

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

2025-2026 MICD Special Session Hosts

APPLICATION TIMELINE

RFQ announced:	October 15, 2024
Submission deadline:	January 10, 2025, 4:00 p.m. Eastern time
Selected hosts announced:	March 7, 2025

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Universities with accredited programs in architecture, landscape architecture, and/or urban planning, as well as nonprofit design organizations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1986, the [Mayors' Institute on City Design \(MICD\)](#) has helped transform communities through design by preparing mayors to be the chief urban designers of their cities. The MICD Institute Session brings together seven mayors and a team of seven interdisciplinary design professionals at two-and-one-half day workshops to share ideas and find solutions to each mayor's most pressing design and development challenge. Eight Institute Sessions will take place over the course of 2025 and 2026: four "National Sessions" geared towards mid- to large-sized or regionally significant cities, and four "Special Sessions" geared towards small to mid-sized cities. This RFQ seeks partners for MICD "Special Sessions" occurring in 2025 and 2026. Up to four eligible applicants will be selected.

Selected through a competitive RFQ process, each university or nonprofit will work with MICD staff to host and organize one Special Session using the MICD model. Up to \$50,000 in funding will be awarded by MICD to each partner for approved direct expenses of the session, including travel costs for all participating mayors and design professionals, for whom participation is cost-free. Applications from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal Colleges, minority serving institutions, and other parties are welcomed. It is expected that selected partners will host the Special Session in their home city or, if logistically necessary, a city with which they have a close relationship. Mayors of the host city generally do not participate in the MICD session, but welcome their fellow mayors to the event. While these sessions will bring together mayors of small and mid-sized cities, events are often hosted in larger cities.

There is no match requirement for this funding, but no overhead or staffing expenses may be charged against the direct MICD funding. Selected institutions are expected to provide additional support (cash or in-kind contributions) covering the time and benefits of any faculty, project managers, staff, and student assistants involved in planning the session. It is expected that final total costs to the selected partner will exceed the reimbursable \$50,000, so additional institutional support provided directly by the partner, such as audio/visual equipment, local transportation, photography, facility rentals, or catering costs, is encouraged in order to produce the event to MICD standards and will be taken into consideration in the applicant's evaluation.

MICD is a leadership initiative of the [National Endowment of the Arts \(NEA\)](#), designed to foster an understanding of and appreciation for the role of design in creating resilient, equitable, and thriving cities, and the importance of mayors as advocates for good design. Through a cooperative agreement with NEA, the [United States Conference of Mayors \(USCM\)](#) co-funds MICD and carries out the administrative, programmatic, legal, and fiscal responsibilities of the program.

RFQ PROCESS

All background information, application instructions, submission requirements, and selection criteria are included in this RFQ. The complete RFQ is also available for download on the MICD website at micd.org.

Applicants may submit qualification statements at any time before the submission deadline on **January 10, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. Eastern time**. All materials must be submitted as a single PDF document and emailed to trinity@micd.org.

MICD will convene an advisory panel to review the applications based on the Evaluation Criteria (Section V) and announce the decision on Friday, March 7, 2025. Specific dates for the Special Sessions, which are expected to occur during 2025 and 2026, will be determined by the selected institutions in consultation with MICD staff. Selected institutions will enter into a contract with USCM to perform the tasks listed in the Scope of Work (Section II).

Serious applicants are advised to contact MICD Executive Director Trinity Simons Wagner at trinity@micd.org for introduction and to attend an informational webinar before putting together the application.

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I. MICD HISTORY & METHODOLOGY

Since its inception in 1986 by former Charleston, SC Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr., the Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD) has hosted over 1,200 mayors representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Mayors have gained valuable advice on how to deal with difficult urban planning and design issues in their communities. Many complex design topics have been addressed in recent years, including downtown and neighborhood revitalization, transportation planning, creative placemaking, district visioning and branding, Main Street and commercial corridor redevelopment, affordable housing, equitable development, and sustainable development.

