



Request for Proposals:
Nonprofit Strategic Planning Services

PURPOSE

Discovery Museum has initiated a Request for Proposal process to identify qualified consultants to lead and execute a process with our Board of Directors, senior staff, and others to produce a strategic plan that will guide the organization for the next three to five years.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Blending science, nature, and play, [Discovery Museum](#) offers imaginative, hands-on learning experiences to children ages 0-12 and their families. The Museum offers an environment—filled with engaging, low-tech materials—where children can confidently follow their curiosity and playfully explore their world. Its founding philosophy is rooted in the belief that kids are capable of incredible things. For the past four decades, the Museum has nurtured that natural ability.

Because play and early STEM experiences are vital for all children, the Museum has worked to make them available to children of all abilities, economic circumstances, and backgrounds, garnering state and national awards in recognition of its commitment to inclusion.

- Fully renovated in 2018 to be accessible to visitors of all abilities, the Museum features interactive exhibits and programs dedicated to such STEAM topics as light and color, water, sound, air, tinkering, math, pretend play, and nature. The campus also includes the one-acre Discovery Woods nature playscape and wheelchair accessible treehouse, which provide imaginative places for outdoor exploration and play.
- In 2023, the Museum provided free or low-cost admission and subsidized school programs to 25% of its 252,000-person audience, including families with EBT, WIC, or ConnectorCare cards; foster families; children with disabilities; students in underfunded districts; and families served by social-service agency partners.
- The Museum also works to prioritize the representation of people of all genders, cultures, races, language backgrounds, and abilities in its program design, selection of presenters, and the images displayed in galleries.
- An institutional [Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Framework](#), adopted in 2022, guides the Museum's ongoing efforts to promote inclusion both in its audience-facing work and internally.

Because climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing kids' futures, Discovery Museum is setting an example of leadership and action to be visibly and demonstrably sustainable in our operations.

- In 2022, the Museum installed a 326kWh solar array over the parking lot, which generates 100% of its electricity. Additionally, a first-of-its-kind carbon offset program for members, staff, and volunteers is now used as a national model.
- A 5-year [Sustainability Plan](#), adopted in 2021, outlines additional strategies accomplished and underway for reducing the Museum's environmental impact toward a goal of carbon-neutral operations.
- **Discovery Museum is at an important inflection point with new leadership ready to take on the challenges and opportunities of the Museum's next phase.** With the retirement of 14-year, visionary CEO, Neil Gordon, on December 31, 2023, and following a Board-led selection process, Marie Beam begins her career as CEO after 10 ½ years as the Museum's Chief Development Officer. Simultaneously, natural transition in Board leadership is bringing seasoned Museum Board members into Officer roles.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS SCOPE OF WORK AND GOAL

The Discovery Museum Board of Directors and senior administrators have adopted the following statements for this strategic planning process:

Scope of Work:

*The Discovery Museum Board and leadership seeks an **inclusive and generative** process that explores the **very best use** of the Museum's expertise, assets, and influence in **service** to children and families. This process should leverage our unique advantages, differentiated offerings, and **position of strength** among peer museums, and call in **voices** old and new from across our audience segments, Board, staff, donors, partners, and friends in pursuit of identifying **opportunities to strengthen and deepen our impact**.*

Goal:

*A mission, vision, values, and strategic goals for Discovery Museum that anticipate the **changing landscape** for museums and other cultural institutions; recognize the **forces** affecting the daily lives and well-being of children and families; and honor the **strength and diversity** of the communities we strive to serve.*

THE PROPOSAL MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC INFORMATION:

- General information about your consulting practice and approach to strategic planning
- Qualifications of all consulting staff who will be assisting with the project, including education, role in the practice, years and type of experience
- Specific nonprofit sectors in which your practice has conducted strategic planning
- Recommendation for scope of plan (i.e., 3-year plan, 5-year plan)
- Work plan, including timeline with major tasks, milestones, and deliverables, with a completion date of no later than October 15, 2024
- Detailed budget for the project, including travel if the consultant is not local to Eastern Massachusetts
- Three client references
- One or more examples of strategic plans you have led that exemplify aspects of your experience most relevant to this project

- Other relevant deliverables that support your candidacy

SOME KEY QUALIFICATIONS THAT WILL BE CONSIDERED:

- An understanding of the culture and operations of a visitor-serving organization
- Experience working within and creating environments that value respect for diverse perspectives and lived experiences
- Strong facilitation skills that help produce creative and innovative ideas and foster connection and collaboration
- Experience creating a neutral environment for obtaining input and ideas
- Ability to constructively challenge stakeholders toward a better collective outcome
- A personal drive to make data gathering and decision-making inclusive of many voices and perspectives, and to use data to inform strategy and direction
- An appreciation for the Discovery Museum's leadership on sustainability and access

OWNERSHIP AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All intellectual property will become the property of the Discovery Museum. All data remains the sole property of the Discovery Museum. The consultant shall agree to keep information related to this process in strict confidence, including, but not limited to, the terms of the contract and any confidential business information or proprietary information that has been gathered in the course of this project.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

1. **Closing Submission Date**
Submissions are due by February 20, 2024
2. **Inquiries**
Inquiries concerning this RFP should be directed to: strategicplan@discoveryacton.org
3. **Conditions of Proposal**
All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by the Discovery Museum
4. **Submission Instructions**
Please submit electronically to strategicplan@discoveryacton.org. Each submission will be acknowledged by email.
5. **Confidentiality**
Please indicate whether any material submitted is proprietary and/or confidential so we can act accordingly. Note that all material submitted will be reviewed by a small committee of Board and Senior Administration members in the usual course of consultant selection.
6. **Conflict of Interest**
Please indicate if you or your firm has any conflict of interest with the Discovery Museum's organization or leadership. The review committee reserves the right to make ineligible any applicant with a conflict of interest that may limit or obstruct the quality of our strategic planning process.

7. **Notification of Selection and Timeline**

A selection committee will evaluate and rank proposals and may request interviews with finalists. References will be contacted for all finalists. The final selection of the committee will be reviewed by the Discovery Museum Board President and CEO. All applicants will receive written notification of the Museum's decision.

TIMELINE

February 1, 2024	RFP release date
February 20, 2024	Submission deadline
	Evaluation of proposals by selection committee
March 15, 2024	Notice of selection communicated to applicants
March 20, 2024	Startup contract signed
October 31, 2024	Strategic plan completed and ready for implementation