



**Request for Information/Proposal**  
**The Saguache County Transmedia Storytelling Experience**  
**Deadline for Responses: November 4, 2018**

An initiative of The Saguache County Tourism Council, Saguache County, Colorado, USA

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Transmedia Lead. Email responses to both contacts. Feel free to ask questions.

**1. Background/Introduction**—The Saguache County Tourism Council seeks a manager for its Transmedia Story Experience, an all-county marketing initiative to be rolled out in 2019. **Our grant specifies that work begin in 2019, and all work be complete by August 30, 2019.** 2018 funds are available for story development/creative/training, and data collection/photography and message development. It is anticipated that the project manager will work with members of the Council to define story content and manage story development, work with an established transmedia software application provider, or define an alternative user interface for the game, manage the rollout of the project, and develop and execute a marketing campaign for the project. This is to be an ongoing experience, and not event-based, although local events may include promotions to introduce the game. Grant funds include \$5,000 to pay young people—local students and young adults and limited non-local college students, to participate in project development, which may be story creation or testing. \$3,000 is also budgeted for Spanish language translation which should be embedded in at least part of the story. Because of the size, diversity and local characteristics of Saguache County, the project involves a stage of community outreach for story ideas. The project manager should be prepared for a community-based process for story line development. It is anticipated that the story will grow, with components added after the current grant is complete. The project should drive business to local towns and attractions. The goal is to create buzz, mystery and enthusiasm for Saguache County, to prompt people to stop for a few hours, or for an overnight, and to visit again. Travelers pass through Saguache County to visit the Great Sand Dunes National Park, and as they drive from Denver to the 4-corners region.

**2. Information requested**—The Council would like to hear from anyone experienced in Transmedia Storytelling for Marketing, with ideas and models for executing a Transmedia Storytelling experience to attract visitors to a remote, rural Colorado County. Please respond by emailing a statement of concept of 500 words or less. Your submission should include the following:

1. Your contact information
2. Your Transmedia Story credentials, both educational and experiential.
3. A link to your online portfolio
4. Your availability and areas of interest (See pages 2-3 for full project description)
5. The services you offer with costs for initial design and set up during the grant period and/or during the 2018 budget year, as well as multi-year maintenance, if applicable.
6. A concept statement about how you frame the project, and your anticipated involvement, ideas/thoughts about story development, inputs, any crucial vendors you see participating, challenges, etc.
7. Time is of the essence. If you are interested, please respond first, details later. **Deadline for Submission is November 4, 2018.**

**Additional Background:** This project is to use Transmedia Storytelling as the driver of an innovative marketing program that will uniquely address the challenges of a large rural county. Transmedia storytelling is a new technology that has been used successfully to create viral buzz for Hollywood films and in limited applications to develop tourism. By using the technology to market a Colorado County, Saguache will be differentiating itself and creating a unified program to promote our entire county. Transmedia also offers the opportunity to market the many small and micro-enterprises that dot the expansive geography of the county. At 3,170 square miles, Saguache County is the seventh largest county in the state, 6<sup>th</sup> lowest in retail sales per capita, and the 4<sup>th</sup> highest percentage of population living below the poverty line. These statistics mean that scant funds are available for tourism development, and the pressure is significant to use these funds responsibly and locally. Major towns include Crestone, Saguache, and Center. Other communities include Moffat, Hooper, Bonanza, Villa Grove, La Garita, and Sargents. These communities are culturally and ethnically diverse. The story will be sensitive to the distinctions of each locale. Cell phone coverage is not present in many areas of the county. Relationship to technology will be an implicit theme as smart-phone users engage with the area and the story.

Saguache County is home to the Great Sand Dunes National Park, which welcomed 487,000 visitors in 2017, and is projected to receive 750,000 visitors in 2019. Heretofore, limited marketing, facilities, and infrastructure in Saguache County mean potential visitors drive through without stopping or spending. We have many hidden stories, a rich western history, and many attractive tourism assets, but taken individually, these resources are difficult to promote even to our own population, much less to visitors from other places. The concept we will be leading is to employ smart-phone driven digital technologies to propagate a story experience for visitors that leads them to sights, businesses, and experiences throughout the county. The format of this visitor experience is part treasure hunt, part scavenger hunt, and an immersive story experience. In the same way that the Stanley Hotel is a major tourism draw for fans of Stephen King, and in the same way that New Zealand is now a visitor destination for fans of Lord of the Rings, our transmedia story will create an aura and mystique for our place and draw the player who is engaged with our story into the mysterious, remote, diverse, and historic wonderland that is Saguache County.

In the grant preparation stage of this project, the communities we approached and the businesses we visited universally were intrigued by the novelty and possibility of the transmedia story concept. People like games and treasure hunts. They fondly remember scavenger hunts from childhood. Not only will participants connect with locals when they follow clues to explore shops, businesses, points of interest, and sites of history and nature, but likewise the residents of the community will engage in the experience as we create it. The community will be an avenue for viral promotion, as community members expose their networks to the game and what it teaches us about our area. This aspect of the project uniquely leverages a compelling characteristic of rural life, at least as it manifests in Saguache County: We share a strong sense of community that visitors perceive and also find compelling. The transmedia immersive story will engage visitors in a deeper experience of community than non-participant visitors are likely to realize.

The story creators will integrate various media into the story to end up with an exciting experience. Media may include traditional platforms such as books, movies, photographs, theater, and actual places. Media will also include digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube to achieve the desired

outreach. Digital media offer the potential to introduce Saguache County to internet-users across the country and across the world.

The goals of the project include developing a compelling visitor experience that is not available anywhere else in the state, to employ a marketing program that uniquely suits the area and population, to expose potential visitors to the thriving businesses in the county, to foster new tourism-oriented enterprise, and to increase visitor count to the county by meaningful amounts. It is expected that the smart-phone user interface will provide a rich supply of engagement and visitor metrics for county locales.

Ancillary goals are to increase community connectivity and sense of pride, and knowledge of the area by residents. The Council expects the Project Manager to guide the Council to define the target audience of the Experience. The target market should be reflective of typical visitors to the region and the state.

Marketing information on Colorado Tourism is available at

[https://industry.colorado.com/sites/default/files/Colorado\\_Identity\\_MainReport\\_v12.pdf](https://industry.colorado.com/sites/default/files/Colorado_Identity_MainReport_v12.pdf). Saguache County is in Region 4, beginning on page 49. In all cases the story should be family-friendly, and positively and authentically reflect the history, culture, and natural surroundings in Saguache County. The project will demonstrate how tourism development can connect a small community to itself, inform residents about the gifts in their own locale, and connect visitors with an intimate experience of rural and rugged American western culture.

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