

## Illinois and Michigan Canal NHC Core Activity Project Descriptions

<b>Core Activity:</b>	Tourism and Economic Development
<b>Goal:</b>	To build public awareness about I&M Canal NHC and encourage and facilitate Corridor tourism
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	By the end of 2011, potential I&M Canal HNC visitors will have an immediate and accessible source of information
<b>Project:</b>	To create an unique, stand alone website for the I&M Canal NHC

Project Description	Project Steps	Who will we have as Partner(s)?	Known Resources	What is the cost range estimate?	How will we know we succeeded?
<p>The creation of a stand alone, unique website which will supply large amounts of information about the I&amp;M Canal NHC while encouraging tourists to visit and enjoy the Corridor's many resources.</p> <p>The website will be a vital part of the Corridor marketing plan as much of the marketing will be designed to drive potential visitors to the website.</p>	<p>Communicate with website builder(s) with track record of building successful tourism oriented website about purpose and potential uses of website.</p> <p>Seek proposal from selected vendor.</p> <p>Review proposal with marketing committee and seek internal CCA approval to sign contract once CCA and vendor have agreed upon draft contract.</p> <p>Initiate website building process per contract.</p>	<p>Perhaps none needed other than for review purposes.</p> <p>Will want to communicate with partner organizations which may be willing to establish website connectivity.</p>	<p>CCA federal grants and/or appropriations</p>	<p>\$12, 000 to \$15,000</p> <p>Additional features may be added as needed.</p>	<p>Steadily or even rapidly increasing rate of website activity.</p> <p>General increase in Corridor visitor and tourism activity.</p>

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<b>Goal:</b>	To maximize the resources available to the I&M Canal NHC for assisting its efforts to build awareness of Corridor tourism opportunities
<b>SMART Goal</b>	By 2011, the Canal Corridor Association will have made contact with partnership organizations having similar goals
<b>Project:</b>	To identify potentially valuable partnerships with other visitor oriented entities having a Corridor presence

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Project Steps</b>	<b>Who will we have as Partner(s)?</b>	<b>Known Resources</b>	<b>What is the cost range estimate?</b>	<b>How will we know we succeeded?</b>
<p>Identify organizations having a Corridor presence which may be interested in creating partnerships and sharing resources for the purpose of promoting tourism and economic development.</p> <p>Identify and evaluate the resources which each organization may be able to supply through partnership agreements.</p>	<p>Create a list of potential partners.</p> <p>Identify resources which may be available to the Corridor through these partnerships.</p>	<p>Some of these potential partners include the Heritage Corridor CVB, the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway, the Route 66 National Scenic Byway, Ottawa Visitors Center and similar organizations in Corridor communities, Starved Rock Lodge, Will County Forest Preserve, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (tourism division) and others.</p>	<p>Virtually all of these potential partners have tourism oriented websites, sponsor tourism activities, provide recreational information helpful to tourists and so on.</p>	<p>The cost of exploring these partnerships should be minimal.</p>	<p>By the creation of partnerships to support specific projects. For example, an I&amp;M Canal NHC bicycling tourism promotion might involve a partnership with IDNR (Grand Illinois Trail), Will County Forest Preserve (local trails), the IL River Road National Scenic Byway (link to trails throughout the Byway), many communities with local trails, etc.</p>

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<b>Core Activity:</b>	Tourism and Economic Development
<b>Goal:</b>	To encourage tourism through the providing of convenient and better awareness of visitor opportunities
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	By 2014, establish I&M Canal NHC visitor centers in each of the major Corridor cities
<b>Project:</b>	To take the steps necessary to develop the necessary resources and partnerships to establish a series of Corridor visitor centers

Project Description	Project Steps	Who will we have as Partner(s)?	Known Resources	What is the cost range estimate?	How will we know we succeeded?
Establishing a series of highly visible visitor centers will require considerable financial and other types of resources. It will likely not be possible without developing a considerable number of creative partnerships	<p>Review the need and value of visitor centers given the increasingly heavy tourist reliance upon electronic exploration of tourism opportunities.</p> <p>Target the Corridor cities where tourism might be increased with the presence of visitor centers.</p> <p>Establish the physical, content and location standards for successful visitor centers.</p> <p>Pursue partnership opportunities and the necessary financial resources.</p> <p>Proceed with final planning and plan implementation.</p>	Existing tourism organizations in the targeted communities such as the Ottawa Visitors Bureau and Grundy County Area Chamber of Commerce in Morris. The Illinois Office of Tourism should be a partner as should the Heritage Corridor CVB. Also, the Ottawa Canal Association might play a role. Area hotels should also be considered for partnerships.	The Canal Corridor Association along with resources provided by the potential partners.	Ranging from relatively modest when partnerships can be formed with existing tourism facilities to six figures if having to develop stand along facilities.	When seeing major increases in the number of tourist contacts handled through the new visitor centers.

