



KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY
Procurement Department

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND QUALIFICATIONS #2014 (“RFI”)

RFI #2014: Reuse of Kent State University Stark Conference Center

DATE OF ISSUE: Monday, April 27, 2026

RESPONSES DUE: Friday, May 8, 2026, no later than 4:30 PM Eastern

Responses must be received electronically through DynamicForms. No other submission method will be accepted, unless otherwise disclosed in the Instructions and Specifications to this RFI. The confirmation of receipt of your response must be noted as “Signed” no later than the “Responses Due” date and time specified above. The Forms History of your DynamicForms account will also note the date and time of your proposal submission. Responses submitted after the “Responses Due” date and time specified above may, in the University’s sole discretion, be rejected.

Responses are to be submitted in accordance with the enclosed Response Instructions and Specifications. There will not be a formal proposal opening.

The Kent State University Procurement Department shall at all times reserve the right to reject any or all Responses if doing so is deemed to be in the best interests of Kent State University.

Questions pertaining to any specifications contained herein should be directed to:



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EXBIHIT B: Photos of Conference Center
EXHIBIT C: Capital Needs Assessment Report

(Attachments have been distributed with the RFI and are available for download on the Procurement website at www.kent.edu/procurement/bids.)

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1.0 RFI TIMELINE (Subject to change by the University in its sole discretion.)

- **Monday, April 27, 2026:** RFI issued
- **Friday, May 8, 2026, 4:30 PM Eastern:** Responses due via DynamicForms submission; distribution of responses received and evaluations to begin the following **Monday, May 11, 2026**
- **Week of May 11, 2026:** Evaluation of responses received; follow-up questions sent to select respondents AND/OR selection and scheduling of finalists for presentations/interviews, if necessary.
- **TBD:** Issuance of RFP to short-listed RFI respondents, if necessary

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2.0 OVERVIEW OF KENT STATE UNIVERSITY STARK AND THE CONFERENCE CENTER

A. Kent State University Stark:

Kent State University is one of Ohio’s leading public universities with eight campuses spanning Northeast Ohio, a College of Podiatric Medicine, a Twinsburg Academic Center, and academic programs in major world cities such as New York City, Paris, and Florence. Kent State University at Stark is a KSU regional campus serving 3,500 students annually. As Kent State’s largest regional campus, students receive an affordable, university education on a beautiful 200-acre campus with a private college feel. KSU Stark offers the core courses for Kent State’s 370+ world-class programs of study, or students can choose from bachelor’s and associate degrees, minors and certificates that can be completed entirely at the Stark Campus. Kent State Stark is a dynamic institution that is meeting the educational needs of its students and the community. Stark County’s public university is proud to provide affordable, quality higher education opportunities for all Ohioans.

B. Conference Center:

For approximately 25 years, the Kent State University Stark Conference Center located on the southwest quadrant of the Kent State University Stark Campus at 6000 Frank Avenue NW, North Canton, OH 44720 as more particularly described on **Exhibit “A”** to this RFI (“**Conference Center**”). The Conference Center was constructed in 1971 and renovated in 2000, and totals approximately 69,000 square feet. The Conference Center operated as a full-service conference and training center, hosting corporate, governmental, nonprofit, and university events and served as a regional hub for professional education and community convening. The Conference Center was designed as a purpose-built conference and event venue with supporting infrastructure. Key features include:

- Large-format assembly spaces (e.g., ballroom / great hall)
- Breakout and meeting rooms of varying sizes
- Commercial-grade kitchen and dining facilities
- Pre-function and lobby spaces
- Office and administrative areas
- Parking and campus accessibility
- Technology enhancements to support corporate training and distance learning.

Current interior and exterior photos of the Conference Center are attached to this RFI as **Exhibit “B”**. In 2025 the University determined to cease operations at the Conference Center to refocus on its core academic mission, creating an opportunity to reimagine the facility’s future use.

