



Grantmakers for Southern Progress – Event Planner RFP

RFP Summary

Grantmakers for Southern Progress (GSP) is seeking an experienced event planning team to support the planning, coordination, management, and implementation of our 2025 Convening estimated to be held from October 14-16, 2025 in Appalachia (exact location TBD). Submissions must be complete by May 17, 2024 for consideration.

Background

GSP hosts a biennial, regional gathering of its members, funding partners, and practitioners to share and discuss the opportunities, challenges, and best strategies for supporting structural change and advancing equity in the Southern region of the United States. This convening will have an action-oriented agenda that provides opportunities to learn, discuss, critique, and develop tools that support movement and power building in the South. By convening both philanthropic representatives and practitioners, we can learn from and make commitments to the best thinkers and doers in the region.

History, Mission, and Vision

GSP's mission is to help achieve significant and sustained progress in the economic, social, and political outcomes of those who are least well off economically, politically, and socially in the South. Founded in 2010, this network of Southern-based and national funders is committed to fostering thriving communities in the Southern United States, by advancing structural change that results in equitable outcomes.

We envision a region that is just and caring, where all people truly have the power to live healthy, prosperous, and whole lives free of fear and marginalization. GSP believes as these transformative changes are achieved in the South, it will lay an indelible foundation for the achievement of lasting equity and justice in the country overall, for “As the South goes, so goes the nation.”

Broad Convening Goals

As we build the agenda for this convening, we have an exciting opportunity to shift the narrative around the South. Instead of focusing on negative stereotypes, we can intentionally uplift and celebrate the brilliance and resilience of this region. We'll highlight the amazing work of grassroots organizations and vulnerable communities who are leading transformational change and creating a brighter future for all.

Funders should walk away from the convening understanding how to get connected with the structural change work happening in and around the South and to the programming of GSP. This convening will be the touchpoint for moving philanthropic leaders and practitioners into collective action that directs financial and physical resources to Southern communities to strengthen the social justice movement building infrastructure in the region.

The broad goals of this convening are:

1. Learning from the Field: Create opportunities for funders to learn from Southern leaders, both within philanthropy and from practitioners on the ground, as the best thinkers and doers around what success looks like in the region.
2. Learning Together: Bring together national and regional funders within the GSP network as a mutual learning community, particularly around structural change and racial equity. Key issue areas covered at the convening will include issues affecting rural communities across the South with an emphasis on the experiences of Southerners living in Appalachia.
3. Moving Forward Together: Explore and discuss how we, as a collective of individuals, institutions, and practitioners, define what progress looks like within a Southern context.

Scope of Work

The convening is estimated to be held October 14-16, 2025 in the Appalachian region. The event will take place at various locations in the surrounding area. It is anticipated that approximately 300 people (paid registrants, GSP staff and members, presenters, sponsors, exhibitors, etc.) will attend over the 2.5 day event.

The selected consultant, firm, or team will be required to supply personnel who have a track record of success in the professional services and activities of conference planning, support, execution, management, and coordination.

The event planning team that we seek is composed of proactive and organized individuals who feel comfortable managing all members of the GSP team to ensure deadlines are met, decisions are made, and the GSP team can maintain capacity to plan relevant and insightful programming. They demonstrate strong leadership skills, effective communication, and the ability to creatively problem solve.

As directed by GSP, the consulting services will include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Work as a thought partner with the planning committee to support the development of program content and overall flow/design of convening;
- Act as an extension of the GSP team in all communication with external vendors and stakeholders;
- Act as the primary project manager, comfortably managing and guiding the GSP team through the project plan;
- Assist with the development, management and execution of the primary event logistical plan and timeline, assign/delegate tasks to volunteers/session managers/planning and host committee;
- Arrange, coordinate, and schedule all meals including refreshment breaks;
- Determine AV needs for each session and make arrangements with the hotel to provide all necessary conference space and any required AV equipment.
- Manage the following event details:
 - Décor,

- Hiring and Coordinating cultural vendors
- Cultural expressions, entertainment, healing/meditative space
- Staging equipment
- Travel Planning within the region
- Event App and Technological Planning
- Support the following event details as needed:
 - Creation of on-site collateral
 - Budget Management
 - Travel Planning for 60+ individuals
 - Speaker Management

