

Request for Proposal | Strategic Planning Process

Smith Center for the Arts (Geneva, NY) www.thesmith.org

INTRODUCTION

The Smith Center for the Arts (The Smith) seeks proposals from qualified strategic planning firms or contractors (Vendor) to lead The Smith's Board of Directors and management staff through a long-range strategic planning process in 2022-2023. This process will help us understand and define the future of the organization and our position in the community. It will also enable us to prioritize the physical, financial, and personnel needs of the theater and therefore chart a sustainable path forward.

The plan will create a map forward for the organization that will be feasible and future-oriented. It will identify objectives and strategies for our future programming, facilities, leadership, community engagement, and staffing models.

ABOUT THE SMITH

The 1400 seat, 127-year old theater is one of the oldest operating performing arts venues in the U.S. and is recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. Called an "architectural gem" by *The New York Times* and the Smithsonian, The Smith was completely restored (1996-2001) to its ArtDeco glory. The Smith continues its legacy as the cultural anchor of community life for Geneva and surroundings.

The Smith is in the center of Geneva's downtown, in the heart of the Finger Lakes region of New York. Geneva is a small city (pop. +/- 13,000) in Ontario County (pop. +/- 100,000), equidistant from the cities of Rochester, Syracuse and Ithaca. The Smith is the only full-time, year-round, professional arts organization in Geneva and serves as the home for many local amateur and semi-professional arts organizations. The Smith also partners with promoters to bring artists to the stage and books some artists directly. The Smith also makes the venue available for event rental. Though the residents of Geneva are the prime audience for shows and events at the Smith, high-profile events regularly draw patrons from 100 miles away or more.

While programming the stage, special attention is paid to building new audiences and showing work that is inclusive of all age groups, races, religions, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. The grant-subsidized ArtSmart children's live performance program, for example, brings national tours of theater for young audiences to upwards of 3000 of the region's school-aged children annually.

The Smith has professional staff members in areas including technical direction, marketing and promotion, bookkeeping, house management, volunteer coordination, etc. and regularly hires additional "per diem" workers as film projectionists and stage hands. Volunteers provide key patron services functions at Smith events. The Smith is guided by a Board of Directors who

provide oversight of the Smith's operations through the work of several key committees.

Organization's Mission Statement and Purpose:

Purpose Statement: *The Smith has served as the cultural anchor of our community for generations. As a gathering place where people from around the world can engage with the arts, exchange ideas, and work toward collective change, our magnificent Opera House embodies the power of shared experience and creative expression to bring us closer together.*

Mission Statement: *With a diversity of partnerships, The Smith hosts performances, events, and celebrations that catalyze creativity and engage the Finger Lakes community. The Smith is committed to the stewardship of its stunning theater and ensuring its relevance to today's artists and audiences.*

Vision Statement: *The Smith Board of Directors will create a future in which The Smith:*

- *Is the marquee performance venue in the Finger Lakes and established anchor of downtown Geneva.*
- *Galvanizes the cultural vibrancy of its community through its programming, resources, and by actively removing barriers to participation.*
- *Partners with other institutions and individuals to realize a collaborative, just, and sustainable community.*
- *Cultivates a robust network of staff, directors, volunteers, and patrons that shapes the institution's evolution while maintaining its fiscal and organizational strength.*

CONTACTS

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ABOUT OUR NEEDS

The Smith is seeking a consultant to provide the following services:

- Work with a Strategic Planning Team, composed of Board Members, Community Advisors, as well as management staff, to articulate a clear strategic plan for 2024-2029.
 - This plan should use The Smith's renewed purpose, mission, and vision statements as the framework within which this new phase of planning will be conducted.

- The plan should activate these statements, as well as specific strategies for fund-development, communication, programming and facility management objectives for the organization to pursue over the next 5 years.
- Reach out to key stakeholders of The Smith (Board, Staff, Volunteers, Donors and other Key Partners) with appropriate research instruments to evaluate The Smith's success in achieving its mission and goals over the past 5 years and conduct a general SWOT analysis of internal and external perceptions of the organization.
- Develop a timetable of implementation with specific measurable benchmarks, objectives and tasks to be accomplished to achieve goals. Identify clear, measurable outcomes for how to gauge organizational and strategic effectiveness, impact, and success.
- Establish a framework and process for the organization's leadership to effectively implement the strategic plan and monitor progress toward achievement of goals and objectives.
- Facilitate all meetings and provide leadership, direction and expert consultation and advice related to the development of an effective and implementable strategic plan.

The final deliverable should be a clear, easily consumed, strategic planning roadmap, accompanied by a strategic planning timeline, implementation and evaluation methodology.

