

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### **Boston Harbor Now for a Three-Year Program and Marketing Strategy**

Deadline for Submission: **December 31, 2025, noon EST**

Boston Harbor Now (BHN) is developing a **three-year Strategic Program Plan, including a communications and marketing implementation plan**, to guide our work on Boston Harbor. The successful consultant will design and lead a process that identifies and prioritizes programs that increase visitation and foster belonging. Guided by Boston Harbor Now's Strategic Plan and the insights from the [Boston Harbor Now Visitation and Equity Study](#) and other historic visitation data, the strategic program plan will ensure programming is equitable, inclusive, and responsive to community needs. The plan should increase Boston Harbor Now's impact through a growing public's use of on the waterfront parks, harborwalk, and islands to positively impact the public's use and enjoyment, health, recreation and education. The consultant will also define the marketing and communications plan, establish metrics for evaluation.

#### **Timing**

**Start date:** February 10, 2026

**Draft plan completed:** July 1, 2026

**Final plan completed:** November 1, 2026

#### **Budget**

The anticipated budget for the project is \$60,000 - \$75,000.

#### **Who We Are**

Over a generation ago, Boston Harbor was quite literally a dump. A swim in the harbor meant a trip to the hospital. Spectacle Island was a smoldering trash pile. The industrial waterfront was suffering from decades of decline and disrepair.

Today, Boston Harbor is a shining example of the transformation that can occur after decades of advocacy, infrastructure improvements, and environmental stewardship. Billions of dollars in public and private investments laid the groundwork for today's waterfront renaissance.

Boston Harbor Now, a nonprofit at the forefront of this transformation, envisions a vibrant, welcoming, and resilient Boston Harbor, Waterfront, and Islands for the benefit of everyone. Our mission is to ensure that these unique resources are accessible, inclusive, and properly adapted to the risks of climate change to ensure our public and economic health.

Boston Harbor Now works with public and private partners as well as community organizations and nonprofits to activate green and blue open spaces surrounding Boston Harbor by increasing people's awareness of and access to parks and public spaces through advocacy, planning, programming, communications, and engagement. We serve as the legislated non-profit partner of the Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park, the City of Boston's partner on the Harborwalk and Moakley Park.

For more information about Boston Harbor Now, please visit:  
[www.bostonharbornow.org](http://www.bostonharbornow.org).

### **Scope of Work**

Boston Harbor Now seeks a consultant to develop a **comprehensive three-year strategic program plan and accompanying communication and marketing plan** for the Boston Harbor, Waterfront, and the Islands. The intended impact of this plan is to improve the public health of our region by ensuring that more people from every Boston neighborhood and beyond feel welcome on the waterfront and islands - using, enjoying, and benefitting from the harbor.

## **Key Programming Questions to be Answered:**

*How do we define our impact? What evaluation methods and success measures will best capture the impacts of programming?*

*What types of programs best activate the Harborwalk and expand its role as a destination for under-represented communities identified in our Waterfront Visitation and Equity Study?*

*What programming partnerships (e.g., cultural, health, recreation, environmental, workforce development) will strengthen impact and broaden reach?*

*What current programs should be scaled back, retired, or redesigned to make space for new priorities?*

*Can climate education and engagement be incorporated into the public's experience of Boston Harbor and if so, how?*

*How can Boston Harbor Now create paid program opportunities on the Harborwalk and Islands that support financial sustainability?*

*Can we define and measure public health impacts, and if so, how?*

*What communication, marketing, and outreach strategies will ensure that programs effectively reach targeted audiences?*

## **Deliverables and Timelines**

The consultant will develop a three-year Strategic Program Plan that is designed to support programming as well as advancement and fundraising efforts, including clear narratives and materials that can be shared with donors, partners, and sponsors. The plan will include:

1. Program Strategy & Implementation
  - Clear goals and priorities for program impacts and delivery.
  - Recommended program mix and phased implementation roadmap.
2. Audience Engagement, Marketing & Communications
  - Audience segmentation and priority communication pathways.
  - Integrated marketing strategy (digital, social, partner, and on-site).
  - Marketing guidance, campaign frameworks, and tools/templates to support execution.
  - Development-ready messaging to support fundraising, sponsorship, and partnership outreach.
3. Evaluation & Learning Systems
  - Outcomes framework and key performance indicators.
  - Data collection tools and workflows to track participation, belonging, and impact.
  - Process for applying insights to refine programs and communications
4. Staffing & Organizational Capacity
  - Recommended staffing structure, roles, and responsibilities.
  - Capacity assessment and phased staffing or partnership options.
5. Financial Plan
  - Three-year cost projections for programs, staffing, and marketing.
  - Funding and revenue strategies to support sustainability.

**Key deliverables and expected timelines are as follows:**

**February - March 2026**

- Assess effectiveness and level of priority for all current Boston Harbor Now programs (Harbor, Waterfront, Islands).
- Gather input from key stakeholders, partners, and communities, including analysis of visitation, access, and earned income data.

- Identify Boston Harbor Now's strengths and gaps in relation to the broader Harbor landscape.

### March - April 2026

- Produce a strategic programming review summary.
- Confirm or refine key programming questions (belonging, visitation growth, earned income partnerships, diversity/belonging/equity goals).
- Present potential program directions and criteria for prioritization.

