REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – Q?Crew LEAD TEEN VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
STATEMENT OF WORK

1. Project Summary

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) seeks a contractor to provide educational, coordination and logistical services in support of the implementation of the Q?Crew youth volunteer program at NMNH. The Q?Crew is a corps of teen volunteers ages 14 to 19, whose purpose is to use communication and technology to engage with youth audiences visiting Q?rius, an exhibit-sized interactive space designed especially for young people to discover their personal connection to science and the natural world, along with other exhibits within NMNH.

The goal of this position is to provide management and direction of teen volunteers. The Q?Crew Lead Teen Volunteer Coordinator will function as the main point of contact for the teen volunteers and coordinate their training, scheduling, continuing education and social events. The Coordinator will also assist in the implementation of the training curriculum in conjunction with NMNH educators. The contractor will perform communication duties (e.g., sending weekly emails and updates about museum news and schedule reminders), and manage other logistics and needs. The Teen Volunteer Coordinator will be the participants’ mentor, ensuring their immersion and integration into the museum environment and leading teens in projects. The Teen Volunteer Coordinator will also assisting with and contributing to several Youth Programs projects, including the new Youth Ambassadors Network, a network of current and alumni participants from all NMNH youth programs who will serve as advisors and promoters of programming. The work would begin on or about December 4, 2015 and continue through December 5, 2016.

2. Context: Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W. in Washington, D.C., is the most-visited natural history museum in the world. Opened in 1910, the green-domed museum on the National Mall is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and cultural artifacts. It fosters significant scientific research and educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists to the public.

The museum is regarded as a global leader in natural history collections, collections-based research, scientific discovery, and natural history exhibition. The current and ongoing restructuring of the Office of Education & Outreach is part of an institution-wide effort to promote
the education and outreach activities of the museum to the rigor and renown of its science activities. A related intent is to reinvigorate the offerings that the museum provides for youth, especially those from populations underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers, by engaging them in our unique assets—our science and collections—with the hope to inspire the next generation of scientists.

**The Q? Crew Youth Volunteer Program at the National Museum of Natural History**
The National Museum of Natural History is committed to helping youth underrepresented in STEM careers develop the science skills and workplace skills necessary to be competitive in today’s knowledge-based society. Front-end evaluation and other research show that museum visitors, and youth overall, are more engaged with science if they interact directly with a person. We know that interactions with scientists and other experts are very effective at sparking inspiration, but peer-to-peer and near-peer interaction is especially effective at helping youth connect and identify with science and science-related careers.

Based on this research, the museum created a teen volunteer program to work alongside the new adult volunteer program in Q?rius. The addition of the Q?crew Teen Volunteer Program at NMNH last year was an exciting opportunity for local Washington, DC area youth to play an essential role in transitioning NMNH to a place where high school-aged youth want to spend their time – where they feel comfortable to explore science and experience what it’s like to engage in science in their own way. The time was ripe for this transition because NMNH opened a 10,000-square-foot interactive Q?rius education space in December 2013 for youth, ages 10 - 18, including open access to collections, a distance learning lab, participation in authentic science and collections work, and cutting-edge scientific investigation equipment.

All volunteers were trained to engage visitors in inquiry-based learning - helping people of all ages and backgrounds make their own observations, ask questions, use tools and solve problems. Youth volunteers have a choice of a range of experiences to facilitate with Q?rius visitors as their area of focus, including simulations of scientific excursions that recreate the work of NMNH scientists at field sites around the world; tactile exploration, hypothesis formation, observation, and analysis using a fully accessible 6,000 object collection, and facilitating conversations with scientists about the connections between our lives and scientific research in areas such as invasive species, climate change, biodiversity loss, and language revitalization. The first cohort of 35 Q?Crew teen volunteers helped open the Q?rius space in December 2013, and the Museum currently has approximately 80 active teen volunteers facilitating experiences with visitors in Q?rius and in other spaces in the Museum.

