

October 2017



Request for Proposals AUDIENCE RESEARCH PROJECT

Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) is seeking a consultant to conduct audience research both onsite and offsite. Located in Queens, New York, one of the most diverse counties in the nation, QBG endeavors to be welcoming to all visitors. To that end, we must better understand who our visitors are, who we are—or are not—reaching, and what programs we might offer to better serve their needs and interests.

QBG is a non-profit organization. **We have received funding from a private foundation to conduct audience research that will inform program development and expansion based on sound audience and market research. To grow programs *and* increase earned income, we must understand the potential of our market—who they are, and what they want.**

This is a challenge unique to QBG. Our visitors are culturally and racially diverse, with different tastes and interests. From Chinese seniors who practice tai chi daily, to Korean couples who choose QBG's Rose of Sharon collection as the background for wedding photos, to urban twenty- and thirty- somethings growing herbs in containers on the roof, to schoolchildren eating freshly picked vegetables, to teachers looking for professional development opportunities—our markets are varied; each may require its own strategy. The last audience survey was conducted in 2000-2001. A new audience survey is required to understand whom we currently serve, potential gaps in service, and visitor need.

According to the 2001 survey, 86% of QBG's visitors come from Queens. Top visitor groups are 34% Chinese, 28.2% Caucasian, 16.9% Latino/Hispanic, 8% South Asian, 4.6% Korean, and 4.3% African American. More than 75% of visitors do not speak English at home. Average age is 47, and average time spent in the Garden is 2.5 hours. Many rely on the Garden to be the primary greenspace in their lives. We anticipate learning more about our visitors and serving them better in the coming years.

SCOPE OF SERVICES & DELIVERABLES

Queens Botanical Garden staff has preliminary thoughts on the information we would like to collect, based on a grant received. Information below is a starting point (as outlined in our grant proposal). We seek an experienced consultant who will work with staff to determine what questions need to be asked—drawing upon their expertise in the field, utilizing useful, current tools and technology, and their chosen methodology—to find answers.

1. Onsite Visitor Survey

- With input from QBG staff, consultants will create a survey tool.
- Consultants will administer survey. We would like to offer the survey in multiple languages (e.g. English, Spanish, Mandarin, Korean and an additional language to be determined—possibly Russian, Hindi, etc.) to 1,500 to 2,000 visitors (or sample number deemed appropriate by consultant).
- Survey to take place in four seasons in 2018: Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall.
- We are looking for a combination of demographics and psychographics (e.g. reasons for visiting, age of visitors, Membership status, zip code, etc.).
- **Deliver a report at study's midpoint and at its conclusion.**
- **Midpoint Report due by June 30, 2018.**
- **Final Report due by November 30, 2018.**

2. Offsite Quantitative Measure of Potential Interest

- With input from QBG staff, consultants will create an offsite intercept tool.
- Consultants will conduct 400 or more interviews in English (or sample number deemed appropriate by consultant).
- Together with QBG staff, determine suitable locations for offsite intercept interviews.
- Interviews should determine awareness and familiarity with QBG, appeal of programs and collections, awareness of/attendance at other similar attractions
- **Deliver a written report with recommendations at the conclusion.**
- **Report due by June 30, 2018.**

3. Qualitative Measure of Interest in Fee-Based Programs

- With input from QBG staff, consultants will create focus group tool.
- Consultants will work with three 90-minute focus groups.
- Consultants will record and transcribe each group for the purpose of analysis.
- Focus groups should explore interest and capacity to pay for programs (e.g. adult education, children's birthday parties, celebrations, and more...).
- **Deliver a written report with executive summary and recommendations.**
- **Report due by June 30, 2018**

This project is funded through private foundation support. Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) are encouraged to apply.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION MATERIALS

1. Maximum three (3) page narrative describing firm's approach to the project
2. Consultant fees for each project; provide a preliminary idea for number of meetings anticipated.
3. Schedule of rates for reimbursables
4. Hourly rate for principals and staff
5. Summary of qualifications and key resumes
6. Examples of two (2) relevant projects with appropriate illustrative materials
7. Client references with contact information
8. Additional background materials (optional)

