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 is taking more time to process than we expected. Below is Batch 1 of our answers. We will post the remaining answers by the end of day on Tuesday, June 27. We appreciate your patience as we carefully consider your questions and our answers.

Batch 1, posted 6/23/2023

1. Is the design and development cost of the virtual environment/museum included within the stated $4-$5 million budget?
   No. Not included.

2. Is the "virtual environment/museum" included in the $4-5M budget or will that be budgeted separately as with the traveling exhibition?
   Not included. As with traveling exhibitions.

3. Does the anticipated budget include the traveling exhibitions, or will the traveling exhibitions have a separate budget?
   Traveling exhibitions will have a separate budget.

4. Is funding for the project in hand, or does it need to be fundraised?
   Funding is not in hand. Fundraising campaign launches in July. Fundraising is underway, and there is a possibility that the schedule could shift as a result.

5. Does the $4-$5 million budget include contingency?
   Yes.

6. Will programming development be part of the $4-5M budget?
   Programming has already begun, and is not included in the budget, unless there are specific programs to advance planning that will be undertaken as part of the development process.
7. What is the anticipated budget for the core exhibitions, and will there be a separate budget for rotating/traveling exhibitions?

Please refer to the "Institutional Background" section in our RFQ site: "Our anticipated budget for our inaugural 4,000 square-foot core exhibitions is $4-$5 million inclusive of build-out and soft costs. Anticipated budget for the rotating/traveling exhibitions will be confirmed during the RFP stage."

8. Co-creating the Museum’s experiences with the LGBTQ+ community is obviously a priority for the Museum. Can you walk us through your current vision for the community engagement process? How do you envision your design partner participating in the community collaborations?

The potential approach to additional research and engagement will be included in the Phase 2 RFP; however, we expect to learn from our partner firm what has worked in the past and what they would recommend as the optimal process for community engagement, given the tasks at hand.

9. Have community/advocacy members and/or groups already been identified for these additional phases of work?

We have an extensive list of experts, stakeholders, and organizations that have participated in the development of ALM. We are also working on the development of a content advisory committee. We anticipate that the lead firm will articulate how they would like to engage relevant stakeholders.

10. What other exhibits have you seen that inspire you?

The new core exhibitions at the Museum of the Dutch Resistance; Lower East Side Tenement Museum; Legacy Museum; National Museum of African American History and Culture; Noah's Ark at the Skirball; Meow Wolf; Beautiful Science (Huntington Library); Race: are we so different?; Upside down: Arctic Realities (Menil); Cannibals: Myth & Reality (Museum of Us); Jean-Michel Basquiat: King Pleasure

11. Can you provide more information about the ‘core exhibition’?

We cannot provide more information at this stage. Please review the documents provided as well as our website to understand the type of experience we seek to develop.

12. Does the Museum core exhibition focus primarily on LGBTQ+ history in New York City, or will the narrative highlight national and international LGBTQ+ experiences? If broader than New York, will there be a dedicated focus on New York specifically within the larger story?

We seek to tell an American history story in the core exhibition. New York's history will be a through-line given its prominence in the LGBTQ+ rights movement and in the development of queer culture, but we want to tell a national story.

13. Please clarify if the “up to seven rotating exhibitions in first 2-3 years” as noted in the Project Overview are extensions of the same/similar stories and assets as the core exhibition or if they are standalone exhibitions.

This is TBD pending interpretive planning. We envision them as a suite of "inaugural exhibitions," starting at partner sites (including at N-YHS) and traveling nationally.
14. Within the framework of the Museum’s commitment to intersectionality, how do you envision prioritizing content? In other words, almost any topic can be a queer topic when looked at through the right lens. Do you have any existing ideas for the process through which you want to develop your unique lens?

One priority is to center stories of BIPOC, women, gender queer folx, and disabled people in chapters of history that are familiar. Another is to look at where the movement or culture focused and what was missed as a result. A third is to familiarize visitors with chapters of our histories that are less known. Overall, we will work with our partner to ensure that the exhibitions and digital experiences reflect the diversity of our communities.

15. Will donors have any influence over content/exhibits?

We expect to be guided by our interpretive plan which will be informed by community and academic knowledge, experience, and dialogue. To the degree that donors fall within that, they will have influence.

