



**STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW)**  
**for**  
**Ethical Returns and Shared Stewardship Provenance Research and Coordination**  
**Office of the Registrar**  
**SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**  
**June 12, 2024**

**Background**

In May 2022, Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch issued a Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns policy to address instances where items in Smithsonian collections might have been acquired under ethically problematic circumstances. The Smithsonian recognizes it has collections that it would not have acquired under present-day ethical and professional standards. The new policy outlines the circumstances under which the Smithsonian may implement shared stewardship with communities represented in our collections and consider the return of collections based on ethical considerations. This contract would facilitate NMNH's response to this requirement and would allow the museum to address and respond to Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns inquiries regarding items in NMNH's collections in a timely manner by coordinating the NMNH's response to inquiries.

**Objectives**

Contractor(s) will undertake an in-depth inventory and provenance research of remains and/or objects in NMNH collections deemed to be high priority for potential shared stewards/ethical returns consideration, including researching the circumstances of acquisition through archival and museum records research, oral histories, verifying the inventory of remains against the records, reviewing relevant literature and providing reports on remains or objects in question.

Contractor will coordinate the inquiries received by NMNH under the Ethical Shared Stewardship Steering Committee and will liaise between the Office of the Registrar, the NMNH Repatriation Office and the Human Remains Group.

While requests may involve any NMNH collections item, it is anticipated that 90% of the requests will be for objects or human remains within the collections of the Department of Anthropology.

This one-year contract would continue the museum's response to the Smithsonian's policy on ethical returns. **Two 6-month options to extend** are requested in this Statement of Work. In fulfilling this contract, NMNH ADCS Collections Program will therefore contribute to one of the Smithsonian's top priorities.



**Office of the Registrar**

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### Scope of Work

The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) Office of the Registrar issues this statement of work for provenance research and coordination services to 1) provide provenance research services to evaluate the prior acquisition of collections deemed by NMNH to be high priority as determined by the museum or through request, 2) address and respond to Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns inquiries regarding items in NMNH's collections in a timely manner and 3) coordinate communication between NMNH groups working under the NMAI Act and the NMNH Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy and Human Dignity Team.

These services will be carried out at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., and the Smithsonian Museum Support Center in Suitland, MD within the period of performance stipulated in this statement of work.

Work for the duration of this contract will closely involve the following NMNH staff:

- Museum Registrar and staff
- Repatriation Office
- Human Dignity Team
- Collections and Archives staff
- Curatorial staff

The contractor shall provide professional, technical, and non-personal services to the National Museum of Natural History.

### TASKS

The contractor shall perform the following tasks:

The contractor will undertake an in-depth review of anthropological and other museum collections, as needed, which may include human remains, archaeological or ethnographic objects or other items present in the collections of the National Museum of Natural History deemed to be of highest priority for research.

- Receives assignments from COTR, typically via email or team meetings

Conducts an inventory of the collection(s) or item(s) in question, including documentation of collections, if requested. The majority of the collections are located at the Museum Support Center (MSC) in Suitland, Maryland, but some may be located at the National Museum of Natural History. Archival resources are located at MSC and also potentially at Smithsonian Libraries and Archives facilities in the area of the National

Mall. Registration materials are located primarily at the Natural History Building. The inventory will include verifying the collection items against collections records, flagging any discrepancies for additional research.

- Researches provenance/provenience of the collection or items in question to evaluate the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of collections item(s) using 1) museum records including, but not limited to, departmental ledger books (anthropology, mammals or other ledgers), accession and loan files, catalogue cards, and the collections database (EMu), 2) SI archival collections, including fieldnotes and correspondence, 3) relevant literature and 4) oral histories and other non-traditional lines of evidence.
- Consults with curatorial and collections management staff as needed, may be required to participate in ethical returns consultation meetings and other related meetings as required by COTR.
- Writes a concise and well-researched report summarizing the collections information and the circumstances under which the collection(s) or item(s) entered the museum, including any information about the circumstances under which the collection(s) or item(s) were removed from their original cultural context, if known.

The contractor will coordinate inter-museum discussion, coordination and response of anthropological and other museum collections, as needed, which may include human remains, archaeological or ethnographic objects or other items present in the collections of the National Museum of Natural History requested or deemed to be of highest priority for research.

