interpretive plan were incorporated into the exhibit plan and script. LWCHS will submit a final draft of the scriptwriting to scholarly reviewers for quality analysis and accuracy. The consultant/contractor/firm will be required to revise the scriptwriting according to comments made by the peer reviewers.

Strong communication between the Historical Society and the consultant/contractor/firm is necessary. The consultant/contractor/firm will be expected to meet with the Lake of the Woods County Historical Society Board and Executive Director for a kick-off meeting. During this meeting, the consultant/contractor/firm will have the opportunity to meet the board, visit the museum, present their proposed workplan and answer (and ask) any questions. After this meeting, they will be expected to visit and present their progress at three milestones. They will also present a final product to the board upon completion.

A Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grant, administered by the Minnesota Historical Society, will provide the funding for part of this project. Therefore, the project must be carried out in accordance with the provisions outlined by the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants manual.

Qualifications and Expectations
Demonstrated experience in exhibit planning and scriptwriting at museums/historical societies/cultural institutions of similar size.
Highly skilled in museum writing, especially in regards to cohesion, length, and readability.
Provide a portfolio demonstrating past projects (at least one example of exhibit planning and one example of scriptwriting/exhibit narrative).
Will meet with LWCHS staff and board at the beginning of the project and at least three times to share progress of the project.

The ability to create and tell engaging stories through exhibits (we would love to see some audio-visual components).

Strong attention to detail.

Strong organizational abilities.

Strong commitment to quality control, communication, and collaboration.

Proposal Requirements

The proposal should include:

- The consultants/contractors/firm’s resumes and project experience (please include examples of previous work).
- Cost estimates with an outlined fee schedule.
- Proposed workplan schedule including milestones.
- Research Plan (including a proposed schedule/milestones).
- Proof of insurance.

The request for proposal does not commit LWCHS to pay for the costs incurred to prepare a proposal. LWCHS reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal received and to extend the deadline, if needed. The request for proposal also does not commit LWCHS to award a contract. As previously stated, this project is largely dependent upon funding through the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants program.

Request for Proposal Schedule

Call for proposals: March 3, 2020 – May 3, 2020
Deadline for proposals: May 3, 2020 5pm CST
MNHS Historical and Cultural Grant pre-app deadline: May 31, 2020
MNHS Historical and Cultural Grant final app deadline: July 31, 2020
Notification of Awarded Grant/Selection of Applicant/Anticipated Start: January 2021
Desired final presentation to the LWCHS board: March 2022
Appendix A – Museum Floor Plan
Appendix B – Photos of Current Exhibits

Gallery 1 Exhibits/Displays

- Large map showing the county
- East and NE part of Gallery 1
- SE corner Gallery 1 - Rowell Laboratories
- NW corner Gallery 1 - Features commercial fishing and fur trade industries
- From Gallery 2 looking into Gallery 1 - looking toward SW corner
Gallary 2 Exhibits/Displays