

Frequently Asked Questions

We ask that applicants please review thoroughly the [Request for Qualifications here](#) before submitting your application.

Design Ideas Competition

- Why is this a “design ideas” competition and not a design competition?
 - This is the first phase of a multi-phase project. In this first phase, we are soliciting ideas that will generate momentum for a future capital project. A comprehensive design would be created as part of the capital phase. Winning artists and conceptual work created as part of the “design ideas” competition will be credited if/when there is a capital project implemented.
 - For this Request for Qualifications, we are looking for 3 finalists who will receive \$20K each, and who are aligned with the following goals:
 1. Interest in raising awareness about the site and its history;
 2. Able to create ideas that solidify a vision for the site that has grown out of the work of the Legacy Council;
 3. Provide momentum for future support of a permanent memorial;
 4. Dream big!

If you share these goals, we would love for you to submit your qualifications!

Eligibility and Entry Rules

- Can individuals apply, or must they apply as part of a team or joint venture?
 - Individuals can submit their qualifications.
- Can you apply if you are based outside of the New York City metropolitan area?
 - Anyone who is eligible to work in the United States is eligible to apply with the expectation that you would be able to engage in person with the Bronx community if selected in the Spring of 2026.
- If based outside of NYC, will travel subsidies/reimbursements be provided?
 - The 3 selected winners will receive \$20,000 which can be used to subsidize travel and other expenses.
- If I submit an entry as part of a firm, organization, or team, can I enter as an individual?
 - No, if you are entered with a firm or a team you cannot enter separately as an individual.
- Do projects need to be specific to park design?
 - Past project examples should reflect memory, heritage, or public space experience; indoor or outdoor projects are acceptable.
- Do you see a design idea as a monument, public art, a series of educational signage, an outdoor exhibit, or all/any of the above?
 - We would be interested in any or all of the above for this phase of the project. Selected winners will be expected to produce conceptual and schematic designs for the memorial to share with the public at an exhibition in June 2026.

Submission Materials

- What should be included in the 10-page document upload? Does the page limit include resumes and bios?
 - The 10-page document is comprehensive and should include: Background of your firm or description of your individual experience. At least 3 previous projects relevant to this RFQ. Applicants are welcome to include other creative experience or background that might be relevant to this RFQ, so long as it fits within the 10-page limit. Everything counts in the page limit, including the cover and bio pages.
- The long form asks you to provide information on consultants. What consultants were you thinking would be added at this preliminary stage?
 - The RFQ form does not request information on consultants. As this is an “ideas competition,” applicants need not think about sub-consultants necessary to carry out a capital project, the 3 winners will be asked to provide conceptual and schematic ideas for the memorial.

Burial Site Information, History, and Preservation

The below information will be provided after selection of 3 Finalists.

- Was the exact location of the physical burial ground found? Do we know where that is? Or how many unmarked graves are involved?
 - See info session pdf with background and timeline of work that has been done on pages 5 & 6. For more information about the burial ground, see [Pathways to the Past](#) here.
- Have the exact site and spatial boundaries been set for the burial site?
 - Yes, the exact site and spatial boundaries have been set for the design ideas process. This includes the burial ground and the lawn behind the tennis courts, with the option to include the lawn behind the Nature Center. The selected designers will receive detailed site maps.
- Would it be possible to get photos of the site?
 - Photos of the site can be found [here](#). We also encourage applicants to visit the park itself.
- Has the site been properly excavated/recorded archaeologically with clear guidelines as to the site's preservation? Have the remains been removed or retained? Are there restrictions of which we should be aware?
 - The site has been identified as a likely location of an Enslaved African Burial Ground, based on a 2019 USDA ground-penetrating radar study, as well as multiple documents that triangulate around this location. There has not been an excavation. An archaeological study would be included as part of the capital project phase. Restrictions would be determined based on those findings.

Community Engagement and Data Access

- Can you provide more clarification on how to approach the potential to increase outreach to “local businesses, organizations, and educational institutions”?
 - We will continue to expand outreach and partnerships throughout the design process connecting the selected designers to community groups and local stakeholders.
- Are you eventually open to design proposals that involve direct work with the Legacy Council and other community groups as part of the work’s design process? (i.e. projects where the total outcome won’t be clear until the community has been involved)
 - We expect the 3 selected designers to work closely with the Legacy Council and other community groups as part of their design process.
- Will access to data (community survey results, Legacy Council findings) be provided to candidates or finalists?
 - Community survey results and Legacy Council findings will be provided to the 3 designers selected through this RFQ process.

