



BOSTON
CHILDREN'S
MUSEUM

Request for Proposals
Boston Children's Museum
Construction Zone Exhibit Design-Build

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1. INTRODUCTION

Boston Children's Museum (BCM) invites firms to participate in a selection process to identify and engage a partner to complete the final exhibit design and full implementation (including fabrication and installation) of a 3,750 square foot exhibit broadly focused on construction¹. The selection process for this RFP will be based both on written responses, as well as on an interview (in person or via videoconference) with short-listed firms. The result of this RFP will be a 2-phased contract—Phase 1 will be awarded for completion of the exhibit's design, and Phase 2 will be awarded for implementation (including full fabrication and installation) of the exhibit.

Concurrent with this Exhibit Design-Build RFP, BCM is issuing a separate RFP for two digital interactives (Dream City and Magic Painter). Firms bidding on this RFP may also choose to bid on the design of one or both of those components (or neither). BCM may choose to award separate contracts for the design and delivery of the digital interactives and the full Exhibit Design-Build, but the selected Exhibit Design-Build firm will be responsible for integration of the digital interactives.

The exhibit will also include several additional multimedia pieces (e.g., film, animation) and artist commissions (e.g., murals, mosaic, sculpture). Separate RFPs will be issued for the design and production of those components and assets at a later date. The selected Exhibit Design-Build firm will be responsible for integration of these pieces into the exhibit.

¹ Throughout this project, when using the term "construction," we are broadly referencing the full spectrum of planning, architecture, engineering, design, and building that support the creation of structures and spaces.

Separate architectural and construction management contracts will be executed to facilitate the demolition of existing conditions, support this project with basic construction, and for outfitting the space with proper electrical and mechanical service, lighting, and initial finishes.

Proposals are due to Joel Reider, BCM’s Director of Exhibit Design, by December 20, 2024 at 12:00 PM EST, as detailed in [Section 7: Selection Schedule](#).

2. BACKGROUND AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

About Boston Children’s Museum

Boston Children’s Museum is the second oldest and one of the most influential children’s museums in the world. Since its founding in 1913, BCM has been engaging children and families in joyful discovery experiences that instill an appreciation of our world, develop foundational skills, and spark a lifelong love of learning. The Museum’s exhibits and programs emphasize hands-on engagement and learning through experience, employing exploration and play as tools to spark the inherent creativity, curiosity, and imagination of children. BCM’s primary audience is children ages 0-10 and the adults in their lives, and we welcomed 420,000 visitors in fiscal year 2024.

About the New Exhibit and Work to Date

Originally installed in 2003, our current *Construction Zone* exhibit is one of the most popular spaces in the Museum. The exhibit redesign project (new name tbd) will result in the creation of a new 3,750 square foot permanent exhibit² that invites visitors to engage in the process of construction, which we define broadly to include everything from planning and architecture through to trades.

As part of our standard process for commencing an exhibit design project, an initial literature review was conducted (with focuses on gender, race, and demographics in construction, as well as topics such as STEM, building, construction, and spatial reasoning for young children). In addition, BCM conducted an evaluation of our current *Construction Zone* exhibit, and solicited input from a variety of construction professionals and community groups to help inform our redesign plans. Through this process, BCM identified our target audience for the new exhibit as children ages 4-8 and their caregivers, with a specific emphasis on girls and children of color as a key challenge and priority for the new space.

During concept development, the team created a “Dream/Design/Build” framework for the exhibit redesign that is intended to highlight the full process of construction and the many fields (from city planning to architecture to design to the trades) comprising construction. While the building aspect of construction (using your hands, tools, and machines to actually make structures) is innately engaging to many children, the inclusion of the dreaming and designing is intended to increase engagement among children (and caregivers) who might be more drawn to the artistic or social-emotional elements of construction, such as drawing, imagining possibilities, and understanding the needs of community members. Work to date has resulted in the creation of the following main message for the exhibit:

² Permanent exhibits at BCM remain in the Museum for 10+ years.

We have the power and ability to dream up, design, and build things that make our world a better place. What we build affects people, animals, plants, and everything else around us.

BCM has completed the Design Development phase of our exhibit design process, and thus in addition to creating our conceptual framework, significant component development, space planning, and identification of our design language has already occurred—all informed by our front-end research and early prototyping.

Design-Build firms interested in bidding on this project will be provided BCM's Design Development package. To indicate intent to apply and gain access to these materials, firms should email Joel Reider, BCM's Director of Exhibit Design, as detailed in [Section 7: Selection Schedule](#).

