

Request for Proposals

Assessment and Capacity Building for the Cultural Alliance of Niagara (CAN)

RFP Released: Friday, February 16, 2024

Proposals Due Friday, March 15, 2024 at 5 p.m.

PART I: Introduction to Project

A. The Organization: Cultural Alliance of Niagara (CAN)

The Cultural Alliance of Niagara (CAN) is a member-powered collaborative that positions Niagara County's flourishing arts and cultural sector as a vital regional asset and visitor destination essential to the region's economic success and quality of life. Since CAN's formation in the 1980s, it has mobilized its impact through the collaborative efforts of partnerships between the arts, cultural, and heritage organizations of the Niagara County region.

The following arts and cultural organizations comprise CAN membership: Artpark, Aquarium of Niagara, Carnegie Art Center, Castellani Art Museum, Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum, Lewiston Council on the Arts, Old Fort Niagara, Niagara Arts & Cultural Center, and the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center. Additionally, CAN is supported by Arts Services Inc., Niagara Falls Destination Marketing Organization Destination Niagara USA, and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

In the past several years, CAN has made a concerted effort to fortify its coalition by securing nonprofit status, and subsequently developing an events website, www.artsniagara.org to generate awareness and traffic for its' members diverse programmatic offerings. CAN is at a critical time to further amplify its work to become a true advocate and supportive arm for the arts and cultural organizations and artists of Niagara County.

B. Project Overview:

We are seeking proposals from qualified and experienced organizations or individual consultants to strategically assess and empathetically understand the needs of the Niagara County arts and cultural ecosystem and to develop a plan to build capacity for further development, promotion, and implementation of arts and cultural efforts under the Cultural Alliance of Niagara.

Niagara County is a region defined by the agriculture and tourism industries and its long manufacturing history. Niagara County draws millions of tourists each year who come to see Niagara Falls and other outdoor attractions. Destination marketing efforts, specifically in the City of Niagara Falls, concentrate on the outdoor adventure experience and lack comprehensive messaging that include arts and cultural organizations. Additionally, the region contains a vast rural landscape that creates a disconnect among arts and cultural organizations resulting in siloed and duplicative outputs.

This project aims to provide the groundwork for a larger effort to develop a cultural plan for the Niagara County region, under the stewardship of CAN. The results of this project will lay the groundwork to identify unifying strengths and areas of opportunities for the arts and cultural organizations across the region and better equip CAN in its work towards a comprehensive cultural plan. (This project will not develop that cultural plan.)

This RFP was initiated by Fund for the Arts (FFA) – a funders’ cooperative of public, private, family, and corporate foundations administered by the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo. They have engaged arts and cultural coalitions across Western New York in support of the creation of regional cultural plans. In their collaborative spirit, FFA has kept CAN informed of the other WNY regions’ cultural planning efforts and have expressed a funding opportunity to amplify CAN’s work on this front.

C. Project Goals:

The following are the three goals of this project:

1. Assess the needs of the Niagara County Arts and Cultural Organizations.
2. Assess and evaluate Cultural Alliance of Niagara.
3. Develop Capacity Building Plan for Cultural Alliance of Niagara
 - a. What can CAN do for arts and culturals in Niagara County? What tools does CAN need to be successful?

The Scope of each of these goals are described below.

D. Project Scope:

Part One: Assess the Needs of the Niagara County Arts & Cultural Organizations

Describe the landscape of the Niagara County arts and culture sector by engaging CAN members, past members, and non-members:

- Through a combination of surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, identify assets, needs, and desires of the arts and cultural organizations.
- Identify and define the greatest barriers experienced within the arts and culture sector.
- Gather and sort feedback on CAN and the perceived value of CAN for the arts and culture sector and expectations of CAN.
- Identify and evaluate existing data about Niagara County and implications to this effort.

Part Two: Assess and Evaluate Cultural Alliance of Niagara (CAN)

Complete an organizational assessment of CAN in order to inform their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

- Assess the current structure, bylaws, and practices of CAN in context of their stated goals and mission.
- Evaluate CAN assets and resources in relation to their stated goals and mission.
- Evaluate trends in membership, reach of CAN within the Niagara County region, and funding success and challenges.
- Evaluate, translate, and decipher collected information/feedback from arts and cultural organizations from Part One.

