

# Part I

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Craft Sales

at Folk Art Center

within

Blue Ridge Parkway

National Park Service  
Department of the Interior

**Concession Contract No. CC-BLRI008-26**



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## INTRODUCTION

### Site Visit

The National Park Service (“Service”) will host a site visit for organizations interested in bidding on this opportunity on the date listed on the inside front cover of this Prospectus. The site visit provides interested organizations an overview of the concession operation along with a tour of some of the facilities assigned to the Concessioner under the Draft Contract. Each interested Offeror is limited to five persons attending the site visit, and all attendees must be over the age of eighteen.

To attend the site visit, registration is required no later than one week in advance of the scheduled date. To register, please contact the Blue Ridge Parkway Concessions program, at [blri\\_concessions@nps.gov](mailto:blri_concessions@nps.gov), with the name of the organization you represent, the primary contact for the organization, including contact phone number, mailing address and email address, and the number of people in your party. All parties attending the site visit must disclose to the Service the names of the interested organizations engaging their services. The Service will provide further information and additional directions by return email message to the primary contact.

Site visit participants are responsible for obtaining their own lodging, meals, and transportation. Attendance at the site visit is not required in order to submit a proposal for the Prospectus; however, attendance is encouraged.

### Notification of Intent to Propose

If you plan to submit a proposal in response to this solicitation, you must notify William Gordon, Commercial Services Management Specialist, NPS Regional Office Serving Interior Region 2, via email at [william\\_gordon@nps.gov](mailto:william_gordon@nps.gov) no later than 12:00 p.m. Eastern time on August 6, 2025. The Service will not accept proposals from entities that do not provide notice on or before this deadline.

### Summary of Term and Conditions of the CC-BLRI008-26 Opportunity

#### **Location**

Blue Ridge Parkway

#### **Draft Contract Term**

10 Years

#### **Projected Effective Date**

January 1, 2026

#### **Required Services**

Craft Sales

#### **2026 Projected Gross Receipts**

\$2,300,000 to \$2,500,000

#### **Estimated Initial Investment**

\$950,000

#### **Minimum Franchise Fee**

5.0% of gross receipts

#### **Component Renewal Reserve**

3.0% of gross receipts



## Information Regarding This Solicitation

The Prospectus describes in general terms the existing business operation and the business opportunity for services allowed pursuant to Concession Contract No. CC-BLRI008-26 ("Draft Contract"). It is comprised of five parts:

- I. Business Opportunity (this document)
- II. Proposal Instructions
- III. Proposal Package
- IV. Draft Concession Contract Including Contract Exhibits
- V. Appendices Table of Contents

This Prospectus includes Service estimates of revenue and expenses to assist Offerors in developing financial projections. These estimates reflect Service assumptions based on planning decisions, historical concession operating data, industry standards, economic conditions, and comparable and competitive operations. The Service does not guarantee these projections will materialize and assumes no liability for their accuracy. Offerors must compile and present their own financial projections based on independent assumptions, due diligence, and industry knowledge.

Offerors must review all sections of this Prospectus, especially the terms and conditions of the Draft Contract, including its exhibits (Part IV), to determine the full scope of a future concessioner's responsibilities. In the event of any inconsistency between the description of the terms contained in this Prospectus and the Draft Contract, the Draft Contract will control.

Certain federal laws apply to this solicitation including the National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 (Title IV, Public Law 105-391, and hereafter referred to as "the 1998 Act"), as amended, and its implementing regulations at 36 C.F.R. Part 51. In the event of any inconsistency between the terms of this Prospectus and 36 C.F.R. Part 51, 36 C.F.R. Part 51 will control. 36 C.F.R. Part 51 is available at the [Government Printing Office's Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-51)<sup>1</sup>.

Parts I, II, and III refer to Blue Ridge Parkway as "the Park" or "the Parkway".

"Concessioner" refers to the entity that will be the concessioner under the Draft Contract.

"Existing Concessioner" refers to Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, the concessioner under Concession Contract CC-BLRI008-13 ("Existing Contract"). The term of the Existing Contract is from February 1, 2013, to December 31, 2025.

The Service intends to award the Draft Contract around November 1, 2025, or around two months prior to the anticipated effective date of January 1, 2026. Visitor services are open year-round. The Service intends to announce the selected Offeror around September 1, 2025, or around two months prior to award. Award of a concession contract does not occur until the competitive process has been completed and both the selected Offeror and the Service have signed the concession contract. While the Service will make every effort to meet this schedule, it is subject to change.

