

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)  
TO PRODUCE A NEW SIGNATURE EVENT  
FOR THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM**

All proposals must be received not later than **NOON, October 18, 2019**. Late submissions will not be accepted. Proposals may be submitted hard copy or via email to:

City of Bellingham Tourism Commission  
Attn: Signature Event Proposal / Shannon Taysi  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
Email Shannon Taysi at - [staysi@cob.org](mailto:staysi@cob.org)

**INTRODUCTION:**

The City of Bellingham, WA, seeks proposals from parties interested in and capable of producing a festival, special event or a unique public experience "Signature Event". This request seeks to identify a qualified producer with the experience, industry contacts and innovative vision for launching an annual event that will encourage commerce, maximize national and regional exposure, enhance the existing quality of life for residents and become self-sustaining.

This RFP does not constitute a commitment implied or otherwise, that the City of Bellingham, WA (City) will initiate a contractual action on this matter. Further, the City of Bellingham will not be responsible for any cost incurred by responders in furnishing any information. After receipt of responses to this RFP, meetings may be scheduled by the City to review/discuss the information received. Responders to this RFP are encouraged to offer big, bold, creative ideas.

**FUNDING and ELIGIBLE EXPENSES:**

Approximately \$75,000 is available for year 2020 and approximately \$50,000 is available for years 2021 and 2022 for one or more Signature Events. The source of funding is Lodging Tax paid for by hotel / motel visitors and collected within the City of Bellingham. The anticipated commitment is up to three years for purposes of providing seed money necessary to launch a new or expand an existing but small and relatively new event (i.e. the event has only been held for 2-3 years).

Marketing and operational expenses are eligible. Marketing expenses includes activities designed to increase tourism, including but not limited to advertising, publicizing, or otherwise distributing information for the purpose of attracting and welcoming tourists; developing strategies to expand tourism; and funding marketing of special events and festivals designed to attract tourists.

Operation includes, but is not limited to, typical expenses associated with managing and operating an event such as salaries, supplies, rentals etc.

Events do not necessarily need to be held in Bellingham, but need to demonstrate a direct impact to Bellingham's economy (i.e. hotel stays).

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The City of Bellingham is known for its natural beauty, a commitment to environmental awareness and a general healthy, creative and free-spirited nature (see attached accolades). Proposals should highlight and enhance Bellingham's unique history, cultural attributes, vibrant downtown, rich agriculture, culinary proficiency, and/or great outdoor experiences which includes access to the mountains, foothills, and Salish Sea. All this supported strongly by local citizens who value the lifestyle that Bellingham provides. We intend to use these events to highlight what Bellingham has to offer.

The City is interested in pursuing an event unique to our area that reinforces Bellingham's brand. The purpose is to build events/activities that locals are connected to and can participate in which also draws a significant number of visitor participants of all ages to Bellingham and Whatcom County to experience what is cherished by our community. The event becomes synonymous with the community. The City currently has an annual outdoor relay event "Ski to Sea" held each May over Memorial Day weekend and selected Bellingham Seafest as its first Signature Event five years ago. The City is interested in events that differ from these events. While not required, proposals for projects or events held during the off peak months of September – March are encouraged.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

- Builds brand recognition – Areas of focus for Bellingham's tourism economy include:
  1. RECREATION (Biking, Boating, Skiing),
  2. OUTDOORS (Bellingham Bay, Lake Whatcom, Mount Baker),
  3. FOOD (Locally grown and produced), and
  4. ARTS and CULTURE (Performing, visual, heritage).
- Provides a unique distinctive Pacific Northwest experience. For example, the event should not re-create what's happening in Seattle.
- Attracts a significant number of tourists with a strong likelihood of overnight stays. For example, a person is more likely to stay overnight if the event is over a period of days or weeks.
- Generates numerous secondary economic benefits. Promotes the brand of our community – Recreation, Outdoors, Food and Arts, while highlighting or incorporating, where appropriate, businesses, history, area attractions, other events and environmental stewardship.
- Creates a long-lasting positive impression of the event and of Bellingham/Whatcom County.
- Becomes self-sustaining after a few years – specifically, City funding for operations is not required longer than three years.