This RFI is informed in part by a 2025 Capital Needs Assessment Report prepared by American Structurepoint (the “**CNA Report**”) which is attached to this RFI as **Exhibit “C”**. The CNA Report provides a baseline understanding of the Conference Center’s physical condition, remaining useful life of major systems, and projected capital investment needs over a ten-year horizon.

C. Ohio Auditor of State Occupancy:

The Ohio Auditor of State’s office occupies approximately 4,720 square feet of office space in Suite 154 of the Conference Center through June 30, 2027 with an option to extend occupancy through June 30, 2029. The University will reserve the right to continue this occupancy past June 30, 2029. The Auditor’s office has occupied this space since 2021, and its presence does not materially impact Conference Center operations.

For more information about Kent State University Stark, visit www.kent.edu/stark.

3.0 REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

A. Purpose:

Kent State University is seeking information and qualifications from experienced developers, operators, nonprofit organizations, and public-private partnerships for the adaptive reuse, redevelopment, operation, or reprogramming of the Conference Center through a long-term lease with the University.

The University invites innovative, financially viable, and mission-aligned concepts that enhance campus vitality, support regional economic development, and align with institutional priorities. Respondents should carefully review the CNA Report and assume that, while the Conference Center has been maintained, additional modernization and capital investment may be required depending on the proposed reuse.

Respondents must provide general information as to an intended use of the Conference Center along with any other information as requested and required in this RFI or as requested by the University. In addition to the respondent's intended use of the Conference Center, the proposer's qualifications and financial ability to lease and operate the proposed intended use shall be a material consideration in proposal selection.

The purpose of this RFI is to acquire information and qualifications from experienced developers, operators, nonprofit organizations, and public-private partnerships, for the adaptive reuse, operation, or reprogramming of the Conference Center. This RFI is being issued for informational and planning purposes only. The University may use the information received through responses to this RFI to refine a subsequent solicitation and may, but is not obligated to, invite one or more respondents to participate in a future RFP process. Accordingly, based on responses to this RFI, the University intends to invite two or more "short-listed" RFI respondents to submit proposals pursuant to a formal Request for Proposals ("RFP") for the long-term lease (5-25 years), reuse, and operation of the Conference Center ("RFP Phase"). Information on the RFP Phase is provided below for informational purposes only – proposals for the RFP Phase are NOT required in response to this RFI.

B. Objectives of the RFI:

The University seeks to:

- Identify feasible and innovative reuse concepts
- Assess market interest and financial viability
- Evaluate potential development and operating partners
- Explore opportunities that:
 - Complement the academic mission
 - Serve regional workforce and community needs
 - Generate sustainable revenue or cost recovery
 - Activate the campus and surrounding area

These objectives are intended to guide the University's review of responses for informational and planning purposes only. The University may use the information received to refine a subsequent solicitation and may, but is not obligated to, invite one or more respondents to participate in a future RFP process.

C. RFI Response Requirements:

Respondents are invited to provide information and qualifications addressing some or all of the following:

(i) Request for Information:

- Proposed use(s) for the Conference Center (e.g., educational, corporate, mixed-use, hospitality, innovation hub, community space, etc.) for long-term sustainability and relevance;
- Description of how the concept aligns with the Kent State Stark Campus and the needs of the local community and region;
- Preliminary space programming and utilization strategy;
- Preliminary proposed lease, or public-private partnership structure;
- Anticipated economic and community benefits; and

- Any additional information or narrative.

(ii) Request for Qualifications:

- Primary company and point of contact information
- Description of respondent's experience with:
 - Adaptive reuse projects
 - Conference centers, hospitality, or mixed-use developments
 - Projects involving higher education or public entities
 - Sample projects
- Examples of comparable completed projects
- Experience operating similar facilities
- Organizational overview and qualifications
- References: provide names, addresses and contact info (phone number and email address) of references you have worked with or for in the previous five years and provide a brief description of your relationship with such person. References may include anchor tenants, lenders and equity partners, public authorities, design professionals, construction professionals, contractors and other vendors. By providing these references, you expressly consent to the University contacting such persons to discuss your relationship.
- Any additional information or narrative.

