The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), 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 and is regarded as a global leader in collections-based research, scientific discovery, and natural history exhibitions. The Office of Education, Outreach and Visitor Experience (EOVE) is dedicated to advancing audience understanding of and connection to the museum’s research, collections, natural history science and scientists.

EOVE is driven by the belief that everyone can learn science. The museum is an informal learning space. Unlike a classroom, 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 work closely with others from across the museum to create programs, products, and environments that help visitors 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, we activate public engagement best practices 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. Our work helps to make the National Museum of Natural History one of the best museums in the world for learning science.

The museum is opening new exhibitions and developing new Exhibit Hall experiences that are focused on connecting people to nature and inspiring actions that help address biodiversity loss and climate change. In March 2023, the museum will be opening Lights Out: Recovering Our Night Sky aimed at helping visitors understand the night sky—and its disappearance due to light pollution—affects all life on Earth, from natural ecosystems to human cultures. Through stunning photographs, collections objects, and interactives, the exhibit will help visitors explore several key messages: Most organisms on Earth depend on a day-night cycle, including us; The night sky has shaped human imagination and cultures since we first looked up; We’re losing the night sky due to the overuse of artificial lighting, but straightforward solutions can help us reclaim it.

Scope

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History is seeking a contractor with passion for and expertise in natural history science to work across exhibitions in the museum to help visitors understand their connections to nature. The educator will also develop visitor engagement strategies and resources that help the museum’s various audiences find their role in addressing different planetary challenges.
such as those posed by climate change and biodiversity loss. The contractor will introduce facilitated experiences and develop materials for *Lights Out: Recovering Our Night Sky*. The contractor will also expand the opportunities for visitors’ to engage in empowering conversations and explorations in other priority halls.

**Objectives**

The contractor will work with a range of experts from education, science, exhibits, communications, and other departments to implement the deliverables of this contract. The contractor will work independently and as part of collaborative teams; communicate effectively with stakeholders; research best practices in relevant content areas; participate in evaluations; track project logistics and data; document and present work.

**Deliverables and Tasks – January 9, 2023 to January 8, 2024**

**Responsible for:**

**Activating Permanent and Temporary Exhibits for Different Audiences**

Work with EOVE and other museum staff and experts to:

1. Activate *Lights Out: Recovering the Night Sky* with programs, facilitated activities, and expert-led programs.
2. Identify opportunities within exhibition halls to connect visitors to planetary challenges and solutions.
3. Facilitate experiences in exhibition halls and museum spaces such as the Q?rius Education Center that connect visitors to planetary challenges and solutions. Experiences can include cart activities, tours, audience-focused programs, expert-led programs, group explorations and other approaches.
4. Organize special events aligned with priority themes such as Teen Earth Optimism.
5. Participate in the innovation of new public engagement strategies; conduct benchmarking, lead brainstorming, pilot testing, and implementation.
6. Support volunteers and interns as needed through trainings, resource development, and coaching.
7. Recruit, schedule, track, and report programs and visitor participation.
8. Help with audience research and evaluation efforts conducted at the museum.

**Place of Performance**

The contractor will report to the Ocean Education Manager in the Office of Education, Outreach, and Visitor Experience at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, who will act as the Contracting Officer’s Technical Representative (COTR).

The contractor will perform tasks in a team environment with other staff, volunteers, scientists, and interns.

**Period of Performance**

All project activities and deliverables will begin no later than **January 9, 2023 to January 8, 2024**
Base Options and Periods: If, at the sole discretion of the Smithsonian Institution, a one year extension may be possible depending on available and need.

**Base Period – January 9, 2023 to January 8, 2024**

Optional Period 1 – **January 9, 2024 to January 8, 2025**

Optional Period 2 – **January 9, 2025 to January 8, 2026**

Optional Period 3 - **January 9, 2026 to January 8, 2027**

Optional Period 4 – **January 9, 2027 to January 8, 2028**

**Schedule:** Because of the nature of the work and the team structure and environment, it is anticipated that the vendor will need to be flexible with their schedule. Contractor must be available to work onsite at the National Museum of Natural History for up to 40 hours per week, typically Monday through Friday but with flexibility for pre-scheduled weekend days.