



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**  
**Audience Research: *A Garden Made for You***

**Issued by Chicago Botanic Garden**

**Request for Proposal Issue Date: November 4, 2021**  
**Proposal Due Date: December 3, 2021**

**Contact Name for Proposal Questions**

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**Contact Name for Proposal Delivery**

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## I. Introduction

The Chicago Botanic Garden is embarking on a new phase of audience research that will enable us to design more inclusive, accessible experiences for visitors and communities that have been historically oppressed or have historically experienced barriers to museums or the outdoors.

Among other investigative questions that will surface through discussions with our consultant, we are curious about: 1) why are certain audiences not visiting the Garden? and 2) in what ways do select visitors feel and not feel welcome, included, or represented at the Garden?

We will focus our investigation on priority audiences that still require a great deal of definition/defining.

Analyzed data will lead to a set of recommendations for new practices and processes for more diverse, inclusive engagement—a research-based roadmap to develop a “Garden made for you.”

This study will build on the first phase of audience research conducted in 2019 that focused on who is coming to the Garden; output included narrative personas for five key audience segments.

This research will fill a critical hole in the current draft of the Garden’s new interpretive framework, *A Garden Made for You*, and in our communications strategies, and ultimately will enable staff to make audience-centered design decisions and develop effective communications and experiences for new target audiences.

The study will be designed to both yield audience data and facilitate the forming of key partnerships that will enable us to co-implement some of the recommendations.

## II. Background and Organization Overview

The Chicago Horticultural Society operates the Chicago Botanic Garden (subsequently referred to as “the Garden”) on land owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. The 385-acre Garden features 27 distinct gardens and four natural areas, uniquely situated on nine islands surrounded by lakes. The Garden is one of the most-visited botanic gardens in the U.S., with over one million annual visitors. It has 53,000 members--one of the largest memberships of any U.S. botanic garden. The Garden’s annual operating budget is approximately \$40 million.

The Chicago Botanic Garden’s mission is: “We cultivate the power of plants to sustain and enrich life.” The Chicago Botanic Garden is located at 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, Illinois 60022. More information is also available at [www.chicagobotanic.org](http://www.chicagobotanic.org).

## III. Project Description / Scope of Work

The selected consultant will direct the following scope of work in collaboration with the Vice President of Learning and Engagement, Director of EDIA, Director of Interpretation, and Manager of Interpretation. An interdepartmental advisory group from the Garden (estimated to be five additional people) will also be part of select conversations.

### Project Components

- Define the priority audiences with rationale for each
- Define/refine the research objectives, priority audiences, and investigative threads and sub-threads. Possible questions include:
  - Who isn’t coming, and why?
  - What about the experience at the Garden is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible—and what is not? (This includes physical, motor, visual, hearing, sensory AND cognitive AND cultural relevancy.)
  - What can we do to grow to better engage diverse visitors and become an inclusive, accessible, welcoming place for all?
- Determine/define methodologies to support the research objectives
  - Conduct research on and develop a set of best practices for compassionate, reciprocal insight-gathering
- Develop research tools, including but not limited to: interviews with community organizations/members and surveys sent to purposeful samples

## **Project Components, continued**

- Launch the investigations and collect and organize data; share high-level “midterm” insights throughout
- Analyze complete data and identify trends and key findings
- Develop a set of recommendations and an action/implementation plan

The fee for this scope of work will not exceed \$80,000.

## **IV. Selection Process and Criteria**

The Garden seeks an optimum mix of qualifications, service capabilities, and fees. Proposing consultants must demonstrate how their unique strengths will benefit the Garden in carrying out audience research. The credentials and experience of the individuals assigned to the Garden account will be significant selection criteria.

Based on the proposals, the Vice President of Learning and Engagement, Vice President of Communications, Director of EDIA, Director of Interpretation, Manager of Interpretation, and members of the internal advisory group will interview three (3) to four (4) candidates. An appointment will be made shortly thereafter.

The following criteria will be used by the Garden in evaluating the proposals received in response to this solicitation:

- Demonstration of understanding of project goals
- Clear outline of project deliverables with corresponding timeline
- Successful history of managing similar projects at similar scales and in similar contexts
- Demonstrated knowledge of and experience with EDIA-driven research

## V. Project Timeline

The project will begin mid-January 2022. The project timeline is as follows.

- Request for Proposal Issue Date: November 4, 2021
- Deadline for expressing intent to submit: November 11, 2021 *Optional*  
Please note: Expressing intent to submit is not a requirement, but not doing so will exclude candidates from being able to submit questions for response by the Garden.
- Deadline for Questions for the Garden: November 18, 2021

Please direct questions or requests for additional information necessary to prepare proposals to:

Elory Rozner  
Director of Interpretation  
Chicago Botanic Garden  
[erozner@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:erozner@chicagobotanic.org)  
773.791.0818

- Proposals due: December 3, 2021

Please send your proposal by email by December 3, 2021, via PDF or via link to download to:

Dominique Stevens  
Executive Assistant  
Chicago Botanic Garden  
[dstevens@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:dstevens@chicagobotanic.org)

- Candidate interviews: Week of December 13, 2021
- Project awarded: December 17, 2021
- Project kick-off: the week of January 10, 2022
- Project completion: June 1, 2022 (if we learn from consultant that this timeline is unrealistic, we will adjust)

## **VI. Proposal Format**

Please respond to this request in the following format so as to facilitate comparisons between respondents.

