



Request for Proposals

Five-Year Strategic Plan and Business Plan

Proposals Due: August 24, 2026

Purpose

Contemporary Craft is now accepting bids from experienced planning professionals to develop a five-year strategic plan and business plan.

About Contemporary Craft

Contemporary Craft was established in 1971 by Elizabeth Rockwell Raphael to broaden opportunities for craft artists to exhibit and sell their work. The impetus behind its creation was the belief that many artists working with traditional craft materials were developing a unique vocabulary for these materials and in the process they were opening up a new avenue of creative effort in contemporary art.

Contemporary Craft offers innovative exhibitions focused on multicultural diversity and contemporary art, as well as a range of hands-on workshops, community engagement programs, and a store.

Through its mission of engaging the public in creative experiences through contemporary craft, the organization offers meaningful art opportunities through four core values:

1. Providing vital support for artists;
2. Filling critical gaps in public education;
3. Sharing cross-cultural perspectives; and
4. Using art to build community.

At Contemporary Craft, we associate the word craft most readily with the materiality of our field and focus primarily on ceramic, fiber, glass, metal, and wood; with some deviation into paper-arts and mixed-media.

Most importantly, craft to us emanates from community and lineage; much like it would have historically through processes and practices, passed on from one individual to another. In our eyes it's one of the most democratic art forms, practiced by people of all ages and socio-economic and racial backgrounds. This allows craft to instigate critical conversations with the potential to be life changing.

The contemporary nature of our organization is that we challenge ourselves and artists to produce cutting-edge exhibitions and experiences through the use of those traditional craft materials.

At the root of work is the invitation to artists, colleagues, students, and donors alike to engage with us so that we can narrate together what exactly it means for something to be craft.

PITTSBURGH IS CRAFT

Pittsburgh is known as the steel city — the city that helped build America — but now it's forging a new future with the same grit and spirit of making, and craft is leading the way. In Pittsburgh, traditional craft materials are being re-invented and techniques revitalized, mirroring the excitement, innovation, and forward momentum of the city itself.

Pittsburgh is Craft seeks to bring Pittsburgh's craft community to the forefront and promote Pittsburgh as a national and international craft destination. Craft is more than just the materials. It's community. And Pittsburgh's craft community is thriving.

This new initiative, led by Contemporary Craft, draws together a large number of Pittsburgh area organizations that represent an art and craft centered ecosystem that is unique in the United States. With support from the State of Pennsylvania and local foundations, this new consortium will help to grow the value and benefits of these activities.

Background

Contemporary Craft is at a key moment in the organization's history. Successive efforts over the last two decades have grown the organization's staffing, range of programs, sources of funding, types of artists supported, owned physical spaces, partnerships, and have solidified the organization's role in the local, regional, and national field of craft.

The Pittsburgh region is also at an inflection point, recognizing the potential impact for craft to serve as an important economic cluster that can deliver inclusive growth for the region. At the same time, national shifts in funding for arts and cultural organizations have impacted how local foundations are investing, and new sources of revenue are needed to create a flexible and sustainable future for Contemporary Craft and the communities it supports.

The organization has undergone a substantial period of growth that was guided by its current strategic plan, and now seeks a new plan that can build upon the momentum gained and sustain the organization for the decades ahead. The new strategic plan should provide high level guidance provided by specific implementable actions. A balance is needed between bold and visionary ideas and more practical and focused strategies. Contemporary Craft is also seeking to update its vision and mission statements as part of this effort to more accurately reflect the current state and future aspirations of the organization. A secondary deliverable will be a business strategy that helps the organization grow sources of income, strengthen its financial position, and manage growth effectively. Both documents need to support the organization in maintaining a flexible position so that it can respond to changing funding environments and new opportunities.