MICD is dedicated to improving the design and livability of American cities by empowering mayors to be the “chief urban designers” of their cities. Using the MICD model created by Mayor Riley, the Institute convenes seven mayors and a team of seven interdisciplinary design professionals at a two-and-one-half day workshop to share ideas and find solutions to the most pressing design and development challenges that each mayor is currently facing in his or her city. To encourage an open dialogue among participants, the MICD model limits participation at each session to seven mayors, seven design professionals, and leadership from MICD and the host institution, with no outside observers (including press or other city staff). Selected hosts of Special Sessions will replicate and adhere to the MICD model, under the guidance of MICD staff.

Each mayor presents a case study of a critical issue from their city, and members of the Resource Team — nationally known architects, landscape architects, planners, real estate developers, artists, and public policy experts — identify issues, offer suggestions, and discuss paths toward a solution. The interchange among mayors and the Resource Team sparks a lively debate, opens new perspectives, and generates creative ideas. Many mayors have described their MICD experience as among the most influential and memorable events of their time in office, and Resource Team members – volunteers who receive a modest honorarium – often remark that they learned as much from the mayors as the mayors learned from them.

Each member of the Resource Team also gives a short presentation regarding the value of design in city development efforts. These presentations provide important information for mayors on the latest thinking in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, transportation planning, sustainable development, community engagement, economic development, arts and culture, and more. Particular emphasis is placed on the positive influence mayors may wield over the form and economic vitality of their communities. See Sample Agenda (Appendix A) for the expected format of an MICD session.

The host institution must demonstrate its concern for the real-life implications of design. The session can provide participating faculty and/or staff with an opportunity to better understand and investigate the relationship between theory and practice. If conducted properly, it can invigorate the teaching of design and provide opportunities for fruitful discussion among the academy, design professions, and local governance.

While it is expected that selected hosts will adhere to the MICD model, ensuring that mayors receive introductory working skills in urban design and planning, selected hosts may wish to add a layer of focus on discussions through a specific theme (possible examples include public health, arts and culture, infrastructure, climate). Selected hosts will be expected to work closely with MICD staff to execute any proposed theme.

The selected hosts will enter into contracts with USCM to facilitate the planning, organization, coordination, and implementation of the 2025-2026 MICD Special Sessions. The requirements of each selected host and the responsibilities of MICD staff are listed in the following sections.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

Under the agreements resulting from this RFQ, selected host institutions, in consultation with MICD staff, will be required to carry out the following tasks:

1. **Staffing:** Identify two individuals who will serve as the Project Director and Project Coordinator, responsible for fulfilling the obligations of organizing a Special Session. The Project Director will conduct pre-session site visits to all participating cities, write the briefing materials about each city's case study, supervise other paid staff and volunteers, and serve as a liaison to the host institution's administration and financial staff. The Project Director role is a substantial time commitment and is considered essential to the required work; this role may be split between two individuals. The Project Coordinator will be responsible for overseeing logistical arrangements, including hotel and venue contracts, travel arrangements for participants and local transportation for the group, and production of all required briefing and follow-up materials. The Project Coordinator is expected to be a full-time staff member with experience with and capacity for event planning. Students may be hired to assist with in-session logistics but may not assume the Project Coordinator role.
2. **Work plan:** Develop and submit, for review and approval by MICD staff, a written work plan and timeline for a Special Session. MICD will provide guidance, as needed, in preparation of the work plan. The work plan shall address participant selection, site visits, venues, agenda, logistics, publicity, background materials, and pre- and post-session activities.
3. **Mayor invitations:** Collaborate with MICD staff to invite mayors for Special Session participation. MICD staff will provide an approved list of potential mayors. The Special Session host will coordinate invitations to the approved list of mayors and secure attendance of the final participants.
4. **Resource Team invitations:** Collaborate with MICD staff to identify members of the Resource Team for Special Session participation. Coordinate invitations to the potential Resource Team members and secure attendance of the final participants. Invitations to the potential Resource Team members shall only be made after receiving approval from MICD. Ensure that all Resource Team members have signed an agreement acknowledging their acceptance of the MICD Standards of Conduct Policy (see Section III for more details).
5. **Case studies:** Make site visits to all confirmed cities prior to the session to discuss potential case study projects and session logistics with the mayor and to advise city staff regarding preparation for their mayor's participation. Consult with the MICD executive director on the selection of case studies. Gather relevant materials — such as maps, data, and photographs — for use in the briefing book and during the session.
6. **Session logistics:** Plan and coordinate logistical arrangements, including selection of appropriate venues for the opening reception, meetings, evening meals, and site tours. Secure complementary services as necessary, which may include but are not limited to, audio/visual, catering, photography, local transportation, and administrative support.
7. **Travel:** Arrange travel and hotel accommodations for participants. Arrange local transportation for participants as necessary.
8. **Supervision:** Supervise paid staff and volunteers. Coordinate involvement of the faculty, staff, students, administration, and other representatives of the host institution.

