

DETERMINATION AND FINDINGS FOR A DIRECT AWARD PROCUREMENT

TO: Krysten Wolfe, Chief Financial Officer *KAW*
Deidra Silva, Accounting Supervisor *DS*

FROM: Mary Kemper

DATE: May 28, 2026

SUBJECT: Sole Source Justification for the Acquisition and Maintenance of State Historical Highway Markers

Pursuant to the determination of professional requirements, the West Virginia Department of Tourism hereby executes this direct award contract with Sewah Studios, Inc. for the continuous acquisition and comprehensive refurbishment of the state's Historical Highway Markers.

Comprehensive evaluation of the Department's operational mandates and the current commercial marketplace confirms that Sewah Studios, Inc. is the singular entity capable of fulfilling these highly specialized requirements. This determination is substantiated by the following findings:

- 1. Exclusive Intellectual Property and Design Propriety:** Sewah Studios has maintained a continuous partnership with West Virginia since 1962, having independently financed the development of the state's original marker prototype. The production patterns are proprietary intellectual property, and there are no existing technical drawings or specifications available to facilitate replication by an alternative manufacturer.
- 2. Interoperability and Architectural Uniformity:** To maintain visual and material consistency across a statewide inventory exceeding 1,100 markers, adherence to Sewah's proprietary manual manufacturing process is essential. Their specific typographic font and leather-textured finish lack commercial equivalents, rendering Sewah the only provider able to ensure aesthetic compatibility with the existing fleet.
- 3. Reliability and Technical Efficiency:** With established West Virginia-specific master patterns, Sewah offers superior turnaround times and logistical flexibility. Their 60-year tenure as a service provider serves as evidence of their consistent ability to meet stringent quality standards and delivery schedules.
- 4. Specialized OEM Refurbishment:** As the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), Sewah utilizes an industry-exclusive powder coating methodology. This process ensures that refurbished markers remain indistinguishable from newly cast units, preserving the integrity of the state's historical assets.

5. Geographic Proximity and Fiscal Responsibility: Located in Marietta, OH, the vendor's proximity to the state reduces logistical overhead and environmental impact, supporting a stable and competitive fixed-pricing structure.

Market analysis was conducted through a review of industrial manufacturing catalogs and comparative assessments of finishing methodologies. Furthermore, consultations with historical program coordinators in Delaware, Kentucky, and Mississippi corroborated that Sewah Studios remains the only qualified source for markers meeting these exacting standards.

In light of the aforementioned justifications, the Department respectfully requests formal approval to proceed with this direct award to Sewah Studios, Inc.



Mary Kemper
Procurement Officer
WV Dept. of Tourism