



Request for Proposal (RFP) for Fund Development Consultant [Submission due date extended to August 31, 2026]

The Ridge Macon County Archaeology Project [Ridge Project] is requesting proposals for a Fund Development Consultant to assess revenue potential and develop and implement a multiyear fundraising plan to support operations and programs and to start up and grow an endowment and a reserve fund. This position will identify, organize, and manage the fundraising plan and activities with a focus on new opportunities to obtain ongoing and increased support from corporations, academic institutions, public and private organizations, individual donors, investments, and earned income. The Consultant will work with the Ridge Project's Board of Directors and Executive Director on these efforts. Qualified independent contractors and consulting firms are welcome to submit a proposal.

About Us

Founded in 2011, the Ridge Project operates an Interpretive Center and archaeological dig site located on County Road 10 in rural Warrior Stand, Macon County, Alabama, located about twelve miles south of Tuskegee, Alabama.

The Interpretive Center is the first in Alabama to anchor the Federal Road as an "Alabama Fever" historical, social, and cultural landmark. The Center is situated on the paved over roadbed of the historic Federal Road on land that Yargee, son of Big Warrior, a Principal Chief of the Muscogee Creek Nation, acquired in an 1835 land patent. The Ridge Project's mission is to foreground the complex stories of how the Federal Road facilitated human migrations to Alabama during U.S. westward expansion in the 1800s and the effects of expansion on the people of our region.

The Ridge Project presents place-based educational outreach programs, exhibits, publications, and events to visitors of all ages and backgrounds that encompass Muscogee Creek peoples and their ancestors from pre-historic times to Removal, white settlers and enslaved African Americans who migrated during the Alabama Fever land rush from the early to mid-1800s, and post-Civil War local, state, and regional evolutions up to the mid-twentieth century. Our programs and events promote critical thinking, foster social cohesion, and promote understanding of how migration and settlement have shaped the U.S. over time.

The Ridge Project has obtained a substantial grant to support a three-year planning, programming, and capacity building project. We are seeking an experienced Fund Development Consultant with a proven track record for excellence in creating and implementing strategic fund development plans to build an organization's financial sustainability and long term resilience.

The following sections: Scope of Work, Required Deliverables, and Performance Expectations represent expectations spanning the three-year planning, programming, and capacity building project. The selected consultant will operate on a twelve-month contract. Contract renewal will be contingent on satisfactory performance.

Scope of Work

The Consultant's ongoing scope of work will include:

- Conduct assessments.
- Develop fundraising strategies. Research funding opportunities.
- Cultivate and solicit donors.

- Write and submit grant proposals.
- Coordinate donor meetings and fundraising events.
- Advise the Executive Director and Board.
- Ensure fundraising compliance.
- Support fundraising communications and marketing.
- Assist with charitable registrations and reporting to grantors, the board of directors, and tax reporting.

Required Deliverables

The selected consultant shall provide, at a minimum, the following deliverables:

- **Fundraising Capacity Assessment**
Written assessment of the organization's current fundraising infrastructure, systems, capacity, and resources.
- **Fundraising Strategy Recommendations**
A phased fundraising strategy identifying opportunities across corporate, foundation, government, academic, individual, earned income, and investment revenue streams, including implementation priorities, revenue targets, timelines, and estimated costs.
- **Three-Year Fund Development Plan**
A comprehensive three-year fundraising plan with measurable goals, strategies, timelines, performance metrics, and projected revenue by funding source.
- **Case for Support**
A donor-ready case for support adaptable for major gifts, grants, sponsorships, annual giving, and other fundraising communications.
- **Prospect Pipeline**
A prioritized list of qualified funding prospects, including foundations, corporations, government agencies, major donors, and other institutional funders, with recommended cultivation and solicitation strategies.
- **Grant and Proposal Package**
Grant proposals, letters of inquiry, sponsorship proposals, and other funding requests as agreed upon during the contract period.
- **Donor Management Recommendations**
Recommendations for donor management software, gift acceptance and stewardship practices, payment options, donor recognition, and procedures for maintaining donor records.
- **Earned Income Feasibility Report**
Findings and recommendations from pilot earned-income initiatives, including pricing, demand, and operational considerations.
- **Communications and Marketing Toolkit**
Fundraising messaging, donor appeal templates, media materials, and communications recommendations that support implementation of the fundraising strategy.
- **Progress Reports**
Monthly and annual written progress reports, and end of capacity building project report summarizing accomplishments, funds raised, grant activity, recommendations, and progress toward fundraising goals.