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<b>Goal:</b>	To increase tourism through the providing of I&M Canal related recreational and educational opportunities
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	To have established by 2012 at least one I&M Canal themed festival within the Corridor
<b>Project:</b>	To develop a means of reviewing existing festivals and identifying and taking advantage of opportunities for new festivals

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Appropriately themed and organized community festivals may be a productive means of attracting tourists while providing opportunities to learn about the historical importance of the Canal. A process needs to be put in place to review the existing festivals and develop new ones which meet I&M Canal NHC standards while achieving the necessary levels of success.	<p>Review existing I&amp;M Canal themed festivals in the Corridor.</p> <p>Identify communities which might be willing to sponsor Canal themed festivals.</p> <p>Establish content standards for festival recreation, entertainment, food, music, educational opportunities, etc.</p> <p>Partner with communities willing to move ahead with the creating of a Canal festival.</p>	Canal Corridor Association, the tourism offices and historical societies of local Corridor communities, the LaSalle County Tourism Coalition, the Heritage Corridor CVB, the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway, the Illinois Office of Tourism and others.	The event organization, tourism promotion and limited financial resources of the potential partners.	Difficult to estimate at this early stage. However, an assumption can be made that new events would be started up in modest fashion and then grown over time.	The number of people attending and enjoying the Canal festivals along with the amount of media coverage generated by the events.

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<b>Goal:</b>	To attract tourists to the I&M Canal NHC through the providing of enriched recreational opportunities
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	To develop by 2011 a comprehensive plan to promote bicycling throughout the Corridor
<b>Project:</b>	To create a Corridor bicycling plan which will build on existing resources and the use of partnership to expand bicycling opportunities

<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Project Steps</b>	<b>Who will we have as Partner(s)?</b>	<b>Known Resources</b>	<b>What is the cost range estimate?</b>	<b>How will we know we succeeded?</b>
<p>Bicycling is a growing outdoor recreational activity which can be used to attract significant numbers of visitors to the I&amp;M Canal NHC.</p> <p>This project will find the means of identifying the many existing Corridor bicycling resources; expand these resources where possible and organize the resources so they may be readily available to bicycling enthusiasts.</p>	<p>Review existing bicycling resources and opportunities in the Corridor.</p> <p>Look for opportunities to expand these resources in terms of new trails, access to existing trails, bicycling amenities and so on.</p> <p>Determine the means of providing this comprehensive information about available Corridor bicycling opportunities to bicycling enthusiasts in an inexpensive and easy to access fashion. A high priority will be placed on providing these resources via electronic means.</p>	<p>Existing tourism and recreational entities throughout the Corridor such as the Will County Forest Preserve, the IL Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the League of Illinois Bicyclists, the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway and others.</p>	<p>The existing resources of these potential partners – including the IDNR (The Grand Illinois Trail and bicycling grant programs). Also the Illinois Department of Transportation via the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program.</p>	<p>Pulling together and promoting existing bicycling resources should involve only modest costs. Creating new ones will be expensive and require grant access and partnerships.</p>	<p>Increasing amount of bicycling inquiries at tourism offices, more hits on the bicycling portion of the Corridor website, more local bicycle rentals, more local bicycle sales, more local bicycling media coverage, etc.</p>

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<b>Goal:</b>	To build public awareness of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor and its many resources
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	By 2012, thousands of potential visitors will have a better understanding of the Corridor and its wealth of resources
<b>Project:</b>	To create a integrated, comprehensive and ongoing professional marketing program for the Corridor

Project Description	Project Steps	Who will we have as Partner(s)?	Known Resources	What is the cost range estimate?	How will we know we succeeded?
<p>Building on the existing marketing materials and brand identification of the Canal Corridor Association, create and implement a marketing plan for the Corridor.</p> <p>A key aspect of the plan will be the creation of a I&amp;M Canal National Heritage Corridor website.</p>	<p>Identify specific goals for marketing campaign and target audiences such as heritage tourists and special interest groups such as bicyclists.</p> <p>Develop and disseminate Requests of Qualifications (RFQ).</p> <p>Review RFQ's and select three top submissions for further investigation including interviews.</p> <p>Select marketing firm and develop campaign.</p>	<p>Heritage Corridor CVB, special interest groups such as the League of Illinois Bicyclists, State of Illinois, tourist agencies of Corridor cities—Joliet, Ottawa, etc., Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway, LaSalle County Tourism Coalition</p>	<p>Provided through interaction with identified partners.</p>	<p>To be determined through RFQ and follow-up process.</p>	<p>Primarily by measuring the number of new visitors to the new Corridor website and to the websites of partner groups.</p>