



# **BOSTON CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

*Boston Children's Museum seeks proposals  
for Exhibit Fabrication Services*

**17 May 2006**

**Deadline for Responses: Wednesday, 31 May, 2006, 4:00PM EST**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Boston Children's Museum (BCM) seeks exhibit fabrication and installation services for a 3,500 square foot permanent exhibit space to be installed as part of BCM's planned expansion. The intent of this Request for Proposal is to obtain fixed price proposals from experienced firms to fabricate the components in this exhibit space. The fabrication bid package is enclosed.

Separate architectural and construction management contracts have been executed to support this project and to facilitate the demolition of existing conditions, basic construction, and for outfitting the space with proper electrical and mechanical service, lighting, and initial finishes. Relevant drawings of this work, current as of this date, are enclosed for reference at Appendix 3.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

### **Boston Children's Museum**

Founded in 1913 by a group of teachers in Boston's Jamaica Plain neighborhood, the Boston Children's Museum began a "hands-on" tradition long before that phrase became commonplace.

As early as 1913, it meant engaging youth in identifying and marking nature walks, preparing specimens, making clay and wax models for exhibits, and even attempting a working model of the metropolitan water system.

The 1920's and 1930's began an era of Museum sponsored clubs that gave children the opportunity to explore the unfamiliar with naturalist hikes and bus trips.

In the 1960's, Michael Spock (museum director 1962-85) led the institution in revolutionizing the traditional museum experience, getting objects out of cases and into children's hands in exhibit areas where children could interact, experiment, and follow their own curiosity. Hands-on learning is now a part of American education and we are proud to have had a "hand" in it from the beginning.

Today, after 90 years, the Boston Children's Museum exists to help children understand and enjoy the world in which they live. As an early museum experience for children, our environment is informal, but our purpose is serious. We want children to grow up feeling secure and self-confident with respect for others and the natural world. We encourage imagination, curiosity, questioning, and realism. We provide opportunities for new insights, involvement with the world and understanding of human differences with world-class exhibits and programs.

### **Overall Background**

The exhibit area that is the subject of this RFP is composed of four related spaces – an Art Studio, the Recycle Shop, Johnny's Workbench, and a small gallery space. The spaces share the theme of creativity and working with materials to produce arts and crafts of varying kinds. Although they offer the visitor different experiences, they are united by these two themes. A design element – an overhead valance – ties the spaces together visually as a result, while each space maintains a distinct visual identity.

## Art Studio - Background

The Art Studio is a place where families can explore art materials in a fun, stress-free environment. The activities are designed to invite exploration and support creativity by allowing visitors young and old to work at their own pace, with no “wrong way” to do it! Children’s natural tendency to experiment and create is embraced, while their grown-ups are given a chance to rediscover their own “inner artist” - or take a moment to enjoy watching their child’s process unfold.

Boston Children’s Museum’s visual arts program is anchored in the concept that learning in and through the arts is an engaging and valuable experience for children. Art is an expressive language that gives children a visual vocabulary to articulate what otherwise might not be seen or heard. The Art Studio aims to nurture and support the development of this language in learners of all ages.

The Art Studio at Boston Children’s Museum is a lively, well-equipped space for making art and exploring self-expression through a variety of processes from collaging textured papers and printmaking with recycled materials to creating 3D forms using clay, paper, fabric or felt. The programs, led by professional artists and education staff, are designed to engage children and their adult companions. The space is designed to accommodate drop-in visitors on weekdays, family workshop participants who sign up for structured 30-minute programs on weekends, and School Programs that support the Massachusetts Learning Standards in the visual arts. Through its programs and use of varied materials, the Art Studio also works in collaboration with the Recycle Shop at the Museum.

While much of the programming for the Art Studio is developed with five and six year olds in mind, every visitor to Boston Children’s Museum is part of the target audience for this space. Children are encouraged to explore materials, learn a new technique, and take home the art they make in the Art Studio. Materials include but are not limited to: tempera paint, foam paint, marbling inks, fabric, paper, wallpaper, cardboard, clay, play dough, printmaking media, materials from the Recycle Shop, beads, buttons, glue and tape.

Families can work together while in the studio, and expand the experience at home through “Art @ Home” activity sheets, developed to extend the experience of each studio workshop. Activity sheets contain illustrated instructions and additional resources for parents to try out activities at home.

