



**CAMDEN COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP**
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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival
Event Planner**

**Submissions due:
January 29th 2026, by 3 pm EST**

**Prepared by:
Camden Community Partnership, Inc.
Ferry Terminal Building
2 Aquarium Drive, Suite 310
Camden, NJ 08103**

**Email:
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I. Invitation to Bid & Introduction to Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival

Camden Community Partnership (CCP) is seeking the services of an experienced individual or firm that specializes in community festivals and arts event planning, consulting, and coordination. The experienced individual or firm will be retained to assist with developing, implementing, and managing cultural, artistic, and activity programming for the 2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival. Camden Night Gardens is a free nighttime art, music, food, and performance festival designed to celebrate the local arts and rich culture of the City of Camden.

The event is tentatively scheduled for the evening of Friday, May 22, 2026. Camden Night Gardens is regarded as the summer kickoff event for the Connect the Lots Season, which is a comprehensive, community-driven effort designed to activate Camden, New Jersey's vacant and underutilized spaces through the identification and execution of artistic, cultural, and recreational programs, projects and activities. The Camden Night Gardens typically draws 3,000 to 5,000 attendees from the city and region.

The Camden Night Gardens ("CNG") event planner should have experience creating, managing, and carrying out urban nighttime festivals featuring culture and arts. The event planner should prioritize working with local Camden artists, nonprofits, and the community to develop suitable artistic programming for the 2026 Camden Night Gardens, from conceptual development, festival layout, and age-appropriate activities to production execution.

The event planner will be required to be on-site in Camden, NJ, the night of the event, as well as attend several meetings to plan, implement, oversee, and report on several aspects of the projects proposed here.

II. Connect the Lots (CTL) Background

Connect the Lots (CTL) is a multidimensional, community-driven initiative that aims to activate Camden, New Jersey's vacant and underutilized spaces by identifying and implementing artistic, cultural, and recreational projects and activities. Led by the Camden Community Partnership in collaboration with the City of Camden and the County of Camden, Connect the Lots brings together residents and stakeholders from across the City of Camden.

CCP has worked with residents and community partners for over a decade to envision a seasonal placemaking strategy and special events series designed to program public spaces and parks throughout the city. Branded as Connect The Lots (CTL), the goal was to infuse health, wellness, and art into free, family-friendly programs in city parks and open spaces. Events ranged from outdoor concerts and festivals, outdoor movie nights, fitness and exercise classes, art crawls, pop-up skatepark, public art installations, and other family-friendly activities. Connect the Lots (CTL) has energized Camden's artistic community to cultivate pathways of economic and social opportunity for residents.

Beyond developing a seasonal placemaking strategy, Connect the Lots (CTL) seeks to reconnect Camden's residents with newly improved community assets through artistic, cultural, and recreational projects and programming, as well as connecting residents to nodes along the Circuit Trails and Greenway. By creating and sharing memories in these open spaces, Camden residents increase their sense of pride in their neighborhood while strengthening the social, environmental, and civic fabric of the community. These and other activities bring vibrancy to Camden's open spaces.

III. Camden Night Gardens (CNG) Background

In 2014, CCP and community stakeholders developed the Camden Night Gardens to temporarily transform the site of the former Riverfront Prison (demolished in 2010) from a community eyesore—a blighted and vacant lot—into a vibrant public event on North Camden’s waterfront along the Delaware River. CCP sought to demonstrate to government officials, funders, stakeholders, and residents the significant potential of the site for creating a signature waterfront open space set to the backdrop of the Philadelphia skyline and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. Just two years later, that vision has become a reality with Cooper’s Poynt Waterfront Park: a brand new park that features an ADA-accessible playground, grassy areas for play, a half-mile multi-purpose trail for biking, walking, and running, as well as landscaping and lighting.

The event serves as the annual kick-off celebration for the Connect the Lots Season and the start of summertime in the city.

This year CCP is looking to design a unique experience and memorable event for the children, youth, and families of Camden that builds upon years of carefully curated experiences and placemaking.