## Proposal Overview

Part II of this Prospectus contains the instructions for submitting proposals. Offerors must carefully read and comply with those instructions.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-51>



Part III of this Prospectus contains the proposal package Offerors must complete in its entirety. The proposal package contains a required transmittal letter, five principal selection factors, and two secondary selection factors. Each selection factor identifies the minimum and maximum points the Service may award depending on the quality of the response. The following paraphrases the information sought under each selection factor. The wording of the actual selection factors controls.

Principal Selection Factor 1 requires Offerors to describe how they will protect, conserve, and preserve the resources of the Park. Offerors must describe their maintenance program and procedures.

Principal Selection Factor 2 requires Offerors to describe how they would improve the visitor experience through their concepts for providing high quality Appalachian Handicraft sales that relate to the Parkway's interpretive themes.

In Principal Selection Factor 3, Offerors must describe their organizational structure and provide documentation to help the Service understand the Offeror and its relationship to other entities. The Service does not score the first portion of Selection Factor 3 but may use it to understand responses elsewhere in a proposal. Incomplete submissions may lead to a lower score elsewhere if the information submitted does not support claims made in response to specific subfactors in this and other selection factors. The Service provides forms Offerors must complete depending on their organizational structure. The rest of this principal selection factor, which is scored, requires Offerors to describe their experience providing similar services, strategies for employee recruitment and retention, and history of violations or infractions and overall strategy to minimize and resolve them.

In Principal Selection Factor 4, Offerors must provide documentation demonstrating that they have the financial resources to commence and carry-on operations under the Draft Contract, including a business history form. Offerors also must complete the provided Excel workbook and provide other information to demonstrate an understanding of the operations under the Draft Contract.

In Principal Selection Factor 5, Offerors provide the franchise fee they will pay on gross receipts generated under the Draft Contract. Failure to agree to pay at least the minimum franchise fee set out in this selection factor will result in the Service finding the proposal non-responsive and ineligible for award of the Draft Contract.

Secondary Selection Factor 1 requires Offerors to describe how they would implement environmentally-friendly business practices.

Secondary Selection Factor 2 requires Offerors to describe their marketing plan.



## Doing Business with the Service

The Service has worked with private parties to provide services to visitors dating back to the earliest times of national parks. Many of the iconic lodges and other structures found in America's national parks were constructed and operated by private parties, and that relationship continues today.

We use the term "commercial visitor services" when generally describing services, benefits, and goods provided to visitors within an area of the National Park System by a third party for a fee. Simply put, the term "commercial visitor services" includes lodging, food and beverage, retail, marina operations, guided recreation, rental of equipment, experiential transportation, and similar services the National Park Service itself does not provide. Congress has passed several laws guiding the Service in contracting with third parties to provide these services, including the 1998 Act. The Service implemented regulations for many aspects of the law, primarily to set out the process for soliciting bids for new contracts and managing concessioners' investment in structures owned by the United States.

Working with the Service in providing commercial visitor services differs from operating outside a park in several respects. By law, we approve rates to ensure park visitors do not pay higher fees for goods and services merely because such transaction occurs within a park. Section 4(B) of the Operating Plan (Exhibit B to the Draft Contract) lists the rate methods for all visitor services. As with the private sector, concessioners must develop and follow environmental management programs, risk management programs, and similar programs to ensure operations comply with applicable laws. Service employees review the quality of concession operations and compliance with contract requirements including the maintenance of facilities.

Even with those regulatory actions, concessioners in national parks enjoy significant benefits. Many parks function as unique visitor destinations. Concessioners frequently operate with few, if any, in-park competitors, even though we do not grant exclusive rights to provide any visitor services. Although we approve rates, our processes ensure the rates are competitive with similar services near the operating locations. Our contract oversight reflects the best management practices of the private sector industries. We developed operating standards based on similar ones in the private sector to reflect best industry practices for the services provided under the concession contracts.

## The National Park Service and its Mission

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson approved legislation creating the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior. That legislation stated that Congress created America's National Park Service to:

*...conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Pub. L. No. 64-235, § 1 (codified at 54 U.S.C. § 100101(a)).*

Additionally, Congress has declared that the National Park System should be:

*...preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States. Pub. L. No. 91-383, § 1 (codified at 54 U.S.C. § 100101(b)).*

The Service has as its overall mission the preservation and public enjoyment of significant aspects of the nation's natural and cultural heritage. To learn more about the Service, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). The website includes information about the Service's mission, policies, and information on individual park units.



## BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

In 1936, Congress formally authorized the construction of Blue Ridge Parkway, a designated National Scenic Byway and All-American Road intended to connect Shenandoah National Park to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Parkway, which was built over a period of 52 years, is almost 500 miles long and crosses through the states of North Carolina (NC) and Virginia (VA) along the Blue Ridge mountain range. Land alongside the Parkway is maintained by the Service and, in many places, borders land protected by the United States Forest Service.

The maximum speed limit never surpasses 45 miles per hour with no direct interchanges with interstate highways, making it possible for visitors passing through to leisurely and safely enjoy the passing scenery. The Parkway's varied and scenic environment is designed to showcase the natural beauty and culture of the surrounding area.

From Milepost 0 at Rockfish Gap, VA to Milepost 355 near Mount Mitchell State Park, NC, the Parkway lives up to its name by following the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, averaging about 3,000 feet in elevation, and occasionally dipping down into the coves and hollows or crossing low-elevation water gaps. At Mount Mitchell, the Parkway veers westward through the Black Mountains, then into the Craggy Mountains before descending toward Asheville, NC. From there, the road climbs to elevations over 6,000 feet in the Balsam Mountains before entering the Great Smoky Mountains National Park near Cherokee, NC.

Along this route an unsurpassed diversity of climate zones, vegetation zones, physiographic zones, and geological features are traversed. The more than 81,000 acres of Parkway lands pass through a highland area of five degrees longitude and approximately 3 degrees latitude, making it the third largest unit of the National Park Service in terms of area covered. Park resources include 600 streams (150 headwaters), 47 Natural Heritage Areas (areas set aside as national, regional or state examples of exemplary natural communities), a variety of slopes and exposures, and possibly 100 different soil types. The Parkway provides a home for both southern species at the lower elevations and northern species on the mountaintops.



Due to the varied topography, weather conditions can vary dramatically. The highest point on the Parkway (Richland Balsam Mountain at Milepost 431) is often closed from November to April due to inclement weather such as snow, fog, and even freezing fog from low clouds. A few facilities located on the Parkway are open year-round, although a large majority (such as visitor centers, campgrounds and picnic areas) begin opening on a staggered schedule in late April and stay open through the fall leaf color.

Exhibit 1 on the following page presents a map of the Parkway. Additional information about the Park can be found at [www.nps.gov/blri](http://www.nps.gov/blri).



**Exhibit 1. Map of Blue Ridge Parkway**



Source: National Park Service



## CONCESSION OPPORTUNITY

The Draft Contract requires the Concessioner to provide craft sales at the Folk Art Center year-round. Minimum operating hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from January through March and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from April through December. The Folk Art Center is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

Located at Milepost 382, only 6 miles from downtown Asheville, North Carolina, the Folk Art Center is the Parkway’s showcase of Appalachian arts and crafts. The Folk Art Center opened in 1980 and includes spaces for craft sales, exhibition galleries, a library, and an auditorium.

There is a nonprofit cooperating association (Eastern National) bookstore on the first floor near the front entrance to the Folk Art Center. This area is excluded from the Concessioner’s land assignment, as designated on the map in Exhibit D to the Draft Contract.

Previously, the Service utilized the Folk Art Center auditorium periodically for programs and events, but this use will not continue under the Draft Contract.

### Draft Contract Term and Effective Date

The Draft Contract has a term of **ten (10) years** with an effective date of January 1, 2026. The effective date of the Draft Contract may change prior to award if necessary; however, in such event, the Service will change the expiration date of the Draft Contract, if necessary, to provide ten operating seasons.

### Required and Authorized Services

The Draft Contract includes the following required and authorized services.

**Exhibit 2. Required Services of the Draft Contract**

| Service     | Location        |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Craft Sales | Folk Art Center |

**Exhibit 3. Authorized Services of the Draft Contract**

| Service                      | Location        |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Special Events and Workshops | Folk Art Center |

### Overview of Required Services

A summary of required services is provided below. Offerors should reference the Draft Contract and its exhibits for additional information.



## Craft Sales

The Folk Art Center was developed as a venue for promotion of the folk art of the Appalachian region. Therefore, all handicraft merchandise sold by the Concessioner must be handmade or must be made using only simple tools. Additionally, this merchandise must have been made using traditional skills. Items must reflect individual artisanship and reflect the cultural heritage of the region.

Crafts may include jewelry, woodworking, pottery, glass, baskets, textiles and prints among a variety of other arts and handicrafts. All merchandise must be made in the Appalachian region by artists who make handicrafts, either traditional or contemporary.

Under the Draft Contract, prices for crafts will be determined using manufacturer's suggested retail price ("MSRP"), or if this is not available, Competitive Market Declaration ("CMD").