PLEASE both 1) mail TWO hard copies of materials and also 2) email materials to:

Stephanie Ehrlich, Director of Development
Queens Botanical Garden
43-50 Main Street, Flushing, NY 11355
718-886-3800, ext. 330
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Additional contact: Annette Fanara, Assistant Director of Development
718-886-3800, ext. 202
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ANTICIPATED TIMETABLE

RFP Issued: October 11, 2017
Proposals Due: November 6, 2017 (6pm)
Interviews: November 2017

Background and History



Mission

Queens Botanical Garden is an urban oasis where people, plants and cultures are celebrated through inspiring gardens, innovative educational programs and demonstrations of environmental stewardship.

Queens Botanical Garden is a private non-profit cultural institution located on 39 acres of public property owned in full by the City of New York, in Flushing, Queens. Its operations are made possible, in part, by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the NYC City Council, NY State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and other public funders, and by support from corporations, foundations, and individuals.

QBG, which thinks of itself as *the place where people, plants, and cultures meet*, offers numerous programs on botanical, cultural, environmental, and horticultural themes, and it provides numerous other community services. Most importantly, QBG serves as an open-air resource in a densely populated part of New York City where people may be inspired by trees and flowers, practice Tai Chi, reflect while sitting on a bench, watch children exploring nature, converse with friends, celebrate joyous occasions, and much more.

Queens is home to one of the most diverse populations in the world, with over 140 different languages spoken in the borough. Located in one of the most ethnically diverse counties in the United States, QBG serves over 225, 000 people each year and strives to keep programs accessible to all audiences. More than three-quarters of QBG's visitors speak a language other than English at home. Top visitor groups are Chinese (34%), Caucasian (28%), Hispanic/Latino (17%), South Asian (7%), Korean (5%), and African American (4%).

Queens was home to two World's Fairs—in 1939/40 and in 1964/65—and Queens Botanical Garden is associated with both of them. QBG grew out of the 5-acre "Gardens on Parade" exhibit at the first fair. A group of civic-minded people wanted Queens to have its own botanical garden and kept the exhibit—which featured hydroponics and a selection of roses, among other things—growing until QBG was incorporated in 1946. In the early 1960s, QBG was moved to its current Main Street location, in the Kissena Park Corridor, to make way for the building of the second fair. The three statuesque Blue Atlas Cedars that frame QBG's iconic Tree Sculpture Gate on Main Street come from that '39/40 World's Fair exhibit in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

The themes of the fairs—"Building the World of Tomorrow" (1939/40) and "Peace Through Understanding" (1964/65) were powerful statements to mankind's optimism. Each fair contributed much in the way of technology, art, and culture, subsequently influencing generations that followed. Both fairs were seminal events that had transformative impact internationally, nationally, and locally. QBG celebrated the anniversaries of the fairs recently through an exhibit, *Harvesting our History—The*

Story of Queens Botanical Garden, and the inauguration of *Taiwan: A World of Orchids*, a show now in its fourth year. Taiwan was the first international country to break ground for an exhibit for the '64/65 fair.

With the World's Fairs, the building of bridges, and new immigration laws, Queens and its people changed and developed; both continue to do so. As a community changes so must its gardens. Since 1997 when QBG adopted a cultural vision, this public garden has embraced bringing cultural expression into all it does. It also embraces an environmental mission and intertwines these two core concepts at every opportunity.

World's Fairs are associated with innovation, and so is Queens Botanical Garden. QBG's Visitor & Administration Building is the first publicly funded building in New York State to achieve LEED® Platinum status. It has also garnered numerous other awards and served as a "poster project" for the City. The Visitor & Administration building, with its three working roofs—one that captures the sun's energy, another that gathers rain water, and a green, planted roof—and its geothermal heating and cooling system, gray water system, and composting toilets has served as inspiration for many other projects. A Parking Garden, a sustainable Rose Garden, and extensive involvement in composting and organic recycling, as well as how we embrace community involvement, also set this garden apart.