



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS
("RFQ")**

**Revision and Renovations to
Audacious Freedom
February 6, 2020**

Mission:

The African American Museum in Philadelphia brings diverse communities together in greater appreciation of the Black experience through the combined narrative of arts, culture and historical witness.

Vision:

The African American Museum will be an integral asset of the Philadelphia cultural landscape that makes a meaningful impact on visitors' lives as they experience the stories of people of African descent through art, history and culture.

The African American Museum in Philadelphia (the "Museum") invites firms interested in providing exhibit design, fabrication and installation services to submit a letter of interest and statement of qualifications for consideration regarding the upgrades and renovation to the permanent installation entitled: *Audacious Freedom*. Lead firms with collaborative teams as sub-contractors are encouraged to respond. The proposed project will be the renovation and revisions to the 2009 experience, now more than 10 years old. The current Exhibit has successfully imparted a story of national importance, one of audacious freedom, in an inspiring, informative and interactive way through scholarship, imagery, interpretative text and multimedia.

Located adjacent to Independence Mall, visitors include a broad cross-section of people of varying age groups, ethnicities and nationalities. Tourists, school groups, and families enjoy not only the exhibit experience, but a broad range of dynamic programs. We are a regional museum that tells the story of not only Philadelphia but the greater metro area that includes southern New Jersey, northern Delaware, and the Philadelphia suburbs. AAMP's role as an educational destination and resource supports the School District of Philadelphia's African American curriculum requirement.

Located midway between New York City's African American cultural institutions (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Studio Museum in Harlem) and Washington DC's National Museum African American History and Culture, AAMP is the leading African American cultural history/history institution in the region's dense and competitive history sector.

Philadelphia has a unique place in history and its citizens of African descent, both free and enslaved, played a vital role in the early shaping of America. Philadelphia also has world renowned specialists in the world of African and African American studies, among them Dr. Diane Turner of the Blockson Collection, Dr. Molefi Asante of Temple University, Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar of Rutgers, a native Philadelphian, and Dr. Tukufu Zuberi of University of Pennsylvania. Additionally, there is a close working relationship with the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC.

The recent publication of the *1619 Project* (*New York Times*, August 2019) that acknowledges the 400th anniversary of the arrival of indentured servants of African descent is but one example. Racial and ethnic awareness, ethnically sensitive challenges, and civic tension have increasingly surfaced and in some cases re-surfaced as organizations and corporations grapple with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The United States is in the midst of a tumultuous time. The publication of a number of award-winning books from a new generation of celebrated African American authors have captured the attention of the public in recent years including: *Water Dancers* by Tanehisi Paul Coates; *Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead; *She Came to Slay* by Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar; and *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson.

There has been a notable surge in the number of culturally diverse experiences that Philadelphia's cultural institutions are staging to attract visitors. The Museum intends to become the gathering place for the African American experience in Philadelphia. As such, the exhibit will also be outward facing, serving as a tangible connector to other organizations that feature the African American experience. The exhibit becomes part of that core.

For example, Mother Bethel AME Church, the founding AME church in the world, continues to be a destination frequented by tourists who wish to see the museum and artifacts that speak to early black life in Philadelphia. The Museum of the American Revolution shares the unique perspectives of African Americans and Native Americans in its exhibits. The Marian Anderson House, Paul Robeson House, and Tindley Temple are among the region's culturally specific landmarks. The President's House historic site (2010) adjacent to the Liberty Bell Pavilion has increased the name recognition for Ona Judge and Hercules, two of George Washington's enslaved workers who managed to escape. New books have surfaced featuring their stories. The statue of civil rights advocate Octavius V. Catto erected on the southwest apron of City Hall (2017) is thought to have breathed new life into *Audacious Freedom*, which has featured his remarkable story for the past decade. These are but a few of the experiences that are integral to the narrative and for which AAMP is a hub.

The Philadelphia International Airport has often included the experience in its transition spaces. These temporary displays are a natural example of how themes can be connected across sites and new audiences attracted.