Performance Expectations

The consultant's performance expectations over the three-year project will include but will not be limited to:

- Develop a grant calendar and timeline that includes a minimum goal of submitting 2 grant proposals per quarter for each fiscal year.
- Identify at least 20 qualified major donor prospects.
- Gain and retain 100-200 new individual donors.
- Increase Friends of the Ridge Project memberships to 200.
- Conduct at least one donor cultivation meeting per fiscal year with the Executive Director and/or Board.
- Develop and submit at least 6 corporate sponsorship proposals and manage responses and related planning and activities.
- Deliver monthly progress reports and attend Board meetings as requested.
- Pilot 2-3 earned income activities to establish pricing, demand assumptions, and operational requirements.
- Establish at least one partnership with the state department of tourism and/or a local economic development agency for ongoing marketing support.

Budget

\$30,000 first year to cover consultant services and travel expenses. Contingent on satisfactory performance and contract renewal, opportunity for 6.67% increase in year two, and 6.25% increase in year three.

Submission Requirements

All proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF or Word to Dr. Shari L. Williams, Executive Director at contact@digtheridge.com

All proposals must include:

- A cover letter.
- Experience and qualifications of the consultant or consulting firm. Consulting firms must include the resume of the principal fund development professional providing direct service for this project.
- A narrative that addresses how the Scope of Work, Deliverable, etc., as outlined above, will be accomplished, including a timeline with benchmarks and the number of hours required to accomplish the plan.
- A reporting and communications plan.
- Information to clearly support that the consultant or principal professional with a consulting firm has solid working knowledge of Alabama nonprofit organizations and Alabama legislation that establishes fund development and fundraising policies and procedures for Alabama charitable organizations.
- Clear outline of expectations of both parties, i.e. the Ridge Project and consultant or principal professional with a consulting firm.
- Project budget, including breakdown of all costs expected to be paid by the Ridge Project (e.g., necessary expenses and optional expenses). Note that billing will coincide with reaching set goals and deliverables so this should be outlined in the proposal.
- Three (3) references from clients for whom the consultant has performed similar services.

Failure to comply with or complete any part of this RFP may result in rejection of the proposal.

Proposed Evaluation Criteria

All accepted proposals will be reviewed by the Selection Committee and will be evaluated and scored using the following criteria:

- Overall match between the RFP requirements and proposal: Understanding of scope and objectives and completeness and coherence of response (35 points)
- Qualifications and previous work of consultant (25 points)
- Demonstrated ability of consultant to carry out fundraising plan of similar character and size (25 points)
- Cost effectiveness (15 points)

Schedule

The selection of the fundraising consultant is expected to proceed as indicated below:

<i>RFP Release</i>	June 29, 2026
<i>Proposals Due</i>	August 31, 2026
<i>Consultant Selected</i>	September 2026
<i>Project Begins</i>	As negotiated at contract signing

Selection Process

The Ridge Project will use a two-step process for the final selection of a qualified consultant to perform stated work. During step one all proposal packages submitted will be reviewed by a selection committee. The Executive Director and Ridge Project Board of Directors anticipate selecting up to three (3) candidates based on an evaluation of the written proposals submitted. Candidates may be asked to submit additional information prior to their interviews.

The Ridge Project Board of Directors will rank the candidates after all interviews are completed. During step two the Ridge Project will select a consultant based on the selection criteria, and will then initiate contract negotiations. If contract negotiations are unsuccessful, the Ridge Project will enter into a subsequent negotiation with the next highest ranked candidate.

Timeline, Terms and Conditions

Any contract awarded pursuant to the RFP shall be for a period that coincides with each year of the three year planning, programming, and capacity building project. project (May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027; May 1, 2027 – April 30, 2028; May 1, 2028 – April 30, 2029). Issuance of this RFP does not commit the Ridge Project to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in preparation of proposals responding to the RFP.