



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

March 22, 2024

Minnesota Discovery Center
Hall of Geology Permanent Exhibit: Request for Proposals
Exhibit Design, Fabrication, and Installation
Submission Deadline: 5 pm, Friday, May 10, 2024

1. Introduction

The Minnesota Discovery Center (MDC) is currently soliciting proposals for the design, fabrication, and installation for the renovation of our Hall of Geology permanent exhibit. This exhibit seeks to explore the Iron Range's geological and paleontological past in an engaging and hands-on approach.

MDC is a private non-profit and the state's largest museum complex outside of the Twin Cities metro area. It comprises a museum, research center, and park, encompassing over 600 acres. Our mission is to transport area residents and guests to a space where they can connect with the Iron Range's storied past while creating lasting memories that honor the region's unique human and natural history. Our vision is to spark individual curiosity and inspire our community through experiencing the past to shape a better future.

2. Project Description

Our Hall of Geology will be a permanent installation within our museum and is approximately 2025 square feet in size. The scope of this project consists of two phases: research and implementation. The research phase, including the writing of all label text, has been completed by MDC's exhibit staff. Moving into the implementation phase will begin with the selection of a qualified exhibit firm based on proposals submitted in response to this RFP.

The chosen exhibit firm will be expected to work closely with MDC's exhibit and research staff, led by curator Allyse Freeman. Ms. Freeman will be the point of contact at all stages of the design, fabrication, and installation. The exhibition design should draw upon the current written label text and be engaging to fourth through tenth grade students and a family audience. To the extent that it is possible, the fabrication and installation processes should utilize local artists and craftspeople.



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

The contract will be awarded in May of 2024, and installation of our Hall of Geology is expected to be complete by December 2025. The project is fully contingent upon receiving grant funds from the Minnesota Historical Society. Should MDC not be awarded grant monies as a result of final grant submission on July 26, 2024, this project will need to be submitted again the following grant year.

Proposal submissions will be evaluated based on the proposed budget and timeline, the qualifications and competence of the exhibit firm, and the past experience of the firm and its personnel. MDC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted. The award will be made in writing and sent to the selected firm during May 2024.

3. Project Timeline

Date	Event
March 22, 2024	RFP issued
April 26, 2024	Pre-application bid confirmation via email to Allyse Freeman (to confirm interest in submitting a bid)
April 15-26, 2024	Submit any questions about RFP and project via email to Allyse Freeman
April 29, 2024	Addendum answered to all who confirmed a pre-application bid
May 10, 2024 (5 pm)	Deadline for proposal submissions
May 2024	Contract award made in writing
December 2024	Estimated official project start date (contingent upon MNHS grant)
June 2025	Substantial completion of project
December 2025	Completion of project
January 2026	Exhibit grand opening



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

4. Exhibit Concepts and General Walkthrough

Our Hall of Geology will span billions of years of regional geologic and paleontological history. The big idea for this exhibit seeks to answer three questions: Why are there iron deposits on the Iron Range, what kind of life pre-dated human activity, and why does the modern landscape look the way it does today? These three questions have guided our research and the overall layout for this exhibit.

Zone 1: Introduction

This zone will introduce the visitor to the space and provide some basic geologic concepts to get the visitor acquainted with the subject. This includes a definition for both geology and paleontology and what these disciplines do, an introduction to the basic three rock types, and why this is important for understanding our planet.

Zone 2: Timeline Wall

This area of the exhibit will be dominated by an interactive timeline that spans the wall and floor with touchable specimens for each different time period. The purpose of this timeline is to explain just how long geologic time really is. It will illustrate the lengths of time where “nothing” happened and then demonstrate the giant burst of activity towards the end of the Pre-Cambrian.

Along the wall will be a painted mural that blends into each different time period. This will help the visitor visualize what our region would have looked like through time and really drive the point home that the landscape has dramatically changed over billions of years. Here is also where we will have sample specimens for each section as well as tactile components for visitors to touch.

