



**SAINT LOUIS
SCIENCE
CENTER**

Request for Proposal, Portable Planetarium
Student and Teacher Programs, Saint Louis Science Center
September 21, 2018

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Introduction

The Saint Louis Science Center seeks proposals from qualified Planetarium and Educational vendor supply companies for purchase of a portable planetarium for on-site and off-site programming with school and public audiences. Proposals that include details for a portable dome, projector, training opportunities, and software options will be reviewed.

About Us

The Saint Louis Science Center traces its roots to the Academy of Science of St. Louis, founded in 1856 as the first scientific organization west of the Mississippi River. In 1959, the Academy created the Museum of Science and Natural History in Clayton's Oak Knoll Park. When the Metropolitan Zoological Park & Museum District (ZMD) was formed in 1971, the Museum of Science and Natural History became a member, independent from the Academy, which continues to operate as a separate entity to this day. The Museum outgrew the facilities at Oak Knoll Park in the mid-1980s, and in 1984 the Museum acquired the James S. McDonnell Planetarium from the City of St. Louis. After extensive renovations, the Planetarium reopened in 1985 as the Saint Louis Science Center.

Following a \$34 million expansion to construct the current main building on Oakland Avenue, the Science Center opened November 2, 1991 in its larger footprint which included the five story OMNIMAX® Theater and a highway-spanning connection bridge. The Science Center added the EXPLORADOME in 1997 in order to provide an additional space for large traveling exhibitions. With the popularity of the EXPLORADOME, the Science Center took action to create a permanent exhibition space. In October, 2011 Boeing Hall opened dedicating 13,000 square feet of exhibit space for traveling exhibitions.

The 50,000 square foot area previously used for the EXPLORADOME was renovated into *GROW*, a permanent indoor/outdoor exhibit dedicated to the experience and journey of the food supply from farm to fork. The agriculture exhibit opened to the public on June 18, 2016. The Saint Louis Science Center was also named a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate, the first in the St. Louis region, in 2016. This title provides access to Smithsonian artifacts, traveling exhibits, and educational collaborations locally and nationally.

In 2000 the McDonnell Planetarium underwent an extensive \$10 million renovation. It reopened in 2001 with a new ZEISS UNIVERSARIUM Modell IX star projector under a 24-meter dome, which remains the largest horizontal planetarium dome in the Americas. The unique open floor plan under the dome includes mats for lying on the floor and removable seating that allows the planetarium to be a popular venue for events and programs such as Science with the Symphony and Yoga Under the Stars. In 2016 the Planetarium installed efficient LED Cove Lighting and brand new star fields to create a more realistic astronomical experience. In 2017 the McDonnell Planetarium became the first and only planetarium in the Americas to install LED lamps to power the stars in the UNIVERSARIUM, making the stars more energy efficient and two times brighter. The planetarium finished out 2017 as one of its strongest years ever. The Planetarium had the pleasure of serving as a local community leader in the 2017 Great

American Total Solar Eclipse, as well as hosting the international Pleiades National Planetarium Conference; the first of its kind that saw over 400 attendees.

Today the Science Center serves more than one million people each year, and is one of the nation's 25 largest museums. It has built a national reputation for programs and exhibits, community partnerships, and visitor experience. The Science Center is part of many local, regional and national initiatives to build better and stronger links between formal and informal education.

Project Scope

The Education Department of the Saint Louis Science Center would like to purchase a Portable Planetarium system that will best fit the Science Center's facilitation of impactful on-site and off-site programming. These educational programs represent the backbone of our mission: "To ignite and sustain lifelong science and technology learning". Bids for purchase answering this RFP, at a minimum, should include the following equipment: fish-eye digital projector; 5-meter dome; program software and on-site training with equipment and software.

Due to demand and popularity of this programming, the Science Center requires equipment that is durable and provides functional longevity. This off-site community resource is valuable to community members that are unable to visit the Planetarium or OMNIMAX domes on-site. While the main programming content will focus on astronomy, the Science Center is also looking for equipment and software systems that will help to expand programming content offerings.

Deliverables

The successful Vendor shall guarantee that the products proposed for a new¹ system shall be new, of the model of current production agreed to in the contract, and of first quality as to workmanship and materials used in said units. If a new hardware and/or software release is available after the proposal submission and before any system cutover, it shall be offered at no increased cost. The Science Center shall then decide which version it would like to purchase.

The top priorities for an off-site Portable Planetarium include the following:

- *Equipment and Presentation Quality* – Equipment is purposefully designed, functions with consistency, includes sealed entry, is accessible to individuals with limited physical mobility, and facilitates the best visual experience for participants. The quality of the equipment is such that it will require little to no repair or replacement under careful handling.

¹ A new product is defined as a product that is made completely of unused, name brand, genuine, original parts. The product shall not have been operated for any purpose other than routine operational testing. A product used for demonstration purposes at any time does not meet this definition and is not acceptable.