Eligibility Requirements

- GSP is seeking an experienced conference planning consultant with the following qualifications. When submitting to this RFP, please respond specifically to these qualifications:
- Please provide the professional background and experience of each administrative and project staff member who will be working on this project. Please also indicate their capacity to manage convening activities, including logistics and communication, or the ability to recruit additional staff to manage this workload for the duration of the project.
- Consultant must show a proven positive track record of a minimum of three years' experience in all areas of planning, financial management, and executing successful conferences;
- Positive Track Record narrative should include:
 - Ability to perform the work on schedule;
 - Management capacity, knowledge, skills, and experience to oversee the implementation of conference agenda, planning timeline and budget;
 - Experience with all aspects of meeting/event planning implementation.

Please note: The firm hired must have a strong commitment to promoting race and gender equity in their work. We strongly encourage consultants who are based in or have deep connections to the South to apply, as we would like to prioritize working with professionals who have a strong understanding of the region's unique needs and challenges.

Successful Event Planner:

The event planning team that we seek is composed of proactive and organized individuals who feel comfortable managing all members of the GSP team to ensure deadlines are met, decisions are made, and the GSP team can maintain capacity to plan relevant and insightful programming. They demonstrate strong leadership skills, effective communication, and the ability to creatively problem solve.

We envision the Event Planner to be an extension of our organization, engaging with our community and stakeholders with the mission and vision of GSP at the core of all work.

Overall Role:

The event planner will act as the momentum behind the Convening.

To contribute to the overall success of the event, they should:

- Send a weekly email to the GSP Team, informing them of:
 - Upcoming deadlines from the project timeline
 - Any past deadlines
 - Upcoming decisions
- Act as main liaison with all logistical vendors
- Manage the project timeline
- Bi-weekly check-ins with Event Lead
- Attend at least two committee meetings per month
- Attend the monthly All-Team Meeting

Logistics:

- **Venue and Accommodations**
 - Act as main liaison with host venue and accommodations
 - Negotiate contracts in the best interest of GSP
 - Clearly communicate relevant details as stated in the contract
 - Lead the management of the primary list of guests
 - Create and track pick-up pace to ensure attrition rate is covered
 - Secure A/V Contract with hotel
 - Manage Food and Beverage, using the projection matrix
 - Manage Shipping to the hotel
 - Schedule Site Visit
- **External Vendor Management**
 - Procure 3-4 external vendors and quotes for all external needs, including, but not limited to:
 - Swag
 - Practitioner Transportation Planner
 - Transportation for Learning Tours
 - Graphic Recorders
 - Language Justice
 - Printers
 - Security (with major influence from GSP)
 - Present options to GSP
 - Facilitate decision-making with GSP
 - Ensure contracts are signed
 - Ensure deposits and payments are facilitated
 - Act as main liaison for all details
- **Practitioner Travel**
 - Secure and manage travel for external stakeholders (up to 60 individuals)
- **Platform Management**

- Create back-end of the platform
- Manage all inquiries in the platform
- Provide strategic insight on hybrid functionality and other technological enhancements

Financial:

- **Budget Management**
 - Support the Financial Management committee with budget management needs
 - Weekly request for receipts
 - Organize receipts
 - Clearly communicate payment deadlines for all vendor
- **Sponsorship**
 - Management of Sponsorship Deliverables

Marketing & Outreach:

- Support the Marketing & Outreach Committee in creating templates to be used during the event

Submission to RFP

Please submit the following required documents by May 17, 2024 to info@g4sp.org. The subject line should read: **Convening RFP – Your or Your Firms Name**

RFP must include the following information:

- A response to the Eligibility Requirements stated above;
- The fee to undertake the role of conference planner for the event and a budget that shows a breakdown of the costs for operations, (e.g. costs for personnel, supplies, etc.);
- Key staff and relevant experience;
- Recent experience on similar project(s) and how those similarities might relate to this project;
- Provide a minimum of two (2) references from clients that have worked with you and/or your consulting firm in the last five years at a convening, event, or conference. Please include name, contact number, and an email address.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out at the above address.