Competition Process, Jurying, Awards, and Timeline

- Who will select the teams for the first round? Who will be involved in each round of the application review process?
 - The Planning Team (Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, Design Trust for Public Space, and Liminal Sp) will review applications in the initial round and select up to 25 semi-finalists to be reviewed by a Jury. The Jury members will meet at the end of January to recommend up to 6 finalists for interviews. Interviews will take place in-person in early February with members of the Legacy Council and Planning Team. The 3 winners will be selected at the end of this process to begin working on design ideas.
- How will the jury be selected?
 - The Jury will comprise experts in their fields, such as landscape architects, artists, curators, representatives from the African Burial Ground National Monument, and parks organizations. There will be members of the local Black community as well as experts from the Descendant community in NYC. The jury is still in formation.
- Will the judging process keep candidates anonymous to prevent bias?
 - As this is a Request for Qualifications, candidates will not be kept anonymous through the review process. We are looking to get to know you as a designer.
- When will winners be announced?
 - Winners will be notified at the end of February and will be publicly announced at an event planned for mid-March.

- How will winners be awarded and what does it include?
 - 3 selected winners will receive:
 - A \$20,000 stipend for their time creating their designs. The \$20,000 will be payable in 3 installments over the course of the competition, as milestones are met.
 - Opportunity to speak at 2 public events featuring the project.
 - Promotion on VCPA and Design Trust websites and in related collateral, including a final publication.
 - Complimentary membership with Van Cortlandt Park Alliance and membership in the Design Trust's DT Council (including invitations to both organizations' 2026 Benefits).
- After winners are selected, what is the timeline for the installation of temporary work?
 - Upon completion of final materials, an outdoor exhibition of work will be up for less than a year, as mandated by NYC Parks for temporary works.

Budget, Funding, and Implementation

- What will be the budget for the installation displays?
 - We will work with the 3 finalists to develop a budget for the temporary outdoor exhibit.
- What will happen to the winning design ideas that are selected? Will they become temporary or permanent installations?
 - Upon completion of final materials, an outdoor exhibition of the selected winners' ideas will be up for a period of time (less than one year) as mandated by NYC Parks for temporary works. See page 8 of RFQ.
- Who will own the intellectual rights to the design idea?
 - Intellectual Rights agreements and contracts will take place prior to submission of ideas / design work. We aim to credit the artists and their work in all phases of this project.
- Who is funding this project?
 - This phase of the project is funded by the Mellon Foundation.

Long-Term Outcomes and Capital Phase

- Would there be an additional competition and artist team chosen for the final capital installation?
 - As of now, there is no plan for a final capital project installation or another competition.
- Do finalists retain or surrender ownership of the design if it moves forward to the capital phase?
 - As of now, there is no funding for a capital project, but the work created through this phase will help move the second phase forward. Designs, or parts of any design, created in this phase may be used in the capital phase and will be properly credited.
- Is there a budget established for the permanent installation?
 - A budget has not been allotted for a "permanent" installation since there is no capital project at this time. While there is no established budget, the beauty of a "design ideas" competition is to dream big and share exciting concepts that inform a future, implementable design that is more practical.

- In what capacity will the winners be involved in the creation of a permanent structure at the Enslaved African Burial Ground at Van Cortlandt Park?
 - There is currently not a plan for a permanent structure.
- How do we ensure the outcomes of this project will not be overturned or removed by future administrations?
 - This project will result in a temporary outdoor exhibition that will adhere to NYC Parks guidelines for temporary works; temporary installations can be in place for 364 days or less.
- Would you be looking for additional support to raise funds and partnerships for the project?
 - Yes. Absolutely!

Selection Phases

Phase I

Applicants submit Requests for Qualifications; open to the public. No Design Ideas are to be submitted. 3 Finalists are selected after jury and interviews.

Phase II

Finalists review agreements and are contracted to submit ideas that reflect the work and vision of the Legacy Council, as well as other potential outreach. Design idea materials undergo iterations and review for final submission.

Phase III

Design Ideas are complete, available online, coupled with an outdoor exhibit on display and will be up for a period of time (less than one year) as determined by NYC Parks. Finalists along with project partners will be updated regarding any notice of possible Capital Project.

Note: Finalists will be credited, along with other project partners, in any future advancements or announcements related to a capital project in or surrounding the African Burial Ground site.