

Request for Proposals –July 9, 2018

Maritime Historian

Summary and Background

Greater Portland Landmarks is currently accepting proposals to evaluate the visitor experience at the Portland Observatory with an aim of enhancing the current experience.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from various candidates, conduct a fair and extensive evaluation based on criteria listed herein, and select the candidate who best represents the direction Greater Portland Landmarks wishes to go.

The mission of Greater Portland Landmarks is to preserve and revitalize greater Portland's remarkable legacy of historic buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes, and parks. It acts as steward and manager of the William Safford House at 93 High Street in Portland, home to its administrative offices, and the Portland Observatory (1807), at 138 Congress Street in Portland, the last remaining maritime signal tower in the U.S. Both properties demonstrate best practices in historic preservation while providing valuable opportunities to engage the public with local architectural and cultural history.

Proposal Guidelines

This Request for Proposals represents the requirements for an open and competitive process. Proposals will be accepted until 5pm EST August 17, 2018. Any proposals received after this date and time will be returned to the sender. All proposals must be signed by an official agent or representative of the company submitting the proposal.

Contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning bidder for this RFP.

Project Purpose and Description

Background:

Captain Lemuel Moody (1768-1846) ordered construction of the Portland Observatory (1807), an octagonal, 86-foot-high tower, to serve as a communication station for the city's bustling harbor. Ships entering the harbor could not be seen from the docks of Portland until they rounded a point into the harbor. With his powerful Dollond telescope, Moody identified incoming vessels as far away as 30 miles. For a fee, he alerted subscribing merchants and dockworkers by hoisting signal flags identifying their vessels.

The Observatory is the only remaining historic maritime signal station in the United States. As a rare intact survivor from the Golden Age of Sail, the Observatory is a National Historic Landmark, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and a locally-designated landmark.

The Observatory was renovated in 1936-39, and again in 1998-2000. Interpretive panels for visitors were installed in 2000. The Observatory's current semi-permanent exhibits explore Maine maritime history, Lemuel Moody's role in Portland, Portland history, and the history, construction, and function of the Observatory. Visitors from around the globe visit the Portland Observatory to experience the 360 degree

views, and to engage in Portland history at this unique historic site. Forty volunteer docents and four staff are critical to its function every year.

Project Need:

Open to the public from May to October each year, the Observatory's average annual attendance has increased dramatically in the last three years from 10,000 to over 15,000. With a restructuring of tours to offer a self-guided option in 2015, and with positive changes in the economy, the Observatory saw a 40% increase in visitors in two years. Of those visitors, 50% now elect to take self-guided tours. In 2018, the increased annual attendance continues to hold steady.

With such a drastic increase in visitors, it is timely to update and augment exhibits to respond to visitor interest to engage the most people. Because space is limited at the top, and visitors congregate on the first floor, we plan to optimize usage of the additional five floors to capture attention at additional points while evening out the increased flow of visitors through the structure. We will incorporate new objects into the exhibits and have a need for new text and information to accompany the objects.

Project Scope and Deliverables:

Greater Portland Landmarks seeks a qualified marine historian to research and produce written, sourced text about various marine-related topics with regards to the Portland Observatory including:

- 1) The recently-donated 19th century Dollond telescope, to explain its use and function and its importance in the story of the Observatory.
- 2) The history of marine signal towers on the eastern coast of the United States to give perspective on the Observatory's place in that history and augment existing research.
- 3) The Observatory's role in Portland's World War II history, after its WPA-era renovation, and linking that information to newly-acquired objects by Greater Portland Landmarks related to the war.

The written research will be the source document from which Greater Portland Landmarks can pull exhibit language and educational information for Observatory visitors.

Request for Proposal and Project Timeline

All proposals in response to this RFP are due no later than 5pm EST, on Monday, August 17, 2018.

If additional information or discussions are needed after proposal submission, the bidder(s) will be notified.

The selection decision for the winning bidder will be made no later than September 7, 2018.

Upon notification, the contract negotiation with the winning bidder will begin immediately. Contract negotiations will be completed by September 14, 2018.

Notifications to bidders who were not selected will be completed by September 14, 2018.

Project Timeline:

Project initiation phase must be completed by November 15, 2018.

Site Visit

Access to view the existing conditions at the Observatory is available on request. The Observatory is also open to the public daily from 10 am to 5 pm with the last tour starting at 4:30 pm until October 8, 2018.

Budget

The budget should not exceed \$5,000.

Bidder Qualifications

A qualifications statement attesting to the applicant's capacity to perform the required work program should include resume(s), detailing academic and professional work experience attesting to capacity to perform the required work. Resumes are required for all project personnel.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Greater Portland Landmarks will evaluate and score all proposals based on the following criteria. To ensure consideration for this Request for Proposal, your proposal should be complete and include all of the following criteria:

- Overall proposal suitability: proposed solution(s) must meet the scope and needs included herein and be presented in a clear and organized manner.
- Proposed methodology for the research.
- Organizational Experience: Bidders will be evaluated on their qualifications and experience in research and exhibit development as it pertains to the scope of this project.

Each bidder must submit 2 hard copies and one electronic copy of their proposal to the address below by Monday, August 17th, 2018 at 5 pm EST.

Greater Portland Landmarks
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