IV. Camden Night Gardens Themes

Each year, Camden Night Gardens is curated with a specific theme showcasing Camden-related topics such as poet Walt Whitman, Connectivity, and Rebirth. Previous hallmark features of the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival have included:

Zip Line (2018):

A towering thrill ride added heart-pumping excitement to the experience of Night Gardens 2018. The bravest festival-goers paid \$5 each to ride the 300 ft zip line that allowed two passengers at a time to soar high above Cooper’s Poynt Waterfront Park. The two-minute trip added beautiful vistas and fun-loving screams to the festival atmosphere.

Light Projection: Water Tower and City Hall (2014 - 2018)

The North Camden water tank and Camden City Hall have served as the focal points for the Camden Night Gardens Festivals. The tower and logo became the creative foundation for a site-specific light projection. The existing CAMDEN logo was framed within a large circle of shifting colored light, with its letters traced and filled with vibrant colors and kaleidoscopic patterns. Visible from a distance, the shimmering surface of the water tower and radiant CAMDEN RISING logo beckoned to the festival site.

Shadow Stage (2014, 2015, 2018)

Nestled at the base of a monumental North Camden water tower, the “Shadow Stage” served as the festival’s central hub for a spectacular array of poetry, music, and dance performances. To create the “Shadow Stage,” the watertower was illuminated in radiant white light and transformed into a vast projection screen. The performers’ bodies appeared as giant silhouettes floating and shimmering on the surface of the water tower, crafting fleeting images and mesmerizing patterns of movement that provided spontaneous accompaniment to their performance.

CAMDEN and CITY INVINCIBLE Public Art Project (2014 and 2015)

The Camden Night Gardens showcased a collaborative effort by individual artists, each contributing their unique creative vision to create a visually dynamic mural along the Delaware River: 8-foot-tall "CAMDEN" letters in 2014 and 14-foot-tall "CITY INVINCIBLE" letters in 2015. Working through the night of the festival, the team of artists engaged in a spontaneous act of performative painting for festival visitors, culminating in an iconic logo representing the city's cultural vitality and vibrant diversity.

Light Graffiti Photography (2014, 2016)

Light graffiti is a technique that creates visually stunning images by manipulating various light sources during long-exposure photography. Essentially, this technique allows one to draw in space, using pure light as a pencil. At the Camden Night Gardens Fall Festival, visitors had the chance to collaborate with artists to create luminous and original self-portraits through this innovative process. A team of photographers equipped with cameras connected to large screen monitors worked with visitors and graffiti artists to produce dazzling self-portraits featuring superimposed graffiti that ranged from simple hearts and stars to mesmerizing abstract patterns. The light graffiti portraits were showcased on a large monitor at the festival and on the Camden Night Garden's Facebook page, enabling visitors to express themselves and actively contribute to the festival's artistic vision.

Zero Gravity and Once Upon a Night (2019, 2022)

In 2019, Camden Night Gardens "*Zero Gravity*" theme emerged as a highly anticipated community event, marking the launch of CCP's *Connect the Lots* Summer Program. The event offered a vibrant platform for local artists to showcase their talents through dance, music, and visual arts, complemented by thrilling rides. The unique "zero gravity" theme featured interactive art installations and attractions designed to evoke the sensation of weightlessness while celebrating various artistic styles engagingly and imaginatively. Standout elements included a free car show, a variety of local food vendors serving diverse cuisines, and a captivating hot air balloon experience, making the event a memorable experience for attendees of all ages.

After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event returned in 2022 with a new theme, "*Once Upon a Night*." This edition shifted focus toward storytelling and performance art, showcasing local talents such as fire performers, storytellers, singers, and more. While attendance reflected the challenges of rebuilding momentum post-pandemic, the event continued to serve as a vital opportunity for residents to reconnect and celebrate the arts within their community.

Carnival (2023, 2024)

In its second year after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival embraced a carnival theme, providing free, family-friendly rides, games, and activities for children and youth ages 4 to 15 during the weekend of the Memorial Day Holiday. Recognizing that many Camden residents face barriers to access, such as transportation and discretionary funds easily afforded by their suburban counterparts and their ability to visit New Jersey shore points with carnival rides and games, CCP shifted its energy into creating an experience on the Camden Waterfront. The event included the performance stage, local food trucks and vendors, a local antique car shows, video game trucks, the Trenton Circus, and much more.

