



Questions and Answers

Request for Proposals for Event Planning, Administration, Coordination & Consultation Services for Greater & Greener, the biennial urban parks conference, in Atlanta, GA, June 3-6, 2028

Selection Process

1. How many companies received this RFP?

A: The RFP is publicly available on the City Parks Alliance website at cityparksalliance.org/event-planner-request-for-proposals. In addition, we reached out to 9 targeted companies that either provided this service in the past, have bid on our previous conference RFPs, or were recommended by our 2028 conference partners.

2. What factors will be weighted most heavily in proposal evaluation (e.g., cost, relevant experience, staffing model, DEI approach)?

A: Qualifications and experience will be the most important factors, along with the estimated fee. We are also looking for a clear understanding of the conference and our goals, as well as any innovative ideas about improving the attendee experience, or making it more cost-effective to deliver. We would like a consultant who has familiarity with event planning in the urban context, as our conference tends to be in the downtowns of larger cities. And we would like a consultant who can work effectively with a small staff in a collaborative setting that includes a local partner and several other organizations who make up the Local Host Team.

The suggested staffing model has worked in the past, but we are open to different approaches as long as they meet our goals. Diversity goals for contractor staff and vendors are a welcome secondary benefit in addition to our goal of spending as much of our budget as locally as feasible for economic impact in our host city.

3. Who will be the final decision-maker for the selection and how will that decision ultimately be made?

A: The final decision-makers will be our executive director (Catherine Nagel) and program director (Gideon Berger), with select input from other key staff and board members as needed for any subject matter expertise. The decision will be made based on timely and appropriate responses to the 12 proposal requirements, with emphasis generally weighted as described in the answer to question 2 above. In the case of there being 2 or more finalists, interviews would be conducted over the last 2 weeks of April to inform a final decision.

4. Could the response to questions 4, 5, and 6 (summary of quals including project examples, estimate of how much available time team members have based on projected

workload over the life of the contract, summary of key staff and any additional subcontractors) be combined into one section in our response?

A: Absolutely if that helps make your response more concise. Just be clear to provide all of the information asked for under those questions.

General Questions

1. Which elements of the scope (programming, sponsorship/exhibitors, logistics, registration) require the greatest consultant capacity based on prior conferences?

A: Managing the project within the scope and budget takes the most time. Recruiting and managing exhibitors, along with managing day-to-day registrations, are the top two in terms of hours required for the project. These items also include extensive work in the registration system used for the event. Managing logistics is the next most time-consuming aspect of the project.

2. Who is managing the 2026 conference? Is this company included in this RFP? If yes, what would make you change companies?

A: Poplar Events, LLC is managing the 2026 conference and has communicated that they plan to respond to the RFP. City Park Alliance procurement policies require an RFP from at least three qualified bidders (whenever possible) under a competitive procurement for the provision of goods or services valued at or greater than \$200,000 with a goal of providing the overall Best Value, defined as “the most advantageous combination of multiple criteria, including but not limited to the following: quality, economic value, timely performance, the procurement and use of recycled products and environmentally preferable products and services, minimal administrative burden, expediency, flexibility in developing alternative business relationships and the continuing participation of quality contractors.” The proposal determined to provide the Best Value will not necessarily be the lowest cost contract.

3. If a vendor cannot provide all services outlined in the RFP, is the use of outsourced partners permitted for those specific services? (e.g., we partner with two companies who could provide exhibit and sponsorship sales, which we do not offer at this time)

A: We absolutely welcome the addition of subcontractors under your responses to provide any specific services. But we recommend minimizing the number of partners that are part of the consulting team, as we already have a complex organizational structure between the Alliance and the Local Host Team. Please be sure to include any subcontractor qualifications and experience, as well as relevant staff member descriptions as part of your response in the appropriate sections, along with pricing information.

4. Are there any existing supplier contracts currently in place that would be included in the 2028 event?

A: The only existing contract at this time is with the Westin Peachtree Plaza.

5. Are you looking for air management? If yes, please describe expectations.
A: We are not looking for any air management services.
6. Will the conference be livestreamed or otherwise made accessible to a virtual audience?
A: We currently do not plan on livestreaming the 2028 conference, but could be open to exploring that option if it could generate additional revenue and align with our goals and budget. We have traditionally recorded only the general sessions (specifically the Keynotes, Plenary and Mayors Forum) and posted those on our website after the conference via YouTube, sometimes with access restrictions to members only.