It will also cover the concept of geologic time in more depth as well as the different dating methods scientists use to understand different time periods. We will also incorporate a drill core sample interactive here.

Zone 3: Central Hub

The central hub section is a main focal point as the visitor walks into the space. As such, we wanted this portion to be eye-catching and really draw the visitor in. Verticality would be essential in this section.

As we are envisioning it now, the hub would be circular in design with a reading rail around its entirety. It would be divided into four sections: formation of iron deposits, mountain-building and volcanism, Cretaceous Period, and glaciation. The goal is to help summarize these different sections and use a lot of visuals and models to explain the different scientific concepts found in each of these zones.

See the interpretive plan for a longer explanation.



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

Zone 4: Banded-Iron Formation, Oxygenation, and the Sudbury Impact

One of the first questions everyone asked when entering our previous Hall of Geology was, “Why is there iron here?” This was not answered in great depth in the previous exhibit and so we wish to greatly explain here why the Iron Range is named thus. Concepts covered in this zone include the formation of banded iron, the Great Oxygenation Event, stromatolites, and the Sudbury Impact.

Zone 5: Mid Continental Rift and Volcanism

Zone 5 focuses on the massive geologic event known as the Mid Continental Rift and the implications it had for the Iron Range. This time period also led to a high level of volcanism and mountain-building, two things that most people do not immediately associate with Minnesota. We want to again remind visitors that these types of events did happen on the Iron Range and helped make the landscape what it is today.

Zone 6: Fossils

Zone 6 will cover the fossil evidence of past life on the Iron Range. The first section will detail why this region lacks Paleozoic fossils and lead directly into the plethora of Cretaceous Period fossils. This section will answer the question of “what life lived here.” Concepts covered here include the definition of a fossil, index and trace fossils, past environments and landscapes, and a general explanation of what life was like 90 million years ago.

Zone 7: Glaciation and Conclusion

The concluding zone for this exhibit features the rise of mammals and glaciation. This will also connect to the questions of what types of living things were once found here as well as why is the landscape the way it is today. The lasting effects of glaciation can be seen all across our region but few may know how glaciers did this and what they left behind.

5. Services to be provided by the exhibit firm

The following is a preliminary outline of the seven zones comprising the Hall of Geology. Each zone will require the design, fabrication, and installation of graphic panels, props, and interactive components. The attached interpretive plan gives a detailed explanation of the content expected in each zone. The following list contains anticipated needs and current ideas for each zone; however, it is flexible based on ideas from the exhibit firm, design, and budget.



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

Zone 1: Introduction

- Design and fabricate 2 panels (4' x 3')
- Installation

Zone 2: Timeline Wall

- Design and fabricate 2 panels (3' x 2')
- Design and fabricate 30 small panels along timeline itself (5" x 8")
- Design and fabricate core sample interactive
- Design and fabricate simple flip book interactive for dating methods (10 pages)
- Commission mural of changing geologic time periods (approximately 10' x 30')
- Floor graphic (approximately 10' x 30')
- Installation

Zone 3: Central Hub

- Design and fabricate circular reading rail divided into four zones (approximately 12' in diameter with approximately 3' of reading rail per zone)
- Design and fabricate a central hub display piece for four major zones: formation of iron deposits, mountain-building and volcanism, Cretaceous Period, and glaciation (approximately 12' in diameter)
 - Stomatolite display, 3D model of plate tectonic collision to mountains to volcano to rift/plate spreading, Dromaeosaur model, and glacier landscape model
- Installation

Zone 4: Banded-Iron Formations, Oxygenation, and the Sudbury Impact

- Design and fabricate 1 panel (3' x 4')
- Design and fabricate 3 panels (2' x 3')
- Design and fabricate 2 panels (18" x 24")
- Design and fabricate Sudbury Impact interactive
- Design and fabricate a multi-media display for stromatolites
- Installation