16. The concept mentions a recommendation to seek partnerships and collaboration with existing institutions. Are there particular institutions already in mind for that?

We have ideas and some established relationships. Partners and plans will be formalized in the coming months and years.

17. Has ALM identified a schedule or schedule structure for the rotating exhibitions and the rotating exhibition space?

How long are you planning to tour each of the traveling exhibits?

We expect to develop up to seven rotating exhibitions that will roll out over our first 2-3 years and run for 3 years or more. The specific schedule structure is to be confirmed at a later stage.

18. Thinking about the N-YHS exhibition versus those at other physical venues: are these exhibitions concurrent, or sequential?

See #17. Some of them could be concurrent, some sequential, this is yet to be defined.

19. Will the seven rotating exhibitions be part of the lead designers’ scope of work?

ALM anticipates including the core exhibitions at the main space and the rotating exhibitions for the first 2-3 years as part of the RFP scope. However, we also will focus first on interpretive planning to identify the elements of our core exhibit (main space at the N-YHS), the overall Visitor Experience Design strategy, and the conceptual approach to the Virtual Environment/Museum. All rotating exhibitions will be defined and planned once we have set the parameters of the above elements and formalized institutional partnerships.

Additional details will be shared during the RFP launch.

There is not currently a set schedule or methodology for rolling out the travelling exhibitions.
20. Will the scope to develop the seven rotating exhibitions in the first 2 to 3 years and ALM Virtual environment/museum be included in the Phase 2 RFP scope of work? If not, will separate RFP(s) be sent out in the future for them to only the short list (of up to five firms) confirmed during this Phase 1 RFQ stage?

See above answers #17 and #19. Additionally, we acknowledge that the design and development of the Virtual Environment/Museum will require a separate scope/budget. We expect the necessary information to advance this work will emerge from the Interpretive Plan and conceptual approach to the Virtual Environment defined as part of the Visitor Experience strategy. Ideally, the lead firm will be able to navigate us through as much of this work as possible, though we may need to seek additional expertise. In other words, we are not looking to change teams unless it proves necessary for the best interest of the project.

21. Would the chosen partner contribute to developing the “participative elements” of the rotating exhibitions?

Yes.

22. Do you have an idea of where the 'temporary exhibition in a rotating exhibition gallery' might be?

This is still being defined, additional information will be shared during the RFP phase.

23. What does the design schedule look like? I'm assuming that design work would be from January 2024 – April 2025, then construction from May 2025 – December 2025? Does the exhibition open in December 2025?

The schedule is being confirmed in the coming months and will be provided in the RFP. We anticipate that our space at N-YHS and our exhibitions will open in October 2026.

24. Under II. Project Overview, it is mentioned that you expect to develop up to seven rotating exhibitions in the first 2-3 years. Do you plan to rotate those exhibits within the 2 – 3 years, or they would be on exhibit for 2-3 years before rotating?

See answer #17

25. Are the rotating/traveling exhibits within a gallery of the 4,000 sf core exhibition space, or a separate gallery space?

The core exhibit will be semi-permanent, in our dedicated space, and the rotating/temporary exhibitions will be in other venues.

26. Does ALM require any minimum level of insurance coverage for the lead firm? If so, would you be able to share the amounts at this point?

We will require a customary level of insurance, and any excess needs can be addressed in the contracting process.

27. Do you have a preferred AV integrator you intend to work with for this project?

We do not.
28. Do you anticipate a requirement/desire for lighting, A/V, or other electrical elements?
   Yes, but it is not necessary to form a team to cover those elements at this time. If you do not have in-house capabilities, these areas of expertise can be added by the lead firm at a later stage, in conversation with ALM.

29. In the RFP, it is noted that ALM will only collect to support their core exhibitions. Will the full core exhibition be on display always or will a storage space be needed? If so, where would that storage space be (e.g., offsite or onsite)?
   The parameters of the collection, including storage, are under development. It is anticipated that curators, registrars, and other key people involved in exhibition design will have access to the collection items as needed.

30. Will ticketing or reception spaces be needed within the ALM space on the fourth floor?
   A small reception space may be included, but ticketing is anticipated to be part of the N-YHS entrance sequence.