D. Site Visitation:

Respondents interested in inspecting the Conference Center are encouraged to attend an optional facilities tour on (Date). Questions can be directed to Brian Gardener, Senior Facility Manager, Stark Campus, 330-244-3470 or via email to bgarde4@kent.edu.

E. RFP Phase: (provided for informational purposes only)

The RFP Phase will invite qualified "short-listed" respondents selected through the RFI to submit **detailed, implementable proposals** for lease of the Conference Center for the adaptive reuse, improvement, and/or operation of the Conference Center.

Proposals must:

- Build upon concepts identified during the RFI phase and demonstrate a clear, feasible path toward **project execution, financial sustainability, and long-term asset stewardship**;
- Proposed operating model, staffing, and management approach;
- Fully describe the overall costs and the financial structure proposed by the respondent, including any philanthropic opportunities, naming rights, limitations or expectations;
- Identify a financing strategy, estimated capital investment range, revenue model and long-term financial sustainability;
- Clearly describe maintenance, improvements, and lifecycle considerations.

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4.0 RFI INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Instruction and Information:** In order to receive consideration, companies responding to this RFP are required to submit their proposal electronically through DynamicForms. No other submission method will be accepted, unless otherwise disclosed in the RFP Instructions and Specifications. The confirmation of receipt of your response must be noted as "Signed" no later than the "Proposals Due" date and time specified above. The Forms History of your DynamicForms account will also note the date and time of your proposal submission. Proposals submitted after the "Proposals Due" date and time specified above will be rejected.
2. **Forms 1 through 9 must be completed, dated, and signed by a responsible company official, in addition to the information requested of your company.**
3. **It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that all required documentation arrives on time and at the designated location. Any submissions received after the stated date and time, or those that do not contain the required information as enumerated above, will be considered incomplete and unresponsive, and will be disqualified.**
4. **Specifications:** The specifications set forth in this RFI have been written to address the manner in which responses to this RFQ will best suit the University's needs. Additional information may be shared with respondents who are selected by the University to continue to the RFP Phase.
5. **Additional Information:** In the event that information submitted by the respondent is unclear to the University, the University may request additional explanation from the respondent for the purpose of evaluation and decisions. The respondent shall answer requests for additional information or clarification in writing, and these responses will become part of the company's overall submission. Respondents failing to provide adequate information on any issue in a timely manner to allow a comprehensive evaluation by the University shall be considered unresponsive, and their submission subject to rejection.
6. **Verbal Information:** Respondents shall NOT base responses on verbal information from any employee of the University from the date and time the RFI is received by the respondent, unless otherwise noted elsewhere in the RFI.
7. **Evaluation and Contract Award:** Refer to Section 5.0 below for detail.
8. **Respondent Presentations:** Respondents submitting qualifications and letters of interest which meet the selection criteria and which are deemed to be the most advantageous to the University may be required, as set forth below, to give an oral presentation to the University selection team. Scheduling of these oral presentations will be done by the Procurement Department.
9. **Reservation of Rights:** The issuance of this RFI does not constitute a commitment to issue a Request for Proposal, award a contract, or pay any costs incurred in preparation of a response to this RFI. In the event that the University determines, in its sole discretion, to not move forward with any responses to the RFI, the University shall have the right to: (i) cancel the RFI and the selection process outlined below; (ii) issue a new RFI, an RFP, or other process to seek qualified applicants; (iii) to provide the services itself; or (iv) to use another process in order to select a desired tenant for the Conference Center.
10. **Valid Submissions:** Submissions will be considered valid for a period of one hundred-twenty (120) days after the scheduled due date, unless otherwise noted.
11. **Proprietary Information Disclosure; Public Records:** All responses and accompanying documentation will become the property of the University at the time responses are opened. All submitted materials may be subject to disclosure under the Ohio Public Records Law (ORC 149.43). If you choose to submit documentation containing information your company considers trade secret, please be aware that the University may have a duty to release the documentation in response to a public record request. If you wish to claim that certain information contained in the

materials is trade secret, your company bears the burden of identifying that information, as well as taking steps to demonstrate that it is subject to protection under the law.