## Special Events and Workshops (Authorized Service)

The Concessioner may provide special events, workshops, demonstrations, lectures, etc. in the galleries and auditorium of the Folk Art Center. Special events may include but are not limited to: lectures on topics associated with Parkway interpretive themes and Appalachian handicrafts, meetings of crafters groups, music and dancing events, educational activities and training seminars.



## Revenue Assumptions

The following exhibit provides a summary of projected revenues for the first operating season under the Draft Contract (2026).

### Exhibit 4. Summary of Projected Revenues

| Department            | 2026                             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Craft Sales           | \$2,300,000 - \$2,500,000        |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUES</b> | <b>\$2,300,000 - \$2,500,000</b> |
| Less: Deductions*     | \$0                              |
| <b>GROSS RECEIPTS</b> | <b>\$2,300,000 - \$2,500,000</b> |

\* Authorized deductions (exclusions) are listed in the definition of "gross receipts" in Sec. 2 of the Draft Contract.

The following exhibit provides a projection of the number of craft sales transactions and average revenue per transaction in the first year of the Draft Contract term.

### Exhibit 5. Projected Craft Sales Operating Statistics

|                                    | 2026              |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Number of Craft Sales transactions | 42,000 - 44,000   |
| Average revenue per transaction    | \$54.00 - \$57.00 |

## Expense Assumptions

In developing projected expense estimates, the Service assumed adjustments of certain direct, indirect and fixed expenses to reflect costs associated with changes in operations and the business environment. The Service projects that most expenses will be within industry average ranges.

## Utilities Expenses

The Concessioner must obtain all utilities (water, electricity, solid waste, telephone, internet, etc.) from out-of-park suppliers.

## Potential Impact Issues

Road construction projects to the south of Northwest Trading Post, between NC-16 and Deep Gap, as well as the replacement of the Laurel Fork Bridge to the north of Northwest Trading Post, are expected to be completed by mid-2025 (prior to the Draft Contract term).



## INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

As shown in the following exhibit, the Concessioner's total estimated required initial investment as projected by the Service is **\$950,000 in 2026 dollars**. This includes personal property, inventory, supplies, start-up costs (staff hiring, training, etc.), and working capital (investment needed to cover expenses incurred in advance of offsetting revenues).

The Concessioner will incur start-up costs prior to commencing operations under the Draft Contract. Start-up costs include staff hiring, training that may involve compensation in addition to normal wages, systems implementation, legal support services, and marketing and advertising beyond normal annual expenditures.

A list of the Existing Concessioner's personal property as of 2023 is provided as Appendix C to the Prospectus.

### Exhibit 6. Estimated Initial Investment

| Item                                 | Estimated Amount (2026 Dollars) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Initial Personal Property Investment | \$500,000                       |
| Inventory Investment                 | \$250,000                       |
| Start-up Costs                       | \$100,000                       |
| Working Capital                      | \$100,000                       |
| <b>Total Initial Investment</b>      | <b>\$950,000</b>                |

**In addition to the initial investment, there are other required investments in the early years of the Draft Contract. These include curing deferred maintenance. Responses within Principal Selection Factor 4 in the proposal package should address how an Offeror intends to fund these items.**

### Deferred Maintenance

The Concessioner must cure, within the first two years of the Draft Contract's term, all deferred maintenance ("DM") for all real property assets assigned under the Draft Contract. The Draft Contract requires the Concessioner to maintain buildings according to the Maintenance Plan (Exhibit H to the Draft Contract), which means DM will not accumulate. The Draft Contract lists DM projects in an attachment to the Maintenance Plan.

The following exhibit presents estimated DM costs. The Service has estimated these costs for illustrative purposes only; Offerors must develop their own estimates. In addition, the Concessioner must cure the DM to the satisfaction of the Service even if the actual cost total exceeds the estimates provided in this Prospectus.

### Exhibit 7. Estimated Deferred Maintenance

| Year         | Amount           |
|--------------|------------------|
| 2026         | \$125,000        |
| 2027         | \$125,000        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$250,000</b> |



## Maintenance

### Assigned Facilities

The Draft Contract, Exhibit D, Assigned Land and Real Property Improvements (Concession Facilities), contains a complete list and maps of assigned land and real property improvements. Note: the Mountains-to-Sea Trail passes through the Folk Art Center land assignment, but the Concessioner is not responsible for maintaining the trail.