Each month the Art Studio provides a different theme which focuses on exploring art materials and supports the rich learning that occurs during the process of creating a piece of art. Examples of monthly themes include: collage, puppet making, printmaking, papermaking, paper sculpture, *Suminagashi* (Japanese marbling), mixed media, and painting with primary colors. In addition to celebrating every child’s self-expression, the range of art media will inspire

creativity and imagination while encouraging the refinement of fine motor skills. Specific outcomes include:

- Opportunities for children and families to engage in meaningful, unique arts activities they would likely not do at home or school
- Programming that engages an older audience of 6 – 10 year olds at Boston Children's Museum
- Programming that will support an increased rhythm of change at Boston Children's Museum and will inspire return visits by providing engaging, varied activities on a regular basis

### **Art Studio Description**

Visitors will enter the new Art Studio through a visually dynamic arbor and portico, themed to inspire creativity. This area also provides a space for visitors waiting their turn to enter the studio, as well as the display of works created there. The Art Studio is one of the few enclosed exhibits in the Museum. At approximately 1100 square feet, the Art Studio can accommodate a school group of 25 children and their teachers or comparable numbers of family visitors. On a busy day, the studio will see around 300 visitors. At other times, the room entertains just a couple of families at a time, with people dropping into the studio just to admire the space and “escape” the activity of the rest in the museum. There are usually a few extra visitors standing around, looking through books or out the windows.

Its casual atmosphere, open plan, and large worktables are geared toward accommodating large groups. Low tables equipped with blocks and puzzles extend the exhibit's “hold time,” inviting younger children who have completed their art project to create 3D structures while their older siblings finish their art making at the big tables. Oversized windows engulf the space in light, creating a cheery, bright art making environment. The exposed brick and ceiling in the Studio bring an artists' loft space to mind. Cabinetry and countertops around the 2 adult and three child-size sinks add to that environment, while at the opposite end two very large windows throw natural light across the worktables.

Storage is the number-one functionality issue. New storage closets must be reliably locked at all times, while standing as an interesting feature in themselves, and as a neutral surface/display space. The new studio will feature a larger, more functional enclosed space for prep, replacing one which is currently a poorly lit, small closet which also houses most-used supplies.

As monthly themes change from printmaking to painting, from papermaking to *Suminagashi*, from clay pots to collage, the appearance of the studio will be transformed along with it. Objects from the Museum's collection that connect to monthly themes also will be highlighted in display cases. The simple furnishings and functional fixtures will be reminiscent of artists' studios that one might visit in Fort Point Channel or in other parts of Boston where artists are concentrated.

## **Recycle Shop - Background**

Recycle is a creativity center that has existed at The Children's Museum since 1972. It is a highly successful program that collects and re-uses materials that can be cut, glued, folded, painted or otherwise transformed into science or art projects. Staff in the Recycle Shop work with local manufacturers, businesses and private individuals to rescue clean and safe materials from landfills. These materials might be overstock, surplus, remnants or discontinued items. The Recycle Shop inside the Museum carries safe industrial leftovers, from ribbons to rubber, tubes to bottle tops, game pieces to camera cases, fabric paint to figurines. Visitors browse the barrels and buy materials by the bagful to take home for just a few dollars. Many teachers buy several bags at a time to supplement their classroom art and science curricula.

Recycle has a threefold mission:

- Provide low-cost materials to children, artists, educators and museum visitors to use in creative, hands-on projects in the home, classroom and Art Studio
- Provide inspiration and creative examples for how materials in the Recycle Shop can be used in exciting ways
- Increase public awareness of the benefits of reducing, re-using and recycling

In the new Recycle Shop, materials will be displayed more effectively. The Shop will highlight materials, and the idea of display will connect the Shop to the Art Studio. It will encourage visitors to collect materials and knowledge, using materials to experiment and create, and display and share their creations.

The Shop will feature a new façade, with display cases incorporated as "windows." The façade itself will be dominated by wire mesh "bins" that will be filled with the recyclable materials for sale in the shop, providing a dynamic and ever changing environment. The bins, easily opened by staff, will make it possible to change out the materials found in them as desired.

The new Shop will also feature new fixtures and display equipment, rather than a hodge-podge of discarded or otherwise found items. In contrast to the warm and organic Art Studio, the shop is to be more sleek and modern in appearance. Machine or space age elements combine with the backdrop of the 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse to give visitors the feel that they are in an artist's loft.

## **Johnny's Workbench**

Johnny's Workbench features woodworking and metalworking activities, as well as some static displays. An existing exhibit, work here is limited to some graphics and the overhead valance.

