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# Adlai Stevenson

Center on Democracy

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## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

# INVITATION TO CARRY FORWARD VALUES OF THE ADLAI STEVENSON CENTER ON DEMOCRACY

**The Board of the Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy (Center) cordially invites proposals from interested parties with the vision and wherewithal to carry forward the Stevenson legacy and deep commitment to the understanding and practice of democracy. Proposals are due no later than: September 15, 2021 and should be sent via email to: [rfp@stevensoncenterondemocracy.org](mailto:rfp@stevensoncenterondemocracy.org)**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy (Center) was incorporated in November 2007 and held its “inaugural program”, Grand Jollification, in August 2008. Now, in its 13th year of operation, the founders’ believe it is time for the work to be carried forward by the next generation of leaders. That said, the Center invites proposals from interested parties who share the Center’s commitment to progressive democracy and have a clear vision for how to assume the Stevenson mantle and advance the understanding and practice of democracy.

To assist applicants, this RFP provides a brief overview of the Center’s legacy and support the Center will extend to the winning proposal. It also provides guidance on the proposal format, review and selection process and a decision timetable. Inquiries should be directed to: Sheila Leahy | SAL Consulting Inc. | [sal.consulting.inc@gmail.com](mailto:sal.consulting.inc@gmail.com)

## A. Stevenson Center's Legacy

The Center recently commissioned a review of the Center by a third party. This review included a deep dive into the work of the Center and its impact to date and included a look at its educational programming and Reform Coalition work. Interviews conducted by the reviewer confirmed that these are particularly “dangerous” times for democracy in the US and across the globe. Strong articulate voices, elevating democratic values and facilitating deeply thoughtful exploration of what makes democracy work, were seen as especially critical at this moment in time. There was agreement that the Stevenson Center is one of those voices.

**Reform Coalition:** The Center is credited with playing an important role in helping to “plant the seeds” of critical democracy reform efforts that are underway today in the United States. The independent review confirmed that the Center’s efforts with the Reform Coalition, beginning in 2016, that involved coalescing influential leaders around shared domestic reform opportunities, was influential in terms of making important connections among key leaders and “spurring” discussion that is ably led by other leaders today.

**Educational Programs:** The robust monthly programs were widely recognized by participants as exceptional. Participants applaud the Center’s programs for the caliber of speakers, the variety of topics, the depth of the presentations and the rich sidebar conversations that occur before and after the presentations. The gravitas of the Stevenon name, the Center’s reputation for thoughtful programming and for attracting an engaged and politically active audience, allowed the Center to attract respected and renowned historians, political leaders, government officials and non-profit and philanthropic leaders. (see appendix for a list of programs hosted by the Center)

**Audience Demand:** Programs held at the Stevenson homestead are seen to have a particular impact because participants believe there is a need for far more progressive conversations in Lake and McHenry Counties and parts of Cook County. The Center was seen as a significant voice for progressive thinking and democratic values for all the north and west collar counties in Illinois and parts of Cook.

**Stevenson Homestead:** The Stevenson homestead, owned by the Lake County Forest Preserve District since 1974, is a lasting legacy to Adlai E. Stevenson II. Designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2014, the house includes exhibits of Adlai E. Stevenson’s life and career and offers a permanent curated educational opportunity for students and the general public. Fittingly, the Center leases space in the homestead from the District to house its office and to host most of its in-person educational programming. Program participants and speakers indicate the historical significance of the setting, coupled with the intimacy of the space, makes for truly memorable moments.

**Student Voices:** Launched in 2016, the Student Voices program invites high school students to submit essays on issues important to them. This initiative has engaged a growing number of

youth, primarily in Lake County, in the process of democratic discourse. A rigorous process of review by experienced educators has resulted in identifying, recognizing and publishing the best of the best student essays on the Center's website.

## B. Selected Organization

The Center seeks interested parties who share the Stevenson Center's commitment to calling out challenges to equitable democratic systems and advancing practical solutions. **The Center is not requiring applicants to continue in the same manner, but rather they are interested in proposals that reimagine how the values of the Center might be advanced in a sustainable way for current and future generations.**

The organization with the winning proposal will be supported in the following ways:

### ***Assuming the Stevenson Center Mantle***

- The Stevenson Center, led by Adlai Steveson, and its Board, would work collaboratively with the organization to publicly announce the passing of the torch to new leadership.
- The selected organization will be able to use the Stevenson Center name in promoting the work outlined in their winning proposal

### ***Funds***

- The Stevenson Center, its Board, Advisors and volunteers, would, in collaboration with the winning organization, make one coordinated and strategic fundraising appeal to foundation and generous individual donors to: announce the finalist organization; outline the organization's plans and resources needed to do so; and seek their support.

### ***Other assets***

- Contact information for the dedicated and generous audience and colleagues cultivated by the Center over the years would be passed on to the winning organization for their ongoing care and stewardship
- The Center would also give the winning organization all of the materials and recordings related to educational programming that have been produced and preserved over the years
- The Center's lease with the Forest Preserve, to maintain its office space and host events at the Stevenson homestead will expire in 2022. The Center's Board would, if desired by the winning applicant, help negotiate a new working relationship with the Forest Preserve.

# C. Selection Criteria, Process, Timeline and Proposal Format

## 1. SELECTION CRITERIA, PROCESS and TIMELINE

The Center has structured a team of reviewers, who were drawn from the Center’s Board, Advisors and volunteers. This team will be interested in proposals that meet the following criteria:

- The applying organization has a demonstrated commitment to preserving and advancing democracy in service of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion and has a board that reflects these values
- The applicant has a deep appreciation for the Stevenson legacy
- The applicant presented an innovative strategy for carrying forward the values of the Stevenson Center to a diverse audience
- The proposed strategy is sustainable and the applicant has the capacity to succeed

The application is considered the first step in opening a conversation with the Stevenson Center. The team of reviewers look forward to structuring a conversation with applicants to go over their proposal and collectively explore the opportunity.

The timetable below represents approximate dates:

Task	Date
Applications Due	September 15, 2021
Conversations with Review Team	September 20, 2021
Finalist Selected	October 15, 2021

## 2. PROPOSAL FORMAT

The proposal should be no more than 8 pages. **Please follow this format to help facilitate a consistent review of proposals:**

### **A. Introduction:**

*In this section we seek to understand the mission and activities of the applicant organization and how the mantle of the Stevenson Center would add value.*

- Identify the primary contact person and their contact information
- Tell us about your organization, its mission and services
- Explain how the spirit of the Stevenson Center fits into your mission and work

**B. Plans for adopting the spirit of the Stevenson Center**

*The previous section explained 'Why' and this section should outline 'How' you plan to advance the spirit/values of the Stevenson Center*

- Describe what you intend to do, your target audience and timeline
- Describe the expected impact/outcome
- Outline who will staff the effort

**C. Budget**

*Provide an itemized budget and expected revenue streams for carrying out your plans.*

**D. Addendum**

*We ask you to share background information on your organization such as your operating budget, most recent 990, list of board and staff...*

**This RFP is respectfully offered by the Center Board:**

<https://www.stevensoncenterondemocracy.org/board-directors.html>

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## **APPENDIX**

### **CENTER'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**

Programming covered a broad array of issues with 30% focused on international democracy, 22% on domestic democracy issues related to governance, 10% related to issues of justice and 9% to the environment. The full list of programming can be found here.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1I9heU-5JVbKYmAAJ186jBqIReujHH3rH8jX5FUGu5gc/edit?usp=sharing>