



NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM
OF THE
GULF OF MEXICO



Request for Proposals (RFP) for Exhibit Design & Installation

Delta Mosaic. A Confluence of Life

Solicited by
The National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico

11/22/2024

The National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico (NMMOG), an operating component of the City of Mobile, Alabama, is requesting written proposals for the design and installation of a new immersive exhibit experience. Interested design teams are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for this fully-funded project in one of America's most dynamic experiential waterfront museums. Written competitive proposals are due by January 17, 2025, with full design by the selected team to be complete by April 2026 and a fully operational exhibit by April 2027.

Mission Statement

The National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico is a premier place of learning that inspires a lifelong love and respect for the Gulf of Mexico, its rich history and importance to the world.

1.0 Introduction

This RFP is for "Delta Mosaic. A Confluence of Life" an interactive, walk-through exhibit that will introduce guests to the Mobile Tensaw River Delta and help them understand the importance of its vast, unmatched biodiversity. Through a completely immersive environment and interactive technology, the exhibit will place guests in the heart of the Delta and allow them to join a research team studying there.

The Mobile Tensaw Delta, located near Mobile, Alabama, spans approximately 250,000 acres, making it one of the largest delta systems in the United States. This vast wetland is home to over 400 species of plants and a remarkable variety of wildlife. The Delta's intricate network of rivers, swamps, and marshes supports an impressive array of animal life, including more than 200 bird species, 50 species of mammals, and countless reptiles and amphibians.

The Delta's rich habitats provide critical breeding grounds for numerous fish species, including those vital for both commercial and recreational fishing. Its diverse ecosystems range from cypress swamps to tidal marshes, each contributing to the overall ecological health of the region.

The Mobile Tensaw Delta is not just a vital environmental resource; it also boasts a rich history. It's waters and banks have seen centuries of natural and human history. The region has been home to various Indigenous peoples, including the Muskogean tribes, who thrived on the area's abundant resources. European exploration of the area began in the 16th century, with the arrival of Spanish and French explorers, followed by the establishment of settlements in the 18th century.

The delta's strategic location made it significant for trade and transportation, especially during the 19th century when cotton and timber industries flourished. The delta also played a pivotal role during the Civil War.

This unique landscape serves as a natural sanctuary, attracting researchers, conservationists, and nature enthusiasts, all drawn by its stunning beauty and ecological and historical significance. The Delta is a treasured natural gem but even though its significance and beauty are undeniable, relatively few people visit it or even are aware that it exists.

2.0 Background and Exhibit Concept

The exhibition assumes that the visitor has little knowledge of the Delta and so may not be familiar with its location or the terminology used to describe and research it. An introductory area will provide a description of the Delta as well as a map of its boundaries. Once briefed, our guests will receive an RFID chipped card that will identify them as an Archeologist, Wildlife Biologist, Botanist or a Conservationist. As they step into the Delta, and wander its pathways, our researchers will encounter interactive displays that will allow deeper study of their areas of expertise.

Below is the breakdown of the exhibition's sections.

Section 1: Introduction to the Mobile Tensaw Delta

This preliminary area begins with a short introduction to the Delta. What is it? Why is it special? What makes it the perfect habitat for unmatched biodiversity? A display or panel will define basic vocabulary. Another display or interactive device will explain and assign each guest to be a specific type of researcher and thus assigning them a specific research project.

The research project: Guests will be assigned one of 4 different specialties. They will be an Archeologist, Wildlife Biologist, Botanist or a Conservationist. These specialties will be designated on the RFID card/pin/button.

Welcome to America's Amazon

Once guests have been properly briefed and given their research assignments, their journey through the Delta will begin. Our goal is to recreate the Delta with beautifully sculpted Giant Cypress Trees, Spanish Moss, Streams (not real water), Pine forests, marshes and authentic sounds. The entrance needs to be spectacular and will set the tone for the rest of the experience. As the guest travels through the next 4 areas of the exhibit, there will be an interactive in each. We will look to the Design Firm to suggest technologies that will best tell the stories in the specific areas.

Sections 2-5: While it is impossible to represent all the different environments that exist in the Delta, we want to incorporate representations of four of the major ones.

Section 2: Mesic Flood Plain

Floodplains stretch from the banks of a river channel to the base of the enclosing valley. The floodplain ecosystem is defined as the part of the river valley that is regularly flooded and dried. The soils usually consist of clays, silts, sands and gravels deposited during floods.