Approximate Square Footage of the Exhibit

- Gallery One – 960 sq. ft.
- Gallery Two – 1,978 sq. ft.

Targeted Completion Date for the Exhibit

- **Fall 2021**

Exhibit Characteristics

- A question and answer approach to thematic content development that inspires curiosity and further learning once visit is complete
- Disrupting the strict chronological approach that is currently found in the exhibit timeline
- Relevance to current trends and topics of interest with respect to cultural heritage
- Acknowledgement that people of African descent are not monolithic and come with varied backgrounds, heritages, and experiences
- Hands-on
- Object-based
- Immersive environment
- Multimedia
- Thought-provoking
- Dispelling myths
- Promoting civic dialog
- Creating new memories
- Allowances for people with physical challenges
- The ability to take smaller collections to places in the communities
- Identifying what is compelling to today's visitors

Roundtable Discussions

Roundtable discussions were conducted with stakeholders and local historians as a preliminary step in addressing themes for the new version of the exhibit. These discussions also highlighted the features of the current exhibit that are noteworthy.

Thematic Topics for Consideration

- The story of the museum's origin
- Social Justice
- Social History
- Environmental Justice
- Geography and Diaspora – the multiplicity of blackness
- Fashion and adornment
- Criminal justice/Mass Incarceration (particularly given that there is a prison directly across the street from the museum)
- Race & Identity

- Arts and creative practice Misconceptions about the notion of race in the 17th through 21st centuries
- Activism/Civic engagement
- Moving towards the United States Semiquincentennial in 2026
- Persistent challenges in the African American community
- Cultural Production such as Spirituality, Faith, and Belief Systems in the African American community
- The African American LGBTQ community

Exhibit Leadership

African American Museum:

Ivan Henderson, Vice President of Programming is the museum's senior leader for the exhibit.

DeJay Duckett, Director of Curatorial Service is an integral part of the team

Sylvia Watts McKinney, Board of Directors

The ROZ Group – Project Consultant Team:

Rosalyn McPherson, President of The ROZ Group serves as the Project Director

Leslie Russell Winder, Business Director of The ROZ Group serves as the Project Manager

Quotes from the roundtable sessions:

“Each time I visit this exhibit, some new story jumps out at me.”

“My takeaway is pride and endurance ... Pride and overwhelming exhaustion of the struggle.”

“I taught African American history, but this exhibit introduced me to so many people I did not recognize. I was struck by the people and documents I had never seen before.”

“Given the changes in technology over the last 10 years, how will we create a method for consuming so much information in a meaningful and accessible way. How can we leverage the fact that so many kids have tablets these days?”

“The exhibit’s timeline gives a sense of the city that you are in. Many of the building blocks for content are there.”

“I liked the low-tech experience at the NMAAHC ... I was able to sit in the old care and read the Green Book.”

When asked: “What do you want non-African Americans to take away from the exhibit?”

“The 1619 series profoundly affected White people that I know who consider themselves educated, “woke”, and political. They did not realize how deep the roots of racial constructs in our society lie. That would be great to take with them.”

“People need to have that “aha” moment as well as that “uh-oh” moment so that there is knowledge and understanding.”

“I want to be inclusive [like] images of Selma marches including white people who protested ... a white person can come in and say, ‘I have a place and I am an advocate.’”

“I want them to make the connection to the fact that we have much more in common than the tiny differences.”

“I want people to walk away with a different level of respect for our culture.”

“I want people to have a sense of “I bet you didn’t know that” and “I’m better for knowing this.”

REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR THE RFQ

Firms interested in providing design, fabrication and installation services for the Exhibit should submit a response to this RFQ of *no more than 20 pages* and include the following:

- A letter of interest including why your firm or team is best suited for developing an African American history exhibit experience;
- A statement about your firm's diversity and inclusion practices and experience;
- Summaries of at least three similar recent projects with pertinent information and references (i.e., projects completed in the last five years), including information on proposed and actual impact on visitor experiences (where data is available)
- Statement of experience working on culturally sensitive projects, especially African American History.
- A summary of your vision for the exhibit and how your team will address some of the elements of the listed exhibit characteristics;
- Statement of qualifications of the firm and all members of the team that will work on the Exhibit;
- Copies of the resumes of all team members;
- Financial statements for the firm for the last two years;

An optional site visit for interested firms is planned for February 20, 2020 at 1:30 PM – 3 PM.

Deadline for the receipt of RFQ responses: March 4, 2020

Projected completion of the exhibit: Fall 2021

An original and 10 copies of all responses to this RFQ must be sent or delivered by 5pm on March 4, 2020 to:

Ivan Henderson, Vice President
African American Museum in Philadelphia
701 Arch St, Philadelphia, PA 19106

All questions concerning this RFQ must be emailed by no later than February 12, 2020 to:

Leslie Russell Winder, Consultant to the Museum
The ROZ Group, Inc.
E-mail: lwinder@therozgroup.com
Phone: 267-909-9340

An electronic version of the proposal should be sent to Leslie Winder by 5pm on March 4, 2020.

GENERAL CRITERIA as required by the City of Philadelphia

The African American Museum in Philadelphia is an institution that receives funding from the City. As such, it is required to follow the City's protocols:

Anti-Discrimination

The Museum is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in its contracting activities. With that commitment in mind, any contract issued pursuant to a Request for Proposals ("RFP") developed by the Museum will require the selected firm to comply with the anti-discrimination policy described in the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia's Executive Order No. 03-12, which is administered by the City's Office of Economic Opportunity ("OEO") and available at https://www.phila.gov/ExecutiveOrders/Executive%20Orders/2012_EO03-12.pdf. The MBEC website address is <https://www.phila.gov/departments/office-of-economic-opportunity/>.

Indemnity Provisions and Insurance Requirements

Any contract resulting from the RFP will require that to the fullest extent permitted by law, the selected firm shall indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Museum, the City of Philadelphia and their respective officers, directors, employees and agents from and against any and all loss, cost, claim, damage and liability (including attorneys' fees), arising out of, resulting from or related to the design, fabrication and installation of the Exhibit or to the acts or omissions of the selected firm, its subcontractors, suppliers or other entity for whose acts or omissions said firm or any of its subcontractors may be liable. In addition, the selected firm will be required to submit to the Museum, the City of Philadelphia, and any other parties designated by the Museum, certificates of insurance evidencing insurance policies covering the firm's activities under the contract including design, fabrication and installation of the Exhibit.

Disclosure of Data

Submittals in response to this RFQ may contain material (i.e., financial statements of the firm) that firm does not want disclosed for any purpose other than in connection with the evaluation of the firm in accordance with this RFQ (the "Confidential Material"). If so, the firm shall (i) submit one copy of the Confidential Material in a separately sealed envelope; (ii) clearly mark "Confidential Material" on the sealed envelope; and (iii) submit a self-addressed stamped envelope if the firm wishes to have Confidential Material returned. The Museum will make good faith efforts not to disclose such Confidential Material.

Submission Costs and Ownership

The Museum will not be liable for any costs associated with the development, preparation, transmittal or presentation of any proposal or materials submitted in response to this RFQ. All materials submitted by a firm in connection with this RFQ shall become the property of the Museum when received. Each firm responding to this RFQ agrees that it will have no claim of any nature whatsoever against the Museum for any costs or liabilities incurred.

Reservation of Rights

The Museum reserves the right to supplement, amend or otherwise modify this RFQ or to solicit new qualifications and/or proposals, in its sole and absolute discretion.

Selection Process

An initial short-list of respondents to this RFQ will be selected with particular emphasis on a thorough assessment of each firm's answers to the requested information, past projects, and creative vision for the Exhibit. All submissions will be acknowledged and the short-listed firms will then be invited to submit proposals in response to an RFP issued by the Museum.