

## **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS CREATIVE WORKER RIGHTS: EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT CONSULTANTS/ DELEGATE AGENCY**

### **BACKGROUND**

Creative workers are the foundation of Chicago's rich arts and culture landscape. From artists, educators, and ushers, to techs, administrators, and so many others, creative workers are fueling the imagination and design that are essential to the city's businesses, organizations, and communities.

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is committed to supporting the livelihoods of Chicago's creative workers. While it does this through programmatic and project support, as well as professional development opportunities, DCASE is responding to calls from the sector to enact more proactive strategies over the long term to ensure that, in Chicago, creative work is good work.

In 2024, DCASE, in partnership with the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), spearheaded an introductory educational campaign entitled, "Art is Labor." to connect creative sector employers and creative sector workers with information about labor laws at the city, state, and federal level. The campaign included:

- Convening of an Advisory Committee to guide the campaign's contents and direction.
- Launching a stand-alone website ([chicago.gov/creativework](https://chicago.gov/creativework)).
- Commissioning the creation of brand assets and execution of a PR campaign, which included the distribution of assets across the City's digital platforms and in limited online publications through ads.
- Presenting four unique webinars for employer and worker audiences, presented in English and Spanish, with additional materials translated into Polish and Simplified Chinese.
- Initiating partnerships with creative sector organizations and governmental agencies to expand the reach of the campaign.

The "Art is Labor." campaign, and DCASE's broader efforts, are guided by the policy and advocacy work happening locally and nationally to confront disparities in creative workers' working conditions. Chicago's creative community has repeatedly called for the City to develop standards and resources for people who work in arts and culture, and to ensure that racial, gender, disability, age, geographic and other equity considerations are a part of this work. The opportunity of the coming year includes remaining responsive to local and national context and learnings. For further information on this context, visit the "Background" page of [Chicago.gov/CreativeWork](https://chicago.gov/CreativeWork).

### **OPPORTUNITY**

In 2025, DCASE's Cultural Resources team will continue the work started through the "Art is Labor." campaign by engaging a consultant or consultant team, contracted as a delegate agency, to develop a new arc of content that advances creative worker rights for performing arts organizations and independent workers.

The Scope of Services, detailed below, includes collaborating with DCASE to convene an advisory body to guide the development of the content; designing and producing an educational arc of programming, including developing associated marketing materials; reporting on the resulting program's impact; and providing recommendations to DCASE on steps to continue to advance work in support of creative worker rights. Topics that have been identified to be of interest for further educational programming include operationalizing pay equity, contracting and labor standards across union/non-union workforces, financial planning and modeling, and supporting organizations moving from misclassification to classification compliance within their workforce.

The selection process for the consultant team will include an opportunity to interview with City staff and share reflections on the issues that are most pressing to Chicago's performing arts entities and independent creative workers from the standpoint of creative worker rights.

The interview process, as well as the implementation of the Scope, will include opportunities to identify how DCASE can support the sector in navigating the volatility and uncertainty around arts, culture, and the humanities funding in this moment.

The goals of this consulting contract are to:

- 1) support organizations and individuals to have better working knowledge of a broad range of labor standards and best practices;
- 2) share tools that the arts and culture sector can use to address noncompliance and inequitable working conditions, which limit the ability of performing artists to live, work, and stay in Chicago; and
- 3) sustain investments and momentum from within public sector agencies towards improving working conditions for creative workers.

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The selected Consultant will work closely with DCASE's Cultural Resources and BACP staff to continue efforts to advance creative worker rights. The final scope of work and timeline, which will be included in the Consultant's contract, will be determined through City collaboration and consultation with the selected Consultant.

The intended scope includes:

### Phase 1: Information Gathering & Design | August – December 2025

- Convening an Advisory Committee to guide content development (Depending on the consultant's approach, this group can/may convene throughout the duration of the contract).
- Paying Committee member stipends/honoraria.
- Developing a workplan for the learning arc, and engagement structure for organizational partners. These deliverables will be approved by DCASE staff before being enacted.
- Preparing a refined budget for the final deliverables, to be approved by DCASE before the Consultant proceeds to Phase 2.

### Phase 2: Public Presentations/Convenings & Marketing Campaign | January – June 2026

- Leading educational convenings, webinars, or workshops that address working conditions topics (precise number of sessions will be determined based on the Consultant's proposed content, identified during the information gathering and design stage),
- Developing promotional materials for the sessions, using the brand guidelines and kit of assets developed by Public Communications Inc for the campaign in 2024.

- Delivering recordings and evergreen materials from educational sessions; these will be archived on the DCASE website and social media feeds, including YouTube.
- Developing communication tools, graphics for distribution in local media, social media boosting.
- Managing ad buys for graphics and promotional material, on behalf of the city.
- Engaging ASL/Cart and/or translation services, as required.

#### Phase 3: Reporting | July – August 2026

- Maintaining records of attendance (unique and repeat), contact information, demographics, and other appropriate information on the impact of the public presentations and marketing campaign.

#### Phase 4: Recommendations | September 2026

- Preparing a final report with recommendations to guide DCASE in work that can follow the scope implemented here.
- Attending a closing conversation that will include a review and discussion of the recommendations with City staff, Advisory Committee members, and “Art is Labor.” campaign partners.

Throughout the term of the contract, the Consultant will attend regular meetings with City staff. It is expected that DCASE staff will inform the Advisory Committee selection process and attend Advisory meetings.