Hotel

1. Based on prior conferences, approximately how large is the hotel rooming list?
A: For both 2024 and 2026, we are managing more than 500 rooms and close to 2,000 room nights. Approximately 20% is booked to the master account and managed by the Alliance. These rooms include staff, scholarship rooms, and VIP comps.
2. Does the rooming list typically include staff, speakers, scholarship recipients, and/or VIPs?
A: The rooming list includes staff and contractors, general session speakers (i.e., VIPs), and scholarship recipients. Scholarships are managed through sub blocks and self registration. The others are managed via a rooming list that the Alliance provides to the hotel.
3. Are most guest rooms billed to the hotel master account, or are they primarily individual pay?
A: Most guest rooms are billed individually. The only rooms billed to the master account are the staff, contractors, VIP speakers, and scholarships.

Budget Management

1. The total budget for 2026 is expected to be about \$1.9 million. What portion of this budget is allocated to the company providing consultation and services?
A: That the current 2-year consultant contract makes up about 12% of the total budget for the 2026 conference.
2. When does your current agreement with Cvent, your existing provider for several services, conclude?
A: It concludes on 12/31/26.
3. Does the 2028 host hotel contract allow for an outside audio-visual provider, or is there an in-house AV partner that must be used?
A: There is no fee to bring in an outside vendor (a concession) but some services have to be provided including, WiFi, power, and rigging if required.

Pre-Conference & Onsite Logistics

1. Budget creation and management:

- a. Will the chosen consultant be working with a pre-existing budget?

A: City Parks Alliance creates a project budget that typically spans four fiscal years to accommodate two years of planning in advance of the fiscal year when the conference takes place, and the fiscal year following the conference for follow-up activities. Our fiscal year runs from July through June. We manage the project against the comprehensive budget as well as the individual fiscal year budgets (which are approved by the board as part of the annual budget). We will work with the consultant to build out and verify the total project budget and projections for each fiscal year. The consultant will be expected to identify fiscal trends, anticipate challenges, and recommend solutions that staff can act on to stay on budget, either through cost cutting or revenue enhancements. Staff also has a modeling tool that can be customized to forecast revenue and expense scenarios to assist with fiscal planning, as well as data from previous conferences as references.

- b. What are expectations regarding budget creation, management, and reporting? How often is reporting expected?

A: The consultant reconciles and updates the project financial reports based on actual expenses and some revenue lines for which the consultant oversees (i.e. exhibitors) on a monthly basis.

2. Volunteer Management:

- a. For the estimated 125 volunteers that need to be scheduled for assignments/ shifts, do you currently do this through your registration or other platform?

A: We work with the local partner to source a volunteer pool. The consultant provides the scope of the volunteer program and works with the local partner to implement. Applications are received and reviewed. All volunteers register through the registration platform.

- b. Is the training in person onsite at the meeting or conducted virtually? Is there just one training session or multiple?

A: Volunteer training is conducted through two to three virtual meetings prior to the start of the conference. Usually two weeks in advance.

- c. Do you utilize volunteers to staff registration and/or other logistical functions at the conference? If so, will the selected contractor be permitted to bring core staff to manage and supervise on-site logistics and volunteer teams?

A: Yes, volunteers staff registration and other logistical functions at the conference, and the consultant is permitted to bring core staff to manage and supervise.

3. What is the expected cadence for and anticipated participation from your convention consultant team:

- a. Alliance staff meetings (weekly vs. bi-weekly)?

A: It depends on the need, but generally, all-staff meetings would be monthly until about 6 months from the conference, bi-weekly until about 3 months from the conference, and weekly in the final 3 months. Staff meetings can be canceled in advance if there are no relevant agenda items.

The consultant meets bi-weekly with the program manager until about 6 months from the conference, when the cadence changes to weekly.

The Executive Director meets with the consultant generally on a monthly basis, and bi-weekly to discuss projections for large expenditures (and any other pressing issues that need executive decision-making) six months out from the conference date. The consultant meets with the Alliance executive director
 - b. Board and Board Committee meetings (prep + attendance)?

A: The Board meets 3 times per year, including at Greater & Greener and the Conference Committee additionally meets bi-monthly. Depending on the agenda, the consultant works with staff to prepare information for those meetings.
 - c. Local Host Team meetings (prep + attendance)?

A: In a pre-determined cadence, the consultant meets with the Local Host Team bi-weekly through the Weekend Tour and Mobile Workshop creation process, which is targeted for November of the prior year. Then there is a lull until the Volunteer process begins closer to the conference. At the three month pre-conference mark, meetings are weekly. The consultant meets with key stakeholders of the local host partner and plans the agenda and provides reports to the team to manage deadlines and expectations.
4. Throughout the planning process, how are final decisions made? (e.g., Board approval, committee driven?)

