

WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION



Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program Request for Qualifications

OVERVIEW

The Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program promotes the highest level of design in the development of future public buildings and spaces in Benton and Washington counties. Through the Design Excellence Program, the foundation regularly partners with local municipalities and nonprofit organizations by offering financial support for all aspects of design.

Over the last 25 years, the population in Northwest Arkansas has more than doubled, creating opportunities and challenges in planning and design. The Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program seeks to address these opportunities by encouraging the design of public spaces that put people first. Projects supported by the program will strengthen public life, elevate standards of sustainability and resilience, celebrate local cultures and place, and build regional capacity.

By identifying top design professionals, the program will fund projects developed with a clear understanding of how people use and experience public space in the intersection of life, space and buildings. Designing places and spaces for people can: support children's ability to learn; provide a platform for local arts and culture to flourish; help keep a community physically active and mentally stimulated; build social cohesion; spur economic development; and help us live in harmony with the environment. The Design Excellence program places emphasis on inclusive community engagement and representation throughout all phases of design and development.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program is defined by a set of commonly held principles. The selection of design professionals, participating projects and program success are all measured against these core values. We measure performance to learn, and to apply the lessons learned to future work. These principles are supported by goals and metrics for all stakeholders to stand behind, and they apply to different projects, at different scales and spaces.

Strengthen Public Life

Create opportunities for people to spend quality time in public – moving or staying, alone or with others

Elevate Standards of Sustainability and Resilience

Adhere to standards of sustainability, elevate ambitions and demonstrate relation of resilience to people and place

Celebrate Local Cultures and Place

Enhance and respond to local social history and cultures as well as climate and geography

Build Regional Capacity

Raise local ambitions and build knowledge and skills among design community and public

2020 APPLICATION PROCESS

The Walton Family Foundation is opening a new application cycle for its Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program. **Now through October 14**, design professionals, including those with experience in architecture, landscape architecture and urban design in small communities, are encouraged to submit their work for review at [waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design](https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design).

Relevant Work in Northwest Arkansas

Please visit <https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design-resources> for samples of relevant work.

Recent Media Coverage about Northwest Arkansas

Please visit <https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design-resources> for a compilation of media coverage about Northwest Arkansas.

SELECTION PROCESS

Interested design professionals must be prepared to submit a proposal of a **maximum of 25** pages, which should include the following:

- A letter of interest, maximum one page
- Design firm overview, including notation on if the firm is a Woman or Minority-Owned Business (WMBE), maximum two pages
- Team member bios (principals and key team members), maximum two pages
- Statement of commitment outlining how principals will be involved in requested project interviews if admitted into the program and on-site engagement with the project and/or grantee if ultimately selected, maximum half page
- A statement of the design firm's technical approach to work, including philosophy for a team-based project approach, maximum two pages
- A statement of no more than two pages responding to the following:
 - The firm's understanding/sensibility of the Design Excellence Program's guiding principles, particularly as applied to its built work
 - The firm's approach to evaluating the success of a project, from inception through completion, giving one example where specific performance metrics were used
 - The firm's approach to achieving design excellence while working with public sector and nonprofit clients with limited budgets
- Maximum of five examples of completed projects as lead consultant. The samples should showcase projects that demonstrate the four guiding principles of the Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program. Please include:
 - Project description outlining issues and approach used to solve these challenges, maximum half page
 - Visual examples, maximum of three pages per project
 - Awards, if any, won for examples of work
- References: Please include a reference letter from the following sources:
 - Two former or current clients
 - A contractor responsible for the construction of one of the firm's designs, if firm is an architecture or landscape architecture firm

Materials should be provided in a PDF format and can be uploaded at <https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design-apply>.

Interested parties will be able to submit questions before the application deadline closes at <http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design-contact>. Questions must be submitted by **5 p.m. CST on October 2, 2020**. Answers to the questions will be posted to the website by **5 p.m. CST on October 7, 2020**.

The Q&A process will be the ONLY communication allowed between interested applicants and the Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program. Walton Family Foundation Board members, staff and selection committee members should NOT be contacted directly.

The application process for design professionals opens when the Design Excellence Selection Committee determines there is a need for specific design backgrounds, to replace firms that have been awarded projects or replace firms whose five-year term has expired. The Design Excellence Selection Committee, which is comprised of industry experts and Walton Family Foundation representatives, will review qualifications and invite select design firms to join the program.

Design professionals will be able to participate in the Design Excellence Program for up to five years, or until they are selected for a project. Selection does not guarantee an interview for a project, nor does it guarantee that a project will ultimately be approved.

Projects are typically selected through:

- A direct invitation from the Walton Family Foundation to apply for the program based on the organization's potential to enhance the foundation's efforts
- An open call for applications that complement the Walton Family Foundation's efforts to support a specific area of design such as developing green spaces or enhancing urban design at the neighborhood scale

As projects are determined, the Selection Committee will review the project's unique design needs and choose a core group of design professionals who may be a good fit for the project. This core group will be presented to the grantee for consideration and final approval. Final decisions on the design professional and design outcome will be made by the grantee.

Selection does not guarantee an interview or a project, nor does it guarantee that any project will ultimately be approved. The Walton Family Foundation reserves the right to cancel this program in whole or in part at any time. In no event shall any person or organization have any claim or cause of action against the Walton Family Foundation or any of its members, officers, employees, agents or affiliates arising out of, relating to, or in any way connected with this program. Submission of an application shall constitute unconditional agreement to each and every term and condition hereof.

For approved projects, the grantee is provided a limited budget to reimburse each interviewed design firm's transportation and interview presentation expenses.

This selection process is designed to accommodate firms of all sizes, including nationally recognized, multi-disciplinary firms, smaller specialty firms and young design professionals who may not yet be discovered.

The program is expected to generate meaningful partnerships between in-state and out-of-state firms. However, partnership agreements are not needed during the initial review process and should only be considered after a design professional has been selected as a finalist for a specific project.

Applicants selected for the pool of designers for the Design Excellence Program will be notified by the end of December 2020.

KEY DATES

- Wednesday, September 16, 2020: Application process opens
- Friday, October 02, 2020: Submit questions on application process by 5 p.m. CST
- Wednesday, October 07, 2020: Response to questions published by 5 p.m. CST
- **Wednesday, October 14, 2020: Submit RFQ response for review in PDF format to the link provided above by 5 p.m. CST**
- By end of December 2020: Notification of selection

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Design professional are encouraged to visit www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/design to gain access to additional information on the program and public responses to questions submitted.