12. **Dun and Bradstreet Data:** The University reserves the right to request data from Dun and Bradstreet concerning history of company's financial and payment statistics. Responses from companies failing to provide the requested data to Dun and Bradstreet will not be considered.
13. **Use of Designs:** Respondent agrees that it will keep confidential the features of any equipment, tools, gauges, patterns, designs, drawings, engineering data or other technical or proprietary information furnished by Kent State University and use such items only in the performance of any agreements resulting from this RFI and not otherwise, without the prior written consent of the University. Upon demand or completion of resultant purchase order, the respondent shall return all such item(s) to the University at the expense of the respondent, or make other disposition thereof as may be directed or approved by the University.
14. **Finding for Recovery; Debarment:** Ohio Revised Code Section 9.242 prohibits any vendor who has been debarred by any state agency to participate in any contract during the debarment period. Further, respondent represents and warrants that it is not subject to an unresolved finding for recovery under ORC Section 9.24 and is not under any suspension or debarment by any office of the state of Ohio or the federal government.
15. **Campaign Contributions:** Respondent hereby certifies that all applicable parties listed in Division (I)(3) or (J)(3) of O.R.C. Section 3517.13 are in full compliance with Divisions (I)(1) and (J)(1) of O.R.C. Section 3517.13.
16. **H.B. 476, State Contract and Boycotting:** Pursuant to R.C. 9.76(B) respondent represents and warrants that it is not boycotting any jurisdiction with whom the State of Ohio can enjoy open trade, including Israel, and will not do so during the contract period.

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5.0 RFI EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria:

A committee of University stakeholders will be assembled to evaluate statements of qualifications and make a recommendation to the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration on respondents that the committee deems qualified to proceed to the RFP Phase.

The evaluation will be based upon the qualifications provided in response to this RFI, additional information requested by the University for clarification, information obtained from references and independent sources, and oral presentations, if requested and any addenda to this RFI, if issued. The University will select respondents whose qualifications are determined to be the most advantageous to the University, taking into consideration qualifications of the respondent and the nature and requirements of the response.

Notwithstanding the above, this RFI does not commit the University to proceed to the RFP Phase, or to enter into any agreements or described in this document. The University reserves the right to reject any or all responses and to waive formalities and minor irregularities in the responses it receives.

Rights and Options Reserved:

The University reserves the right, but shall not be required to, exercise the following rights and options with respect to the evaluation process under this RFI:

- To reject any submissions if, in the University's sole discretion, the submission is incomplete, not responsive to the requirements of this RFI, the respondent does not meet the qualifications required of this RFI, or it is otherwise in the University's best interest to do so;
- To supplement, amend, substitute or otherwise modify this RFI at any time with or without issuing another RFI;
- To reject the submission of any respondent that, in the University's sole judgment, is financially or technically incapable of performing the project or is otherwise not a responsible respondent;
- To waive any informality, defect, non-responsiveness and/or deviation from this RFQ and its requirements that is not, in the University's sole judgment, material to the submission;
- To permit or reject at the University's sole discretion, corrections (including for information inadvertently omitted), of submission by some or all of the respondents following qualifications submission;
- To request additional or clarifying information or more detailed information from any respondent at any time, before or after qualifications submission, including information inadvertently omitted by a respondent;
- To inspect and otherwise investigate projects performed by the respondent, whether or not referenced in the qualifications, with or without the consent of or notice to the respondent;
- To conduct such investigations with respect to the financial, technical, and other qualifications of each respondent as the University, in its sole discretion, deems necessary or appropriate.

(End of section. Please see note on Attachments on the following page.)

ATTACHMENTS

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