VISITOR EXPERIENCE DESIGN AND EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT

Answers to Questions Submitted in Response to the RFQ

Thanks to all for your thoughtful reading of our RFQ and for taking the time to submit questions. In total, we received close to 200 questions, which took more time to process than we expected. We appreciated your patience as we carefully considered your questions and our answers.

This is the final batch of answers. Please make sure to also check:

Batch 1 (June 23, 2023)
Batch 2 (June 27, 2023)

Batch 3, posted 6/28/2023

120. We noticed this quote in your materials, “Risk taking is something that we desperately need in the museum world.” Can you speak to how you see this showing up in your museum?

We envision a museum that is also a school for activists and one that queers the form. Questioning the assumptions that underlie our field is part of this work. Building new structures to support the work is another. Keeping a spirit of experimentation, collaboration, decolonization, and ceding traditional notions of authority speak to the risk taking we envision. These conversations will deepen through the interpretive planning work with the lead firm.

121. What balance do you envision striking between a celebration of LGBTQ+ history vs. explicit efforts to stave off threats to the progress the community has made?

That will be determined with evaluation and in conversation with advisors and the planning team.

122. How do you envision the relationship between the children’s exhibit area and the rest of the Museum?

We have no specific children's exhibit area in our brief. N-YHS has a children's area and all decisions about queer content in N-YHS exhibitions will be made in partnership with their staff.

123. Is there an ethos and plan determined for developing content collaboratively with advocacy groups, organizations, etc.?
100% yes on the ethos, but the plan for how to "get there" is under development. We hope to learn from the lead firm and our stakeholders.

124. Does ALM foresee events taking place within the main gallery?
Perhaps, but the most important functions are display and visitor engagement. We anticipate that there will be other event spaces available to us under the agreement with N-YHS.

125. We are excited to see that Prime Access may be included in the project team—are there any specific requirements or standards for accessibility of the in-gallery experiences that have already been determined? Or will accessibility provisions be developed individually as each experience takes shape?
Our accessibility work will kick off in the coming months. Parameters/Requirements will be defined at a later stage.

126. Is there a desire to present content and experiences in more than one language?
Yes, preferred languages to be confirmed at a later stage.

127. Is there any thought to how marketing and branding materials might be coordinated with the exhibition visual design?
It is expected that the Visitor Experience Design can integrate with collateral materials and public communications. The process will be further defined at a later stage.

128. Is there a separate donor signage/recognition scope of work?
This will be needed and is anticipated to be included in the RFP scope.

129. Will there be a need/desire for wayfinding/directional signage? Will signage be part of the existing N-YHS system?
Yes, we anticipate a need for wayfinding signage inside ALM spaces, beyond what will be part of the existing N-YHS system.

130. Is the rotating exhibition gallery at the N-YHS to be part of the 4,000 square foot core exhibition gallery? If not part of the core gallery, will this temporary space at NYHS be dedicated to ALM to house rotating exhibitions?
No, the 4,000 sq. ft. space is ALM’s core permanent space. Additionally, ALM expects to have access to N-YHS exhibition gallery(es) on a rotating temporary basis. The details are still being defined, and more information will be shared during the RFP stage.

131. Will admission to this exhibit be part of the overall N-YHS museum or an add-on purchase?
Admission policies and procedures are to be determined.

132. What is the anticipated frequency of onsite meetings/presentations vs. virtual? Do you anticipate that the whole team (including subconsultants) will be required to be present at every meeting?
We anticipate that the lead firm will manage resources as appropriate, and that meetings which are crucial for in-person engagement will occur as needed.
133. Are you primarily interested in design-build of museums, or equally interested in exhibitions, traveling exhibitions and/or virtual experiences?

We are interested in a team that will bring our concept to life in a unique and impactful visitor experience—across physical and digital platforms, from design through implementation. We prioritize exhibitions and experiences over design-build.

134. Can you share any examples of exhibits/spaces/projects you admire or think are relevant to this project? Have you seen other museums doing the type of work that you are striving for?

See answer #10 in Batch 1. We also aspire to new methods.

135. What are the biggest opportunities and biggest challenges that the new museum will face?

This will become clear from the research that will be shared during the RFP phase.

136. Will the N-YHS and/or building Architect be involved in the design process?

Both will be involved for coordination purposes. N-YHS curators will be advisors along with other content experts. Neither will have authority to determine design decisions.

137. We understand from the RFP that ALM has partnered with N-YHS to occupy the top floor of the planned new addition. We also understand that ALM’s space will be delivered as a white box. Will the Visitor Experience Design & Exhibition Development team be required to design within the given parameters of the base building/white box (e.g., amount of electrical panels and separate circuits serving the space, floor load capacity, etc.)? Alternatively, is there anticipated to be any interface between the Visitor Experience Design & Exhibition Development team and the N-YHS new Addition design team to adjust parameters of the space (e.g., if structural reinforcing is needed for an exhibition design element, if more circuits are needed, etc.)?