Additional elements of the Camden Night Gardens have included: Blacklight Basketball, an interactive Victrola Recorder, the Pleasure/Data Gardens, illuminated BMX biking, and projections of Walt Whitman's work. For more information and visuals of the Camden Night Gardens, please visit our website at: www.camdencommunitypartnership.com or www.connectthelotscamden.com/camdennightgardens.html

Glow Extreme Sports (2025)

The 2025 theme, "Glow Extreme Sports," created an energetic and immersive festival atmosphere. Guests enjoyed live entertainment from local artists, a wide selection of food trucks, and interactive attractions including a photo booth, half-pipe skate show, silent disco, Euro bungee, rock-climbing wall, and glow-in-the-dark activities. The evening came alive under the stars at Cooper's Poynt Park, offering a memorable experience for attendees of all ages.

v. Scope of Work

The selected event planner will collaborate with representatives from CCP, the City of Camden, the County of Camden and other community groups to curate art projects, musical performances, and cultural, recreational, and amusement events for the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival, scheduled for 2026, to be held at (Location TBD) on Friday, May 22, 2026. These activities should encompass a combination of light projection, sound, music, public art, and interactive art along with cultural or recreational events that incorporate the hallmark features listed in Section IV. The event planner must meet several times with CCP staff and/or community residents during the planning of the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival to effectively develop and implement these event activities. The selected event planner should clearly communicate any needs to CCP to ensure the successful execution of the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival. Additionally, the event planner should provide coordination services, setup management, and day-of services for the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival to ensure that the event runs smoothly and on schedule.

CCP is responsible for securing all venue approvals and permits and coordinating with property owners. CCP will also assist in coordinating activities and contracting artists and community groups as necessary. The event planner is fully responsible for the setup and takedown of the CNG event. CCP is responsible for ancillary activities, such as the community organization showcase and securing food vendors.

Phase 1 - Planning

- Conceptualize all activities at the 2026 Camden Night Gardens with CCP Staff. The selected event planner must work with CCP to identify local community artists and organizations to implement these projects.
- Conduct at least 3 on-site meetings with CCP Staff and other stakeholders to discuss proposed Camden Night Garden activities, event logistics and required infrastructure for event.
- Participate in monthly conference calls with CCP and weekly calls in the 6 weeks leading up to the event.
- Develop various artistic, recreational, interactive or cultural activities for all ages at the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival. This will involve working directly with artists to negotiate a fee for service.
- Work with CCP to obtain and secure proper insurance and permitting for the event.

- Work with CCP to secure subcontractors and/or vendors to provide lighting, wiring, tents, tables, chairs, electricity, and any other necessary event items for the festival grounds and art activities.
- Work with CCP and stakeholders to develop a schedule of events and an event map with locations of 5 activities.

Phase 2 - Execution

- Implement all activities at the 2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival with CCP Staff. The selected event planner must work with CCP to identify local community artists and organizations to implement these projects.
- Implement various artistic, recreational, interactive or cultural activities for all ages at the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival. This will involve working directly with the artists to make sure that they are well accommodated.
- Work with CCP, subcontractors, vendors, artists, fire and safety teams, and volunteers to coordinate set-up and takedown of event. The selected event planner must oversee that the festival ground is returned to its pre-event state.

Phase 3 - Analysis

- Create, manage and reconcile event budgets, expenses and timelines. The selected event planner must adhere to project timelines and budget guidelines and submit invoices in a timely manner.
- Manage and execute event debriefing, analyzing recommended improvements and changes.
- Create a 1-minute video recap of the 2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival. There shall be two rounds of edits with CCP. The recap video will promote the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival to stakeholders.

Deliverables:

- Meeting notes from any community meetings.
- Design files of marketing materials deemed necessary.
- Specifications of light, wires, seating, and electrical equipment needed for the event.
- Map of festival grounds, including the location of light, restrooms, tents, stages, wires, seating, electrical equipment, and any other necessary equipment.
- 2026 Camden Night Gardens recap promo video.

VI. Proposal Submittal Information

Each firm or event planner responding to this RFP shall submit, on or before the submission deadline date, a proposal to be called the "RFP- 2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival Event Planner." This should include a cover letter, table of contents, and the information outlined below:

A. Identification

1. Name of firm, address, telephone and fax number of main office and any branch office that will be involved in the project.
2. Name, title, address, telephone, fax number, and email address of the principal-in-charge.

