REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Preserve / Wanhi Yukan Trail

Signage Design, Development, Creation, and Installation
For
A Self-Guided Walking Trail & Interpretive Tour

Mower County
&
Mower County Historical Society
Austin, Minnesota

Above: “The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry / Wanhi Yukan, 1100CE,” by Art Kenyon
Mower County and the Mower County Historical Society (MCHS) as contractors (Contractors), with their project partners The Archaeological Conservancy (TAC) and the Prairie Island Indian Community (PIIC), are seeking the participation of a team of experienced professionals (Vendor) to serve as the Signage Team for the final phase of a landscape development project (Project) for the Grand Meadow Chert (GMC) Quarry Preserve (Preserve). The goals are: 1) to design the signage for a self-guided walking tour at the GMC Quarry using existing drafts and images; 2) to advise on their locations within the GMC Quarry; 3) to oversee the production of the signs in English and Dakota; and 4) to manage the payment, delivery, and installation of the signs along the established trail. The signs will be wayfinding to aid visitors, interpretive using provided text and images, and botanical, based on similar, existing signs at two tribal communities who will contribute their content. There will also be a Welcome sign at the parking area, and a large kiosk at the Entrance to the GMC Quarry Preserve.

The Vendor will be supported in this effort by the staff of MCHS, a special group of advisors, and a Project Archaeologist, all of whom are available to contribute as needed to the work of the Signage Team. It is anticipated that the Vendor will be experienced in the creation of signage and trail planning for precontact or historic sites.

The watershed of the Root River, and the GMC Quarry Preserve at the star in Mower County.
The Grand Meadow Chert (GMC) Quarry (21MW0008) is a 170-acre archaeological site listed on the National Register of Historic Places, near the town of Grand Meadow in Mower County, Minnesota. Located on the western edge of the Root River Watershed, it falls just outside of Minnesota’s portion of the Driftless Area. Previously surrounded by prairie, most of the site is now hidden below what is mostly cultivated farmland, but there is a notable exception: a small 8-acre patch of oak savanna that contains a completely pristine remnant of the original Native American open-pit quarry.

The entire interior of the oak savanna Preserve is made up of pits dug by hand using tools of stone, antler and wood, and the corresponding spoil piles of dirt removed as each pit was excavated to reach the layer of chert below. There are 88 pits and trenches that are clearly visible, some large and deep, and none of the original surface is easily seen on the undulating landscape.

Surface collections of the surrounding fields indicate that the original quarry was substantially larger than this small remnant in the Preserve. Using the known density of pits within today’s woods, the entire site appears to have had well over 2,000 quarry pits.

The GMC Quarry is the most extensively-utilized Indigenous site in the state for providing stone for making tools, and the only example where there is evidence of chert having been extracted through digging rather than appearing in bedrock outcrops or as deposits in glacial till. It is one of only a few such places regionally that have preserved quarry pits, and the 8 acres of oak savanna stands out for its remarkable condition: except for the trees and shrubs that have appeared since the prairie fires ended when farming began, it appears unchanged from its last day of use prior to the European invasion.
The distinctive and high-quality chert from Grand Meadow has now been found at archaeological sites in 52 counties throughout Minnesota, as well as at sites in Wisconsin and Iowa. This quarry site is the only known source of culturally used GMC, considered to be perhaps the finest of material from Minnesota for making chipped stone tools.

Three articles on the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry/ Wanhi Yukan were featured in the 2020 issue of *The Minnesota Archaeologist*:

- The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry
- Grand Meadow Chert: A Distinctive and High-Quality Chert in Southeastern Minnesota
- Modeling Movement of Grand Meadow Chert from Quarry to Use

The Project

Mower County, Mower County Historical Society, The Archaeological Conservancy and the Prairie Island Indian Community, with input from other descendant tribal communities, are collaborating to develop the 8-acre wooded GMC Quarry Preserve for public access, interpretation, education and preservation. The Project entails 4 phases, three of which have been completed (see Timeline, below). The Project Partners are now seeking to enlist a team to participate in Phase 4: the creation of the ca. 3,800ft Wanhi Yukan Trail and its interpretive program, along with the amenities needed to open the site to the public for a self-guided walking tour.

