Appendix A
Statement of Work
Informal-Education Consultant

The National Museum of Natural History
Office of Education, Outreach, and Visitor Experience
March 17, 2022

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Office of Education, Outreach and Visitor Experience (EOVE) at the National Museum of Natural History is driven by the belief that everyone can learn science. As an informal-learning space, we have both the freedom and opportunity to explore and develop ways of making science accessible to our tremendous diversity of onsite and online learners.

Our team of education, public programs, and visitor experience professionals works closely with others from across the museum to create programs, products, and environments that help visitors, K-12 students and teachers, families, adults, and youth to advance their understanding of and connection to natural history. We begin by first addressing the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of our audiences so that they are ready and open to learning on their own terms.

Building on experience, evaluation findings, and published research, as well as public engagement best practices, we strive to meet the needs of our various audiences. EOVE’s diverse group of experts collaborate to solve challenges, find opportunities to innovate through iterative and evidence-based processes, and advance the field of informal-science learning. We strive to make the National Museum of Natural History one of the best museums in the world for learning science.

Currently, NMNH and the Smithsonian are facing what Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III describes as a “dual pandemic” of the coronavirus and racism. We recognize the enormous financial and community disruptions across the country. Confronted by this new reality, museums are reinventing both what they offer to the public and how they work. NMNH is committed to finding more flexible, affordable, and impactful ways to deliver learning experiences and to reach a broader and more diverse audience. We are investigating and experimenting with new mechanisms for engaging organizations, reaching audiences, and serving communities. Through NMNH’s new Inclusive Science Initiative (ISI), we are striving to improve science literacy and provide youth from underserved communities and populations with training to be the next generation of scientists.

NMNH is committed to supporting Smithsonian priorities, including the American Women’s History Initiative, Life on a Sustainable Planet, and Reckoning with Our Racial Past. We seek to extend and deepen the Smithsonian’s impact by producing or adapting content and services, delivered across a range of platforms, including Q?rius, the Coralyn A. Whitney Science Education Center at NMNH, that are responsive to the needs and priorities of our collaborators and audiences. As part of this work, we aim to encourage and support access to Smithsonian resources for teachers, students, and other audiences, and operationalize a wholistic approach to our outreach efforts that involve both onsite and digital approaches. This work might include resources developed and shared on the Smithsonian
Learning Lab, educational experiences that enrich the exhibition experience, and other educational products that can complement or amplify NMNH’s work.

2. DESCRIPTION OF REQUIRED SERVICES

Contractor shall provide technical, non-personal services to assess NMNH’s current educational activities and envision how the Museum might enhance educational offerings to meet the needs of priority audiences, currently defined as K-12 students, teachers, families, adults, and visitors. The contractor will also recommend how NMNH can define, operationalize, and sustain an educational strategy for this national museum over the next 5-10 years.

NMNH is requesting the services of a contractor to:

- conduct an audit and analysis of EOVE’s current educational activities, mission, and venues to determine their appropriateness for meeting the evolving needs of 21st century audiences and collaborators. These include both onsite offerings for visitors and special audiences such as school groups as well as digital offerings (synchronous and asynchronous) for remote audiences;
- provide a comparative analysis of NMNH educational efforts to other educational initiatives taking place within the Smithsonian Institution as well as exemplary educational resources/offerings provided by other museums and cultural and educational organizations. Include an analysis of NMNH’s major audience groups and identify opportunities for program change and growth. These might include recommendations for adapting, expanding, consolidating, or even reducing certain types of programs in favor of others;
- review EOVE’s organizational structure and staffing resources and compare it to education programs within the Smithsonian as well as other museums and informal-learning organizations and make recommendations. Evaluate the structure and resources in light of the strategic goals and audience needs and make recommendations;
- where possible, identify existing museum best practices that may be incorporated into NMNH’s work and possible opportunities to collaborate with other museums including Smithsonian units on educational offerings;
- develop a prioritized list of action steps that NMNH can take in the short- and long-term to advance its educational activities and mission.

Further, the contractor will make recommendations on how NMNH can:

- develop educational resources/offerings to benefit its audiences, as well as opportunities to reach a wider audience, including PreK-12 educators and/or learners, individuals with differing abilities, audiences from diverse backgrounds, and other museum educators;
- support Smithsonian priority areas through educational outreach and programming;
- build its internal capacity to implement educational initiatives and prioritize its efforts to reach its strategic goals;
- review and evaluate its efforts in selecting and implementing educational projects that fit within NMNH current project development roadmap and align with its strategic plan.

The contractor shall gain an understanding of EOVE operations and capacities through review of relevant documents (e.g., the SI and NMNH strategic plans, EOVE department documents, including formal evaluations of Q?rius and other programs, the Informal STEM Education and Evaluation (ISEE)
framework, a system of strategic outcome learning progressions NMNH and partners have been developing with NSF support), as well as the organizational chart and staffing plans, program descriptions and online resources, meetings and interviews with select staff, and observations of select programs and venues.

The contractor shall present its draft findings and recommendations in a written report, provide up to three information sessions to management and staff, and provide a final report that incorporates any necessary comments and edits. In consultation with the EOVE director, the contractor shall also develop a slide presentation for use by the department’s director with stakeholder audiences, such as board members, donors, and Smithsonian executives, that summarizes the findings, strategic approach, and plan for the department.

The contractor will have:

- expert knowledge of informal education, free-choice learning, and educational strategies as they apply to outreach efforts by natural history museums and other museums and cultural organizations aimed at making positive impact in their communities;
- experience in developing educational strategies and best practices that meet the needs of specific communities and target audiences;
- experience working with museums to develop science educational strategies and creating plans that operationalize and sustain these strategies.

The contractor must be available for scheduled and agreed-to meetings and calls. The contractor shall provide all documents in MS Word as editable, digital files.

Work will be performed at contractor’s place of business. Meetings will be held through video conferencing. Contractor will work independently. Period of performance is May 15, 2022 – September 30, 2022.

3. DELIVERABLES AND DUE DATES

Deliverables

- Written assessment and analysis of NMNH current educational offerings, including a comparison to similar offerings provided by other cultural and educational institutions and select Smithsonian units.
- Written recommendations for how NMNH can best use educational offerings to benefit its audiences and reach wider audiences; align its efforts with other museums including Smithsonian units and more effectively support Smithsonian priority topic areas; specific educational strategies that NMNH might employ in the short-term, mid-term and long-term, including how it might structure its staff and build its internal capacity to implement educational initiatives and prioritize its efforts to reach its strategic goals and improve its capacities to select, implement, and evaluate educational offerings that meet the needs of its customers and target audiences.
- Prioritized list of action steps.
Due Dates

- Draft report including assessment, analysis, and recommendations due September 1, 2022 for internal discussion and comment.
- Final report due no later than September 16, 2022.
- Provide up to three information sessions to management and staff no later than September 30, 2022. Provide a slide presentation to the EOVE director no later than Sept. 30, 2022.

4. OPTIONAL PERIODS

The initial contract period will be for approximately five months with up to two six-month options to renew dependent upon need for an extended timeline or follow-on work and available funding.

5. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

All work under this order shall begin on May 15, 2022 and conclude by September 30, 2022.

6. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payments shall be made upon completion and acceptance of all work as required herein and receipt of proper invoices.

7. WORK LOCATION/TRAVEL

Work will be performed at contractor's place of business. Meetings will be held through video conferencing.