- *Equipment Durability* – Equipment is sturdy enough to withstand frequent off-site programming with a minimum of a 3-5 year warranty, few repairs and minimal upgrades.
- *Ease of Use* – Projector and programming for the portable planetarium is simple and sleek, not cumbersome. Similarly, program systems that are difficult to use, customize or require complicated training will not be considered.
- *Audience Interaction Capability* – The system should enable a live presenter to interact easily with the audience in the dome. This could include allowing a student to easily take over controlling the projector (with a remote, tablet, etc.), allowing an audience member to draw on the dome digitally when asked, or making it easier to have multiple students give input through polling.
- *Cost of Consumables* – Additional technical components including batteries, lamps, programming, etc. are expected to last at least 12 months, barring any accidental damage, and will be of a reasonable fee (under \$300).
- *Longevity of Programming* – Pre-recorded shows or digital photos should not be limited by the range of an online network. Due to the Science Center’s expansive reach in program locations, all aspects of programming content must be pre-programmed, downloaded and installed so as to be reliable in even the remotest of locations and/or without the use of Wi-Fi. The equipment and programming should have a projected lifespan of at least 5 years.
- *Ease in Transportation and Set-Up* – Dome and projector can be loaded and unloaded independently by one person of average strength and build. Set-up and tear-down methods are simple and can happen within 20-30 minutes. The projector and digital set-up need to be able to withstand jostling during programming transitions.

Value Additions

With the purchase of this equipment, we are also looking for an active customer service support system. This support should include the following:

- Pricing for on-site staff training, providing specifics on equipment utilization, maintenance, and best practices.
- Willingness to train in-house Planetarium Technician in repair and troubleshooting techniques for the portable projection system.
- Consistent and timely technical support.
- Friendly personal interactions.
- Accessible verbal communication for those with varied content and knowledge levels
- It is preferred that phone and e-mail technical support be available 8am-5pm CST, Monday-Friday with next day business on-site support.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the following requirements:

- Ease of set up and tear down of both the dome and the projection system
- Type of digital projector (i.e. fisheye lens versus mirror system, DLP versus LCD, Laser versus lamp, etc.);
- Quality of projection (–) Does a projected image have undesirable artifacts, such as obvious pixilation;
- Appropriate Brightness (–) Is the system bright enough for the five meter inflatable dome without being overly bright;
- Ease of system use;
- Ease of switching between prerecorded and live programming;
- Content compatibility and availability for system;
- Ease of troubleshooting;
- Interaction with vendor;
- Quality and durability of the portable dome;
- Ability to update the system with either no fee or a minimal fee;
- Compatibility of file formats between planetarium projection systems;
- Recommended frequency of maintenance (including lamp change estimates);
- Interactivity (–)the system be used by a student or audience member easily;
- Lifespan and warranty for both the projection system and the portable dome;
- Proof of patent of license/agreement to use another vendor’s product (i.e. a Sony or Christie projector with proprietary software);
- Company provides a minimum of one change of lamps for the projector and a patch kit for the dome;
- If a system is a portable version or “lite” version of a full system, can the portable version be upgraded to the full version if desired for a reasonable fee;
- The vendor supports legacy systems, especially after one or more new product releases have occurred;

Submission

Submissions for bid should include the following information:

- Agency Description – The Science Center is seeking proposals from planetarium and educational supply companies specializing in Portable Planetarium equipment, maintenance and technical support. Companies must be established in the sale, development, creation, and technical support of Portable Planetariums for at least five years.
- The Science Center requests companies provide the contact information for at least three customers as a reference for feedback.

- Fees² for Equipment Purchase.

All proposal submissions must be submitted via e-mail to the Associate Director of Student and Teacher Programs. Title all e-mail submissions **SLSC Portable Planetarium: your business name**. The contact information is as follows.

Cate Hanford

Associate Director of Student and Teacher Programs

cate.hanford@slsc.org

314.289.4430

Complete proposals must be submitted before November 2, 2018 at 4:00pm CDT. Final decisions will be made November 28, 2018 by 4:00pm CDT.

Project Schedule

Vendor shall verify they can meet the following schedule.

Event	Date
Request for proposal issued	September 24, 2018
RSVP for Bidders Meeting	October 3, 2018
Last day for vendor questions on RFP	October 10, 2018
Written answers provided by	October 19, 2018
Notice to Bid due	October 26, 2018
Proposals due (by 4:00pm CDT)	November 2, 2018
Proposal evaluation, On-Site Demonstrations	November 2 – November 9, 2018
Interviews, as needed	November 8- November 14, 2018
Contract negotiations & Due Diligence	November 21, 2018
Project Awarded – Notice to Proceed	November 28, 2018

² The Science Center is exempt from Missouri state tax and federal excise tax. The prices quoted must be net, exclusive of taxes. A State of Missouri Sales and Use Tax exemption certificate will be provided to the awarded firm.