A: Financial decisions: The Board approves the organizational budget, which includes the conference budget, every year at its spring meeting. The organizational fiscal year runs from July 1-June 30. Only the executive director has authority to sign contracts, so has final approval over those decisions.

 - Comprehensive Program development: The program director has final approval over all programming decisions and collaborates with the consultant on those options, with guidance from the Conference and Research Committee and Local Host Team, and relevant staff as needed.
 - Outdoor Educational Program development: The Local Host Team is responsible for proposing and organizing all outdoor programming (Weekend Tours and Mobile Workshops) and works directly with the consultant to plan those, with final approval by the executive director and program director.
 - Logistics for special events (e.g., catering, vendors, etc.): The consultant receives guidance from the Local Host Team and program director, makes recommendations, and gets approval from the executive director.
 5. Speaker management for approximately 300 speakers and 50 guides:

- a. Will the consultant have a role in speaker management or just receive a final list of sessions and speakers?
A: The programs team is responsible for managing all the session speakers, but the consultant is responsible for managing all the guides for Weekend Tours and Mobile Workshops, in collaboration with the Local Host Team.
- b. Would we be responsible for speaker communication?
 - i. Deadlines for AV submission
A: Staff
 - ii. Collection of any speaker materials or assets?
A: Staff
 - iii. Any travel related management for speakers? Booking hotel rooms?
A: The consultant has no travel responsibilities. The consultant books hotel rooms to the master account for staff, certain contractors, and general session speakers, under the guidance of the executive director and program director.
- c. Do speakers upload presentations in advance of the conference, or do they operate from their own laptop?
A: Speakers are asked to upload presentations in advance of the conference, but some fail to do so or have an updated version when they arrive. The consultant's on-site assistant coordinator will supplement staff to assist with uploading speaker presentations and be available to assist with any A/V problems by interfacing with the A/V contractor if needed.

6. Onsite session management:

- a. With many of the session types requiring limited capacity, do you use session scanning or what method to verify entrance into events?
A: Yes, we use session scanning to ensure that only attendees who registered are admitted to the peer conversation sessions. That role is performed by on-site volunteers.

7. CEU management and tracking:

- a. Assumption is consultant is not responsible for acquiring CEU approval for sessions?
A: Correct. Staff is responsible.
- b. What level of manual oversight is expected onsite?
A: Scanning is the only onsite function. The event management software platform provides an automated record for CEU provision.
- c. Are the room monitors from your volunteer pool or paid staff, or are sessions monitored in this capacity?
A: Room monitors are volunteers posted at the doors who scan attendees so there is an accurate record of their attendance for CEUs.

Registration Questions

1. Is Cvent included in this RFP process? If yes, what would make you change companies?
A: Our current contract with Cvent ends on 12/31/26. We have a good relationship and have grown our working knowledge of the platform over the years. As with any software system, there are constraints (some of which are systematic, some of which can be customized for a price). Also, our pricing goes up with each contract. We have a budgetary responsibility to compare the costs of alternative providers and are curious if there might be a better fit for our needs. We would be happy to renew again with Cvent if that's where our exploration leads us.

2. What areas of the registration process are going well? What areas of the registration process would you like to see changed and/or improved?
A: Our registration process is straightforward but lengthy, as we collect data to better understand our audience. The agenda selection process is also lengthy, as we list all the sessions and activities that we offer (i.e., this is a limitation of Cvent). Our process gets complicated with the various registration types and admission items, and we implement advanced rules to place limits on offerings (e.g., 1 mobile workshop per registration, 1 peer conversation per day, no conflicting sessions). That being said, given our volume of registrants there are a few complaints. Areas for improvement would include streamlining the schedule and allowing changes within the mobile app with the ability to collect fees.

3. What percentage of your attendees are International/Global?
A: International attendance was close to 10% for the first three Greater & Greeners (2012, 2015, 2017) but has hovered around 5% at the last three (2019, 2022, 2024). Currently for the 2026 conference, only about 2% of registrants are international. About 5% of our membership is Canadian, but they have traditionally made up a higher percentage of conference attendees. Most of our public sector Canadian members will not be coming in 2026 due to a general Canadian boycott of US-based events because of current US trade policy. Some of our previous attendees from Mexico, Europe and Asia now attend competing conferences. But we would like to increase our international attendance if feasible.

