



TO: Harvard–Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund Executive Committee
FROM: Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture
DATE: May 15, 2019
SUBJECT: Application for Harvard–Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund

Background

The Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture is a City agency that enhances the quality of life, the economy, and the design of the City through the arts. The role of the arts in all aspects of life in Boston is reinforced through equitable access to arts and culture in every community, its public institutions, and public places. Key areas of work include support to the cultural sector through grants and programs, support of cultural facilities and artist work space, as well as the production and permitting of art in public places.

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Project Summary

The Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture (MOAC) requests a grant of \$60,000.00 from the Harvard–Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund to engage a consultant to identify both creative placemaking and placekeeping opportunities in keeping with the unique and varied present-day character of the dynamic Allston–Brighton neighborhoods.

Project Description

Placemaking, the process through which projects are developed to define or redefine a space, has been at the forefront of many planning initiatives in recent years. However, for neighborhoods experiencing a rapid increase in development pressure or gentrification, *placekeeping* actions are often more appropriate. Placekeeping refers to the acts of cultural preservation to that enable a place to retain the elements that define its identity and a sense of place. We feel these tools would be appropriate for the Allston–Brighton neighborhood and necessitate hiring a consultant.

The consultant would be responsible for:

- Providing timely community themes and relevant concerns;
- Creating a map of viable project sites and existing cultural centers; and
- Producing a roster of active local cultural workers for implementation in the Allston/Brighton neighborhoods.



Upon the completion of this research phase, MOAC would return to the Flexible Fund for an implementation grant. This two-phased process would identify a means for the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture to engage in neighborhood specific placemaking planning and programming implementation. In order to maximize the impact of these funds, MOAC will serve as project lead but collaborate with the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics and the Boston Transportation Department. Specifically, MOAC would look to grow on MONUM's public space and play-based interventions as well as BTD's new public realm guidelines and street painting program.

Today the neighborhood is undergoing rapid changes both physically and socially. At this time there are more than a dozen large construction projects in development or construction phase in this area of Allston-Brighton but despite the strong cultural history of the area, especially in visual art and music, there is no existing neighborhood-specific cultural plan. A placekeeping plan would protect the cultural integrity of the area in a way that the governmental and institutional decisions that profoundly affected the neighborhood between the 1950s and 2000s did not.

A consultant would enable our office to directly investigate neighborhood-specific needs and concerns before an application for cultural programming to the Flexible Fund in a second phase.

Additional information on scope of services:

- Providing timely community themes and relevant concerns
 - Public art and creative interventions in the public realm should be opportunities to build on a sense of community and connection to place. We envision a combination of stakeholder interviews and light touch public engagement that can summarize themes around neighborhood identity, history, and culture that would then be incorporated into future projects. This may include looking through recent planning efforts to summarize existing community feedback about the public realm as well as potential gaps - communities that have not been historically engaged in government process like non English speakers or youth.
- Creating a map of viable project sites and existing cultural centers
 - Because this project is at the scale of a neighborhood, we feel that mapping locations for artistic interventions or programs is feasible and can be a tool that is useful for the City or anyone interested in public realm projects in Allston/Brighton. This mapping will include assets like blank walls, spaces of important public access (i.e. pedestrian bridge), publicly owned open space, and community centers.
- Producing a roster of active local cultural workers for implementation in the Allston/Brighton neighborhoods.
 - One of the goals of focusing funds on a single neighborhood is to hire artists and cultural workers local to that area. While MOAC has a wide distribution list and network, we also know that there are many creatives in Allston/Brighton with whom we have not connected. Creating a roster of potential contacts will ensure that we are sourcing creative work locally and going beyond the "usual suspects."



Timeline

August 2019	Grant awarded, RFP for consultant services released
September 2019	Applicants interviewed and consultant selected and contracted
Oct 2019 - March 2020	Consultant research, study and community outreach
April 2020	Consultant plan submitted

Budget

Item Description	Cost
Consultant Fee	\$50,000
Department Matching (In-kind office support)	\$10,000
Total Budget	\$60,000