

Request for Proposals for
Exhibit Designer for the Wilson Bruce Evans House, Oberlin, OH
Applications due January 5, 2026

The Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society is looking for an Exhibit Designer to work in cooperation with a Content Developer to create a final bid package for fabricators for exhibits for the interior public spaces now under rehabilitation in the National Historic Landmark Wilson Bruce Evans House. The Exhibit Designer position is funded as part of a grant from the National Park Service's African American Civil Rights program. Any work that may impact the site or structure must meet the Secretary of Interior Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

The Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society (Evans HHS) is a 501(c)3 established in 2021 to rehabilitate the Wilson Bruce Evans House in Oberlin, Ohio. Built by a North Carolina born free man of color, the home's original wing was completed by 1856, with a substantial two-story brick addition to the structure in the 1870s. The area available for exhibition is approximately 1200 square feet and includes 4 major areas—three rooms in the historic home and a newly refurbished 600 square foot flexibly configured educational center in the rehabilitated original wing--plus hallways and entrances.

BACKGROUND:

Trained as a cabinetmaker, Evans was an active abolitionist who went to jail for participation in the 1858 Oberlin Wellington Rescue in defiance of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. He is said to have hidden freedom seekers in his house. Two of his Oberlin kin, his brother-in-law Lewis Sheridan Leary and his nephew John Copeland, gave their lives for joining in John Brown's Uprising. Rich with history and craft details, the house is being rehabilitated to open to the public as an historic site and educational center honoring the history of Evans, his descendants, and the long struggle for racial justice in the U.S. Documents, photographs, furniture and other objects pertaining to the house are currently in storage. Archeological explorations in 2024 recovered interesting fragments. The Evans HHS Board approved the [museum master plan](#) completed in 2024 to guide content development and exhibit design.

The Evans HHS Board includes many descendants of Evans as well as local historians. It works closely with the Executive Director. The organization currently has no employees, although it will transition to paid staff after its opening to the public, now expected to be at the end of 2026.

The Evans House has begun its comprehensive rehabilitation funded in large part by National Park Service grants. It will be conducting a concurrent search for an Exhibit Designer to work in cooperation with the Content Developer.

VISION:

As a rare Black-owned historic site with a board that is committed to promoting racial justice, the Evans House seeks to strengthen to the public's understanding of African American history and Oberlin's history; celebrate and serve the local African American community; anchor an abolitionist and African American historical district in Oberlin; and inspire visitors to work toward a more just world, in Oberlin and beyond. Situated in Oberlin, a small town in northeast Ohio known as "the town that started the Civil War" because of its antislavery activism, the Evans House seeks to position itself as the starting point for Black heritage tourism in the region. It envisions offering visitors hands-on experiences illuminating the history of the Underground

Railroad, and also less widely known but vital stories including accounts of how the descendants of Wilson Bruce Evans founded schools in the post-Civil War south where they nurtured Black educational aspirations despite Jim Crow restrictions. It will illuminate their achievements, and those of others in Oberlin and beyond underscoring the long history of the struggle for equality. By exploring the stories of the advances of, and challenges to, Oberlin's Black residents and neighborhoods, it will illuminate the impact of racism and document resistance and achievement, locally and nationally. When open, the Evans HHS will feature exhibits that are interactive, attractive to multiple audiences especially young people, and invite participation and reflection.

The work of the Exhibit Designer will proceed in stages with the following sequence of deliverables:

- Consultation on Exhibit Outline to be produced by Content Developer;
- Schematic Design to be produced in cooperation with Content Developer;
- Exhibit Design: creation of floor plans, story boards, scale drawings, for 3D and 2D exhibits; creation of copyedited and proofread graphic layouts;
- Final Design consultation: preparation of final bid package for exhibit fabricators.

QUALIFICATIONS:

The Exhibit Designer will work closely with Evans HHS Executive Director and other members of the Evans Project Team including the project architect, the historic preservation consultants, and the Content Developer. Ability to work flexibly with a small nonprofit is essential. More on the organization and its work is available at evanshhs.org. Exhibit Designer should be knowledgeable about Section 106 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, particularly as applicable for the rehabilitation of a National Historic Landmark owned by a 501(c)3 not for profit organization, and other regulations pertinent to this federally funded project.

Other essential qualifications include

- Experience with museum exhibitions;
- Appropriate professional credentials;
- References for at least 3 separate projects.

Familiarity with the history of the Evans House, Wilson Bruce Evans, and antebellum Oberlin is desired.

Evans HHS has budgeted \$48,000 for this position. Minority-owned businesses and female-owned businesses are encouraged to apply.

In addition to documenting experience, credentials and projects, proposals should include:

- a proposed timeline for the project;
- An explanation of how the exhibit designer connects past and present in a social justice framework.

Please direct questions and proposals to Carol Lasser, Executive Director at carol.lasser@evanshhs.org.