Specific areas that need to be addressed in the creation of a 5-year strategic plan include but may not be limited to:

- An environmental scan that examines internal and external opportunities and perceptions impacting the organization's ability to achieve mission.
- A thorough assessment of infrastructure needs including, but not limited to, physical plant, technology, human capital and financial resources.
- The development of a sustainable financial and programmatic model to achieve goals.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:

- The Smith is seeking proposals from vendors who are capable of providing all of the above stated services and who can provide additional expertise to help the organization achieve a successful strategic planning outcome.
- While The Smith understands that completing this project requires significant and active Board and staff involvement, it is important to note that the candidates selected will be responsible for completing all project work products and final deliverables (e.g. writing organizational assessments, writing the actual strategic plan, etc.).
- Candidates are to propose which aspects of the project will require Board and/or staff involvement and include the expected time requirements for all activities involving their participation.
- Proposals must include a clear description of the vendor's plan to complete all of the project components (i.e. in what order will the projects be completed, how long each component will take to complete, etc.)
- Vendors must include in their project timelines "check-in" points for The Smith to be provided with project status updates. The successful vendor will be responsible for setting up the check-in meetings/calls, providing work product/deliverables to the Smith for

dissemination to key team members in advance of these check-in points, preparing an agenda for each meeting/call, sending out meeting invites and writing meeting minutes.

- In addition to the check-in meetings and/or conference calls, the vendor will be expected to present a status update on her/his/their preliminary findings and recommendations prior to writing the final project deliverables and strategic plan.
- The Smith will be responsible for implementing the recommendations from all final deliverables; however, it is expected that the consultant selected will provide the organization with ongoing coaching and implementation support as needed, per letter of agreement.

BUDGET RANGE

The total budget for this contract should not exceed \$10,000.

TIMELINE/IMPORTANT DATES

- **Tuesday, June 28, 2022:** RFP Released
- **Monday, July 18, 2022:** Questions due
- **Monday, August 1, 2022:** Questions answered by The Smith
- **Monday, August 22, 2022:** RFP Submission Deadline
- **October 3, 2022:** Vendor Selected
- **October/November 2022:** Discovery
- **February 2023:** Plan Draft
- **March 2023:** Plan Final

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The proposal must include an executive summary of the work to be completed. Please also share a detailed project plan and budget outline.

In contracting a vendor to develop a long-range strategic plan for the organization, The Smith will examine a number of factors and criteria will include:

- The extent to which the proposal clearly describes the scope of work.
- Specific plans or methodology to be used to perform the services.
- Qualifications and experience of consultant in providing strategic planning development.
- Ability to adhere to the timeline detailed above.
- Ability to deliver quality work within the Project Budget parameters.
- Knowledge of and relationship with Finger Lakes/Geneva's culture and community.

The Smith reserves the right to adjust these criteria at any time.

EVALUATION PROCESS

PHASE ONE: Proposal Meets Mandatory Minimum Requirements

- All Vendors must meet the following mandatory minimum requirements:
- Knowledge of the Upstate New York theater and arts non-profit ecosphere.
- Experience running a strategic planning process for another non-profit arts (or similar) organization.

PHASE TWO: Proposal Evaluation

- The Smith will evaluate proposals meeting the mandatory minimum requirements and select at least two finalists.

PHASE THREE: Interviews

- The Smith will interview finalists in person or via video conference. The Vendor with the highest score during this interview will proceed to the next evaluation phase.

PHASE FOUR: Reference Checks

- The Smith will conduct reference checks with three Vendor references asking standardized questions and follow-up questions, as needed. The finalist passes or fails the reference check evaluation phase. If they fail, The Smith will conduct reference checks on the next highest scoring finalist.

VENDOR REFERENCES

- Please submit three named references (with contact name, title, telephone number and email address) demonstrating prior experience providing similar services requested in the RFP. The Smith may consider references other than those supplied by the Vendor.

APPLICATION PROCESS & PROCEDURES

Please provide a complete written response to this RFP, not exceeding 5 pages. Proposals should include:

1. A brief Executive Summary, including past experiences and approaches in conducting Strategic Planning.
2. A description of the candidate's general approach to strategic planning consultation, including methodology, perspective, or philosophy that guides your work with organizations in this undertaking.
3. How the consultant will address the strategic aims to be examined at The Smith.
4. A list of project deliverables with a detailed timeline for each deliverable and overall project completion.

5. A detailed budget that breaks out expenses. **Please** clearly define each fee for the tasks related to this RFP, including proposed staff and their hours to complete the final deliverable. The Smith will not reimburse for any other Vendor costs. Fees for all activities related to this strategic planning process are not to exceed \$10,000.

6. Credentials and qualifications of key personnel who will take responsibility for working directly on this project, including three references.

7. Example(s) of a finished strategic plan created by your company.

Candidates must submit one electronic copy of the proposal. Please note that The Smith will not return any proposals it receives and will not reimburse candidates for any costs they incur in developing their proposals.

The Smith reserves the right to:

- cancel the procurement process at any time.
- reject any and all proposals.
- contact any Vendor to clarify their proposal.
- change the statement of work included in this RFP.
- select and reject any portion of a Vendor's proposal.
- check references other than those provided by proposing Vendors.

CLARIFICATION OF REQUEST

Communications with The Smith will be accepted via email only, to the Executive Director. Questions must be submitted by 8/5/22.

COST OF PREPARATION OF RESPONSE

Expenses incurred in preparing and presenting a proposal to The Smith are the sole responsibility of the Vendor and may not be charged to The Smith in any way.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The Smith gives preference to firms that certify that have in place a policy and practice of preventing sexual harassment and discrimination against employees who are members of a protected class as well as advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

PUBLICITY

The Smith is responsible for all the publicity about this procurement process and any matters associated with procuring, planning, and executing the strategic plan. At no time shall a Vendor create or participate in any publicity related to this project without prior written permission from The Smith.