9. Briefing materials: Coordinate and prepare thorough pre-session briefing materials, including profiles of participants and summaries of mayors' case studies. Compile materials into a briefing book; distribute a digital copy to participants at least one week prior to the session and provide a hard copy to each participant at the session. These materials shall be prepared in accordance with the standards for content and graphics as specified by MICD staff.
10. Follow-up: Conduct follow-up activities, which may include development and dissemination of press materials, corresponding with participants, and documentation for archival purposes.
11. Record-keeping: Maintain appropriate records of all financial obligations and transactions, and compile a listing and documentation in accordance with MICD's final invoice instructions. Keep them safeguarded in such a manner as to make these records readily available to USCM upon request for up to three years after the submission of the final report.
12. Academic advancement: To the extent possible, and with attention to maintain confidentiality with respect to specific details shared by attending mayors, augment the host institution's design education curriculum or professional expertise by using the design topics raised during the session to bridge discussions among students, practitioners of the design disciplines, scholars, and officials of public policy.
13. Report preparation: Document the activities of the session in high-quality audio format and in a written meeting summary of the recommendations made at the session, providing both to MICD within one month of the conclusion of the session. Both the digital and hard copy of the meeting summary and audio files shall be prepared and distributed to participating mayors. Additionally, a final report shall be submitted to MICD within 2 months of the conclusion of the session including both the digital and hard copy of the meeting summary, an evaluation of the session, an accounting of expenses, and a report on any follow-up activities.

III. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Selected host institutions are required to ensure that all MICD activities and participants abide by the National Endowment for the Arts' Standards of Conduct:

1. Individuals serving as resource persons to the MICD may not take part in the discussion of any specific project or activity presented at the MICD in which the resource person has a material financial interest.
2. Those serving as resource persons to the MICD may not negotiate or enter into a consulting agreement or any other type of employment agreement with any participating city of the MICD with respect to any project or activity presented at the Institute, for a period of one year following such presentations at the MICD, except with the express written consent of the National Endowment of the Arts Director of Design & Creative Placemaking after consultation with the Endowment's General Counsel.
3. Specific information obtained by individuals serving as resource persons to the Institute, through the performance of their responsibilities, may not be used to solicit business with any participating city for a period of one year from the time of the resource person's participation at the Institute, except with the express written consent of the National Endowment of the Arts Director of Design & Creative Placemaking after consultation with the Endowment's General Counsel.
4. The selected host institution must incorporate these Standards of Conduct in its contracts or letters of agreement with resource persons. A sample letter of agreement will be provided by MICD.
5. Breach of the foregoing may result in the termination of the contract between the United States Conference of Mayors and the selected host institution.

IV. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit all of the following materials as part of their qualification statements:

1. A cover letter or statement outlining institutional interest and assets that make the institution uniquely qualified to host a 2025-2026 MICD Special Session.
2. A letter of support from the proposed host city mayor or highest local elected official.
3. A letter of support from the institution's administration and/or leadership that includes a commitment to dedicating the substantial faculty/staff time and resources needed.
4. A proposed budget, including a statement of institutional and community support. This should include an overview of potential cash and/or in-kind contributions. A sample budget is included as Appendix B.
5. A statement outlining proposed meeting space, lodging, and dining venues, opportunities for tours of relevant local projects, and special events, including photos of such places where possible, demonstrating a clear commitment to creating a high quality participant experience. Please also address accessibility accommodations.
6. Biographies of potential Project Director, Project Coordinator, and/or key faculty members or staff, detailing their expertise and capacity as it relates to hosting a Special Session.
7. Short biographies of potential Resource Team members that includes an ethnically and gender diverse group of individuals from each of the following disciplines: architecture, landscape architecture, city planning, urban design, transportation planning, arts and culture, equitable development, and real estate development. Potential Resource Team rosters may include representatives from the institution's faculty or staff, as well as outside design experts. It is not necessary to inform the individuals they are being considered until after the applicant has been selected to host the Special Session.