3. List of sub-consultants, including information requested in 1 and 2 above, including any MBE, SBE and WBE affiliation for each sub-consultant and the general nature of the type of service to be provided on the property by each sub-consultant.

B. Consultant Qualifications & Experience

Firm should provide a detailed description of qualifications and experience, including the in-house team for this project, any relevant project experience and other projects in the City of Camden. The expertise of any additional sub-consultants who have agreed to be part of this project should be detailed. The respondent shall provide a thorough description of any relevant projects and shall describe the firm's ability to carry out the scope of work of this project. The firm should highlight other special events and/or experiences in cities in this region. Please send images and links to video websites of relevant events, programs, and projects produced by the consultant team.

C. Project Methodology/Proposed Theme

The respondents shall briefly state their own understanding of the issues and tasks of the project at hand and describe the ideas and methodology to carry out a successful Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival as described in the Scope of Work. Technical proposals should clearly specify the firm's methodology for completing all tasks. Project methodology shall clearly explain both the technical and management approach to the project.

The methodology should include initial thematic ideas for the Camden Night Gardens event.

D. Schedule

CCP seeks to commence this project within 6 weeks of the proposal submission deadline. All tasks would need to be expeditiously carried out in order to meet the Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival date of **May 22, 2026**. A project schedule showing the start and completion of each phase of work shall be submitted with the proposal.

E. Fee Proposal

Respondents should provide a fee proposal for performing all tasks of the project scope of work for professional services and execution. The budget for this proposal should not exceed **\$75,000**.

CCP reserves the right to award all, none, or some of the phases of work described.

Fee proposals submitted should be valid for 12 months.

In addition, hourly rates for the proposed personnel, direct/indirect costs, and equipment, materials, and supplies should be submitted. If additional work is authorized under this contract as a change order, the event planner will hold the same fee rates and schedule attached with this submission.

All reimbursable expenses (including, but not limited to, items such as travel, printing and delivery charges) must be included within the submitted fee for the designated phase.

CCP is responsible for venue costs for the 2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival. The proposed budget should not include venue costs.

CCP is responsible for all city service costs, including police, EMT, trash, and various other services. The selected event planner must provide electricity to operate any additional site amenities. CCP is also responsible for all costs, including rentals and fees for supplementary event details, such as marketing.

VII. Proposal Administration

A. Submission

Respondents shall deliver three (3) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy on CD or flash drive of their proposals (in a clearly marked, sealed envelope) to:

Nakia Maxwell, Office Manager
Camden Community Partnership
Ferry Terminal Building
2 Aquarium Drive
Suite 310
Camden, NJ 08103

ATTN: RFP-2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival Event Planner

All proposals shall be submitted no later than 3 PM EST on Thursday, January 29th, 2026.

Proposals will not be accepted after the time specified for submission. Proposals received after the hour appointed will be deemed invalid and returned unopened.

B. Inquiries

Any explanation required by respondents regarding the interpretation of the requirements of this RFP should be requested in writing and received no later than 3 PM on Thursday, January 22nd, 2026.

Inquiries should be addressed to Joe Myers, COO, Camden Community Partnership via email only at myers@camdencpinc.com. Please include the title of "RFP- 2026 Camden Night Gardens & Arts Festival Event Planner" on the subject line of any email message.

Oral responses will not be provided, and any information given to a prospective respondent will be furnished to all respondents via email, as an addendum to the RFP.

To identify your firm as a potential respondent to receive any addendum to the RFP, please send an email with your firm name and contact information to Nakia Maxwell, Office Manager, and Camden Community Partnership via email only at myers@camdencpinc.com

C. Evaluation Criteria

CCP will evaluate each proposal submitted at its discretion and recommend a firm to the CCP Board of Directors. Event Planners will be evaluated according to the following qualifications-based criteria:

Quality and Completeness of Proposal (10%)
Relevant Experience (25%)
Proposed Project Methodology/ Theme (45%)
Schedule (15%)
Cost (5%)

This RFP does not commit CCP to award a contract or to procure an event planner for services. CCP reserves the right to reject all proposals, accept sections of separate proposals, to negotiate with competing consultants, and/or make no award. Awards may be based solely on initial offers. CCP may interview the firms or individuals that submit a proposal. Awards may be made to the responsible firm or individuals whose proposal is most advantageous to the project, with price and other factors considered.