## REQUIRED SUBMITTALS:

Submissions must be received no later than **NOON on October 18, 2019!** Late submissions will not be accepted.

1. **Cover Letter (REQUIRED).** 1 page Maximum. Name of Primary Contact Person – his/her address, the fiscal agent (whether government, non-profit or for-profit), phone number and email address.
  
2. **Narrative (70 Points).** 10 Pages Maximum.
  - a. Description of Signature Event (15 Points). Describe the concept, dates, how the event builds upon Bellingham’s brand, how the event is unique to the Pacific Northwest and other information to fully describe the proposed unique event. Is this event new or does it build upon an existing but very small and relatively new event – be specific in order for the reviewers to have enough information to qualify your application as an eligible event.
  
  - b. Project Plan/Scope of Work (10). Annual Schedule showing key deliverables and milestones. When will \$ be required, sponsors secured, venue secured, advertising launched, event be held, etc. Note: Contract negotiation will likely begin in February of 2020 and therefore, the date of the event does not actually need to occur in 2020. Details of funding availability and timing of release of funds will be negotiated between the selected party(ies).
  
  - c. Management/Project Team (15 Points). Identify name of key personnel and describe their role and experience. Differentiate between paid and volunteer staff. Resumes of key personnel must be attached, but will not be included in the 10 Page limit.
  
  - d. Partnerships and Vendors (10 Points). Describe partnerships such as leveraging other events, resources of Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, or coordinate with other scheduled community events, facilities, organizations, community promotion and marketing efforts in order to leverage local resources and minimize duplication. Letters of support or letters of commitment by partners are strongly encouraged.
  
  - e. Community & Economic Impact (15 Points). Please describe the expected economic benefit to the tourism sector and to the general community by explaining your target market and how and where you will reach your market, total estimated number of attendees/beneficiaries, estimated number of tourist attendees, and estimated number of room night stays generated at commercial hotel/motel lodging establishments. Describe secondary economic benefits such as the utilization of local facilities, businesses and potential employment opportunities for residents.

- f. Convince us (5 Points). Applicants are encouraged to convince the reviewers that your proposal helps the Tourism Commission build Bellingham as a tourist destination. Describe how your project impacts the community's standing in terms of advancing Bellingham's role such as visual or performing arts, hosting regional sporting and outdoor recreation events, and/or heightening awareness of the area's history or natural amenities.

3. **Budget (30 Points)**. No Page Limit.

- a. Budget Spreadsheet. Please be specific about *sources of revenue* (i.e. "City", "Sponsorships", "Ticket Sales", "T-shirt sales", "Foundation Grant", etc. Be specific about *expenses* (i.e. "Payroll", "Insurance", "Website Design", "Graphic Design", "T-shirts/Collateral", "Radio Advertising", etc. It must be clear what line items the applicant is seeking City funding for. Applicants can seek City funding for up to three years - 2020, 2021 and 2022 (not required). We anticipate additional start-ups costs may be required in 2020.
- b. Budget narrative. A narrative may accompany the spreadsheet to outline details such as the types of advertising and promotional materials, the vendors utilized, the locations/venues where the advertising will be displayed. Describe (or show via spreadsheet) how the event will continue without City funding – i.e. what does the budget look like in 2023?

**ALL MATERIALS ARE DUE BEFORE NOON on October 18, 2019**

Mail or email all required materials to:

City of Bellingham Tourism Commission  
Attn: Signature Event Proposal / Shannon Taysi  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
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Call Shannon Taysi with questions at 360-778-8360

*For any addendums or updates check*

<https://www.cob.org/gov/public/bc/tourism/Pages/signature-event.aspx>

*between now and submittal date.*