Part Three: Develop Capacity Building Plan for Cultural Alliance of Niagara

Consultant will facilitate the development of a comprehensive capacity building plan using the results of the assessments from Part One and Part Two. The plan will be responsive to all findings, and be organized with priorities, goals, objectives, timelines, and measurements.

The consultant will also facilitate:

- A firm articulation of CAN's purpose and who it exists to support.
- The revision of CAN's bylaws in response to the assessments and capacity building plan.
- An articulation of what resources and assets CAN should seek to secure in support of its own purpose and to increase their value to the arts and culture sector.
- An articulation of what tools, practices, processes, or other assets it should consider strengthening or developing in support of the arts and culture sector.

E. Deliverables:

CAN anticipates this project to be fulfilled over the course of **8 - 12 months** resulting in the following:

- Concise summary of assessment of Niagara County Arts & Cultural Community and Cultural Alliance of Niagara.
- Translation of data and feedback gathered through needs assessment into a completed capacity building plan for CAN to include priorities, goals, objectives, timelines, and measures.
- Updated bylaws to support CAN's progress moving forward and support capacity building efforts and outcomes.
- A summary of recommended resources, assets, tools, practices, and processes to strengthen CAN's value to the arts and culture sector and broader community.

F. Contract Term:

This contract is valid for up to twelve months; intended start date May 1, 2024 with completion by April 15, 2025.

G. Number of Awards:

Individuals or organizations must write a proposal for all parts of this RFP, but collaborative efforts are welcomed. If more than one organization is submitting, be sure to describe all organizations involved in your proposal as well as the role of each.

PART II: Submission and Evaluation

A. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria:

The following criteria will be used in evaluation of the proposals:

- Demonstration of past experience doing similar work
- Ability to meet timeline
- Cost of proposal
- Clarity of proposal
- Experience in supporting capacity building efforts
- Experience working with arts and cultural organizations
- Preference for those with knowledge of the Niagara County region; however if unfamiliar please demonstrate the efforts you would take to gain familiarity and understanding with the region.

B. Submission Requirements:

- There are no page restrictions to this proposal, but applicants are asked to consider the time required of the review team to read a multitude of proposals. Good organization and use of headings is requested.
- There are no parameters for font, size, or margins.
- Applicants will submit their proposals to Mary Beth Debus, Project Manager for RFP Process, at marybeth@programsavvy.com as a PDF by 5 p.m. Friday, March 15, 2024..
- If an applicant prefers to mail their proposal, it must be postmarked by March 13, 2024 and mailed to Program Savvy Consulting, 10 St. Margarets Ct. Buffalo, NY 14216 and an email sent to marybeth@programsavvy.com to alert to proposal submission.
- Receipt of proposals will be made by email within 24 hours of receipt.

C. Proposal Contents:

Each proposal should respond in full to the following:

1. Present a detailed statement of qualifications and a summary of relevant experience, including experience working with or interacting with arts and cultural organizations, completing assessments, and completing capacity building plans. Please provide examples of this work and the capacity in which you or your organization were involved.
2. Description of bidder's organization, location of where services will be provided or from which the contract will be managed.
3. Brief description of any special or unique characteristics which would make it especially qualified and compatible with this project. Include previous experience working with a regional focus. Include any experience or familiarity working within the Niagara County region or identify past work experience with a region comprised of both urban and rural communities that is defined by similar challenges.
4. Provide a realistic work plan for the implementation of each component of this project (Parts 1-3 in Project Goals and Scope) including an estimated timeline for completion.
5. A cost proposal which covers the period of the contract and confirms what is and is not included in the cost proposal. Provide a breakdown of costs for each major component of your proposal (such as for Part One, Part Two, and Part Three).

D. Questions

Questions may be submitted to marybeth@programsavvy.com through March 4, 2024 at 5 p.m. A document of responses will be sent to all those asking questions and any requesting the Q&A document by March 11, 2024.

E. Timeline

Friday, February 16, 2024: RFP Released

Monday, March 4, 2024 at 5 p.m.: Deadline for submission of questions

Monday, March 11, 2024 - Responses to questions provided

Friday, March 15, 2024 at 5PM: Deadline for Proposal

Week of April 1, 2024: Finalist Interviews

Monday, April 15, 2024: Anticipated Date for Selection of Consultant

Wednesday, May 1, 2024: Anticipated Consultant State Date