31. What is the expected size of the rotating gallery space? What is the expected size of the traveling exhibits (for the partner sites as well as two national exhibits)?
   We anticipate most rotating exhibitions to be 1,000 – 3,000 sf.

32. The museum concept mentions “a ‘response gallery’ for exploring current events and sharing personal stories.” Is this intended to be part of the 4000 sq ft core exhibition space or part of the rotating exhibit space?
   This idea is still under development, but it would be part of the 4,000 sf core.

33. Will the base building scope include appropriate restroom facilities, or will this space be required to include those?
   The restroom facilities are already part of the base building design. Additional updates or possible interventions, if any, as relevant to the architectural design will be shared during the RFP phase.

34. Is the building listed in the historical registry? If so, will there be surfaces where we cannot mount hardware or other considerations to be aware of?
   The main 4,000 square-foot space designated for our core exhibitions is a new addition designed by Robert A.M. Stern Associates. Details about other relevant or circulation spaces located in the original N-YHS building that may be subject to restrictions will be disclosed later as part of the RFP phase.

35. Will the server space for the virtual environment/museum be located within ALM’s 4th floor space? Will the design of the server space (as well as e.g., power & cooling requirements of it) be part of this project’s scope?
   This is a key question to be defined during the development stage, as the building is still being engineered. We do not anticipate this being an impediment to planning at this point. More details to be shared during the RFP launch.
36. Please confirm that ALM would like the selected firm to create a modular format that would allow ALM to continue to showcase future exhibitions.

The pros and cons of this approach should be explored by the lead firm during the Development of our main space and core exhibitions. While this sounds ideal, there may be tradeoffs or limitations that require a more semi-permanent installation.

37. Would the New York Historical Society (NYHS) fill any needs for the exhibition regarding their own internal facilities teams and external partners?

This is to be determined. However, we anticipate that our team (staff and consulting design/fabrication teams) will be equipped to meet most development/design/fabrication/installation needs and that we'll coordinate with N-YHS teams.

38. Are the four volumes of data and analysis publicly available?

Will the firms selected for the RFP have access to the research and data described in the Concept Study?

The four volumes of data and analysis—result of the preliminary research and engagement process—is not publicly available. However, some of this material will be part of the reference materials shared during the RFP launch.

39. Will ALM be choosing the project team for all the next phases of design and fabrication, or just for early phases such as concept and schematic?

We are looking for a team to take us all the way through opening day (and beyond). We expect to work collaboratively with the lead firm to build a full team, including sub consulting partners representing the full range of disciplines. We expect to contract in phases as funds are available.

40. Will the Phase 2 RFP scope include any of the pilot programming aspects named in the Concept summary and/or additional future museum initiatives mentioned in the RFQ, such as: Conversations; Multidisciplinary speaker series and performances; Temporary exhibits beyond the inaugural exhibitions, including up to 7 exhibits in the first 2-3 years; Educational programming; Archive and museum collaborations; Festivals, balls and celebrations; Exhibitions at the four future sites throughout the boroughs; Traveling exhibitions; Content development, visitor interpretation; Other programming

At this stage, please refer to the elements listed in the "Project Overview" section of our RFQ site. Pilot public programs—not included in the scope—have already launched under the management of ALM staff. Once there is a lead firm in place, we expect close collaboration and communication towards a unified Visitor Experience strategy. The Public Programming strategy will not be part of the scope but may offer interesting points of contact or content to draw upon.

41. Is it ALM’s intent to issue the RFP as a design/build or design/bid/build?

This will not be a design-build project. But we expect to retain the selected Lead Firm to oversee visitor experience design and exhibition development and design through implementation.

42. Will a bid bond be required for the RFP submission?

No, we will not require a bid bond.
43. Can you provide more details about the Phase 2 RFP (Request for Proposal), such as the expected timeline, submission requirements, and project brief?

Please refer to Amendment notes at the top of our RFQ site, and the preliminary dates in the section "Team Selection Process: Key dates". Additional information will be shared during the RFP phase launch. Submission requirements will not include any design or concepting work, and the requirements are expected to follow those of a traditional RFP.