Although the initial goal will be to design within the given parameters of the base building, the parameters of the base building may be adjusted pending the requirements of the final design and through coordination with the base building architect.

138. Will any of the visuals required for the Phase 2 submission be used toward fundraising/ be required to be of a level that could be used for fundraising?

The RFP stage will not request or accept design proposals. Visuals presented by applicants, if any, will not be used for purposes other than the evaluation and selection process. RFP parameters and submission instructions will be released during the RFP launch.

139. If we partner with a firm for estimating services and said firm is also a fabricator, would they be precluded from bidding on the production phase or would they be allowed to bid on the production?

They would be allowed.

140. Within the white box, will the design of the mechanical distribution, sprinkler distribution, power/data distribution, fire alarm device location, etc. within the space be the responsibility of the Visitor Experience Design & Exhibition Development team? If so, should MEP, SP, FA, and Structural engineers be included as part of the proposing lead firm’s team during Phase 1?

To be determined. Adjustments to the existing MEP/FP and data systems designed by the RAMSA-led team may be coordinated with the RAMSA-led team, pending timing relative to their design
schedule and the scale of adjustments being proposed. If necessary, ALM will select engineers in collaboration with the successful lead firm. It is not necessary to contemplate or name specific engineering firms as part of this selection process.

141.  Will security design for the ALM space be provided by base building team or will that be the responsibility of the Visitor Experience Design & Exhibition Development team?

We do not yet know. This will be clarified in the RFP phase.

142.  ALM is interested in firms and independent professionals with expertise in Interior Architecture. Does ALM expect that the inaugural exhibition program will require interior alterations to the building which are in addition to the scope of work by Robert A.M. Stern Associates? Will ALM require a separate Architect licensed to practice in New York representing ALM’s interests to work alongside Robert A.M. Stern Associates on those interior alterations?

The exhibition program may require interior alterations as required by the design. To be determined.

143.  Has any exhibit designer/firm been part of the design process with RAMSA to ensure the space will be adequate for museum use?

No, an exhibit design/firm has not been involved. However, we have no reason to believe that the current design doesn’t align with standard museum requirements.

144.  As definitions can vary across teams and industry specialties, can you please define what you consider to be a ‘white box’?

The space will be completed to a basic level for obtaining a TCO: unpainted drywall walls with a clean, level concrete floor. The ceiling will not be finished unless it needs to achieve a fire-rating (unlikely/TBC). Systems will include minimum required lighting (on emergency power) for egress from the space, fully operational MEP, and Fire Protection with strobe / annunciator systems.

145.  Do you anticipate a requirement/desire to build-out of interior partitions, selection of finishes/furnishings, and/or other architectural/interior design elements?

Yes.

146.  Will there be a need/desire for code required room signage?

To be determined.

147.  Given the Museum’s commitment to creating a polyvocal and updateable narrative for permanent exhibitions, what is the relationship you envision between exhibits and programs? Are you interested in exploring unconventional models for exhibits, including ones that require live facilitation?

We are open to all ideas that will result in effective mission delivery.

148.  How do you envision the relationship between the development of the permanent physical museum, traveling exhibits, exhibits at partner sites, and the digital museum? Where might these processes converge and diverge?

This is to be designed into final scope and process in conversation with the lead firm.
The following questions will be addressed in the RFP. Firms that will be invited to the Phase 2 RFP will receive additional guidance in the project brief.

149. We understand from the RFP that the anticipated budget for the inaugural 4,000 square-foot core exhibitions is $4-$5 million inclusive of build-out and soft costs. What percent of that anticipated budget are you allocating for the build-out itself?

150. How was the project budget determined for the core exhibition, and what is the anticipated breakdown of the funds?

151. Who would be involved in the design approval process?

152. Could you clarify the scope of work for the lead firm during Phase 2 of the project?

153. (re: floor plan provided) Is the full extent of the ALM space (i.e. the white box area): the ALM Gallery 403, Gallery R4-03W, and Shell R4-04? (Are the fit-outs of Vestibule 404, Janitor 406, Unisex Restroom 405, and Stair E in this project’s scope?)

154. Does ALM plan to use Shell R4-04 as back of house/ office/storage space? If not, is any back-of-house space needed on location?

155. Does N-YHS have a specific process for design and approvals of exhibitions to be installed in their building?

The following questions refer to issues that will be better addressed/explored during the Visitor Experience Design and Exhibition Development and Design work, once the lead firm is on board.

156. What are your top priorities in regards to the physical museum space, the traveling exhibitions, and virtual museum?

157. What do you envision including in the virtual environment? What does the user experience look like?

158. For the virtual environment/museum is there a desire for this to incorporate virtual reality/augmented reality?

159. Could you provide more information about ALM’s virtual environment/museum and its relationship with the physical exhibitions?

160. What is the overall intended visitor path?