Design-Build Parameters and Criteria

Process and BCM Project Team: Many members of the BCM staff have participated in our exhibit process to date, and we are looking for a Design-Build firm who is interested in joining our team. We anticipate working in a collaborative relationship that draws on both BCM's and the firm's expertise, as well as that of consultants and advisors to the project. BCM has a track record of creating engaging, creative, joyful experiences that are meaningful for children and families, and we are looking for a partner to help us achieve that with this new exhibit. BCM's core team for this exhibit include our on-staff Director of Exhibit Design, Senior Director of Exhibits and Research, as well as contracted Content Developer and Graphic Designer. Additional team members who also contribute to this project include members of BCM's visitor experience, education, collections, and facilities teams.

BCM has a Learning Framework and Equity Tool, which are critical documents that will guide the creation of the new exhibit. BCM has been incorporating the principles represented in both of these documents to guide development of the exhibit to this point. Our Learning Framework defines how BCM thinks about exploration, play, and learning, and outlines the defining features of our experiences that we feel are essential to supporting children and families and help make our exhibits accessible, meaningful, and fun. BCM's Equity Tool is a process and series of questions for centering equity across all types of experience development work in the Museum. Summaries of both our Learning Framework and Equity Tool are available upon request.

Safety, Useability, and Durability: BCM is known for our high quality hands-on exhibits, and our exhibits need to be designed and built to last for 10+ years of hard and enthusiastic play. We are looking for a Design-Build firm who shares our commitment to choosing materials and design solutions that support safety, accessibility, and usability, as well as durability and ease of maintenance. BCM's audience is diverse in many ways, and design solutions must be intuitive for intended users.

Design Language, Aesthetics, and Materials: BCM aims for the new exhibit to be inviting and inspirational for our visitors. We are looking for a Design-Build firm who can help us ignite our visitors' curiosity, imagination, and creativity. Inspiring and inventive use of materials, thoughtful integration of the various parts, and a high quality of fit and finish are high priorities. Where

possible, BCM is also interested in design solutions that include the use of sustainable material options.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected firm will be responsible for supporting the BCM team in two phases with strong project management throughout:

- **Phase 1: Final Design** - development of the project from its current state through the final phase of design. Final Design must be completed and approved by BCM prior to the start of Phase 2.
- **Phase 2: Implementation** - full fabrication and installation of the exhibit and exhibit-related components, including environmental and architectural installations, furnishings, hands-on and interactive components, integration of digital interactives and media/audio-visual elements, and fabrication and installation of exhibit graphics (designed by contracted Graphic Designer). Implementation will be completed according to a schedule determined by BCM and the selected firm; BCM may require a pause between Phases 1 and 2, depending on fundraising.³

SERVICES INCLUDE:

Project Management:

The selected firm will have a strong track record in managing complex design and implementation projects of similar scope at museums that serve young children and families. BCM will rely on the firm for excellent project management, including communication and coordination with BCM; updating and keeping to budget and schedule; and compliance with ADA and local codes and regulations.

BCM will require a designated point of contact at the firm; mutually agreed upon communication protocols and change order procedures; close communication between the firm and BCM's project manager; a minimum of weekly meetings with the BCM team for project management, with reviews of budget and timeline, and separate regular design meetings; opportunities for BCM team visits to fabrication shop to monitor progress; and timely invoices and expense submissions. Critically, BCM will require opportunities for thorough review and final approvals for all stages of the project; the Design-Build firm should propose a review and approvals process to be mutually agreed upon and followed by both parties.

Execution of the project will require cooperation with additional individuals and teams, which will be coordinated through BCM's project manager. Teams and individuals will include BCM's facilities team, as well as BCM's third-party contractors-including Project Architect, General Contractor, Graphic Design, Content Developer, Multimedia and Artist Commissions, and Digital Interactive Design (if Digital contracts are awarded to other firms). The Design-Build firm may also include partners and subcontractors, as necessary, and will be the main point of contact for those vendors.

³ At the time of issuing this RFP, BCM has secured 46% of our total project budget, which covers all of the Final Design phase and a part of Implementation. BCM will move ahead with Implementation once we have raised approximately two-thirds of the total budget. BCM is confident in current prospects and is committed to seeing this project through to completion.

Phase 1: Final Design

Building on BCM's existing conceptual framework, component ideas and details, floorplan, and design direction, the Design-Build firm will further develop/design the exhibit in true partnership with BCM. BCM will require thorough reviews and final approvals at all stages (as previously described). The firm will:

