

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Design Fabrication for the Wilson Bruce Evans House, Oberlin, OH

Applications due June 30, 2026
To be awarded July 15, 2026

The Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society is looking for an Exhibit Fabricator to work in cooperation with an Exhibit Design Team to create an exhibition for the interior public space in the National Historic Landmark Wilson Bruce Evans House. The Exhibit Fabricator 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. The pre-Civil War residence of a North Carolina-born free man of color, the home's original wing was built in 1848, 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 John Brown's Uprising. Rich with history and craft details, the house will 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, but will transition to paid staff after its public opening, anticipated in February 2027. The Evans House rehabilitation, exhibit design, and fabrication will be largely funded by National Park Service grants.

VISION:

The Evans House, a rare Black-owned historic site, aims to enhance understanding of African American history and Oberlin's legacy, while serving the local community and promoting racial justice. Located in Oberlin, OH, known for its antislavery activism, it seeks to be a hub for Black heritage tourism, offering hands-on experiences related to the Underground Railroad and the post-Civil War educational achievements of Wilson Bruce Evans' descendants. By sharing the stories of Oberlin's Black residents, the site will document the impact of racism and the ongoing struggle for equality. Upon opening, it will feature interactive exhibits that appeal to multiple audiences, especially young people, and invite participation and reflection.

SCOPE OF WORK:

NOTES

- Evans HHS has budgeted \$90,000 for this scope of work. Minority-owned businesses and female-owned businesses are encouraged to apply.
- A team of specialists may be needed to fabricate the entire exhibition, so we are also requesting oversight and management of the fabrication process.
- We may request prototyping for some objects as needed.
- The following is the current estimate of fabrication needs. It may be adjusted in consultation with the chosen fabricator.
- Please see Exhibit A, the tentative design and content plan.

2D Printing:

- Wall covering: roughly 1,000 sq. ft. of vinyl (or similar) wall graphics
- Window covering printing (4 at 36' x 96')—Rooms B, E, and G.
- 3D sintra graphics, TBD (100 sq. ft.?), .5" depth

3D Fabrication:

- Cases: 3 of different dimensions, size to be determined, similar materials, and height
 1. 60" x 60' x 38" h—Room E
 2. 108" x 24" x 38"—Room H
 3. 60" x 24" x 38"—Room TBD
- Benches: different widths, same materials (walnut), depth (17"), and height (19")
 1. 72"—Room E
 2. 48"—Room F
- Moveable Display "Wall" Frames
 1. Quantity of 5 = 84" x 32"Frames are double-sided and can hold 1/2" Sintra panels, back-to-back

- Welcome desk: similar materials/design to bench
1. 36" x 18" x 38" (counter height)—Room E

Digital Needs:

- Audio: 2 rooms—Rooms D and E, soundproofing as needed
- Illuminated slideshow—Room C

Framing: 18 frames, similar materials, differing dimensions, ranging 5 x 7"—12 x 18"

QUALIFICATIONS:

The Fabricators will work closely with the Evans HHS Executive Director and other members of the Evans Project Team, including the project architect, the historic preservation consultants, the Content Developer, and the Exhibition Designer. The ability to work flexibly with a small nonprofit is essential. More on the organization and its work is available at evanshhs.org.

Other 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.

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