

September 2018



Request for Proposals
MARKETING & BRANDING PROJECT

Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) is seeking a **Marketing & Branding Consultant** (M&B Consultant) to work with the Garden on brand assessment, positioning, and marketing.

QBG, a non-profit cultural institution, has received a two-year grant from a private foundation to conduct research that will inform program development and expansion. The yearlong audience research project, which includes onsite surveys, focus groups, and offsite market research is almost complete. **A final report detailing demographic and psychographic information based on the year's research is due in January 2019.**

Utilizing the data collected, the M&B Consultant, working with QBG staff, will **evaluate existing marketing materials/graphics, counsel on visual identity (in print, digital, and onsite), advise on positioning, suggest more efficient/effective approaches, and train staff in digital marketing practices.** The M&B Consultant should take into account that QBG's logo and tagline, "Queens Botanical Garden—the place where people, plants, and cultures meet," are both beloved, so a complete rebranding is not the aim of this project. We are looking to streamline messaging and better position ourselves in a crowded marketplace.

The ultimate goal of the two-year project is to **grow programs, increase visitation, augment earned income, and extend QBG's reach to new audience** in advance of a soon-to-be-built Education Center.

Through the same grant, QBG is working with an Education Consultant who will implement a peer benchmarking study, specifically looking at pricing at other cultural institutions' programs and attractions. She is available to implement further evaluation as part of the QBG team. The M&B Consultant may suggest (or conduct) further evaluation as needed.

SCOPE OF SERVICES & DELIVERABLES

QBG seeks an experienced consultant who will work with staff to make the most of this opportunity—assessing what exists, making recommendations, evaluating as necessary, and implementing where possible. The consultant should suggest appropriate deliverables and benchmarks in their proposal.

1. Brand Assessment and Positioning Strategy

M&B consultant will, with QBG staff input:

- Evaluate Visual Identity (print, digital, onsite)
- Explore Brand Architecture
- Identify Brand Personality (tone, photographic style, etc.)

2. Marketing Evaluation and Activation Recommendations

- Conduct a communications audit of QBG's existing marketing materials and campaigns
- Propose new communications, media, and/or campaign execution ideas to expand QBG's reach to new audiences (execution costs must fit within project budget)
- Recommend awareness-building and engagement strategies that QBG staff could implement
- Possible outcomes:
 - Update graphics style guide
 - Design new materials/templates as necessary (print, digital, onsite signage)
 - Content and outreach strategies

3. Training for Staff

- Train QBG staff to improve search engine optimization, search engine marketing, and social media marketing
- Provide coaching on graphics/communications execution

4. Additional Evaluation/Testing (as needed)

- With input from QBG staff, M&B Consultant will suggest additional evaluation to be carried out by M&B Consultant or by the Education Consultant.
 - In a collaborative effort, Education Consultant could create evaluation tool with M&B Consultant input, then collect and share annotated data.
 - Evaluation may include additional focus groups, surveys, or other suggested methods.
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Project Timeline: December 2018 – August 2019

- *RFP Issued: September 21, 2018*
- *Proposals Due: October 11 by 6 pm*
- *Interviews: Mid-November*
- December: Kickoff Meeting
- January: QBG receives final report and data from yearlong visitor survey
- January & February: Assessment by M&B Consultant
- March: M&B Consultant will present preliminary assessment (to staff, Board, stakeholders), outlining key issues and recommending how to move forward.
- April—July: Implementation by M&B Consultant, with QBG staff
- August: Final presentation or report by M&B Consultant, summarizing research results, if needed
- September 1, 2019: QBG's final report due to funder

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION MATERIALS

1. Narrative describing firm's approach to the project, including recommended deliverables
2. Summary of qualifications and key resumes
3. Project cost not to exceed \$50,000 to be broken down in increments (to include assessment, recommendations, training, implementation). Overall cost includes third party vendors and implementation.
4. Hourly rate for principals and staff
5. Schedule of rates for reimbursables
6. Examples of at least two (2) relevant projects with appropriate illustrative materials
7. Client references with contact information
8. Additional background materials (optional)

PLEASE 1) mail TWO hard copies of materials and 2) send email proposal materials to:

Stephanie Ehrlich, Director of Development
Queens Botanical Garden
43-50 Main Street, Flushing, NY 11355
718-886-3800, ext. 330
sehrlich@queensbotanical.org

Please note that Stephanie Ehrlich will be out of the country with limited access to email from October 18 through November 5.

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

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 served over 250, 000 people last year and strives to keep programs accessible to all audiences.

According to a 2001 survey (soon to be replaced with updated data), 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.

In addition to being culturally and racially diverse, QBG's visitors possess 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.

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 neighbors 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 humankind’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 multicultural vision, this public garden has embraced and actively shares cultural expression. It also promotes an environmental mission and weaves together these two core concepts at every opportunity.

World’s Fairs are associated with innovation, and so is Queens Botanical Garden. Opened in 2007, 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 green “poster project” for the City. The Visitor & Administration building, with its three working roofs (one that captures the sun’s solar energy, another that gathers rain water, and one planted to be a living ecosystem) and its geothermal heating and cooling system, gray water system, and composting toilets has served as inspiration for many other public projects. Advanced storm-water management throughout the landscape, a sustainable Rose Garden, and extensive involvement in NYC’s efforts to promulgate composting and organic recycling, as well as how we embrace community involvement, also set this garden apart.

Queens Botanical Garden is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a new Education Center. Slated to break ground in 2020, the center includes a 14,500 square foot Education Building – with four classrooms, a teaching kitchen, and teaching greenhouse – and an interactive, family friendly, “Kids Culture Garden” that will highlight useful plants from around the world. The \$33 million project is supported largely with funding from New York City and New York State.

As the staff gears up for this brand new facility that will activate a section of the Garden, we are eager to learn more about our visitors, and want to engage new audience as well.