The Signage Team will require an experienced writer/editor with experience in Midwestern archaeology, and a designer with experience in creating signage for public sites. The draft content for the signs has been developed by a team who worked closely on developing the themes, images, and text for interpretive materials. The team consisted of Dakota advisors from the Prairie Island Indian Community’s Tribal Historic Preservation Office; the PIIC Land & Environment department; the PIIC lead for Dakota language and culture; PIIC elders and interested community members; staff of the Mower County Historical Society; the MCHS consulting archaeologist; and contracted archaeologists and educators. Additional input and suggestions from the Vendor will, however, be very welcome. Numerous images and maps are available, if suggestions emerge for improving the current drafts.

This Project is funded through a Legacy grant administered by the Department of Natural Resources Parks & Trails program.

The Project Timeline is expected to be from **March 11, 2024 to October 1, 2024.**
The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry and the pattern of quarry pits revealed by the lidar

Scope of Work

The Signage Team will:

1. Report to the MCHS Executive Director (ED) and the Project Archaeologist/Coordinator (PA/PC), working on behalf of Mower County.
2. Notify the Project Archaeologist/Coordinator prior to intended visits to the site; he will be available onsite for all scheduled visits.
3. Work in coordination with a second Trail Team (tbd) that will be responsible for creating the trail through the site and distributing the surface materials.
4. Create the designs for 14 interpretive signs, using existing texts, maps, and images provided by MCHS. Final approval will occur via a standing GMCQ committee.
5. Produce 20 small signs for plant identification, using existing designs and templates from our Dakota partners.
6. Create the designs for 8 wayfinding signs to guide visitors at specific points along the trail.
7. Develop a 3-panel kiosk for the Entrance area.
8. Attend a 2-day on-site visit in March or April (funded by MCHS outside of this Vendor bid)
9. Collaborate with the PA/PC and the Trail Team to determine the locations for all of the signage within the Preserve, and for the 2 for the Shooting Star Trail.
10. Select a subcontracted vendor for manufacturing and delivery of the signs, using the specifications under Deliverables.
11. Include in their bid the cost of manufacturing, delivery, and installation of the signs at their designated locations.
12. Submit invoices to MCHS, which will send them to Mower County for payment.
All designs and manufacturing specifications will be reviewed and approved by the GMCQ Committee. The Vendor will be responsible for the design, contracting for manufacturing, and installation of all signage; cost for manufacturing and delivery to be included in Vendor bid.

1. Designs for 14 interpretive signs, prepared for manufacture.
2. Overseeing of manufacturing of completed interpretive signs with the following specifications:
   - High pressure laminate (CHPL)
   - High Quality
   - Frameless
   - At least a 10-year warranty
   - Burn-proof materials
   - UV protection for the surface
   - 2 x 3 or 3 x 4, tbd
   - 12 will have a single-post pedestal base, 2 will have 3 posts for a double panel.
   - Removable sign from its post for seasonal storage.
3. Design for a large kiosk at the Entrance with 3 panels for a map, instructions for respectful behavior, donor acknowledgements, other details. Includes a full-size 3’x5’ reproduction of a painting.
   a. Select a vendor and submit all final elements for manufacture following approvals
   b. Oversee delivery and installation of the Informational sign.
4. Designs for 8 small, typical wayfinding signs, prepared for manufacture. Can be a separate design and material, per Vendor recommendation.
5. Designs for informational signs at the parking area, consistent with other signs:
   a. Arrow towards the Entrance in the wayfinding-sign style
   b. Rest room sign with arrow in wayfinding-sign style
   c. “Welcome – Open Daylight Hours April 15 – October 15;” with the 3 partners listed and the Legacy logo; 3’x6’; design tbd.
### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/29/24</td>
<td>Notification to successful applicant</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/11/24</td>
<td>Approximate start date, following completion of the contract with Mower County</td>
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<tr>
<td>March/April</td>
<td>A 2-day in-person site visit (dates tbd) to establish signage locations; date to be set by Vendor. May include a meeting with the Trail Building Team; travel expenses funded separately, not included in this bid</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Delivery of stone for trail; stone dispersal along trail</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>Approximate date for shovel tests as post holes, for the permanent sign supports</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>Approximate date for inserting signs</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Special guided tours for educators; students; neighbors; supporting organizations; tribal communities; donors; media</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>Open to the public for self-guided tours</td>
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<td>October 14</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples Day – guided tours for descendant Indigenous communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Last day of the 2024 season</td>
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### Proposal Requirements

**Project Approach (maximum of 5 single-sided pages):**

- How will the Signage Team work together internally, and with MCHS advisors and staff, to complete the project within the schedule described in the Project Scope of Work and Timeline?
- What special skills and innovative thinking will your team bring to the project?
- Regarding the competing factors involved in the preservation, protection and maintenance of a publicly accessible archaeological site: What are the potential roadblocks that could delay project completion from your perspective?
- How will you select and manage the vendors who might create the signs from your design and the final texts and images?