### April - May 2026

- Facilitate a single board, staff, and **community design session** to confirm shared programming vision, mission alignment, values, and priority themes (wellness, recreation, economic health, working port, climate resilience).
- Draft preliminary pathways for expanding programming footprint on the Harborwalk and Islands.

### June 2026

- Synthesize findings and prioritize programming strategies for the next three years.
- Develop detailed **implementation pathways**, including staffing, partnerships, funding, and communications approaches.
- Propose strategies to optimize communication, broaden community reach, and measure success.
- Create reporting templates and processes to guide implementation.

### July – September 2026

- **BHN pilots new programs** (e.g., Harborwalk activations, climate resilience events, wellness initiatives).
- Consultant collects feedback and conducts preliminary **evaluation of pilot outcomes** to refine strategies.

### October - November 2026

- Deliver draft FY26–FY28 Strategic Programming Plan, incorporating pilot results, community feedback, and evaluation framework.

- Review draft plan with board and staff.

## **December 2026**

- Incorporate final feedback and prepare a plan for adoption.

### **Proposal Requirements**

Boston Harbor Now is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or teams with demonstrated experience addressing the process and outcomes described above. The applicant selected will be responsible for completing all project work products and final deliverables. Applicants will incorporate Board and staff involvement and estimate expected levels of effort required for their participation.

Proposals must include a timeline and milestones for process and deliverables. The successful applicant will be responsible for scheduling and facilitating regular check-in meetings/calls including setting up an agenda in advance, sending meeting invites and writing up and distributing meeting minutes.

### **Submission Details**

Interested applicants should submit, via email, their completed proposal that includes the following information:

1. Name, role, and contact information for any participating consultants.
2. Statement of qualifications.
3. Client list highlighting specific accomplishments and examples of relevant completed strategies and their impacts.
4. Clear description of proposed process, timeline and deliverables as described above.
5. Fee and budget broken down by task, including expenses.
6. Current resumes and bios of the project team that will be working on the project.
7. Three relevant references of clients whose plans have been completed.

Please email proposals by December 10, 2025 to Rebecca Smerling, Director of Programs at [rsmerling@bostonharbornow.org](mailto:rsmerling@bostonharbornow.org). No calls or visits, please.

### **Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging**

Boston Harbor Now is an intentionally diverse workplace. We are intentional about hiring, developing, and retaining diverse individuals at all levels. We don't just accept differences - we celebrate them, we value them, we promote them, and we thrive on them for the benefit of our employees, volunteers, supporters, partners, and community. We recognize that people bring their personal histories to work and that we make better decisions when we include a wide range of experiences and opinions. Diversity refers not only to race and gender, but also to an array of human differences including: culture, ethnicity, geography, socio-economic position, ability, sexual orientation, background, perspective and more that exist in the community and are reflected in the workforce. We value using an equity lens to manage the organization and create spaces for conversations on equity and ongoing staff and board engagement and empowerment to redesign policies, practices, services and programs. Boston Harbor Now strongly believes that diversity plays an essential role in our mission, fostering innovation and creativity, attracting the best candidates to our team, and enhancing our ability to serve.

### **Procurement Terms and Conditions**

The successful bidder will bring **direct experience in program design, placemaking, and community-centered strategic planning**, ideally within the context of public spaces, cultural programming, and activation. The firm should demonstrate a track record of working with non-profit trustees, advisors, and staff to **initiate and execute strategic programming plans** that balance mission impact with financial sustainability.

Additionally, the bidder should have **significant experience collaborating with non-profit organizations** engaged in conservation, advocacy, recreation, and

community engagement. Knowledge of urban waterfronts, parks, or public realm programming is strongly preferred.

The successful firm will contribute:

- **Analytical expertise** to identify priority programming areas and use evaluation and data to optimize resource allocation.
- **Facilitative leadership** to engage diverse stakeholders, including community partners, staff, trustees, and funders.
- **Communications skills** to frame strategies clearly and develop implementation pathways.
- **Innovative placemaking insight** to connect programming with broader goals of inclusion, resilience, and economic vitality.
- **Design and facilitate an equity-centered process**—guided by the Boston Harbor Now Equity Study—to identify and prioritize programs that foster belonging, grow visitation, and strengthen earned income and partnerships.

**Right to Reject/Cancel.** Boston Harbor Now reserves the right to cancel this procurement, to waive any defect or technicality, and to advertise for new proposals, without notice or justification, where the rejection, cancellation, waiver or advertisement would be in the best interests of Boston Harbor Now.

**Formal Contract Required.** Upon award, Boston Harbor Now and the successful bidder will enter into a contract based on the factors described in this Request for Proposal. The services to be provided will begin and end on specific dates to be negotiated by the parties, not to exceed nine months. The contract value will not exceed the proposed amount, unless the time period and/or the contract value are modified by written, executed amendment to the contract.

**No Liability for Costs.** Each prospective bidder responding to this RFP agrees that it will have no claims against Boston Harbor Now for any costs or liabilities incurred relating to this RFP.



**Indemnification.** The successful bidder will indemnify and hold harmless Boston Harbor Now, its trustees, employees, agents and members from any and all liability resulting from the performance of the services provided under the contract, including, but not limited to, the acts or omissions of the successful bidder, its directors, officers and employees, any and all sub-contractor(s) and their employees, and/or from any and all third party claims related to the contract.

**Applicable Law.** This Request for Proposal and any Contract subsequently executed shall be governed and/or construed in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.