The Q?Crew will also collaborate with NMNH Education staff on designing new interactive experiences for visitors, and will be part of a critical conversation about how to effectively communicate complex science issues to a modern, diverse teen audience, including those from populations underrepresented in science, and harnessing different technologies to do this.

This year, we are implementing one new change to the Q?Crew program, based on evaluation of last year’s program and feedback from current Q?Crew volunteers. A cohort of Lead Q?Crew
teens will be hired as part-time paid staff, providing them with more of a leadership role in the Museum.

3. **Scope of Work**

The contractor shall provide the necessary labor to coordinate the Youth Volunteer Program as outlined here:

**Tasks**

**Training and Continuing Education for Teen Volunteers**
- Refine and deliver teen-appropriate volunteer training sessions, including workshops in scientific content and activity development.
- Work with Youth Programs staff to develop a schedule and training curriculum for Q?Crew Gold and Platinum, an advanced group of teen volunteers who will facilitate visitor experiences in other parts of the museum and take part in activity development workshops with NMNH Education Staff.
- Coordinate continuing education sessions (called “Master Classes”) to enhance volunteer skills and knowledge such as behind-the-scene tours, field trips to other Smithsonian units and digital skills training sessions.
- Assist in the main Q?rius volunteer training and provide support to youth volunteers during this integration.

**Coordination of Teen Volunteer Program**
- Manage teen volunteers, rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors from the local Washington, DC area, and coordinates the logistics of program throughout the year.
  - Serve as a floater during teen volunteer shifts, checking in on teens at their work stations, understanding that some teens need guidance more than others. Remind teen volunteers of their duties and responsibilities.
  - Model visitor interactions when checking on teens.
  - Offer teens feedback and constructive criticism on visitor interaction techniques.
  - Conduct regularly check-in meetings with teen volunteer cohort to assess progress in program. Report all activity and feedback as detailed by the teens to Youth Programs Coordinator and Manager of Youth Programs.
  - Identify and resolve volunteer concerns and questions.
  - Act as a point contact for teens and parents.
- Update the policy and procedure manual for management of teen volunteers as needed.
- Maintain appropriate rotation and scheduling strategy for teen volunteers.
- Manage volunteer tracking and schedule system and implement a communication system between staff and youth volunteers for scheduling and planning.
- Assist the NMNH Youth Programs Coordinator in coordinating the Youth Ambassadors Network.
● Maintain the digital badging system to help teens and staff track the teen’s achievements.
● Document Q?Crew happenings through photographs and video and organizing and reporting data about teens’ work and interaction with visitors.
● Coordinate the creation and delivery of a bi-weekly digital newsletter to Q?Crew Teen Volunteers about upcoming events and news.

Deliverables
● Scheduling and communication plan for teen volunteers
● Weekly written reports summarizing the weekly youth volunteer work and progress on other projects will be due to the Manager of Youth Programs no later than close of business on Thursdays.
● Weekly check-in meetings with the Manager of Youth Programs and Youth Programs Coordinator.
● Bi-weekly digital newsletter for Q?Crew members
● Curriculum for the various types of Q?Crew members, including new recruits and Q?Crew Gold members.

Period of Performance

All tasks and deliverables will begin upon approval of contract and end no later than December 5, 2016.

4. Requirements
Contractor must be available to work onsite at the National Museum of Natural History on specific days during specific seasons.

Contractor must work approximately 40 hours per week, including one weekend day. The ideal candidate will be able to work Saturdays and Sundays, but we will waive this requirement for a great candidate who can only work one weekend day.

Schedule may change during summer months to accommodate teen volunteer shifts, schedule negotiable.

Qualifications include:
1. Demonstrated ability to recruit, interview, select, and plan a range of training opportunities for, and motivate a corps of diverse teenage volunteers.
2. Minimum of Bachelors Degree including coursework in the natural sciences, education, museum education or related field required.
3. Minimum one year experience in curriculum design and/or implementation required.
4. Minimum one year of extensive experience working with diverse youth and teenagers desired.
5. Ideal candidate will have demonstrated experience and knowledge of principles of volunteer management and techniques for recruiting, training, instructing, scheduling,
and evaluating volunteers, including appropriate use of current technologies and ability to enact policies and procedures.