44. Will the firms selected for the RFP be able to ask additional questions of the museum and curatorial teams after receiving the detailed project brief and additional reference materials?

Yes, there will be a chance for the selected candidates to communicate additional questions to the museum team during the Phase 2 RFP phase after receiving additional reference materials. Details will be released during the RFP launch.

45. Will there be an interview or presentation (either remote or in-person) for Phase 1 and/or Phase 2?

Yes, there will be a presentation, interview, and possibly site visit for Phase 2 finalists. The process and expectations will be included in the RFP.

46. What are your top priorities you are looking for in a “lead firm” partner at this stage?

We are looking for a partner that shares our values and commitment to equity and liberation; is able to be flexible, but clearly see the optimal path for navigating through evolving plans; and understands the process and benefits of meaningful collaborations.

47. To be able to assess our eligibility for the next phase, can you elaborate on the evaluation criteria in the RFP with regard to representation requirements? Some of the certification mentioned if not available for Dutch companies for example.

A certification M/WBE and/or LGBTQ+ will be regarded positively but will not be required. Though evaluation criteria have not yet been established, we expect that non-certified firms will be competitive if their work experience and values clearly reflect the ability to help us deliver on our mission and vision.

48. What are the specific diversity requirements for the project team from the lead firm in the RFP phase? As a European company we do not have any certifications. If we need certifications, can we complement our team with partners that have those certifications?

See above answer #47. Additionally, yes, an expanded team selected in conversation with ALM, is a possible way forward.

49. Are there any specific expectations regarding the inclusion of diverse perspectives, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, and disabled individuals, in the project team?

See above two answers. All of our work must be carried out with a level of unprecedented inclusion.

50. Is there a preference for local consultants?

There is no preference for local consultants. We seek partners with proven capacity to deploy efforts on-site during critical periods of development and implementation, competitive fees and expenses, and a cost-efficient use of resources.
51. Our firm being Dutch, are international firms/teams invited to submit proposals?
   Yes, international firms/teams are invited to submit, see answer #50 for additional details.

52. We found the RFQ to be clear and only have this one question: Is the Museum planning to select exhibition design firms as the lead designer candidates?
   Firms with ample experience in Experience and/or Exhibition Design, and a proven record of overseeing all aspects of Visitor Experience & Exhibition Design development—through implementation—will be considered for the Lead Firm Role. We understand that some architecture firms have developed these capabilities in-house as well.

53. Are you willing to share the number of firms/agencies you are speaking to about this project?
   During Phase 1 RFQ: Approximately 30 established firms were directly approached and encouraged to share their qualifications. However, the RFQ is truly an open call and has been publicly posted to encourage broader participation. Our intention is to identify smaller firms and independent professionals that may be invited to collaborate with the lead firm (or in other capacities with ALM) as we advance planning and implementation.

54. I want to understand the name of the contact person we should address our quals package cover letter to. This information was not available in the RFQ documentation. We understand our quals package will be uploaded through the ALM website portal.
   Please address to: Ben Garcia, Executive Director, American LGBTQ+ Museum

55. For the first question on the Qualifications Submission Form (on Survey Monkey), we are asked to choose the size of our firm based on number of people. Would this be total people (including each part time employee separately) or would it be full time-equivalent people? For instance, if we had 12 people full time and six people half time, would we record that as 18 total people (and so medium firm) or 15 full-time equivalent people (and so small firm)?
   We simply want to understand the scale of your firm. Please share how many full time equivalent (FTE) staff you have. For example, 5 full time staff plus 2 half-time staff = 6 FTEs. Please do not include contractors or affiliated non-staff collaborators.

56. For the Qualifications Submission form question #5 [“ALM is committed to building a cultural institution that advances liberation, through its public-facing activities, governance, and operations. If you’d like to share, we’d like to know more about how applicants identify. Check all that apply.”], would the “applicants” be considered to be just the submitting firm’s owner, or also the firm’s leadership, or all team members proposed to be on the project?
   We would like to know about the firm’s leadership team and key team members that would collaborate on our project. However, please note that this is an optional question, not a requirement.
57. What is the page size limit 8.5 x 11 in. or 11 x 17 in.? Do you mean 1-side or 2-sided pages? Can a spread of 2 letter-sized pages count as 1 page?

