



BARTRAM'S GARDEN

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR ONSITE INTERPRETIVE INSTALLATIONS

July 2025

Bartram's Garden is seeking qualifications from artists, teams of artists, or exhibition firms for a series of onsite interpretive installations to be centered at the Garden's parking loop, with additional installations alongside the 1.55-mile recreational trail and a portable, tabletop component to serve as an off-site introduction

ELIGIBILITY

This opportunity is open to all professional artists or exhibition firms with previous public sculpture or outdoor interpretive installation experience. Priority consideration will be given to artists and firms from the Philadelphia area, though other applicants are welcome to submit. Refer to the Selection Criteria listed below for additional requirements.

BUDGET

The budget for design and fabrication of the onsite interpretive installations is \$40,000. The selected artist/firm will be responsible for their own travel costs, housing, and personal liability insurance.

SUBMISSION

Deadline for answering this RFQ is August 22, 2025, by 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). All questions can be directed to Sarah Pharaon at sarah@dialogicconsulting.com.

ABOUT AMERICA'S OLDEST SURVIVING BOTANIC GARDEN

Bartram's Garden, a 50-acre National Historic Landmark and public park, welcomes more than 125,000 visitors annually to Southwest Philadelphia. Founded in 1728, the site is named for Quaker botanist John Bartram (1699–1777) and known as America's oldest surviving botanic garden. Since 1893, it has been stewarded by the non-profit John Bartram Association with the City of Philadelphia.

The Garden's mission is to co-create equitable relationships among people and nature through immersive, community-centered experiences that activate the Bartram legacy, Garden, and House, on land and on the Schuylkill River, in Southwest Philadelphia. Bartram's Garden is a place and an aspirational vision for the future, where:

- public spaces are centers of welcome, respite, and celebration;
- nature and the environment are accessible and inviting to everyone;
- people decide what happens in their own communities; and
- historic places seek to repair our fraught legacies.

ABOUT INTERPRETATION AT THE GARDEN

In 2019, when public tours were last regularly available, more than 9,000 people, including 6,000 schoolchildren, directly engaged with the site's interpretation. Since 2013, Bartram's Garden has dramatically expanded programming and resource-sharing to amplify priorities identified by our Southwest Philadelphia neighbors. The Garden's neighbors are our most important partners and audience.

With funding from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, the Garden is developing new public interpretive elements centered on the land and its many stories, especially the histories of Black and Indigenous communities who have called this area home for generations. In addition to a new public tour and online elements, this effort includes a series of on-site interpretive installations along our 1.55-mile recreational trail.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In its entirety, this project curates and implements a new suite of public interpretive experiences, dramatically reshaping our audiences' access to and understanding of the Garden's many histories.

Specific to this RFQ, the selected artist(s)/firm will design and fabricate on-site interpretative installations drawing upon archival and community histories along the 1.55-mile Bartram's Mile Trail. The resulting work will draw upon rich stores of historic, creative, and contemporary content, weaving together stories and influences from multiple time periods and experiences. This project will uplift the stories of the land—and its people, geology, and ecosystems—that stretches through our highly industrialized Kingsessing neighborhood.

Outdoor Installations

One installation element will be situated near our parking loop as an oft-cited gathering place for arriving guests. Artists will work with the Bartram's Garden team on selecting sites and correlative interpretive content for additional installations along the trail.

Portable Storytelling

An additional component will be a portable, easy-to-produce piece or set of tabletop materials for staff and storytellers to use offsite when introducing potential visitors to Bartram's Garden.

All components will relate visually to each other and be designed with the intent to add additional on-site installations in the coming years. The elements should also relate visually to the Garden's existing brand identity, though the project is welcome to expand upon or reinterpret the brand identity rather than fit precisely within the current parameters.

The artists/firm may contract with another agency for the design and fabrication of the components needed. All aspects of the project must be covered by the budget amount

provided, but Bartram's Garden can be flexible regarding the number of installations that can be completed within the budget.

Bartram's Garden, as a public park, is open 24 hours per day and the on-site installation elements should not have any fragile components and should be resistant to vandalism, weather, and public engagement. They should be substantial, durable and long-lasting. The smaller portable component should be easily transported and displayed on a standard tabletop.

The Garden's team will provide interpretive content to be highlighted and is open to artist(s)/exhibition teams sharing that content with audiences in creative ways. We welcome the artists/exhibition teams to consider how the ecosystem, trail, built environment, weather, and other permanent and varying features of the Garden might contribute to, frame, or be reflected in the design

The selected artists/exhibition firm finalist will ultimately provide a detailed proposal, including design concept, budget information, and a maintenance plan for on-site components. The selected artist will be responsible for providing design and fabrication.

The artist(s) will coordinate with Bartram's Garden on installation. The Garden team will provide on-going maintenance and cleaning.

The artist will also be responsible for providing a recommended plan for lighting, but the Garden will manage the lighting installation, and it will not be included in the budget for this project.

Artist(s)/firm should expect to work on an expedited schedule as design and fabrication should be complete by December 2025.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Bartram's Garden will review the qualifications of applicant artists and firms and select one finalist. Their selection will be based on the following criteria:

- Artistic/interpretive excellence as demonstrated in digital images of previous work
- Experience in design and installation of projects of a similar type and scale
- Experience working in community settings and with community advisors

Submissions shall include the following:

- Cover letter/letter of intent demonstrating previous experience with installed pieces, similar in style and scale to this project.
- Artist's resume or resumes of exhibition team

- Digital portfolio (10 digital images of previous artwork) - Include an image list with a thumbnail view of each image submitted, the fabrication and design cost for each piece, and provide a short description next to each thumbnail
- Contact information for 3 professional references (at least 2 should be from individuals who have commissioned public work from the artists or firm)

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION: August 22, 2025, by 4:00 PM EST to be submitted virtually to sarah@dialogicconsulting.com under the subject line, “RFQ Submission, Bartram’s Garden”