Through this RFP Contemporary Craft will find and contract a firm or team of firms that have the knowledge, experience, and real-world examples needed to complete a strategic plan and business plan. The chosen firm or team will work with the Executive Director, staff, and Board of Directors.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

Responses to the RFP should clearly define a desired approach and process. Following selection, the Executive Director and Board of Directors will work with the consultant / team to fully develop a scope of work. A board committee was formed in early 2026 with the charge to support and advise the Executive Director and staff as they lead the strategic plan process. Contemporary Craft desires a consultant or team that can achieve the following aims:

- Construct an inclusive and engaging planning process that captures and synthesizes strategies that reflect and balance the views of Contemporary Craft leadership, staff, and board members. In addition to soliciting input from all involved, the process and its progress should be clearly reported to each group to maintain a sense of transparency and buy-in.
- Collect data points from similar craft organizations across the country as well as the Southwestern PA region to assist in determining how Contemporary Craft can grow its role in both the national and regional field of craft, and emerge as an inclusive economic development cluster, consistent with the heritage of the area.
- Identify strategies to broaden and strengthen the organization's funding and revenue sources to create a diverse portfolio of long-term, sustainable, and flexible foundation funds for the organization.

The planning process should result in a set of deliverables for public and internal use.

The public-facing strategic plan should give the public, partners, funders, and other stakeholders an understanding of where the organization is headed and the practical actions it will take to get there. It should include at least the following elements:

- Executive summary
- Updated organizational mission, vision, and values
- Overview of strategic priorities and initiatives

Additional materials would be intended for staff and board use:

- Timeframes for priorities and initiatives
- Metrics (potentially through the generation of a dashboard)
- Business / financial plan tied to the strategic plan priorities

Schedule

ACTIVITY	COMPLETION DATE
RFP released	July 24, 2026
Proposals due	August 24, 2026
Applicant selected	September 2026
Finalize scope and issue notice to proceed	October 2026
Input sessions and information gathering	November 1, 2026 - March 20, 2027
First draft presented to Executive Director and Executive Committee of the Board of Directors	May 8, 2027
Final deliverables presented at Board of Directors meeting and plan accepted	June 3, 2027

Budget

The total budget is not to exceed \$60,000 inclusive of consultant fees, document production, printing, and contingency.

Evaluation

Contemporary Craft will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- Projected costs;
- Experience and technical expertise;
- Past performance history (prior experience with neighborhood-based District development and strategies is a plus); and
- Samples and/or case studies from previous projects.

Submission Requirements

Submissions should include:

- Names, contact information and qualifications of the individuals who will perform the tasks and the degree of their respective participation;
- Statement of ability to perform the task in a timely fashion including staffing and familiarity with the subject matter;
- Information about the firm or team's methods and approach to strategic planning;
- Proposed work plan with major stages and milestones, specific activities to be conducted at each stage, and deliverables associated with each stage;
- Detailed project budget (including estimated hours, and proposed payment schedule as it relates to project milestones and deliverables); and
- At least three samples of past work and related references.

Questions can be submitted to work@contemporarycraft.org. Questions submitted less than three days prior to the submittal due date may not be answered.

Proposals must be submitted in a single PDF to work@contemporarycraft.org by 5:00 PM EST on August 24, 2026 and be no longer than 25 pages in length to be considered.

Resumes are not considered part of this 25-page limit.

Minority-owned, women-owned and LGBT+-owned businesses are encouraged to respond to this RFP.

Terms and Conditions

- **Ownership and Confidentiality:** All intellectual property will become the property of Contemporary Craft. All data remains the sole property of Contemporary Craft. The consultant shall agree to keep information related to this process in strict confidence, including, but not limited to, the terms of the contract and any confidential business information or proprietary information that has been gathered on this project. If the bidder deems any material submitted to be proprietary or confidential, the bidder must indicate this in the relevant sections of the response.
- **Cost of Proposal:** All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by Contemporary Craft.
- **Reservation of Rights:** Contemporary Craft reserves the right to request or negotiate changes in a proposal, to accept all or part of a proposal, or to reject any or all proposals. Contemporary Craft may, at its sole and absolute discretion, select no provider for these services if, in its determination, no applicant is sufficiently responsive to the need. Contemporary Craft reserves the right to disqualify any proposal which does not adhere to the RFP guidelines. This RFP is being offered at the discretion of Contemporary Craft. It does not commit Contemporary Craft to award any contract.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Applicants agree that they or their employees do not currently have, nor will they have, any conflict of interest between themselves and Contemporary Craft. Any perceived or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in the proposal. Contemporary Craft employees, board members and their family members are ineligible to be a Contemporary Craft vendor, and therefore may not submit a proposal.