



NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM  
OF THE  
GULF OF MEXICO



## Request for Proposals (RFP) for Exhibit Design & Installation

*Son of a Son of a Sailor*  
*Jimmy **Buffett's** Life on the Gulf of Mexico*

Solicited by  
The National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico

2/7/2025

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 gallery exhibit and immersive experience focusing on the life and music of Jimmy Buffett. Interested design teams are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for this project in one of **America's** most dynamic waterfront museums. Written competitive proposals are due by March 10, 2025, with full design by the selected team to be complete by January, 2026 and a fully operational exhibit by September 1, 2026.

### 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 "Son of a Son of a Sailor" an interactive, gallery exhibit that will chronicle the life and music of Jimmy Buffett in the museum that is dedicated to the body of water that inspired him most. Jimmy spent his childhood on the banks of the Mobile River where he dreamed of hopping on board his **grandfather's** ship and living a life of adventure. Throughout his life, he called the Gulf of Mexico home. His songs are filled with lyrics about the beauty and eccentricities of the Gulf Coast. In a sense, the Gulf Coast gave Jimmy Buffett his identity and, through his music, Jimmy gave the Gulf Coast its identity.

### 2.0 Background and Exhibit Concept

The exhibition will be part of a larger tribute to one of **Mobile's** favorite sons. Other pieces will include a bronze statue outside the museum on the banks of the Mobile River and a "Parrot Trail" in and around Mobile and Baldwin Counties. The exhibit assumes the visitor has knowledge of, and affection for, Jimmy Buffett and his music. We expect this 3,500 square foot gallery exhibit and this 2,600 square foot

immersive concert experience to be the most comprehensive Buffett exhibition in the country and a must-see for **"Parrotheads"** and other fans of the musical legend. While the full exhibit will be part of our permanent collection, we would like to create certain aspects of the exhibition to be capable of touring to other museums and institutions. We also plan to make the spaces capable of hosting private events. These functionalities will be decided upon in concert with the Design Firm during the design process.

Below is the breakdown of the **exhibition's** elements.

#### Gallery Element 1: Introduction: Jimmy and the Gulf of Mexico

This preliminary area begins with a short introduction to the Gulf of Mexico through **Jimmy's** eyes and lyrics. There will be references to the very strong ties that Jimmy Buffett and the Buffett family have to the Gulf Coast Region. The section will feature family photos and artifacts of **Jimmy's** childhood in Mobile and Mississippi. It will also highlight **Jimmy's** elementary and high school days, time spent with his family at **Mobile's** Mardi Gras celebrations, the first clubs and places he performed and the Chiquimula, the burned remains of the ship his grandfather captained, that still peeks out of the waters in Mobile Bay.

#### Gallery Element 2: Shrimppboat Studios Interactive (the centerpiece of the gallery)

Later in life, Jimmy settled in Key West. There he bought a refrigerated warehouse on the water that was once used to store shrimp offloaded from the Gulf shrimp boats. Buffett built out the building to be a recording studio. The façade of the white building is covered in stickers placed there by visitors and tourists. The centerpiece of the gallery will be a replica of the recording studio that features an interactive where guests can enjoy rare audio and video of Jimmy and the Coral Reefer Band in recording sessions. The design and functionality of this interactive will be up to the Design Firm with NMMOG approval.

#### Gallery Element 3: Personal Stories – Digital Kiosks

Jimmy Buffett had an undeniable joy and zest for life. In his tribute to Buffett at the 2024 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony, James Taylor said, "His adventure was our adventure and we got to share his huge love of this life. Jimmy Buffett loved, loved being Jimmy Buffett..." Through the preliminary research we have done we have realized that no one can talk about Buffett without a smile on their face and either a twinkle or a tear in their eye. We want to capture the many heartfelt stories about Buffett, his life, his music and his impact. These video kiosks will be filled with some existing and some new content. The purpose is to give Buffett fans a glimpse into the life of the man that maybe they have never heard before. The design/placement/functionality of these kiosks will be up to the Design Firm with NMMOG approval.

#### Gallery Element 4: Parrothead Showcase Interactive

No Jimmy Buffett exhibit would be complete without some homage to his fans. Again, in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ceremony, Taylor went on to say, "**Jimmy** absolutely loved his **audience...We** were all summoned like to a tribal

**celebration...the Parrothead Nation.”** Jimmy **Buffett’s** fans are one of a kind. We are interested in creating an interactive, perhaps even one that allows guests to contribute their own UGC, that pays tribute to the Parrothead Nation. There is plenty of content available, both photos and video for this interactive. The design and functionality of this interactive will be up to the Design Firm with NMMOG approval.

#### Gallery Element 5: Casework/Artifacts and Stories

NMMOG will have access to many Buffett artifacts including handwritten manuscripts, family photos, clothes and instruments used on stage, his first music contract, surfboards and paddleboards used by Jimmy, stage props and road cases. We would like to create a unique way to display these items and tell the stories that go along with them. Design and placement of these artifact displays will be up to the Design Firm with NMMOG approval.