1. Lead further component and design development, integrating BCM's existing work and in collaboration with BCM project team;
2. Design, build, and test working prototypes for evaluation and review with the BCM team, both in the shop and with children and families;
3. Create all necessary drawings for the exhibit's production following BCM's exhibit design direction, ensuring appropriate level of detail for production⁴ and showing how components are integrated with each other and within the space;
4. Provide material and finish samples and mockups for approval, and prepare material and finish schedule;
5. Prepare and keep updated design, fabrication, and installation schedules, with critical milestones and tasks identified; establish regular timeline review processes with BCM on an ongoing basis and at critical milestones;
6. Prepare a full project budget for final design and implementation, and monitor project cost estimates to ensure compliance with the project budget; establish review processes with BCM on an ongoing basis and at critical milestones;
7. Coordinate (in collaboration with BCM project manager) with all third-party vendors contributing to the project and plan for integration of their work, both those contracted by BCM (including graphic design, multimedia and A/V production, producers of original artwork, digital interactive designers, etc.), and with the firm's own partners and subcontractors, as needed for a successful project;
8. Coordinate (in collaboration with BCM project manager) with the Project Architect to support documentation of demolition and infrastructure modifications/upgrades needed for a successful project;
9. Complete a final design package with all drawings, specifications, and fabrication and installation budgets and timelines.

Phase 2: Implementation

Using the final approved design package created in Phase 1, the Design-Build firm will fabricate and install the exhibit, and provide documentation and training that will allow BCM to operate and maintain the exhibit into the future. Fabrication and installation shall be executed with particular attention paid to high quality fit and finish, safety, durability, and ease of maintenance. BCM will require thorough reviews and final approvals at all stages (as previously described). The firm will:

1. Create a full set of shop drawings to communicate fabrication and installation details for all exhibit components and environmental treatments, including integration of all digital interactives, multimedia or A/V elements, artworks, etc. being created by third-party vendors;

⁴ Some components will require the design of custom loose parts, and some will include integration of objects from BCM's Collections and from BCM's current Construction Zone exhibit (like our existing real Bobcats and jackhammer).

2. Fabricate, deliver, and install all exhibit elements, including but not limited to environmental treatments, basic structural elements, exhibit components, and furniture. Fabrication and installation will also include:
 - a. Testing of components and elements to ensure operation as intended in a safe, intuitive, and reliable manner;
 - b. Procurement as needed (except where negotiated with BCM, such as off-the-shelf loose parts and potential donations);
 - c. Coordination, integration, and testing of third-party components and elements (such as digital interactives, multimedia and A/V elements, artworks);
 - d. Modification and/or coordination for modification of BCM's existing components that will be reused in the exhibit (e.g., Bobcats and jackhammer) and integration of these components and objects from BCM's Collections into the exhibit;
 - e. Production of custom loose parts, as needed;
 - f. Graphic fabrication and installation from print-ready mechanical files and to specifications provided by BCM's Graphic Designer;
3. Prepare and keep updated fabrication and installation schedules, with critical milestones and tasks identified, to ensure compliance with project timeline; establish review processes with BCM on an ongoing basis and at critical milestones;
4. Prepare and keep updated any changes to the project budget, and monitor project cost estimates to ensure compliance with the project budget; establish review processes with BCM on an ongoing basis and at critical milestones;
5. Attend weekly construction coordination meetings and work with BCM project manager to coordinate with the Project Architect, General Contractor, and BCM's facilities team during fabrication, delivery, installation, and cleanup to ensure project success, and to protect the site and all surrounding spaces within BCM;
6. Produce and deliver all final documentation including, but not limited to, assembly manual, maintenance manual, and closeout package (including electronic and hard copies of all as-built drawings and related files);
7. Train BCM staff on the operation and maintenance of the exhibit to ensure project success and longevity.

WHAT BCM WILL PROVIDE:

1. BCM's Director of Exhibit Design will serve as project manager throughout this project. The selected firm will also work directly with other members of BCM's core team (previously defined), other BCM staff, and BCM's third-party vendors, as coordinated by the project manager. Through BCM's project manager, BCM will provide reviews, comments, and final approvals for all stages in a timely manner, as agreed upon with the selected firm.
2. BCM will provide our work to date, including front-end research and conceptual framework (target audience, main message, goals, and objectives), content templates for each component, prototyping memos for selected components, and design direction. BCM will retain an active role in generating ideas and participating in the continued development of all exhibit components and final design solutions.
3. BCM will work with the selected firm to find the best ways to prototype components both in the firm's shop and with children and families (either at BCM or a venue local to the firm). BCM's

team will support testing in-person, and BCM may be able to build and test some smaller prototypes locally (tbd, as negotiated with the firm).

4. BCM will write all exhibit label copy, and our Graphic Designer will lead graphic design and production for all graphics, providing fabrication ready files and specifications in consultation with the selected firm.
5. BCM will provide specific components from our current Construction Zone exhibit for modification and reuse (Bobcats and jackhammer), and objects from our Collections (dollhouse and possibly other items, tbd during the design process). BCM and the selected firm will negotiate the most appropriate methods for needed modification and integration of these items.

