



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

VHCB WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT

VHCB

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Summary

Project Summary

The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) is accepting proposals from outside vendors to redesign the existing VHCB website (<https://vhcb.org>). The current website was last redesigned in 2017 and is due for an update. Our objective is to completely redesign our website to showcase our mission-driven work and impact, improve the navigation and functionality of the website, organize content and resources provided on the website, communicate the VHCB mission and brand, and motivate people to support our organization and our work. Written proposals are due to Cara Hansen by e-mail to cara@vhcb.org no later than April 21, 2024 by 10:00 pm.

About VHCB

VHCB is a quasi-state organization that celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2022. The organization is driven by a dual mission:

“(a) The dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands are of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.

(b) In the best interests of all of its citizens and in order to improve the quality of life for Vermonters and to maintain for the benefit of future generations the essential characteristics of the Vermont countryside, and to support farm, forest, and related enterprises, Vermont should encourage and assist in creating affordable housing and in preserving the State’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas and recreational lands, and in keeping conserved agricultural land in production and affordable for future generations of farmers.”

~10 V.S.A. Chapter 15

The work VHCB does is funded with state dollars and impacts everyone who lives in Vermont. One of our website’s primary goals is to provide transparency to the general public about: the programs and initiatives we administer; the availability of funding opportunities; Board meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes; funding awards that are granted; and the impact of our investments. The information on our website must be available to all people, whatever their hardware, software, network infrastructure, device, native language, culture, geographical location, or physical or mental ability.

Background

Why are we redesigning the site?

Over the years, our organization and the programs we administer have quickly expanded, and we are in need of a new site that can grow with us into the future.

Our new website should:

- Improve navigation
- Update and organize information and resources

- Modernize visual design to encourage visitor engagement
- Highlight our work and the connection between housing and conservation
- Provide a clear path for our different audiences (those interested in learning more about us versus those who are on the site for a specific purpose, such as to access applications, program information, or other resources)
- Allow for easy addition of new pages as needed, and easy updating/editing of existing pages and menus

Objectives

The new website development should include the flexibility/framework for the addition of new programs and initiatives so that we can adapt as our work expands. The redesign of the VHCB website should achieve the following goals:

- Solidify brand authority with consistent design and uniform appearance
- Create an engaging, visually appealing, and easy-to-navigate experience
- Improve typography site-wide
- Present information in a clean, organized manner
- Allow each program to have its own section of the site, without getting lost “down the rabbit hole”
- Provide the ability for VHCB to create and edit contact forms
- Include, at a minimum, the following pages/features, in addition to the home page: event calendar (for scheduled board meetings), blog, projects page (similar to a services page where we can share descriptions and pictures/galleries of completed projects), contact us page with contact form, and the ability to embed videos directly into the site
- Include easy-to-access documentation files for visitors (pdfs, spreadsheets, text documents, etc), preferably with an intuitive system for end-user filtering/sorting
- Enable us to evolve the website architecture to accommodate new needs and usages (editing/adding pages, menu items, and content easily) over time
- Optimized site (layout, tooling) to present content that meets user needs (content design for targeted audiences)
- Provide an easy-to-use and intuitive CMS so that staff can easily edit existing page layout and content (body text, galleries, contact forms, etc) and create new pages with a wide selection of content block types and layout (images/galleries, event/meeting calendars, columns, tables, accordions, etc)
- Create a long-lasting partnership with a web design agency to continue to work with us as our needs and organization evolve

Project Goal

The current website was implemented six years ago and, due to growth within the organization and programs, it requires updating to optimize its support of VHCB’s mission and goals.

VHCB believes that by implementing current web best practices and technologies, revising the information architecture, creating a content strategy, and revamping the visual design, we can provide our website visitors with the best information in a user-friendly fashion, motivate participation in and support of the organization, and communicate the nature and impact of our mission more effectively.

Key Audiences & Benefits

There are three main audiences for the VHCB website, all with equal importance: partner organizations and program participants/grant applicants; legislators/state officials; and members of the general public who wish to learn more about our organization and programs.

Partner Organizations & Program Participants/Grant Applicants

Organizations and individuals who are interested in participating in one of our programs, have participated in the past, or wish to apply for funding need access to information, applications, documents, calendars/schedules of Board meetings, etc.

Legislators/Vermont Leadership

VHCB is funded by the state, and our work is directed by the State Legislature. Information about our programs and initiatives needs to be easily accessible to them.