D. Insurance Requirements

The Event Planner shall secure and maintain insurance coverage provided herein, in force, for the term of the contract. The selected Event Planner shall provide CCP with current certificates of insurance for all coverage and renewals thereof which must contain the provision that the insurance provided in the certificate shall not be canceled for any reason except after thirty [30] calendar days written notice to CCP. CCP, the State of New Jersey and the City of Camden shall be listed as additional insureds on the policy.

Comprehensive Liability: Comprehensive liability insurance for the benefit of the Event Planner and sub-consultants is to be written as broad as the standard coverage form currently in use in the State of New Jersey, which shall not be circumscribed by any endorsements limiting the breadth of coverage. The policy shall include an endorsement [broad form] for contractual liability insurance, an endorsement for completed operations insurance, and an endorsement eliminating the explosion, collapse and underground [XCU] exclusion. Limits of liability shall not be less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury liability and \$1,000,000 per occurrence for property damage liability.

Comprehensive Automobile Liability: Comprehensive automobile liability insurance covering owned, non-owned and hired vehicles must be carried by the Consultant and its sub-consultants. The limits of liability shall not be less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury liability and \$500,000 per occurrence for property damage liability.

Workers Compensation: Workers Compensation insurance, applicable to the laws of the State of New Jersey and other State or Federal jurisdiction is required to protect employees of the Event Planner or any sub-consultants who will be engaged in the performance of this contract. The insurance shall include employer's liability protection with a limit of liability not less than \$250,000.

Professional Liability Insurance: The Event Planner shall maintain Professional Liability insurance for itself and sub-consultants. The limits of liability shall not be less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate. The insurance carrier shall be registered with the New Jersey Department of Insurance and licensed or authorized to conduct business in the State of New Jersey, as required by law. In the event of a loss, the Event Planner shall be held responsible for payment of the deductible as

though there were no deductible. Such insurance shall be maintained for a period of not less than six [6] months following the actual completion and acceptance of the project by Owner. Contractual Liability Insurance is not acceptable.

Please include proof of insurance with your proposal.

E. Equal Employment Opportunity Provisions

Companies and their sub-consultants will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex in the award and performance of this contract.

All potential firms must demonstrate a commitment to the effective implementation of an affirmative

action plan or policy on equal employment opportunity. The potential firm must ensure equal employment opportunity to all persons and not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, physical disability, mental disorder, ancestry, marital status, criminal record, or political beliefs. The company must uphold and operate in compliance with Executive Order I 1 246 and as amended in Executive Order I 1 375, Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Opportunity Act of 1972, the Fair Employment Practices Act, and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.

VII. Miscellaneous

- A. The Contract will be between CCP and selected firm. The contract will be a lump sum, not-to-exceed contract. Reimbursable expenses, except where otherwise noted in this RFP, shall be included in the lump sum contract cost.

CCP will not compensate for normal and reasonable office expenses, including but not limited to: telephone charges, photocopying, duplication/copying, blueprinting, postage, transportation to or from sites within Camden County, express/overnight mailing, and other reasonable business-related expenses.

- B. The Event Planner(s) shall be required to provide written certification that the project is in compliance with applicable design standards.
- C. The Event Planner(s) will be required to comply with requirements of P.L. 1975, c 27 (Law Against Discrimination in Public Contract).
- D. Any item that, in the opinion of the Event Planner, may have been inadvertently omitted and would be necessary for successful completion of the project should be included in the proposal and documented.
- E. Payment of all sub-consultants shall be the sole responsibility of the Event Planner. Nothing contained herein shall create a contractual relationship between any sub-consultant and the CFP.
- F. All work products produced by the Event Planner(s) and its members, and/or by any third party during the term of the Contract resulting from this RFP are the sole property of Camden Community Partnership (CCP). CCP shall be the sole owner of all digital data, graphics, and documents, as well as all hard-copy and publishable documentation resulting from the reports.

- G. CCP has the right to use, distribute or dispose of the work products without the consent of the Event Planner.