Section 3: Cypress-Gum Swamp

A swam is a forested wetland. Swamps are considered to be transition zones because both land and water play a role in creating this environment. Swamps in the Mobile Tensaw Delta tend to be full of Cypress and Tupelo trees.

Section 4: Brackish Water Marsh

A marsh is a wetland that is dominated by herbaceous plants rather than by woody plants such as trees. Marshlands flood seasonally therefore it provides habitat for many species of plants, animals and insects that have adapted to living in flooded conditions.

Section 5: Bottomland Rainforest

The Bottomland Hardwood Forest is a type of deciduous and evergreen hardwood forest found in broad lowland floodplains. These plains are occasionally flooded, which builds up the soils required for gum, oak and bald cypress trees that typically grow in this type of biome. The trees often develop unique characteristics to allow submergence, including cypress knees and fluted trunks.

Section 6: The Field Lab

Within the existing E.O. Wilson Field Lab structure, we will create new content that will allow each guest to understand the outcomes of their research. The lab will be the last stop on their journey through the Delta. It will also provide resources for guests to further research and help care for the Delta.

NMMOG's educational goals are as follows:

- People will learn what the Delta is and what makes it such a unique natural treasure.
- People will learn about current threats to the Delta and what is being done to prevent the Delta and its inhabitants from facing extinction.
- People will learn how they can help preserve this vital natural resource.

3.0 Target Audiences

NMMOG expects this exhibition to appeal to a general audience with special attention to school groups and families. Because of the interactivity and the environmental focus, it is hoped the exhibit will increase visitor traffic to the museum. We hope that the exhibition will strengthen our outreach to schools, tourists and environmental groups throughout the entire Gulf Coast Region.

NMMOG expects its Delta Experience to stand out from the competition, especially when it comes to the quality of interactive experiences and immersive design. Since this exhibit will be part of the museum's permanent collection, it is the desire of NMMOG that the digital components of the exhibit be completely updatable. New research is being done every day in the Delta and the exhibit must remain relevant.

4.0 Project Budget and Size

An estimated size for the exhibit is 2,600 square feet.

The budget for this project is \$2M.

The opening date is April 7, 2027.

5.0 Eligibility

This competition is open to exhibit designers with a strong portfolio of successful designs for museums, interactives & science centers.

6.0 Project Scope

The Exhibit Designer selected for this project will work as a partner with NMMOG, under the direction of the NMMOG designated project manager. This is intended to be a turn-key project with the Exhibit Designer selected being responsible for design, fabrication and installation with NMMOG's prior approval.

Completion of the design phase of the exhibit project is tentatively set for **April, 2026**, with fabrication/installation completion projected for **April 2027**.

Completion of design phase of exhibit to be worked out between NMMOG and Exhibit Designer, in line with the exhibit being completed and ready to be opened to the public on April 7, 2027.

Working with NMMOG and environmental scientists and scholars, the Design Firm will develop the exhibit in the following steps:

Design phase:

Stage 1: Conceptual: The Design firm will provide initial concept illustrations of all exhibition components to be designed or purchased and develop key area illustrations in full color for promotional purposes. The design firm will submit the illustrations for this stage to NMMOG for signoff and approval before moving on to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Design Development: In the next step to refine all designs, the Design Firm will interpret the general concepts of construction by creating initial light plot, show control, and power plans (mostly black and white illustrations/elevations with color swatches of various areas). Potential signage, text, and pictorial information layouts for each area will be generated. A simplistic animatic and script will be developed for the video and digital interactive production for the exhibit. The Design Firm will submit the requirements for this stage to NMMOG for signoff and approval before moving on to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Final Design: All areas and components will be finalized. The equipment needed will be sourced and documented. The Design Firm, or a third-party contractor (depending on capabilities of the selected Design Firm), will complete the light, show control, and power plans, as well as the design and function of all exhibition components. The script will be prepared for video production. The Design Firm will submit the requirements for this stage to NMMOG for signoff and approval before moving on to Stage 4.

Fabrication and Installation Phase:

Stage 4: Exhibit component fabrication: The Design Firm will be responsible for the production of all components in coordination with NMMOG in time for the scheduled opening of April 7, 2027. The Design Firm/Fabricator and NMMOG to develop inspection and sign off schedule for fabrication phase.

