



Permanent Museum Exhibition

Request for Qualifications: Creation of a new long-term exhibition at the Sharon historical Society and Museum focusing on the importance of the iron industry to the area.

Purpose

The Sharon Historical Society and Museum (SHSM) is seeking a qualified individual or firm to handle the project management, content creation, exhibition design, and installation, of a new long-term exhibition focusing on the active role Sharon played in the region's iron district, which shaped Sharon's future and that of modern America.

Background

Beginning with conversations started in the 2010s, the SHSM has recently been exploring in earnest the idea of turning over a portion of their gallery space to a permanent exhibition primarily focused on the area's iron history. Local historian, the late Ed Kirby, was instrumental in putting this project in motion and wrote multiple books based on the topic, which are intended for use as the foundation of the exhibition's content.

In 2024, a task force was assembled to more deeply explore the possible avenues the exhibit could take. The group has undertaken discussions leading to a big idea, audiences, outcomes and brief overview for the exhibition (included below).

Big Idea

Sharon played an active role in the area's iron district, which shaped Sharon's future and that of modern America.

Audiences

Major identified audiences are: explorers, hobbyists, history enthusiasts, and facilitators. Additionally, the exhibit should provide space for engagement with school groups and educators. Each of these groups is composed of both full- and part-time residents.

Outcomes

- Expand local interest and understanding of Sharon's place in American history.
- Increase public knowledge of Sharon's industrial past and the impact of Sharon on the area's iron industry and the making of modern America.
- Generate opportunities for increased engagement and connection to Sharon and SHSM.
- Increase understanding of Sharon's physical landscape.
- Create visitors who want to bring others back, and tell people what they learned.

Sharon Historical Society and Museum

18 Main Street, Sharon, CT 06069 | sharonhist.org | 860-364-5688

Brief Overview

From the mid-eighteenth to early-twentieth century, the iron industry was crucial to northwestern Connecticut's economy, history, and culture, particularly in towns located in the iron district, such as Sharon. Abundant iron ore deposits and timber coupled with waterpower in the area fueled the widescale production of essential goods for domestic and military use, bringing industry and employment to the region.

This engaging exhibition looks to present an in-depth exploration of the history of the iron industry in Sharon and examine its regional and national impact in the making of a "modern America." The historical implications of the past and transformation of industrial Sharon to the bucolic rural environment that it has become will also be considered. Original artworks and artifacts, archival photographs, and dynamic video and interactive components will engage visitors of all ages and interests in this compelling and noteworthy regional story.

Scope of Services

Initial planning services to:

- Confirm the basic goals and intent of the exhibition and the spaces required.
- Establish a proposed budget.
- Preparation of initial exhibit design documents for presentation to potential donors and the society's board.

Services following approval by the society's board, including:

- Content development.
- Exhibit and graphic design.
- Preparation of a final budget.

Services following approval of a final budget:

- Fabrication and installation of the exhibit.

SHSM is looking for a qualified professional to lead the exhibition from its current idea phase to physical completion with an aspiring opening date of winter 2027/spring 2028. The service provider will be primarily engaged in content development and exhibition design. The provider should manage and coordinate any elements of the project that are not offered by the provider including, but not be limited to, fabrication and graphic design.

As a major project for SHSM, the provider is expected to work closely with the staff and specified volunteers to bring the project to fruition. Much of the base content has already been established through a number of books written by Ed Kirby on the iron industry in the area which will serve as the narrative foundation. The selected consultant will have access to SHSM's

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collection and Kirby's research materials, with the majority of content creation being under the purview of the provider.

Qualifications

SHSM seeks a provider who has experience:

- creating multi-generational exhibitions.
- incorporating technology to enhance but not detract from content.
- breaking down complex stories into audience-engaging content.
- leading a dynamic group through the exhibition process.
- working with various other providers to ensure the exhibition is completed on time and on budget.
- Designing renderings of the exhibit that can be used in fundraising collateral.

Submission Instructions

If you are interested in leading this exhibition project to completion:

1. Provide qualifications for relevant staff in the form of bios or resumes.
2. Briefly describe the approach you would take to the project and a sample budget range.
3. Provide 3-5 examples of exhibitions you have worked on, outlining the basics of what you did for each and the budget. If you have done regional work currently available to be seen in person, please provide that information.
4. If you would be working with outside contractors for portions of the project, please provide their names, a short write up of your previous work with them, and 2-3 examples of their work.
5. Description of how you base your fees.

Inquiries & Questions To ensure a fair process, all questions regarding this RFQ must be submitted via email to director@sharonhist.org by April 15, 2026. A consolidated list of questions and SHSM's responses will be shared with all interested parties by April 20th.

Please email materials to director@sharonhist.org by May 15, 2026, with the subject line: RESPONSE TO RFQ.

Review Process and Timeline

A team from SHSM will review responses to the RFQ. We will follow up within six weeks of the closing date to all respondents concerning next steps.