

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: BELLE ISLE AQUARIUM SPEAKEASY EVENT MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE

Belle Isle Conservancy seeks proposals from distilleries, wineries, caterers, event managers, and other related entities for managing the Belle Isle Aquarium's Speakeasy events and programming on behalf of the Conservancy. The goals of a partnership are to 1) generate significant revenue to support the Conservancy's annual operating fund, 2) leverage a historic and unique asset, and 3) provide a turn-key operation that keeps Conservancy staff focused on other fundraising initiatives and mission-related programs.

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Established in 2012, the mission of Belle Isle Conservancy is to protect, preserve, restore and enhance the natural environment, historic structures and unique character of Belle Isle as a public park for the enjoyment of all – now and forever. Belle Isle Conservancy works in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the City of Detroit to bring additional resources to the 982-acre island park in Detroit. Belle Isle Conservancy manages and operates the historic Belle Isle Aquarium, which is America's oldest operating aquarium. Today, over 175,000 people visit the Belle Isle Aquarium annually, free of admission.

SPEAKEASY OVERVIEW

During the prohibition era of the 1920s, Belle Isle was a hotspot for alcohol smugglers because of its prime location in the river between Detroit and Canada. There are remnants of a speakeasy bar that allegedly sold illicit alcohol in the basement of the historic Belle Isle Aquarium. Over the last decade, the Conservancy has worked to restore the Aquarium after a 7 year closure from 2005-2012 and has activated the speakeasy space for a few fundraiser events. The allure of the speakeasy is extremely strong in the Detroit community, and the opportunity is ripe to leverage this unique asset as one of the key revenue drivers for Belle Isle Conservancy and its work in operating the Belle Isle Aquarium and providing free admission to the public on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 10 am to 4 pm.

EVENT PARAMETERS

- Private event season for the Belle Isle Aquarium runs from Labor Day until Memorial Day due to the uncomfortable climate in the building in the summer season (no air conditioning) and the inability to guarantee access to the venue when the park reaches vehicular capacity on busy summer days
- Event footprint may include speakeasy, main gallery, and classroom
- Access to aquarists' lab and other areas of the Aquarium is prohibited by guests, event vendor(s) and its staff or contractors. Event vendor is responsible for ensuring that no person enters an unauthorized area of the building in order to protect the fish collection

FACILITY LIMITATIONS

- Lack of ADA accessibility to lower level
- Additional egress exits are needed to meet building code requirements
- Restrooms are on the main floor and need to be accessed by exiting the speakeasy
- Lack of modern HVAC; building gets extremely hot with no air conditioning
- Potential for flooding

- Animal safety and comfort is a top priority, which may necessitate additional accommodations from the event vendor which may include (but not limited to) a prohibition or volume limit on electronic systems, microphones, amplifiers, loudspeakers, and related equipment, as well as the prohibition of flash photography.
- Park access hours are from 5 am to 10 pm daily; Aquarium is open to the public Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 10 am to 4 pm
- Storage space is extremely limited

RFP REQUIREMENTS

Please address the following areas in your submittal of information:

- Description of the business including experience, qualifications, and bios of key staff
- Examples of event experience, particularly events in non-traditional venue spaces.
- Proposed event program describing the event experience, the quantity of events per year, the audience reached, etc.
- Proposed investments to enhance the space and ensure safe and comfortable guest experience
- Proposed financial structure including the expected net benefit to the Conservancy in the short-term (1 to 3 years) and long-term (3+ years)
- (Optional) Proposed long-term, big picture partnerships to deliver capital improvements with expected revenue to "pay back" initial investment made by vendor

SUBMITTAL PROCESS

- For a tour of the space, please reach out to Danielle Jackson via email at jacksond@belleisleconservancy.org
- Responses to the RFI are due on September 1, 2022 at 5 pm EST
- Responses should be emailed to proposals@belleisleconservancy.org with the subject line "Speakeasy RFP"
- Questions can be emailed to Katy LaBarrie at labarriek@belleisleconservancy.org

STATEMENT OF NON-COMMITMENT

Issuance of this RFP does not commit the Belle Isle Conservancy to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in preparation of proposals responding to the RFP.