General Public

Public meeting law requires us to make available our scheduled Board meetings, agendas and minutes; in addition, we regularly post press releases and other publications for transparency related to our work and the funding we award. The website should be easy for the general public to find what they are looking for while also elevating their awareness of the VHCB brand, support for our organization, and understanding of our dual mission.

Project scope

Requirements

- Responsive design
- Modern best practices
- Performance must be as good as or better than the current site
- Easy-to-use content management system (CMS)
- Full change/version histories identifying which user made each change
- Potential for login portal for staff/partners to securely access and exchange information that is not for public consumption (dependent on cost)
- Web accessibility/ e-accessibility for visually impaired visitors
- Website translation for website visitors whose first language is not English

Services

Bids should include cost estimates for these services:

Design

- Information architecture / wireframes (new website infrastructure)
- Visual design
- Adopt, or define & draft a website governance document / project specification / design system
- Responsive design
- Style sheets and templates

Development

- Front-end
- Content strategy
- Content migration
- Browser and device testing

- Usability testing (ideally including participants with disabilities)

Consulting

- Advice on software
- Migration strategy
- Advice on how to maintain accessibility
- A privacy policy readable by humans, and meeting the needs of VHCB
- MFA infrastructure for member and public users
- Project management
- Maintenance and future collaboration

Website Redevelopment Task-Force

VHCB will assemble a team to work with the vendor to attend meetings, answer questions, and provide feedback throughout the lifecycle of the project. VHCB will also draft a VHCB style guide to be used as a starting point for the design of the new website.

Timelines

RFP timeline

We did our best to create an RFP timeline that allows ample time for bidders to review the RFP, ask questions, and prepare a response, as well as ample time for VHCB to review all of the responses and select a preferred vendor.

March 2024:

11th – announcement of the RFP

18th – Questions and answers period begins

April 2024:

5th – Questions and answers period ends

21st – Bids due no later than 10:00 pm

May 2024:

17th – Project awarded to successful proposal

June 2024:

3rd – Notification sent to all bidders

Project initial timeline

The vendor is expected to propose a project timeline that begins no earlier than July 1, 2024 and that makes clear what the phases are and what the process is to accept feedback from the VHCB community (website team, communications team, management team, and Board of Directors).

If possible, we would like the project to be completed within six to nine months (site launch being sometime between January 2025-April 2025). In responding to this RFP, bidders are asked to balance the desired timeline, completeness, and quality as well as identify tradeoffs where the desired launch date could impact completeness or quality and what adjustments to the desired timeline you would recommend to achieve the desired result.

Proposal Guidelines

Please submit a written proposal to Cara Hansen by e-mail to cara@vhcb.org no later than April 21, 2024 by 10:00 pm.

Note: all proposals will become available for public viewing, but costs, figures, and schedules you wish to keep confidential may be submitted as separate attachments to Cara Hansen.

Bidders must include line items, rates, resources, expenses, and estimate vs. cap. Please itemize to explain how your fees break out for each aspect requested in this RFP.

Please provide examples of similar projects you have completed in the past and a summary of how you plan to work together with our organization to ensure effective communication and a smooth process.

Copyright: The contractor agrees to assign to VHCB all rights, title, and interest, including copyright, in all data, intellectual property, and copyrightable information developed by the contractor in performance of this project.

Evaluation Criteria

VHCB will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria:

1. Overall proposal suitability: Proposed solution(s) must meet the scope, requirements, and needs included herein and be presented in a clear and organized manner.
2. Organizational Experience: Bidders will be evaluated on their experience as it pertains to the scope of this project.
3. Previous work: Bidders will be evaluated on examples of their work, notably, bidders must have a demonstrable ability to produce accessible websites.
4. Value and cost: Bidders will be evaluated on the cost of their solution(s) based on the work to be performed in accordance with the scope of this project.
5. Technical expertise and experience: Bidders must provide descriptions and documentation of staff technical expertise and experience.
6. Language: English must be used for proposals and milestone publications.

Questions and Submissions

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to VHCB's Communications Director at cara@vhcb.org starting March 18th and no later than April 5th, 2024. No phone calls, please. Responses to all questions will be posted to the VHCB website at www.vhcb.org/rfp within five business days.

Electronic submissions of the proposals are preferred and should be submitted to cara@vhcb.org with "VHCB Website Redevelopment" in the subject line. If submitting a hard copy proposal, please ensure delivery by the proposal deadline to: Cara Hansen, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, 58 E. State Street, Montpelier, VT, 05602.