Zone 5: Mid Continental Rift and Volcanism

- Design and fabricate 1 panel (3' x 4')
- Design and fabricate 1 panel (2' x 3')
- Design and fabricate 2 panel (18" x 24")
- Design and fabricate rifting interactive
- Installation



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

Zone 6: Fossils

- Design and fabricate 2 panels (3' x 4')
- Design and fabricate 4 panels (2' x 3')
- Design and fabricate 12 fossil labels (5" x 8")
- Creative resurfacing of display wall in Hall (approximately 30' x 10')
- Commission mural of Cretaceous Period landscape (approximately 15 feet)
- Design and fabricate Cretaceous animal interactive game
- Installation

Zone 7: Glaciers and Conclusion

- Design and fabricate 2 panel (3' x 4')
- Design and fabricate 2 panels (2' x 3')
- Design and fabricate 1 panel (18" x 24")
- Installation

6. Proposal Requirements

Proposal submissions should include all of the following:

- A. Company profile including:
 1. Company's name and contact information
 2. Date of company's establishment and description of how many years the company has been involved in producing museum exhibits
 3. Key personnel and their experience in the field

- B. Experience of company including:
 1. Examples of past work with photographs, graphics, and budget information included
 2. Narratives on how the company has worked with other museum teams
 3. Description of work processes including logistics and organization, use of subcontractors, and history of meeting deadlines

- C. Project budget including:
 1. Cost by zone and component
 2. Breakdown of company's overhead and profit for the entirety of the exhibition process



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

D. Detailed work schedule including, but not limited to:

1. Design commencement and completion
2. Design review by MDC
3. Fabrication commencement and completion
4. Prototype review by MDC
5. Installation commencement and completion

Proposals will be evaluated by MDC staff using the following criteria:

- Competence and experience of individual or team
- Demonstrated knowledge or participatory, innovative, and engaging exhibit designs
- How well designer and/or firm has worked with other museum teams/projects
- Competitive budget
- Highly organized and successful project and budget management

7. Proposal Process

A pre-application confirmation of interest in submitting a bid is due by Friday, April 26, 2024. This is to ensure MDC has proper contact information for all companies interested in submitting a proposal. You will receive a confirmation email within 24 hours to ensure it was submitted properly. Questions about the RFP and project will also be accepted between April 15-26, 2024. These both can be submitted to Allyse Freeman via email listed below. All questions will be listed and answered in an addendum that will be sent to all who confirmed an interest in bidding by Monday, April 29, 2024.

Proposals are due by 5 pm, Friday, May 10, 2024. Electronic submissions will not be accepted. Please send two hard copies of proposal to:

Allyse Freeman, Curator
Minnesota Discovery Center
1005 Discovery Drive
Chisholm, MN 55719

For further information, questions, and/or pre-application confirmation of bid please contact Allyse Freeman at allyse.freeman@mndiscoverycenter.com.



1005 Discovery Dr. | Chisholm, MN 55719 | Phone: (800) 372-6437 | (218) 254-7959 | Fax: (218) 254-7971

Conditions of Receipt of Proposals:

This Request for Proposals does not oblige the Minnesota Discovery Center to award any specific project. MDC reserves the right to cancel this solicitation or to change its scope if doing so would be in the best interest of the museum. MDC also reserves the right to waive irregularities in proposal content or to request supplemental information from prospective bidder(s). All documents included in this package do not constitute a legal offer. A legally binding contract will not be formed until all parties involved have fully executed a written contract which incorporates all mutually agreed-upon instructions, specifications, conditions, and fees.

This project is also contingent upon funding from the granting agency. Without grant monies, this project will not move forward. As such, MNHS requires all bid requests state that the project is subject to prevailing wage:

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 177.41 to 177.44 and corresponding Minnesota Rules 5200.1000 to 5200.1120, this contract is subject to the prevailing wages as established by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Specifically, all contractors and subcontractors must pay all laborers and mechanics the established prevailing wages for work performed under the contract. Failure to comply with the aforementioned may result in civil or criminal penalties.