



America 250-Ohio Commission

**Private Fundraising Consultant
Request for Qualifications/Proposals**

RFQ Issue Date:	October 11, 2023
Inquiry Period:	October 12-30, 2023
Statements of Qualifications/Proposals due:	November 9, 2023
Review and Scoring Period:	November 20 – December 1, 2023
Notification to short-listed Candidates:	December 5, 2023
Interviews with short-listed Candidates	December 12-13, 2023
Selection Announced:	December 15, 2023

Submit responses via e-mail to: Abby Reynolds, Executive Assistant
America 250-Ohio Commission
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Project Background:

In 2026 the United States of America will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Congress has encouraged each state to create its own commission focused on planning the celebration and commemoration not only of this important date in history but also to reflect each state’s unique character and contributions to the nation over the past 250 years. It is a time when we, as Americans, can focus on advancements already achieved in so many areas as well as contemplate what lies ahead as we move forward to more broadly realizing the ideals embodied in the Declaration and building a more perfect union.

The Ohio General Assembly and Gov. Mike DeWine embraced this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and launched the Ohio Commission for the Semiquincentennial (“America 250-Ohio Commission” or “AM 250-Ohio”) on March 1, 2022. The Commission’s charge is, according to Ohio Revised Code 149.409, “to plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United States and the impact of Ohioans on the nation’s past, present, and future.” More specifically, the Commission will:

- **PLAN** Ohio's approach to commemorate/celebrate the U.S.A.'s 250th anniversary in 2026.
- **ENCOURAGE** all 88 Ohio counties to get involved and create and foster local plans while joining other efforts in the region, across the state and throughout the nation.
- **DEVELOP** a public awareness campaign, a collaborative vision, and a strategic approach to the statewide plans.
- **COORDINATE** collective impact opportunities to partner, expand impact, and share resources.

AM 250-Ohio operates as a non-profit organization, with initial funding coming primarily through State of Ohio general revenue funds; the Ohio History Connection serves as the Commission's fiscal agent. While having a small administrative staff, the Commission can draw upon the talents of its 30+ commissioners who included local, county, and statewide public officials as well as business leaders and directors of many state and cultural institutions. While not a state agency *per se*, AM 250-Ohio adheres to the basic procurement guidelines and open and competitive processes followed by the State of Ohio and will do so when selecting the fundraising firm/consultant being sought through this Request for Qualifications/Proposals. More information about AM 250-Ohio's staff and Commissioners may be found on our website (www.america250-ohio.org).

Initial plans for events and products being developed by the AM 250-Ohio Commission include:

- Enhanced patriotic celebrations on the July 4, 2026 anniversary date – including, of course, parades and firework displays.
- Statewide film festival celebrating Ohio's multi-faceted contributions to the film industry.
- Identifying and marking Revolutionary War veteran's graves ((more than 7,000 in Ohio)
- Improvements to Fort Laurens (Tuscarawas County) - Ohio's only Revolutionary War fort.
- U.S. Route 250/America 250 Heritage Trail which stretches from Sandusky to Bridgeport, Ohio.
- Promoting Ohio road trips and discovery trails.
- Collection and sharing of under-told and little-known stories about Ohioans (past and present).
- Opening the 1976 time capsule located at the Ohio State Fairgrounds and inviting Ohioans to contribute items to be sealed inside a new one to be opened on the 300th anniversary.
- Urban murals and barn paintings.
- And many more projects still under consideration.

Hundreds of local and statewide events and experiences are expected to be held across Ohio during the 2024-2026 celebration timeframe.

Scope of Work/Services to be Provided by the Successful Firm/Consultant:

The assistance of a professional firm/consultant, having a proven track record of success in guiding similar enterprises, is needed to realize AM 250-Ohio's goals and accomplish our mission. The firm/consultant will be expected to develop and execute realistic fundraising plans, identify prospects, cultivate donor relationships, and occasionally work with the AM 250-Ohio public relations firm, Fahlgren Mortine.

The firm/consultant will liaise principally with our Executive Director and Executive Assistant, while also coordinating efforts with the chairpersons of our key committees. The selected firm/consultant will act as an extension of the AM 250-Ohio team to develop fundraising resources and capacity not possible through by the Commission staff alone. A public-private partnership funding model is to be developed and put into place.

To fully embrace the potential of this being "Ohio's moment" as Gov. DeWine has said, the selected firm/consultant will need to strategize about maximizing AM 250-Ohio's statewide impact and draw national attention to some of the projects that Ohio will be undertaking.