### **A. History, Ownership, and Organization**

1. Provide your company's complete name, address, telephone, and website.
2. Provide a brief company history (including date founded) and affiliated organizations, if any.
3. Describe the ownership structure of your company, including specific details with regard to parent or affiliated companies.
4. Identify and provide background information on the key person or personnel who take the most active role(s) in the administration and management of your company.
5. Provide your company's licensing or registration qualifications.

### **B. Personnel**

1. How many employees work on the same project? How are they selected?
2. How many minorities and women does your business employ?
3. What is the average number of accounts handled by your company during one calendar year?
4. Identify the personnel to be assigned to this engagement and their responsibilities to our account. Please provide profiles for these individuals.

### **C. Conflicts of Interest**

1. Disclose any potential conflicts of interest, or appearance of conflict, which might arise if your company was selected. Such disclosure should reveal compensation, which may be paid in either hard dollars or soft dollars by any source to your firm.
2. Provide an affirmation statement that the firm is independent of the Garden and its Board of Directors.

### **D. Fees**

1. Specify client fee structure options, indicating which services are included and the additional fees, if any, for services not included. Fees must include all charges associated with your services and must reflect your costs in their entirety.
2. Specify the expenses that would be covered by the fees indicated above.

## **E. References**

1. Provide two references from similar institutions, including client name, length of time your company has acted in a capacity similar to the services in this Request for Proposal, contact personnel, phone number and e-mail address.

## **F. Minority and Women Owned Businesses**

1. The Garden recognizes its responsibility to the communities that it serves, and is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination. It is the policy and commitment of the Garden not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex in the award and performance of any Garden contract or in the administration of the Garden's Supplier Diversity Program. The Garden will take all necessary and reasonable steps to assure that certified minority and women owned businesses shall have a fair opportunity to participate in Garden contracts. The Garden has established goals for certified minority and women owned businesses participation for 2021 at 35% of the Garden's total qualified expenditures.
2. Minority owned enterprises and women owned enterprises are requested to identify themselves and include current certification documents.
3. Bidders with questions about the Garden's minority and women owned businesses program, please contact Beth Dunn, Director of Government Affairs and Coordinator of the Garden's Supplier Diversity Program at (847) 835-6879 or [edunn@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:edunn@chicagobotanic.org).

## **G. Approach and Differentiation**

1. Describe how you would approach a strategy in carrying out this work with the Garden including an operation plan and ability to meet the requirements described in the scope of services.
2. Describe the unique services that your company offers that differentiate you from your competition.

## **H. Other**

1. Proposals must include completion of the Chicago Botanic Garden Substitute Form W-9 Vendor Registration Form (appended).

## **I. Confidentiality**

The Garden commits to maintain in strict confidence any information you submit in response to this RFP and will destroy your response at the end of the RFP process if you are not selected.

## **Appendix A: Chicago Botanic Garden Mission and History**

The Chicago Horticultural Society has been promoting gardens and gardening since 1890. With the opening of the Chicago Botanic Garden in 1972, the Society established a center for plant collections, education, and research. Today its 385 acres house a living collection of more than two million plants in 27 gardens and four natural areas—woodlands, wetlands, prairie, and lakes. On land that is now owned by the Cook County Forest Preserve District and managed by the Chicago Horticultural Society, the Chicago Botanic Garden belongs to the people of Cook County and serves the Chicago region as a resource that is broadly shared. The Chicago Botanic Garden’s mission—We cultivate the power of plants to sustain and enrich life—motivates its many activities.

The Chicago Botanic Garden is first and foremost a vibrant living and growing museum, with a plant collection that numbers more than 2.5 million in a unique island infrastructure that supports both terrestrial and aquatic plants. The collection’s over 13,500 unique taxa form the foundation of the community, education, and research programs that serve so many in the Chicago area and beyond. This scientific collection is aesthetically displayed in gardens that represent the best in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape design.

While building the collection and defining the landscape, the Garden has maintained an abiding commitment to connecting people with the natural world. This dedication begins with visitor programs that attract new and returning visitors and extends through interpretation of the site, School of the Chicago Botanic Garden classes, workshops, and symposia, as well as teacher and school services. The Garden’s community education programs reach into Chicago neighborhoods with urban agriculture programs for youth, young adults, and non-violent offenders, culminating in an accredited community college certificate program. Summer science camps for underserved youth, teacher-training programs, and state-certified nature pre-school classes transform the Garden into a living through multiple seasons. The depth and quality of these programs have helped build the Garden’s national reputation as an outstanding teaching garden and earned the 2004 National Award for Museum Services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the nation’s highest honor for museum excellence. The focal point for all learning and engagement programs is the Learning Campus, which opened in 2016.

The Chicago Botanic Garden is committed to plant science and conservation research, practice, and training in response to global environmental threats such as habitat destruction, invasive species, climate change, and other deleterious human impacts. Garden scientists seek to better understand the consequences of these impacts and develop the capacity to address them meaningfully. With the opening of the Plant Conservation Science Center in September 2009, the Garden significantly advanced its capacity to conduct plant research and to train future generations of plant scientists and stewards through the joint Master's and Ph.D. degree programs in Plant Biology and Conservation with Northwestern University.

The Chicago Botanic Garden annually serves over one million visitors, 53,000 members, and 120,000 participants in education and community programs. More than 2,000 volunteers contribute to the Garden’s operation by planting gardens, working in research laboratories, and presenting programs to the public. Open 365 days each year, the Chicago Botanic Garden is committed to sustaining a place of beauty, protecting biodiversity, and fostering the human relationship with the natural world.



Appendix B: Substitute Form W9 (separate attachment)