### **BUDGET**

\$85,000, inclusive of professional fees, honoraria, graphic design and marketing expenses, travel, insurance, materials & supplies.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

This project is open to consultants, professionals, businesses, and non-profit organizations with:

- A minimum of three (3) years of experience in labor- and/or creative work-related research, advocacy, programming, communications, and/or policymaking.
- Specific knowledge of the Chicago performing arts community and/or community of independent creative workers.
- Experience managing participatory planning processes or program design processes.
- Experience working with diverse creative communities.
- Experience with graphic design and developing marketing materials using existing brand assets and placing marketing materials through paid advertising and/or boosted content.

Teams with a diverse range of experience and expertise are highly encouraged to apply.

### **SELECTION**

Respondents will be required to participate in a competitive selection process. Responses will be reviewed and evaluated by a Review Committee made up of City staff with relevant experience and expertise. Demonstration of qualifications, prior experience, approach to the scope, and ability to complete the desired tasks with the budget identified will be the basis for selection. Respondents

may meet the criteria outlined below through the combined skills and experiences of team members. Responses will be scored according to the criteria below.

- (20 points) **Professional merit and qualifications** demonstrated in a portfolio of past work that includes content expertise relevant to the scope of work, including advanced knowledge of efforts to advance creative worker rights, knowledge of the Chicago art sector, experience in creative community focused marketing, and program reporting.
- (10 points) A broad range of **creative and administrative skills** applicable to the development and execution of the scope of work, including budget and timeline management.
- (10 points) A **commitment to equity and access**, as demonstrated through past work and leadership.
- (10 points) A **demonstrated ability to communicate** complex concepts in ways that are compelling and meaningful to diverse audiences.

The City will invite the most highly qualified Respondents to interview with the Committee. Respondents selected to interview will receive \$500 to prepare a presentation detailing their approach to the project, presenting a draft budget, and responding to Review Committee questions. Interviews will be scored according to a set of Review Criteria shared with the interviewees in advance of the presentation.

After a final round of scoring, the City will commence negotiations with the most highly qualified Respondents for the Scope of Work. If the City is unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with such Respondent, the City shall terminate such negotiations and undertake negotiations with the next most qualified Respondent, continuing the process until an agreement is reached.

## SELECTION TIMELINE

\*All dates are approximate.

STAGE	Date
RFQ Released	Wednesday, May 14, 2025
Virtual Information Session   This session will be recorded and posted online.	Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 1pm CT <a href="#">Register here.</a>
Deadline to submit	<b>Tuesday, July 1, 2025, at 5pm CT</b>
Review of qualifications / finalist selection	Week of July 7, 2025
Finalist interviews / presentations	Week of July 21, 2025
Notification of final selection	Week of August 4, 2025

## HOW TO APPLY

Respondents should email all materials in a single PDF attachment to [CulturalResources@cityofchicago.gov](mailto:CulturalResources@cityofchicago.gov) using the email subject "Creative Work RFQ Response – [Consultant/team name here]" by **Tuesday, July 1, 2025, at 5 pm CT**.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

## WHAT TO SUBMIT

Each team must submit all application materials in a single PDF attachment.

Applications should include:

1. **Letter of Interest (LOI).** The LOI should be no more than four (4) pages and include the following:
  - a. **General Contact Information** for the Lead Consultant. This is the entity or individual that will handle the administrative aspects of contracting, invoicing, and serve as point person in the relationship with City staff.
    - i. Lead's name, address, phone, email
    - ii. Lead's website and social media handles, as applicable
  - b. **Narrative Response Questions:**
    - i. Describe you and/or your team's interest in this project. Why are you applying for this opportunity?
    - ii. Describe your experience developing and managing projects relevant to the consulting opportunity described here. If responding as a team, detail any instances of collaboration between the team members.
    - iii. Describe your experience serving and providing culturally equitable services within creative communities of diverse backgrounds, including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexual orientation.
2. **Key Personnel Description(s).** A document containing one paragraph descriptions of the people who will play a key role in executing this project, describing the person's role on the team and any associated responsibilities.
3. **CV/Resume(s).** A CV/Resume needs to be provided for each individual. Include a list of prior projects, experience, education, credentials, etc. showing that the minimum requirements for past work are met.
4. **Work Samples.** Provide three (3) to five (5) Work Samples from the last five (5) years. Samples should represent the respondent's ability to implement the work described in the Scope of Services. Provide samples of past projects and services that demonstrate project management capacity and content expertise. Include project reports (with descriptions, titles, dates, locations, clients/agencies, etc.), project summaries with photographs or relevant media links that demonstrate an ability to fulfill the scope of work.

In the case of submissions from teams of consultants, please provide examples from each lead contributor, and/or that demonstrate projects where consultants have collaborated in the past
5. **References.** Provide at least three (3) references who can speak about their experience working with you on projects completed within the past five (5) years. For each reference provide: name, phone number, email, company or organizational affiliation, title, and a brief description of the project/consulting services you provided, including the project's budget. In the case of submissions from teams, please provide a reference for all lead contributors.

## ABOUT DCASE

The **City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)** supports artists and cultural organizations, invests in the creative economy, and expands access and participation in the arts throughout Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. As a collaborative cultural presenter, arts funder, and advocate for creative workers, our programs and events serve Chicagoans and visitors of all ages and backgrounds, downtown and in diverse communities across our city – to strengthen and celebrate Chicago. DCASE produces some of the city's most iconic festivals, markets, events, and

exhibitions at the Chicago Cultural Center, Millennium Park, and in communities across the city — serving a local and global audience of 25 million people. The Department offers cultural grants and resources, manages public art, supports TV and film production and other creative industries, and permits special events throughout Chicago.