## **Gallery**

This space, featuring bare brick walls, is maintained as a multipurpose space that can serve as a gallery for display of various arts and crafts, as well as for small interactive activities. Initially, it will feature a reinstallation of BCM's existing weaving exhibit. Large-scale looms invite children and adults to try their hands at intertwining textures, blending fabrics and putting together patterns. Woven objects from the Museum's collections, such as baskets and rugs, provide examples of weaving patterns.

Work here again is limited to graphics and the overhead valance.

## **Children's Wharf Expansion**

The Boston Children's Museum has begun its first major renovation and expansion since moving to its current site in 1979. The plan calls for a 23,000 square foot expansion in addition to a complete renovation of the existing 150,000 square foot building. The Museum will also completely landscape the waterfront creating an outdoor space for visitors and neighbors.

Visitors to the new facility will find updated versions of many of their favorites, such as PlaySpace, Bubbles and KidStage as well as a new entrance and box office, climbing structure, health and wellness center and a better selection of food choices, among other amenities.

The project will also incorporate sustainable design components, such as a state-of-the-art stormwater reclamation system and a green roof, both of which help to reduce pollution.

Boston Children's Museum has assembled a highly qualified team to help the Museum prepare the expansion and renovation project. The team includes Cambridge Seven Associates (Building Architects), Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (Landscape Architects) and Leggat McCall Properties (Project Management) among other experienced professionals in the New England area.

The Museum held a Groundbreaking event on April 5, 2006 and construction began shortly thereafter. The Museum's expansion and renovation will be completed in 2007.



## DESCRIPTION OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

### Scope of Work

All respondents must be able to provide professional exhibit fabrication and other specialty services to build and install the exhibits and components, and produce graphics as required by BCM. All fabrication and installation must be finalized and approved by BCM prior to 16 March, 2007.

All proposals must be made on the basis of and either meet or exceed the requirements contained in the bid documents.

### Specific Tasks

1. The contractor shall furnish all labor, materials and equipment required to perform the work indicated and specified by bid documents, technical specifications and drawings. Work includes fabrication and installation of exhibit components, custom furniture, and graphic production. Exhibit components include but are not limited to:

- Decorative millwork
- Seating and other furniture
- Exhibit lighting (as indicated in drawings)
- Graphics
- Exhibit furniture, Artifact cases, and other structures

2. Fabrication shall be to museum quality with particular attention paid to high quality fit and finish, durability, and ease of maintenance. For the purpose of this RFP, “museum quality” shall be defined to be in accordance with the American Association of Museum certification requirements and with defects not discernible to the human eye.

- All individual freestanding units are to withstand 100 pounds of lateral force, without tipping, at five-foot height from the finished floor.
- Interactives must survive use and abuse by visitors without failure and without danger to visitors.

3. Prepare and submit for review final shop drawings detailing fabrication, “hardening”, and installation. Shop drawings are required for each typical component type and include: specially-prepared technical data for this project, drawings, diagrams, schedules, templates, patterns, instructions, measurements, and similar information not in standard print form.

4. Exhibit structures: fabricate all exhibit elements, including, but not limited to: cabinetry, panels, platforms, vitrines, or other elements which constitute the basic structural elements of the space. All components must be easily serviced and repaired (particularly access to lighting and audio/video equipment) by established contractors. Component construction shall allow BCM maintenance staff to make repairs when possible. Component parts of each element shall be easily replaceable, rather than having to replace the entire exhibit.
5. Electrical and mechanical: purchase (except where noted that BCM or other vendors will provide), fabricate, assemble, and install into exhibit structures, and thoroughly test, all electrical and mechanical devices.
6. Graphics: review and prepare all BCM-furnished material; final placement of text and graphics, adjustments to graphic layouts, and conversion of digital files for specified imaging system output.
7. Graphic production: includes, but is not limited to, digital images, screenprinting, label copy plaques, frisketed and spray painted shapes, vinyl graphics, photo etched or sandblasted images, porcelain enamel panels, fiberglass-embedded panels, and cut-out graphic images of letters. BCM expects to provide the bulk of the required images on CD, but all museum-furnished materials shall be returned to BCM unaltered and undamaged. Protection from loss and physical damage shall be the responsibility of the vendor at all times during construction and installation until acceptance of the project by BCM.
8. Architectural modifications: none. As previously stated, this work is underway via a separate contract. The vendor will be expected to coordinate their work with the work of the architect as the need arises.
9. Submit control samples. Samples include both fabricated and un-fabricated physical examples of materials, products and units of work. Samples may be both complete units and smaller portions of units of work, either for limited visual inspection or, where indicated, for more detailed testing and analysis.
10. Mockups or prototypes are required for interactives with moving parts. Each interactive shall be tested thoroughly before installation. Work cannot proceed without acceptance by BCM.
11. Set up and Installation: setup and install on-site all elements and materials.
12. Commissioning. Vendor shall develop a commissioning protocol for all assemblies and interactive exhibits, including media elements.