4. What percentage of your registrations are done online? Mailed? Onsite?
A: Nearly all of our registrations are done online. There is no mail-in option, although registrants can choose to be invoiced rather than pay online. It is rare to take a registration onsite, and the 2024 conference sold out more than a month in advance. Most of the work at registration is helping people with schedule adjustments and collecting add-on fees.

5. For speaker registrations is there an approval process? If yes, please share current process?
A: Speakers selected for the conference are given a special link by staff to register using the speaker rates (i.e., they have a different registration pathway in Cvent). The

consultant plays a role in helping to QC those registrations with staff to confirm those links have not been inappropriately used or shared.

6. Are all credentials distributed onsite?

A; Yes, badges are printed onsite for all attendees.

7. With your membership verification – please explain current process?

A: Alliance members are directed to click on the member registration link and then log into the membership account

8. Confirm your AMS is Alliance Technologies?

A: We recently upgraded our technology systems to select some new provides and better integrate between our CRM platform (SalesForce), website (WordPress), a new member portal (Advanced Communities) and selected a new e-commerce provider (Stripe). We are checking with our consultant teams about our association management software and should have an answer soon.

9. Are there capacity limits for any of the sessions, workshops, experiences etc.?

A: Yes, there are capacity limits for all of the outdoor programming (Weekend Tours and Mobile Workshops) based on bus size or the feasible number of participants for a walking or biking tour or mobile. There are also capacity limits for the small-format indoor sessions (skill-building workshops, peer conversations) that are based on a goal of around 50 attendees per session set up at round tables, pending room size. We do not use capacity limits to limit signup for the panels or general sessions.

10. Are there any additional integrations needed with any other third parties?

A: The only official integrations are between Cvent and Salesforce, the API between Cvent and Wordpress, and Cvent and Stripe (payment portal). While not an integration, the consultant should be familiar with Passkey for hotel reservation management.

11. How is customer service currently managed?

A: The consultant works closely with the Alliance on customer service. All inquiries sent to the consultant planner email addresses (e.g., coordinator@greener.org, registration@greener.org, exhibitors@greener.org) are handled directly by the consultant team. Other email addresses associated with the conference go directly to the staff lead for that address. When a response is unclear, the team works together to discuss and handle the question. All inquiries are handled usually within one business day of receipt.

12. Describe your current badge.

A: The badge is designed to specifications provided by Cvent. We pre-print logos on the badges and registrant information and QR code is thermally printed on site. The badge has two perforated holes at the top for a double bulldog clip lanyard.

13. What merchant account do you use?

A: We use Stripe as our payment processor.

Conference App Questions

1. Expected number of users?

A: Approximately 80% of attendees download and interact with the app. As we continue to minimize printed materials, we anticipate app interaction to increase. With an estimated 1,300 registrants in Austin, we expect 1,050 users.

2. What integrations will be needed? (e.g. speaker and abstract management platform)

A: The current app is Cvent, so is automatically integrated with event management. The new registration system, if other than Cvent, should be all inclusive or have partnered with other third-party providers for a seamless integration.

3. Will Attendee Networking Capabilities (ability to message in app, etc.) be needed?

A: Yes, we allow for and encourage attendees to interact using the app.

4. Will Interactive Maps/Onsite Navigational Aids be needed?

A: The current Cvent app can show floorplans and sessions associated with a room. We don't have interactive maps, but we supplement with digital displays throughout the conference space.

Exhibition Questions

1. Who is currently selling exhibits and sponsorship?

A: The Alliance's development consultant currently manages sponsorships, and the conference consultant recruits and manages exhibitors. A number of sponsors also exhibit, and a number of exhibitors also speak, so coordination with our development consultant and programs team is essential.

2. What was the total exhibit space revenue generated in 2026, 2024, and 2022?

A: In 2026 we raised over \$140,000 in revenue with 47 exhibitors. In 2024, we raised \$87,800 with 32 exhibitors. In 2022, we raised \$57,300 with 26 exhibitors. As we are not a trade show, the exhibit hall is dictated by the size of the venue space along with the Alliance's desire to keep the Exhibition Hall experience intimate and curated.

3. What was the total sponsorship revenue in 2026, 2024, 2022?

A: Sponsorship revenue for 2022 was about \$1 million, for 2024 was more than \$1.3 million, and for 2026 is more than \$1.3 million to date and ongoing.

4. Does City Parks Alliance currently contract with an exhibition services/general contractor (e.g., Freeman, Fern, GES) to manage exhibitor booths, freight/delivery, and related services?