Serious applicants are advised to contact the MICD Executive Director Trinity Simons Wagner at trinity@micd.org for introduction and consultation before putting together the application.

Applicants may submit qualification statements at any time before the submission deadline on January 10, 2025, 4:00 p.m. Eastern time. All materials must be submitted as a single PDF document and emailed to trinity@micd.org.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Responses to this RFQ will be evaluated by an advisory panel composed of qualified outside experts assembled by MICD leadership. Selection will be made based on the following criteria:

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

1. A complete, polished, graphically compelling submission package representative of the quality of materials that would be produced during the project
2. Appropriateness of proposed facilities that reflect high standards of event planning and demonstrate design excellence, an understanding of accessibility considerations, and a commitment to maximizing the participant learning experience
3. If proposing a theme, demonstrated expertise in any proposed Special Session theme or focused topic. Applicants not pursuing a specific theme will not be penalized.
4. A compelling proposed host city setting, with potential for relevant site tours and adequate travel options for participants

CAPACITY

1. Project Director, Project Coordinator, and support staff with appropriate qualifications who are able to make the substantial commitment of time necessary to ensure the successful completion of the work
2. Evidence of sufficient institutional capacity, financial support, and event planning capabilities to accomplish all tasks necessary for a successful MICD Special Session

ALIGNMENT OF VISION

1. A demonstrated understanding of MICD's methodology and mission
2. A demonstrated desire to provide mayors with impactful technical assistance and leadership development around the real-life implications of design
3. A commitment to seek diversity among participants in terms of discipline, gender, age, ethnicity, and affiliation

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

1. Compelling letters of support from 1) the proposed host city mayor or highest local elected official, and 2) the institution's administration and/or leadership

For more information, please contact:

Trinity Simons Wagner, Executive Director
Mayors' Institute on City Design
1620 Eye Street NW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20006
trinity@micd.org
www.micd.org

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE AGENDA



MAYORS' INSTITUTE ON CITY DESIGN SPECIAL SESSION	DATES LOCATION

Draft Agenda

WEDNESDAY, DATE

- 4:30 PM Meet in the hotel lobby for host city tour
- 6:00 PM Opening reception
- 7:00 PM Opening dinner
- Opening remarks: Trinity Simons Wagner, Mayors' Institute on City Design
Representative, National Endowment of the Arts
Representative, Host University or Organization
- Opening address: **Host Mayor**
- 9:00 PM Return to the hotel

THURSDAY, DATE

- 8:30 AM Depart from hotel to the meeting space
- 8:45 AM Hot breakfast & coffee
- 9:00 AM Introductions & overview: Trinity Simons Wagner
- 9:30 AM **Presentation: Resource Team 1**
- 9:45 AM **Presentation: Resource Team 2**
- 10:00 AM Discussion
- 10:20 AM Break
- 10:40 AM **The Honorable Mayor 1**
- 11:40 AM Break
- 11:50 AM **The Honorable Mayor 2**
- 12:50 PM Lunch at the meeting space
- 1:40 PM **Presentation: Resource Team 3**
- 1:55 PM **Presentation: Resource Team 4**
- 2:10 PM Discussion
- 2:30 PM Break
- 2:50 PM **The Honorable Mayor 3**
- 3:50 PM Break
- 4:00 PM **The Honorable Mayor 4**
- 5:00 PM Return to the hotel
- 6:45 PM Meet in the hotel lobby for dinner
- 7:00 PM Dinner
- 9:00 PM Return to the hotel