13. Training on operation, maintenance and upkeep of the installed components shall be included in the project scope. Training shall be provided to designated BCM staff during run-in.

14. Project closeout: preparation of all closeout components including, but not limited to, assembly manual, maintenance manual and closeout package (including electronic and hard copies of all drawings). Product data are to be provided to BCM in the form of an Operations and Maintenance Manual at the completion of the project. Product data includes: standard printed information on materials, products and systems, not specially prepared for the Project. Product data may include information indicating the range of standard products for selection to be used in the finished work.

15. Warranties for installed components shall be provided as follows: utilities shall be warranted for two years from the date of project acceptance by BCM. Exhibit components shall be warranted for one year.

## **Project Management**

The vendor must establish one person to serve as project manager and liaison to the BCM project manager.

BCM looks to the vendor to inform the needs of the project, maintain a cohesive schedule, and coordinate, oversee and manage work produced. Therefore, the vendor must establish a work plan (work breakdown structure) and schedule for all parties to ensure timely completion of the project. A critical path schedule shall be prepared by the vendor and submitted in reproducible form. In addition to the start and completion of various construction stages, the schedule shall also show percentages of work to be completed at any given time, as well as significant dates that will serve as check points to determine compliance with approved schedule. Each respondent should indicate critical anticipated dates for work by others which impacts exhibit fabrication.

Regular meetings with the BCM team (in person and/or by telephone) are an integral part of the overall process and must be indicated in project schedule. These meetings will report on and track the fabrication process, and establish and implement mechanisms for ongoing communications.

## **What BCM Staff Will Provide**

Both the BCM exhibit designer and project manager will be intimately involved in the fabrication and installation process from contract signing thru opening. BCM has a track record of developing complex interactive exhibitions, on time and on budget. The core team for this exhibition will include the Vice President - Exhibits, Director of Project Management, Exhibit Designer, Arts Program Educator, and the Recycle Materials Coordinator.

## **Unusual Conditions and Requirements**

- An architectural firm and construction management company are overseeing the design and renovation of the BCM expansion; this work is concurrently underway. It is imperative that the exhibition fabricator work in a collaborative manner with both of these parties, as well as with BCM.

## **Time Schedule**

Please refer to Appendix 4 for specific details regarding deadlines impacting the exhibit installation.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

### **Schedule**

The following is the anticipated Selection Process Schedule.

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • Request for Proposals issued          | 17 May 2006    |
| • Questions/queries to BCM              | 24 May 2006    |
| • Answers provided to potential bidders | 25 May 2006    |
| • Cost Proposals Due                    | 31 May 2006    |
| • Contract negotiation                  | to 9 June 2006 |
| • Fabrication contract awarded          | 12 June 2006   |

### **Response Requirements**

Please number your responses exactly as the questions are presented below, and limit to 10 (ten) one-sided pages, including work samples (#2, below) and fee proposals (#9, below).

The response must include the following elements.

- 1) Letter of interest.
- 2) Experience of the firm/team as fabricator of exhibits of similar scale, complexity, and budget, emphasizing firm's record of meeting estimated budgets and schedules. Limit to 3 relevant examples.
- 3) Identification and bios of personnel to be directly involved in this project: principals, project manager and professional staff, and others expected to perform work, including those in affiliation.
- 4) Identify current workload of firm and personnel to be assigned to project.
- 5) Experience in fabricating exhibits which meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- 6) Identify your in-house fabrication capabilities and those services that you would outsource. Include a list of all subcontractors, and a statement of the subcontractors' qualifications.
- 7) Proposed workplan describing individual tasks to be performed and the relative scheduling of those tasks. All deliverable items should be identified and described.
- 8) Hourly rate and expense schedule.
- 9) Fee proposal using provided forms (Appendix 4).
- 10) Demonstrate experience in coordinating the integration of warranties, operations and maintenance manuals.
- 11) References from at least three similar projects, to include: key owner personnel and contractors project manager.

