

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Event Planning and Production Services

Southern Education Foundation – 160th Anniversary Celebration & Issues Forum

I. Introduction

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) invites qualified event planning firms to submit proposals to design, plan, and execute a series of events commemorating SEF's 160th Anniversary. The centerpiece of this milestone celebration will be the Issues Forum, a multi-day conference to be held in Atlanta, Georgia in November 2027.

This anniversary offers a unique opportunity to highlight SEF's enduring legacy and its continued impact on advancing public education across the South.

II. Organizational Background

The Southern Education Foundation is a research, policy, advocacy and leadership development organization that works to advance education opportunity for underserved students.

Founded in 1867 as the Peabody Fund, we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to advancing more equal education policies and practices, especially for students of color and from low-income families.

III. Project Overview

SEF seeks an experienced event planning partner to provide full-service event management and production for a series of events anchored by the Issues Forum.

Core Event

- Issues Forum Conference
 - A flagship, mission-driven convening of leaders, academics, policymakers, educators, and partners
 - Expected attendance: 200-300
 - Includes plenary sessions, panels, and networking opportunities

Additional Events (during or very closely near to the Issues Forum)

- 160th Anniversary Gala
 - Celebratory evening highlighting SEF's history and achievements
 - Potential fundraising component
- President's Dinner

- Curated, intimate gathering of key stakeholders and partners with SEF's President & CEO
 - History & Impact Programming
 - Additional programming designed to uplift SEF's legacy, such as:
 - Exhibits or installations
 - Multimedia storytelling experiences
 - Recognition of partners and leaders
 - Thematic receptions or community engagement events
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IV. Scope of Work

The selected firm will provide end-to-end event planning and execution, including but not limited to:

1. Event Strategy & Design

- Collaborate with SEF leadership to develop a cohesive vision and theme
- Ensure all events align with SEF's mission and brand identity
- Integrate storytelling elements highlighting SEF's 160-year impact

2. Project Management

- Develop and maintain a detailed project timeline
- Coordinate all planning phases and stakeholders
- Provide regular status updates and milestone tracking

3. Venue & Vendor Management

- Identify and secure venues in Atlanta suitable for all events
- Negotiate contracts and manage vendor relationships (e.g., catering, AV, décor)
- Coordinate lodging blocks and transportation logistics as needed

4. Program Production

- Support agenda development for the Issues Forum
- Manage speaker logistics (in coordination with SEF)
- Oversee staging, audiovisual production, and on-site execution

5. Event Experience & Design

- Design attendee experience across all events
- Develop creative concepts for:
 - Gala programming
 - Historical exhibit or storytelling elements
 - Branding and signage
- Incorporate inclusive and accessible design practices

6. Registration & Attendee Management (in partnership with SEF)

- Implement and manage registration platform

- Provide attendee communications and support
- Track attendance and engagement metrics

7. Marketing & Communications Support

- Assist with event branding and promotional materials
- Support digital engagement strategies for the Issues Forum

8. On-Site Execution

- Provide staffing for all events
- Manage run-of-show, logistics, and troubleshooting
- Ensure seamless execution and high-quality attendee experience

9. Post-Event Reporting

- Provide post-event evaluation and reporting
- Analyze attendance, engagement, and overall outcomes
- Recommend improvements for future events

V. Qualifications

The ideal firm will demonstrate:

- Proven experience managing multi-day conferences and high-profile events
- Strong portfolio of mission-driven, nonprofit, or education sector work
- Experience producing gala events and executive-level convenings
- Expertise in event design, storytelling, and brand integration
- Ability to manage complex logistics and multiple event formats simultaneously
- Presence or strong operational capability in Atlanta, GA

VI. Deliverables

- Comprehensive project plan and timeline
- Creative event concepts and design proposals
- Budget development and tracking
- Vendor contracts and management
- Event production plans and run-of-show documents
- On-site execution and staffing
- Final report and evaluation

VII. Budget

Proposals should include:

- Detailed cost breakdown (planning fees, production, vendor costs, etc.)
 - Optional cost tiers or scalable options
 - Recommendations for maximizing impact within budget
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VIII. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should include:

1. Company Overview
2. Relevant Experience & Case Studies
3. Proposed Approach and Methodology
4. Team Structure and Key Personnel
5. Preliminary Creative Ideas (optional but encouraged)
6. Pricing and Fee Structure
7. Client References (3 minimum)

IX. Timeline

Milestone	Date
RFP Issued	July 24, 2026
Questions Due	Aug 15, 2026
Proposals Due	Sept 4, 2026
Selection Notification	Sept 25, 2026
Project Kickoff	October 2027
Event Dates	November 2027

X. Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted electronically to:

Lauren Mead, Sr. Operations Program Associate
Southern Education Foundation
lmead@southerneducation.org

Subject line: *RFP – SEF 160th Anniversary Event Planning*

Please limit proposals to 5 pages.

XI. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated experience and qualifications
 - Creativity and alignment with SEF's mission
 - Quality and feasibility of proposed approach
 - Cost-effectiveness and value
 - References and past performance
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XII. Additional Information

SEF reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any or all proposals
- Request additional information or interviews
- Negotiate scope and pricing with selected firm