Submission should be uploaded as a single pdf file, US standard letter-sized pages (US 8.5 x 11 in). Horizontal or Vertical orientations are equally acceptable. Page count should not exceed 12 pages.

As this is a digital submission, we are referring exclusively to 1-side pages, a spread of 2-letter-sized pages would count as 2 pages.

58. Is there a page size limit for the RFQ and the RFP?

For RFQ submission instructions please refer to above answer #57. For the RFP, submission instructions will be released during the RFP launch.

59. Is there a template for the submission or desired page formatting?

There is no template or preferred formatting, you are free to use your own within the parameters established for page size, count, and file limits. Please refer to details in the sections "Requested materials" and "Submission requirements" on our RFQ site.

60. What is covered in the 12-page count limit, would the cover, table of contents, dividers, end pages, etc. count towards this limit?

The 12-page limit includes all components of the submission, including any cover or table of contents you may choose to include.

61. Should we include in our submission scanned pages of our relevant certifications (M/WBE and/or LGBTQ+ certifications), and if so, would they count toward the 12-page limit?

Scans are not needed at this stage. Just ensure the relevant certifications are called out in the text of the firm qualifications at this stage.

62. For the relevant projects, are we able to include links to video and additional visual documentation?

Links to your website and videos may be provided and may be reviewed by members of the selection team. However, the selection of potential lead firms for the RFP phase will be based on the contents of your PDF submission.

63. Can you please clarify/outline what information on the team members you will be looking for? With page restrictions, we likely won’t include full resumes but would like to prioritize information/credentials/experience important to the museum.

Team member bios should emphasize experience and similar roles in relevant projects, level of expertise in specific disciplines, and other professional background details that uniquely qualify them to contribute to the project’s success.

64. Are there any specific requirements for the format of the RFQ submission, such as file size, document structure, or accessibility guidelines?

Yes, please refer to the sections "Requested Materials" and "Submission Instructions" in our RFQ site, and review answers 57, and 60, above.
65. Will ALM request/require an NDA for Phase 1 or Phase 2?

Phase 2 RFP may require an NDA.

66. Are there any defining details you recommend we consider when selecting our 3-5 past project examples, in addition to: anticipated 200-250k annual visitors; 4,000 square foot inaugural exhibition; $4-5M project budget; non-collecting / borrowing institution; community-based museum that utilizes storytelling, exhibitions and engages community members; immersive experiences.

Please refer to the section "Project Overview" on our RFQ website, consider our multi-venue/platform approach which besides the inaugural exhibition contemplates a series of rotating exhibitions during our first 2-3 years, and contemplate our mission, vision, and values.

67. Will there be any requirements for the Phase 2 submission as to physical models and/or printed documents or will it be strictly virtual/digital?

The RFP stage will not request or accept design proposals - as such, no models. RFP parameters and submission instructions will be released during the RFP launch, likely (but not guaranteed) to be digital in nature.

68. Of the areas of expertise listed (under “Who Should Respond”), does the team need to cover the full list? If not, is there a core list of expertise our response should focus on?

Your team does not need to cover the full list. You can focus on the core areas of expertise that your firm/team regularly provides, highlighting what is applicable to the project as described.

69. Under 'Requested Materials,' it asks to provide a firm profile and bio of team members assigned to this project. Since I am an individual practitioner, should I submit my own bio, or does this only pertain to firms?

In the case of individuals, please submit your own bio (and projects summary if applicable.)

70. Can ALM confirm what time of day on July 11th the Qualifications are due for submission?

The deadline for submission of the Qualifications package has been extended to July 11 at 5:00 pm ET.

71. Is there a sense of what types of specialized firms might be partnered to collaborate with the shortlisted lead firms during the RFP process?

Not at this stage. Please see amended Phase 2 RFP description in the "Phases" section of our RFQ site.

72. Within the RFP you mention that “potential lead firms will be asked to team up with smaller firms and/or independent professionals from the list compiled by ALM.” Should lead designer candidates identify potential partners as well as part of the RFQ phase as well?

Not at this stage. Please see amended Phase 2 RFP description in the "Phases" section of our RFQ site.