- Receives assignments from COTR, typically via email or team meetings
- Manages the receipt of public and internal inquiries received from the NMNH Ethical Stewardship resource account
- Schedule meetings, create agendas and take meeting minutes
- Prepare and distribute weekly updates on ongoing projects, timelines and tasks
- Organize and manage correspondence utilizing preferred naming and archiving protocols
- Enter request data into Smithsonian project tracker
- Create and maintain internal document management system using Microsoft Teams and OneDrive
- Draft responses and formal documentation and submit to COTR in a “ready to send” form
- Liaise with departmental stakeholders to ensure completion of project tasks
- Consult with curatorial and collections management staff as needed, and participate in ethical returns consultation meetings and other related meetings as required by COTR.
- Create end of week summary for COTR that summarizes outstanding action items

- Liaise with NMNH Staff or contractors and central SI staff or contractors as directed by COTR regarding provenance research or related project tasks

### **Deliverables**

The contractor shall provide the following deliverables:

- Provide a completed research report for each assignment at conclusion of analysis in response to each request.
  - Report will be written in accordance with standard scholarly research protocols and shall contain at a minimum:
  - Summaries of provenience/provenance information
  - Evaluation of shared stewardship/ethical returns status in accordance with interim or final shared stewardship/ethical returns policy for NMNH.
  - Recommendations
- Provide written status reports every two (2) weeks on the progress of each research inquiry or implementation of assignment.
- Provide a weekly summary to COTR and TPOC of outstanding activity on assignments for COTR, TPOC or team follow up.

### **Place of Performance**

Work related to this contract may take place in a variety of locations, including the following:

- The Smithsonian Institution Museum Support Center (MSC) in Suitland, Maryland;
- The Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History building at 10th St. and Constitution Ave., Washington, D.C.;
- other Smithsonian facilities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

### **Travel**

The contractor is responsible for all contractor transportation to and from the NMNH, MSC, or other local Washington, D.C., metropolitan assignment sites, including costs related to driving and parking or mass transit. With their Smithsonian credentials, the contractor may make use of the free shuttle service that operates between NMNH and MSC when required to complete assignments at MSC.

The contractor is also responsible for any re-location costs if the contractor is not local to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.



#### **NMNH-FURNISHED ITEMS**

NMNH Collections Program and any required museum departments will provide the following for the duration of this contract:

- Access to relevant facilities (MSC, NMNH, etc.) and collections, whether objects, biological anthropology/human remains, archival and/or other collections or information as needed.

#### **Work requirements and considerations**

The work places the usual demands involved in an office, lab and collections situation, including long periods of standing or sitting, recurring bending, some use of ladders, reaching and lifting of up to 25 lbs. in handling objects or storage units.

#### **Special Material Requirements and Sensitive and Restricted Subjects**

Assignments completed during this contract may involve content that is culturally sensitive or restricted for conservation, security, cultural, research, or legal reasons. This content may include, but not be limited to, any of the following:

- certain cultural objects, remains, knowledge, or performances;
- materials and activities that are the subject of ongoing and unpublished research;
- human remains

#### **Security Considerations**

The Smithsonian Institution requires background investigations and identification badges, also called credentials, for contractors requiring access to staff-only areas of Smithsonian facilities for periods greater than thirty (30) days. Therefore, working with the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for this contract, the contractor shall apply for a background investigation and SI credential through the Smithsonian Office of Protection Services (OPS) Personnel Security and ID Office (PSIO).

In addition to a favorable background investigation, the Smithsonian Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) also requires an hour-long Computer Security Awareness Training (CSAT) for contractors who will be issued network accounts. As such, the contractor shall complete the required CSAT after securing a network account.

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**



#### **Office of the Registrar**

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The Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for this contract is:

Katharine Barker  
Senior Science Program Manager  
Office of the Associate Director for Science/Chief Scientist  
National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution  
Barkerk@si.edu  
202-633-2460

The Technical Point of Contact (TPC) for this contract is:

Sarah Loudin  
Head Registrar  
National Museum of Natural History  
Smithsonian Institution  
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