4. PROJECT BUDGET AND TIMELINE

The total budget for the new exhibit is \$2.1 million, which is inclusive of all aspects of the project—including those outside the scope of this RFP. We anticipate that approximately 40-50% of our budget will support the exhibit design, fabrication, and installation (including all third-party vendors). We are looking for a Design-Build firm who can support and guide our plan to create a high quality experience while keeping within budget, and understand that BCM and the selected firm will need to make thoughtful decisions together to do so.

As noted previously, to date, BCM has raised 46% of the total project budget. This includes all of the funding necessary for completion of Phase 1: Final Design, and part of the funding for the full completion of the project (Phase 2: Implementation). BCM may require a pause after Final Design is complete for continued fundraising. BCM will begin Phase 2: Implementation with the selected firm once we have reached approximately two-thirds of our total fundraising goal.

Our target date for completion of Phase 1: Final Design is May 2025. Assuming no pause for fundraising is needed and we can move straight into Phase 2: Implementation, our target for exhibit opening is December 2025. BCM asks bidders to outline a project schedule that achieves these target dates—or, if our desired dates are not feasible, to outline realistic schedules and completion dates for each of the two phases with explanations for additional time needed.

5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Responses should be submitted electronically as a PDF of the proposal package no later than 12:00 PM EST on December 20, 2024 (see Selection Schedule for details). Address all materials to:

Joel Reider
Director of Exhibit Design
Reider@BostonChildrensMuseum.org

Responses should be no more than 10 pages and should include:

1. Complete contact information;
2. Statement of interest;
3. Suggested project approach for each phase, including:

- a. Projected project schedule/timeline for each phase; with notes on how the timeline might be impacted by a pause between Phases 1 and 2 for fundraising;
 - b. Specific proposed details for project management;
 - c. Specific proposed details about collaborating with the BCM project team;
4. Proposed main point of contact and key project personnel who will be directly involved, both at the different phases and across the project’s duration, including any vendors and subcontractors, if known at this stage; include brief bios with relevant qualifications and descriptions of prior projects;
5. Assessment of the firm’s overall ability to devote necessary time and attention on this project, with specifics given for the main point of contact’s and key personnel’s workloads in addition to this project (e.g., number of other parallel projects, etc.);
6. A summary of no more than three recent design/fabrication projects with images and description of how each example relates to this project;
7. Three recent references citing previous project experience (name, phone, email);
8. Itemized project cost for each phase, including estimates for the full design and build, all fees, etc; with any notes on how the project budget might be impacted by a pause between Phases 1 and 2 for fundraising;
9. Suggested payment terms and conditions.

6. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

BCM’s evaluation of proposals will be based on written proposals and interviews indicating:

1. Alignment of the firm’s portfolio, team, and proposal with BCM’s approach to and goals for our audience and exhibit;
2. Demonstrated experience with and capacity for all phases of the project (design through implementation), as well as overall project management (including communication and management of budget and schedule);
3. Comprehensive explanation of proposed costs, schedule, and services offered;
4. Demonstrated understanding of and respect for where BCM currently is in the process, and indication that the firm is willing and eager to work with BCM in a collaborative partnership;
5. Interviews with finalists and reference checks.

7. SELECTION SCHEDULE

RFP circulated	December 5, 2024
Submit request for BCM’s DD package and/or questions to BCM*	December 10, 2024
Response to questions circulated*	December 12, 2024
All proposals due at Boston Children's Museum	December 20, 2024
Notification of finalists	January 2, 2025
Conduct finalist interviews	January 6-10 2025
Notification of project awarded	January 17, 2024

* Submit requests for BCM's DD package and/or questions via email to: Joel Reider, Director of Exhibit Design (Reider@BostonChildrensMuseum.org). Responses to all questions will be circulated to all firms who submit questions or request the DD package.

Work on Phase 1: Final Design to begin immediately following awarding of contract in mid January 2025.

8. GENERAL INFORMATION

Confidentiality

All respondents' submissions will be treated as proprietary information and will be used solely for the purposes herein. Should a respondent require its submission be returned, BCM will do so at the respondent's request and at the respondent's expense.

Copyright Ownership

The selected firm's services will be engaged and shall be rendered on a work-for-hire basis in favor of BCM for copyright purposes. In the event such services are not deemed to be on a "work made for hire" basis, then the vendor shall assign to BCM the vendor's entire rights, title and interest, including copyright, in and to anything created or developed by the vendor for BCM under any agreement concluded by vendor and BCM, including (by way of example and not of limitation) all original files or work files created by or in the possession or control of the selected vendor, and all patents, copyrights, trade secrets and other proprietary rights in the work performed by the vendor for BCM. The vendor shall cause any subcontractor or partner to do the same.

Federal Funding

Some of the funding for this project may come from Federal sources. The selected Design-Build firm may be required to comply with certain Federal procurement policies, and certify in writing that it has not been suspended or disbarred from doing business with any federal agency.