A: Our exhibit hall offers table tops for exhibitors and given our small size, we have not needed the services of companies to provide these services. The consultant works directly with the hotel on shipping.

5. Would the selected contractor be responsible for creating and distributing the Exhibitor Manual? (This is referenced in the scope under “Create and manage the exhibitor funding stream,” but clarification on responsibility would be helpful.)

A: Yes, here is a link to the 2026 manual for reference:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EaiWnQMJcddnAxHuISfxBjtCLHJfwGWM/view>

2030 RFP Process Questions

1. For the 2030 host RFP process – how many destinations are usually considered?

A: It depends on how many responses we receive. For the 2026 conference, we received 6, for 2028 we received 4. In both cases we narrowed the field to 2 finalists before conducting site visits.

2. Do hotel contracts include commissions? If yes, are commissions used to offset cost of any services?

A: All hotel contracts are non-commissionable to offer the lowest rate to our registrants.

3. How many groups will need to have their blocks managed? (Staff, VIPs are mentioned in the RFP – are there additional blocks?)

A: The groups are attendees, scholarships (including subblocks under this where necessary), government rate, staff, and VIPs.

Sustainability/Ecological Footprint Questions

1. What does success look like for "minimizing the conference's environmental impact", and are there priority focus areas? (waste, water, energy, carbon)

A: We work with our contractors and deploy practices to:

- Plan the opening and closing reception events with zero waste objective
- Reduce paper materials with primary communications conducted digitally through mobile app and other digital communications
- Expand food recovery efforts to preserve excess foods and donate to food insecure residents
- Develop promotional materials that inform attendees ways to reduce their carbon footprint while traveling to/from and attending the conference, including low emissions travel, reducing waste during hotel stay by declining housekeeping services, and distributing reusable water bottles and refill stations across the conference campus

We try to minimize waste (especially plastics), water usage, and carbon emissions in our transportation options. We rely on the conference hotel's energy infrastructure systems. We are open to all practicable suggestions from our Board, staff, Local Host Team,

consultant and vendors and implement based on our ability to manage and financial considerations. Having the conference on a biennial schedule by default reduces our carbon emissions compared to other conferences that are held annually.

2. What level of sustainability support is desired (e.g., advisory, implementation, measurement/reporting, or a combination)?
A: Advisory, with implementation tasks as commensurate with the role of the consultant's scope of work. We do not have any budget for measurement and reporting, but are open to suggestions.
3. Who holds decision-making authority, and are any sustainability expectations required for sponsors, exhibitors, or local partners?
A: Alliance leadership (executive director, and program director as relevant) have decision-making authority. There have not historically been any requirements from sponsors, exhibitors and the Local Host Team, but there could be in the future. We are certainly open to their ideas, particularly if they also reduce expenses.
4. Is there interest in measuring and reporting outcomes, including the event's carbon footprint and post-conference communications? To measure the event carbon footprint, we will need access to the event data including registration list zip codes to determine air travel, ground transportation, food and beverage invoices with final counts and other planning documents.
A: We are interested in measuring and reporting outcomes but have never had a budget line for it. We are intrigued at any low- or no-cost approaches that could be employed. We have most of the data that are cited as examples in the question.
5. Is there interest in sustainability being visible to attendees or leaving a lasting legacy in Atlanta beyond the event?
A: If there is a compelling story to tell about the conference sustainability performance with enough evidence to make it defensible, it would be a great narrative for us to share. The [Toro Urban Park Innovation Award](#) is given at the conference and includes a \$50,000 cash award to a host city park project. At each conference, attendees and local organizations also come together for [Volunteer Service Day](#), an opportunity to make a difference in a city park in the conference host city. The question of the conference's enduring local legacy is posed to the Local Host Team in the RFP and one we encourage them to follow-up on. We have been able to share some newsworthy follow-ups from host cities, but currently there is no formal requirement or arrangement for a legacy story or reporting.

Marketing Questions

1. Ongoing marketing is stated in the RFP. Besides marketing emails used in registration - please describe your support expectations for this area.

A: The consultant provides data to staff and any communications contractors to meet the goals of marketing, such as underperforming sessions, hotel cut-offs, registration reminders, and registrant data to inform niche marketing. They also manage all communications to solicit exhibitors and maintain the relationship. They participate in conversations about marketing to stay informed.

2. Will City Parks Alliance's communications department provide conference branding and graphic design (e.g., signage, printed materials, templates), or should the contractor include graphic design services and associated costs in their proposal?

A: Staff and any additional contractors provide all the branding and graphic design to the consultant.