Stage 5: Exhibit component installation: The Design Firm will install all components in coordination with NMMOG in time for the scheduled opening of April 7, 2027.

The responsibilities of the designer for the design phase of the project are as follows:

- Review NMMOG's concept and goals for the exhibit and establish the full scope of the project.
- Evaluate the proposed schedule and budget as they apply to the scope of the project.
- Create a preliminary budget for design and development of the interactive and AV elements, based upon approved concept drawings. The budget will provide a line-item breakdown of expenses for design and AV production.
- Prepare a design and development schedule detailing the critical path, key milestones and deliverables for the entire project.
- Prepare plans and renderings that illustrate the key components of the exhibit, how these components are integrated with one another, and how the exhibit will be configured.
- Finalize a projected fabrication and installation package and contract external fabricators; the package will include pricing and timeline for work done in this phase.

7.0 Expectations

NMMOG expects the exhibit will:

- Generate increased attendance to NMMOG.
- Grow outreach and strengthen ties particularly to the Gulf Coast Region.
- Grow field trip business for NMMOG.
- Generate revenue through the production of Delta-specific product to be sold in the Museum Shop.

- Develop curriculum about the Delta suitable for use in schools and other educational institutions.

8.0 Client Responsibilities

As the client for the exhibit project, NMMOG will provide the following materials and/or services:

- A critical date schedule to be reviewed and agreed-upon by the project design team.
- Exhibit story and script.
- Photographic research and selections.
- Artifacts from the NMMOG collection and third-party lenders.
- Providing meeting space and coordinating meetings with project designer.

9.0 Submission Procedures

Interested firms or individuals should submit a proposal including the following elements (in this order):

Content

- a) One-page cover letter including a statement of your interest in this project and relevant qualifications and experience to fulfill the RFP requirements.
- b) A summary of recent design projects and how they relate to this design task.
- c) A list of at least three client references from recent projects (name, phone, email).
- d) A list of personnel and brief professional overview of those who would be *directly involved* in this project.
- e) Assessment of the firm or individual's current workload and ability to devote necessary time & attention on this project.
- f) Your approach to the design process, including how you will develop exhibit ideas and structure for the best experience and appeal.
- g) Your approach to the build process, including materials and use of technology
- h) A breakdown budget estimate covering:
 - Planning, design, fabrication, and installation inclusive of interactives and AV experiences.
- i) A draft project timeline based on the critical date schedule.
- j) Payment terms & conditions.

Format

We prefer your proposal to be sent as an electronic file in pdf format; however, hard copies are acceptable.

- 1) For hard copies, one signed original and three complete copies of the proposal should be sealed in one package and labeled NMMOG Delta Experience RFP. The package should be addressed to Karen Poth (see below). Standard, 8.5X11 pages only.
- 2) For electronic files, subject line should say NMMOG Delta Project RFP Submission. We will only accept pdf format attachments. Electronic submissions should be addressed to karen.poth@cityofmobile.org

All proposals will become property of the NMMOG. Proposals must be submitted via email, USPS or in person by **January 17, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.**

10.0 Evaluation Criteria

NMMOG’s management team, selected staff members as well as the City of Mobile’s procurement department will review and evaluate all proposals. Their evaluation will be based on the strength and creativity of the ideas, and the perceived ability of the firm or individual to implement the project on budget and on time. The winning proposal will demonstrate a clear “feel” for the goals and objectives of the exhibit. NMMOG reserves the right to conduct additional inquiries and interviews in its sole discretion, and to accept or reject any or all submissions. The selected firm will be required to enter into a contract with the City of Mobile, and to obtain all required permits and licenses to perform services under the contract.

11.0 Tentative Schedule

Call for proposals	November 22, 2024
Inquiry Deadline	December 13, 2024
Response to Inquiries	December 20, 2024
Deadline for submissions	January 17, 2025
Interviews	January 17 – January 24, 2025
Contract award	February 7, 2025

12.0 Contact information

Interested firms may express interest regarding this RFP, and receive notice of any updates or addenda to this RFP, or submit questions about the project or proposal requirements by December 13, 2024 to:

Karen Poth
National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico
501 Water Street
Mobile, AL
Tel: (251) 348-6956
Email: karen.poth@cityofmobile.org

This RFP, and any follow-up addenda, are posted at www.CityofMobile.org/Bids. Answers to questions received will be posted December 20, 2024. More information about NMMOG is available at <https://www.nmmog.org/>