5. Enthusiasm for working with a diversity of students, scientists, museum educators and other museum staff;

6. Knowledge and skill in oral, written and digital communication sufficient to address varied audiences and to serve as an interface between multiple museum constituents and stakeholders.

7. Outstanding organizational skills and demonstrated ability to follow procedures and policies to maintain safety and security at an institution.

8. Demonstrated ability to make adjustments and refinements in a flexible and nimble manner and come up with creative, fun and engaging solutions to challenges as they arise.

5. Scope and Timeframe
Contractor must be available to work onsite at the National Museum of Natural History on specific days during specific seasons.

The contractor will report directly to the Manager of Youth Programs, Office of Education and Outreach, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, who will act as the delegate and representative of the Chief of Experience Development and Evaluation. The contractor will work in a team environment with other Youth Programs and Volunteer Program staff, volunteers and interns.

Because of the team environment of the work, it is anticipated that the vendor will need to be flexible with their weekday schedule. All project activities and deliverables will begin no later than December 4, 2015 and be completed no later than December 5, 2016.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS:

General. On or before 5:00 PM in the vendor’s time zone on November 18, 2015, Offerors will be expected to provide a proposal in its entirety, via email to Gale Robertson, Manager of Youth Programs, robertsong@si.edu. At the minimum, offerors need to demonstrate that they meet the acceptability standards for non-cost factors, including that they have the ability to perform the requirements in a timely manner.

Proposal Checklist:

☐ Full Name, Street Address, Telephone Number

☐ Plan of Accomplishment
You should describe your plan for completing all work requested in two to five paragraphs. This narrative explanation should include your approach to the tasks and deliverables, and how you will proceed with the project to ensure it is completed on time.
☐ Schedule
A schedule of bi-monthly or monthly deadlines for deliverables.

☐ Capability to Perform
1-2 paragraphs about your ability to perform the work required, in terms of current availability, skills and ability to complete this project on schedule.

☐ Resume(s)
Include your resume. If the offerer is a group, provide resumes of key personnel.

☐ Experience
Provide up to 5 examples of specialized experience and demonstrated technical competence in performing similar work as requested here, preferably completed within the last five years.

☐ Cost Proposal
Cost Proposals should address pricing of all of the work outlined in this proposal for the amount of time specified. The price proposals should be all-inclusive (for example, you would not say that travel will be billed as needed). Cost proposals should include costs broken down according to the schedule of deliverables.

Proposal Evaluation
Proposals shall be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria being applied to the information requested above:

“Plan of Accomplishment” and “Capability to Perform” shall be granted equal weight and shall together be granted more weight than “Staffing,” and “Experience.” “Staffing” and “Experience” shall be granted equal weight. All evaluation factors other than cost, when combined, are granted more weight than cost.

Award of a contract shall be made to the responsive, responsible offeror, whose combined cost and technical proposal is, in the opinion of the Contracting Officer, determined to be the most advantageous and in the best interest of the Smithsonian Institution.

Inquiries
Inquiries regarding this Request for Proposal should be directed via email to Gale Robertson at robertsong@si.edu with the subject line “Youth Volunteer Coordinator Inquiry”.

Interviews
It is the intention of the Smithsonian to interview a select group of responsive offerors; however, it is possible that interviews may not occur. Consequently, it is important that all responses to this request be complete and include all necessary information.

**Submission of Proposals**
The Smithsonian reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received in response to this request, and to negotiate separately with any offeror when such action shall be considered by the Contracting Officer to be in the best interest of the Smithsonian. After limited negotiations or based solely on initial offers received, notice will be provided indicating that an award may be made. It is therefore emphasized that all proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms that the offeror can submit. Written proposals must be received 5:00 PM in the offeror’s time zone, on November 18, 2015.

**Disposition of Proposals**
All information submitted in response to this Request for Proposal shall become the property of the Smithsonian and shall not be returned.