#### Gallery Element 6: The storyteller I nteractive

A peek into the creative process of writing music and lyrical storytelling the Jimmy Buffett way. The museum hopes to figure out a way to introduce Jimmy Buffett to our youngest guests and to make the exhibition relevant to school children who are in the museum on educational fieldtrips. While we are still uncertain as to the specifics of the content of this interactive, we somehow want to discuss the creative process and talk about lyrical storytelling. We will partner with education specialists to help with the development of this content. This partnership with the education advisory board will NOT be part of this budget.

#### Element 7: Immersive Concert Experience

This timed-entry experience will occupy a separate space from the gallery. In partnership with Jimmy **Buffett’s** former director of AV, we will create an immersive concert experience with never-before-seen concert footage. It is our hope to create an intimate, small venue feel within this space. The 9-12 minute show will feature life-like projection or an LED installation, concert-like seating and authentic Buffett set pieces and signage. The design of the space will be up to the Design Firm.

### 3.0 Target Audiences

NMMOG expects this exhibition to appeal to a general audience with special attention to Jimmy Buffett fans and music enthusiasts. Because of the popularity of the subject, it is assumed the exhibit will increase visitor traffic to the museum. We hope the exhibition will strengthen our outreach to schools, tourists and Parrotheads throughout the entire Gulf Coast Region and the world.

NMMOG expects its Buffett experience to stand out from the competition, especially when it comes to the quality of interactive experiences, extent of content and focus on storytelling. We believe this could be the most comprehensive Buffett exhibit in the world. Since this exhibit will be part of the **museum’s** permanent collection with portions of the gallery exhibit out on tour, it is the desire of NMMOG that the digital components of the exhibit and immersive experience be completely updatable. We

have good connections to the family and will have access to never-before-seen content.

#### 4.0 Project Budget and Size

An estimated size for the entire combined experience is 6,100 square feet. ALL CONTENT INCLUDING SCRIPTS, PHOTOS, VIDEO AND AUDIO WILL BE SOURCED AND CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AN EXHIBIT DEVELOPER, JIMMY **BUFFETT'S** ESTATE AND HIS LONG-TIME DIGITAL CONTENT CREATOR AND WILL BE COVERED UNDER A SEPARATE BUDGET.

The budget for this project is \$1.75M.  
The opening date is September 1, 2026.

#### 5.0 Eligibility

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

#### 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**. NMMOG expects the Design Firm to cooperate with NMMOG in promotion and donor opportunities where appropriate.

Completion of the design phase of the exhibit project is tentatively set for January 2026, with fabrication/installation completion projected for August 2026. 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 September 1, 2026.

Working with NMMOG and the Buffett Family, staff and friends, 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. 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 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 September 1, 2026. The Design Firm/Fabricator and NMMOG to develop inspection and sign off schedule for fabrication phase. ALL CONTENT INCLUDING SCRIPTS, PHOTOS, VIDEO AND AUDIO WILL BE SOURCED AND CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AN EXHIBIT DEVELOPER, JIMMY **BUFFETT'S** ESTATE AND HIS LONG-TIME DIGITAL CONTENT CREATOR AND WILL BE COVERED UNDER A SEPARATE BUDGET.

Stage 5: Exhibit component installation: The Design Firm will install all components in coordination with NMMOG in time for the scheduled opening of September 1, 2026.

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 hardware, based upon approved concept drawings. The budget will provide a line-item breakdown of expenses for design.
- 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:

- o Generate increased attendance to NMMOG.
- o Grow outreach and strengthen ties particularly to the Gulf Coast Region.
- o Grow tourism for Mobile.

## 8.0 Client Responsibilities

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

- **Fundraising and funding (NMMOG is actively fundraising for this project.)**
  - A critical date schedule to be reviewed and agreed-upon by the project design team.
  - Exhibit story and script.
  - Photographic research and selections. A/V coordination and production.
  - 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 to 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:
  - o Planning, design, fabrication, and installation inclusive of hardware for 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 Buffett Gallery

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 Buffett Project RFP Submission. We will only accept pdf format attachments. Electronic submissions should be addressed to [karen.poth@cityofmobile.org](mailto:karen.poth@cityofmobile.org)

All proposals will become property of the NMMOG. Proposals must be submitted via email, USPS or in person by March 10, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

#### 10.0 Evaluation Criteria

**NMMOG's** management team, selected staff members, exhibit developer, as well as a representative from 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 gallery 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	February 7, 2025
Inquiry Deadline	February 20, 2025
Response to Inquiries	February 27, 2025
Deadline for submissions	March 10, 2025
Interviews	March 10 – 24, 2025
Contract award	April 4, 2025

#### 12.0 Contact information

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 February 20, 2025 to:

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

This RFP, and any follow-up addenda, are posted at [www.CityofMobile.org/Bids](http://www.CityofMobile.org/Bids). Answers to questions received will be posted February 27, 2025. More information about NMMOG is available at <https://www.nmmog.org/>