### Component Renewal Reserve

The Draft Contract requires the Concessioner to establish a Component Renewal Reserve to ensure funds are available to accomplish certain component renewal and replacement activities. Please see Section 10(c) of the Draft Contract for guidance on the terms and conditions of the Component Renewal Reserve. The Service will require the Concessioner to fund the Component Renewal Reserve for the Draft Contract with **three percent (3.0%)** of gross receipts as defined in Section 2 of the Draft Contract. As further explained in the Draft Contract, the Concessioner must expend sufficient additional monies to maintain the Concession Facilities to the satisfaction of the Director, which may require the Concessioner to expend more than the amount that it pays into the Component Renewal Reserve.

### Minimum Franchise Fee

Offerors must agree to pay the minimum franchise fee, as set out in Principal Selection Factor 5 of the Proposal Package (Part III of this Prospectus), although Offerors may propose higher franchise fees in accordance with terms of the Prospectus.

The minimum franchise fee acceptable to the Service for each year of the contract term is:

**5.0% of gross receipts**

### Leasehold Surrender Interest

The Concessioner will be eligible to obtain LSI as outlined in the Draft Contract and Exhibits A ("Leasehold Surrender Interest") and F1 ("Concessioner New Construction and Major Rehabilitation Project Procedures") to the Draft Contract, subject to all requirements set forth therein.

### No Preferred Offeror

The Director of the Service has determined that no preferred offeror for this Draft Contract exists pursuant to the terms of 36 C.F.R. Part 51. This solicitation for commercial visitor services is fully competitive.



## HISTORICAL CONCESSION DATA

This section presents information regarding historical revenue and operating data to assist Offerors in developing projections for future operations associated with the Draft Contract.

### Historical Financial Information

The following exhibit presents gross revenues by department from 2021 to 2023 for the Existing Contract. Note: the Existing Concessioner reports separate Craft Sales and Exhibit Sales, but Service projections include one combined department.

**Exhibit 8. Existing Contract BLRI008 – Historical Gross Revenues by Department**

|               | 2021               | 2022               | 2023               |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Craft Sales   | \$1,909,159        | \$1,990,250        | \$1,916,156        |
| Exhibit Sales | \$112,632          | \$90,890           | \$83,415           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>\$2,021,791</b> | <b>\$2,081,140</b> | <b>\$1,999,571</b> |

The following exhibit presents franchise fees paid from 2021 to 2023 for the Existing Contract.

**Exhibit 9. Existing Contract BLRI008 – Historical Franchise Fees Paid**

|                     | 2021      | 2022      | 2023      |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Franchise Fees Paid | \$121,307 | \$124,868 | \$139,970 |



## MARKET AREA OVERVIEW

The Folk Art Center is located at Milepost 380, approximately 6 miles from downtown Asheville, North Carolina. Given its proximity to Asheville and its numerous attractions, the Folk Art Center is one of the most-visited destinations on the Parkway, with approximately 250,000 annual visitors.

**Exhibit 10. Regional Area Map and Location of Concession Facilities**



Source: National Park Service

### Local Competitive Market

The Folk Art Center faces competition from arts and craft shops and galleries in and around Asheville. There are numerous shops in the area specializing in products from local artisans including jewelry makers, woodworkers, furniture makers, painters, and glass blowers, among others. Explore Asheville, the website managed by the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, lists over 40 arts and craft galleries and outlets in the City. The Folk Art Center benefits from its long history at the location (since 1980), the fact that it is a destination on the Parkway, and the large size of its sales floor and gallery space.



## Blue Ridge Parkway Visitation

Blue Ridge Parkway visitation numbers are among the highest in the National Park system and are based on a variety of counting procedures and formulas, including numerous traffic count locations along the entire Parkway. Between 2013 and 2023, Parkway recreation visitation increased at an average annual rate of 2.6%. Park visitation was only modestly impacted at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with visitation declining by roughly 6% in that year. However, visitation rebounded significantly in 2021 to 15.9 million visitors, an increase of 13.1% over 2020 visitation. Visitation set a new record in 2023 at approximately 16.7 million visitors, 6.1% higher than in 2022.

**Exhibit 11. Blue Ridge Parkway Recreation Visitation**

| Year | Recreation Visitors | Percentage Change |
|------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 2013 | 12,877,368          | -                 |
| 2014 | 13,941,749          | 8.3%              |
| 2015 | 15,054,603          | 8.0%              |
| 2016 | 15,175,578          | 0.8%              |
| 2017 | 16,093,765          | 6.1%              |
| 2018 | 14,690,418          | -8.7%             |
| 2019 | 14,976,085          | 1.9%              |
| 2020 | 14,099,485          | -5.9%             |
| 2021 | 15,948,148          | 13.1%             |
| 2022 | 15,711,004          | -1.5%             |
| 2023 | 16,667,164          | 6.1%              |



**-- END Part I: Business Opportunity --**