FRIDAY, DATE

- 8:30 AM Depart from hotel to the meeting space
- 8:45 AM Hot breakfast & coffee
- 9:00 AM **Presentation: Resource Team 5**
- 9:15 AM **Presentation: Resource Team 6**
- 9:30 AM Discussion
- 9:50 AM Break + Group Photo
- 10:10 AM **The Honorable Mayor 5**
- 11:10 AM **Host City Tour**
- 12:30 PM Lunch at the meeting space
- 1:10 PM **Presentation: NEA**
- 1:25 PM **Presentation: Resource Team 7**
- 1:40 PM Discussion
- 2:00 PM Break
- 2:20 PM **The Honorable Mayor 6**
- 3:20 PM Break
- 3:30 PM **The Honorable Mayor 7**
- 4:30 PM Closing Remarks: Trinity Simons Wagner
- 5:00 PM Return to the hotel
- 6:45 PM Meet in the hotel lobby for dinner
- 7:00 PM Dinner
- 9:00 PM Return to the hotel

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE BUDGET

Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD) 2025-2026 Sample Budget for Special Session

Site Visits to 7 Cities		
Travel	\$4,200	7 trips @ \$600, including airfare, rental cars, and taxis
Hotel	\$1,750	7 trips @ \$250 per night, including taxes
Food	\$700	7 trips @ \$100 per trip
7 Mayors		
Travel	\$4,200	7 @ \$600 per flight
Hotel	\$6,300	21 room nights @ \$300 per night, including taxes
Incidentals	\$1,000	Incidentals such as taxis to / from airport, airport parking, and food on travel days for mayors
7 Resource Team Members		
Travel	\$3,600	6 @ \$600 per flight (1 local)
Hotel	\$6,300	21 room nights @ \$300 per night, including taxes
Incidentals	\$1,000	Incidentals such as taxis to / from airport, airport parking, and food on travel days for Resource Team
Meals		
Opening dinner	\$4,200	35 guests @ \$120 per person, including beverages, service fees, and rentals
Second dinner	\$2,200	22 participants @ \$100 per person, including beverages, service fees, and rentals
Closing dinner	\$2,200	22 participants @ \$100 per person, including beverages, service fees, and rentals
Breakfast	\$1,540	22 participants for 3 days @ \$35 per day
Lunches and beverages	\$3,300	22 participants for 2 days @ \$75 per day
Honorarium	\$3,500	7 @ \$500 per Resource Team member
Printing and copying	\$3,500	Printing for briefing books, post-session reports, signage, handouts, etc.
Shipping	\$300	Shipping for post-session reports, etc.
Supplies	\$500	Supplies and session materials
Audio / visual services	\$4,000	Provided by the host institution as in-kind support
Local transportation	\$3,000	Provided by the host institution as in-kind support
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$2,500	
Meeting space	N/A	Provided by the host institution as in-kind support
Staff/faculty time	N/A	Provided by the host institution as in-kind support
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Total	\$59,790	
Reimbursable by MICD	\$ 50,000	
Provided by the host institution	\$ 9,790	Plus staff/faculty time

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PROJECT TIMELINE

SAMPLE SESSION TIMELINE

The following is an abbreviated schedule of planning an MICD session. From start to finish, MICD session planning and execution is typically an approximately 8-month process; session dates are determined by host organization, MICD staff, and MICD partners. Please note that MICD provides hosts with a detailed task list, timeline, templates, and other planning documents.

Task / Item	Due Date	Sample Date
Submit work plan and timeline	Within 14 days of contract signing (contractual deadline)	May 1
Begin biweekly meetings with MICD team		June 1
Secure all contracts for hotel, meeting space, meals, opening reception, transportation, AV, etc.		By July 1
Invitations made to mayors and resource team	As early as possible (at least 3 months before Institute Session)	By July 22
Site visits to participating mayors; drafting briefing book		July, August, September
Site visits complete	At least 21 days before session	By October 1
Submit draft briefing book to MICD staff for review and approval	At least 14 days before session (contractual deadline)	October 8
Briefing Book distributed to participants electronically	At least 7 days before session (contractual deadline)	October 15
Institute Session		October 22-24
Submit draft summary to MICD staff for review and approval prior to distribution	Within 21 days of Institute Session (contractual deadline)	November 14
Session summary distributed to participants	Within 30 days of Institute Session (contractual deadline)	November 23
Final Report and invoice to MICD Director	Within 45 days of Institute Session (contractual deadline)	December 8