The proposal may not exceed 10 8.5" by 11" single-spaced, one-sided pages in length. All proposals shall provide a straightforward, concise delineation of the firm's capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this request. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content, and not on volume or elaborate presentation materials.

Proposals must give the full firm name and address of offeror. Person signing the proposal should show title or authority to bind the firm in a contract. Proposals shall be signed in ink by authorized person(s).

By submitting a fee proposal, the respondent firm authorizes BCM to contact any or all of those firms or individuals listed as references or contacts of the information provided.

### **Criteria for Selection**

The following criteria will be used for screening and selection of the fabricator:

- 1) Cost proposal
- 2) Established record of fabrication excellence for museum facilities. Quality of work product as demonstrated through submitted work samples. Number, complexity, and nature of exhibitions handled by the firm.
- 3) Experience in fabricating projects of a similar scale and complexity.
- 4) Experience in working in a collaborative environment.
- 5) Experience in fabricating exhibits that are highly interactive
- 6) Amount of proposed interaction with BCM and other stakeholders.
- 7) Experience and availability of key individuals proposed for the project.
- 8) Reputation for thoroughness, credibility, and client responsiveness as demonstrated through references.
- 9) Innovative or outstanding work by firm that demonstrates the firm's unique qualifications to provide exhibition fabrication services.

## **Questions and Inquiries**

Questions and inquiries, in written form via email, will be accepted from any and all vendors. Questions will be answered in writing via email and will be distributed to all vendors who receive the RFP provided that all questions are received by **Wednesday, 24 May, 2006, no later than 5:00 PM EST.**

Send project-related questions or specific questions regarding this RFP to:

James Jensen  
Director of Project Management  
Jensen@BostonChildrensMuseum.org

## **Addendum and Supplement to RFP**

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP or if additional data are necessary to enable an exact interpretation of provisions of this request, an addendum will be issued. It is the responsibility of the vendor to ensure that it has received all addendums prior to submitting a proposal.

## **WITHDRAWAL OF PROPOSALS**

All proposals submitted shall be valid for a minimum period of ninety (90) calendar days following the date established for acceptance.

Proposals may be withdrawn upon written request from the offeror at the address shown prior to the time of acceptance.

Negligence on the part of the offeror in preparing a proposal confers no right of withdrawal after the time fixed for the acceptance of the proposals.

## **LOCATION AND ADDRESS TO WHICH RESPONSES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED**

A total of 6 copies of should be submitted to BCM at the following address:

Boston Children's Museum  
Art/Recycle Fabrication RFP  
300 Congress Street  
Boston, MA 02210  
Attn: James Jensen

Proposals may be mailed or hand delivered to this address.

### **Date/Time for Receipt of Responses**

Responses will be due by **4:00 PM on Wednesday, 31 May, 2006.**

## **CONTRACTUAL STATUS OF PROPOSALS**

This RFP has been prepared solely to solicit proposals, and is not a contract offer. This RFP is not binding on BCM. The only document that will be binding on BCM is the contract duly executed by BCM and the successful applicant after the completion of the selection process and the award and negotiation of the contract.

BCM reserves the right to withdraw the RFP at any time at its sole discretion before the execution of a contract.

BCM reserves the right not to proceed with any of the respondents to the proposal. In such event, BCM shall not be liable to any respondent for additional costs incurred by it as a result of the withdrawal of the RFP or by the failure to proceed with any respondent.

BCM will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by a firm in preparing and submitting a proposal.

## **Proprietary Information and Confidentiality**

All respondents' responses will be treated as proprietary information and will be used solely for the purposes herein. Should a respondent require its response to be returned, BCM will do so at the respondent's request and at the respondent's expense.

## **Copyright Ownership of Vendor's Work Product**

The selected vendor's services will be engaged and shall be rendered on a work-for-hire basis in favor of BCM for copyright purposes. In the event such services are not deemed to be on a "work made for hire" basis, then the vendor shall assign to BCM the vendor's entire rights, title and interest, including copyright, in and to anything created or developed by the vendor for BCM under any agreement concluded by vendor and BCM, including (by way of example and not of limitation) all original files or work files created by or in the possession or control of the selected vendor, and all patents, copyrights, trade secrets and other proprietary rights in the work performed by the vendor for BCM. The vendor shall cause any sub-contractor or partner to do the same.

## Appendix 1

### Bid Drawings

## Appendix 2

### BCM Expansion Plan Drawings

## Appendix 3

### Proposed Schedule

## Appendix 4

### Cost Proposal