

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST FOR PROJECT TO BE INITIATED THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM STUDIES UNITS (CESU) NETWORK

PROJECT TITLE: Identifying visitor services and opportunities to inform the application of the National Park Service Intermountain Region’s Tourism Toolkit

Response to this Request for Statements of Interest will be used to identify potential partners for a research project funded by the National Park Service (NPS). This project will be administered through a CESU only upon mutual agreement and official authorization by both parties of the acceptance of the application of the CESU Network IDC rate (17.5%). Approximately \$15,000 is available to support this project.

BACKGROUND

Visitation to units of the National Park System has grown in recent decades, but this growth has been uneven. In some cases, park units have seen stalled or declining visitor use or are in a position where they are looking to grow their visitation. The Tourism Toolkit – developed in the Intermountain Region - is a first-of-its-kind effort in the NPS that aims to engage tourism networks and tourists. The outcome of this process may be aimed at increasing the diversity of visitors, as well as the amount of visitation a park unit sees. These changes are generally achieved by attracting tourists to the area. Although difficult to define, “tourist” in the Tourism Toolkit is defined as any person or people traveling to a destination outside their usual or local environment for a specific purpose.

Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site (BEOL), located between Las Animas and La Junta in southeastern Colorado, is often referred to as the Castle of the Plains. The site features a reconstructed 1840s adobe fur trading post that is on the Santa Fe Trail; a place where trappers, traders, travelers, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes came together in peaceful terms for trade. Visitors to the site today can experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the past with living historians, guided tours, demonstrations, and special events. However, BEOL has experienced an approximately 25% decrease in visitation from 2009 to 2019. BEOL is serving as a site for piloting efforts of the Tourism Toolkit.

OBJECTIVES

This project seeks to develop information about visitor preferences for services and experiences as well as opportunities to inform a tourism strategy for BEOL. Specifically, information from tourists to the site is needed to understand the visitor services, opportunities, and activities – both current and potentially in the future – they are or would be interested in. There is very limited data about visitor use and experience for BEOL. Collection of this information could help inform a strategy for tourism development at BEOL. The project will focus specifically on using onsite, visitor intercept surveys of both tourist and non-tourist visitors to BEOL to inform the pilot. Assistance from the Intermountain Regional Office may be available to assist in any approval processes needed (i.e., the OMB Programmatic Approval Process).

NOTE: BEOL and other NPS staff will have significant involvement with the project to ensure the deliverables meet the park needs and provide any background references, documents, research, or other guidance. The success of this project will depend on the collaboration between the cooperator and the NPS.

DELIVERABLES

Deliverables shall include: 1) all data, protocols, and instruments used in data collection; 2) a report describing the data, as well as associated statistical analyses, findings, and management recommendations; and 3) a presentation on the data for park staff.

START DATE

August 1, 2022

END DATE

July 31, 2024

MATERIALS REQUESTED FOR STATEMENT OF INTEREST

Please prepare a 2-3 page summary of your vision for implementing this project. Include your name, department, university or organization, contact information, CESU affiliation, and a brief biographical sketch. Please include the same information for any collaborators, including staff, faculty, or students who would work on the project. Successful applicants will demonstrate expertise in tourism or visitor use management through relevant experience, projects, research, or other examples of their work. We are particularly interested in creative approaches that would be able to collect randomized, generalizable samples at a lower-use park site.

REVIEW OF STATEMENTS RECEIVED

All Statements of Interest received will be evaluated by a board comprising one or more people with expertise related to the park unit or subject matter. Based on a review of Statements of Interest Received, an investigator or investigators will be invited to prepare a full study proposal. Statements of Interest will be evaluated based on demonstrated experience and capabilities related to the project requirements.

Please submit Statements of Interest to Zach Miller by 5PM Mountain Time on 04/30/2022. **PLEASE NOTE: A budget is not requested at this time.**

Contact Information

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