**Signage Team (Vendor) Qualifications (maximum of 10 single-sided pages):**

- Provide a brief overview and history of your company, including location, number of employees, organizational structure, and number of years in business.
- Provide a statement of the firm’s experience and qualifications regarding producing site-based signage and other relevant interpretive materials.
- Describe your team’s experience working with Native American communities.
- Provide brief descriptions of one or two relevant projects, preferably in a park, open space, or other minimally-developed setting, that were led or substantially managed by the proposed project team Lead.
- Demonstrate knowledge of and experience in implementing standards and guidelines governing the treatment of archaeological, historical, or cultural landscapes.
- Provide one-page resumes or qualifications of the key team members.
References

- Provide a list of at least three client references from the last five years that have relevant knowledge concerning the Project team’s ability to perform similar projects. Please include names, affiliations, email addresses, and current telephone numbers for all references.

Response to Project Schedule and Work Plan

- Please prepare a statement regarding your approach or plan for working on the Project, addressing your ability to proceed within the proposed Timeline.

Budget (maximum of one page)

- Please offer your anticipated expenses to accomplish the Deliverables listed above.

• The selected Vendor will agree to perform the work for the amount stated in their bid. Bids should include the expenses for staff time for design, management, and installation, along with travel expenses (beyond the planning meeting in March funded by MCHS). Bids should include all subcontracted manufacturing and delivery costs. The payment schedule will be outlined in the contract, and payments will occur upon receipt of scheduled invoices. The final amount will be released upon final approval of Contractor’s reports submitted to the funder.

Selection Criteria

Mower County / MCHS will consider the following factors in the evaluation of proposals:
1) professional qualifications of individual team members;
2) the experience of the team for working successfully with comparable projects at similar historic or archaeological properties;
3) the capacity to complete the project within the allowed time;
4) the ability to achieve goals while working in a cost effective manner;
5) a demonstrated skill for working in a collaborative atmosphere;
6) experience working respectfully with tribal communities;
7) responses received from references;
8) appropriateness of general approach as outlined;
9) the proposed budget and the application of financial resources;
10) other factors considered to be in the best interests of MCHS.
Conditions of Receipt of Proposals

In evaluating the proposals received, MCHS and Contractor will consider all of the above criteria, including overall value. This is a value-based selection process. Contractor reserves the right, at its own discretion: (1) to reject all submissions received; (2) to accept a submission without further discussion; (3) to reject a submission due to defects, irregularities or provisions inconsistent with this RFP; and (4) to negotiate directly with respondents for other terms, prices and conditions deemed proper and reasonable for the completion of the projects. Contractor also reserves the right to waive irregularities in proposal contents or to request supplemental information from bidders. This provision will be liberally interpreted to permit consideration of all proposals received by the stated deadline for submission.

Interviews

- The Contractor may, at its discretion, hold interviews before entering into contract negotiations with the successful applicant.

Critical Project Dates

- RFP Submission Deadline: electronically at MCHS offices by Monday, February 26, 5:00pm.

- Notification of the outcome of the selection process will occur by Thursday, February 29, 2024, pending contract approval from the funder.

- A two-day pair of on-site meetings for the Project will be required for the Vendor, on two days in March or early April, to be determined. It will the opportunity to see the plan for the trail and to establish the locations for the signs prior to the laying of the surface material. Expenses for travel and housing will be the responsibility of MCHS, outside of the Vendor’s bid.

- The timeline includes all billable activities for the Project to be substantially complete by no later than October 1, 2024, unless otherwise negotiated.

Proposal Submission

Please reply by email no later than 5:00 pm on Monday, February 26, 2024. Late proposals will not be considered. Inquiries prior to submission are welcome by email or phone, below.

Send responses to:

Randal J. Forster, Executive Director
Mower County Historical Society
director@mowercountyhistory.org
Questions: (507) 437-6082