While AM 250-Ohio is currently funded by allocations from the State of Ohio, there is a need to develop public-private partnerships both in terms of actual projects as well as the critically needed fundraising efforts. Helping to build a fundraising strategy from the ground up, to work with our stakeholders to realize opportunities and to assist with direct fundraising opportunities are all of critical importance.

The firm/consultant should also investigate resources and opportunities from companies, organizations, and individuals located outside of Ohio but that have ties to our state or see the benefit of supporting AM 250-Ohio's efforts.

More specifically, the firm/consultant's responsibilities will need to:

- Develop a case for support around AM 250-Ohio fundraising priorities. (1 month – 32 hours)
- Develop a strategic multi-year fundraising and implementation plan that includes strategies involving grassroots fundraising, business sponsorships and major gifts from other benefactors. (1 month – 32 hours)
- Developing a pitch deck. (2 weeks – 16 hours)
- Facilitate a meeting with the Philanthropic Partners Committee and the AM 250-Ohio staff to get everyone aligned around common fundraising goals and cultivate buy-in from AM 250-Ohio Commissioners. (2 weeks – 16 hours)
- Identify prospects and help make introductions. (remaining 8 months)
- Coach and guide AM 250-Ohio Commissioners, committee members and staff members on making asks. (remaining 8 months)
- Assist with meetings/asks as needed. (remaining 8 months)

Preferred qualities:

1. Prior experience working with state of Ohio agencies.
2. Demonstrated success generating private philanthropic opportunities.
3. Experience working with Ohio-based audiences.

Proposal Requirements:

1. Consultant must be based in the state of Ohio.
2. A narrative that addresses how the Scope of Work/Services to be Provided, as outlined above, will be accomplished, including a timeline with realistic benchmarks and the number of hours required to accomplish the plan.
3. A clear explanation of what the firm/consultant expects the AM 250-Ohio Commission staff members, and its committee chairpersons will do to support the firm/consultant's efforts.
4. Provide clear explanation of billing rates and budget. Rates must be a combined hourly rate for any/all billed hours, regardless of the level of staff working on the project.
3. Consultant must submit estimated hours to accomplish projects at the time of proposal to estimate overall potential cost (the projects will be scoped with hours, etc. once the firm/consultant has been selected and the projects become actionable.
4. Firm/consultant's rate proposal should include how regular meetings, telephone calls and other on-going communications such as Teams, Slack, emails, texts, will be billed and payment terms.
5. Firm/consultant's billings must not exceed \$52,000 in Calendar Year 2024 (June 30, 2024 end date), unless prior authorized in writing by the Commission.
6. A qualifications statement should be submitted for each of the key individuals/team members expected to work on the project, including a description of each person's anticipated role, related expertise, and experience.
7. Experience working with small to mid-size non-profit organizations in a fundraising capacity.
8. Strong and recent experience with strategic fundraising planning and evident track record of direct fundraising. A description of the firm/consultant's work on earlier projects and the goals achieved should be submitted. Names and contact information for no less than two (2) prior clients for which the firm/consultant handled similar project for should be submitted. Be sure to include each reference's full name, title/position, company/organization name, street address, telephone number and email address.

The intent is to enter into a one-year agreement, beginning in Calendar Year 2024, with the opportunity for that agreement to be renewed from year-to-year, making this a multi-year opportunity, subject to the Commission's satisfaction with the work provided by the

firm/consultant. Renewal discussions would take place sixty (60) days before the end of each fiscal year. The amount of fees and billing rates could be reviewed at that time, with the understanding that the firm/consultant's fees would not appreciably increase year-to-year.

Evaluation Criteria:

All accepted proposals will be reviewed by the Selection Committee and will be evaluated and scored using the following criteria. The Selection Committee reserves the right to utilize other evaluation criteria in its sole discretion:

- Overall match between RFP requirements and proposal: Understanding of scope, objectives and completeness and coherence of response.
- Demonstrated ability of firm/consultant to carry out fundraising plan of similar character and scope.
- Cost effectiveness.
- Qualifications and previous work of firm/consultant.
- Recommendations from past clients.
- Superior oral and written communication skills as demonstrated by the firm/consultant's written submission and in the interview process.

AM 250-Ohio reserves the right to change this Request for Proposals/Qualifications.

Once a firm/consultant is selected, the expectation is that the written contract will be entered into promptly thereafter which will include standard provisions included in state of Ohio contracts, including the right of AM 250-Ohio to terminate the contract upon thirty (30) days' notice.