

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP# J00221**

VISIT STAUNTON WEBSITE
November 19, 2021, 2:00 P.M.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
November 11, 2021

TO ALL POTENTIAL BIDDERS:

The following information is being provided for purposes of clarification or in response to questions received from potential bidders. This addendum is being posted on the eVA website and City website at the following links:

- eVA website: <https://m.vendor.evro.cgipdc.com/Vendor/public/AllOpportunities>
- City website: <https://www.ci.staunton.va.us/departments/finance/procurement>

This posting consists of the Questions & Answers provided below:

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

BUDGET QUESTIONS

Q Can you share or specify any budgetary information about this project - assigned budget or budget range, budget for the last website redesign, target range, does it include tech support and hosting, etc.?

A. We do not have a set budget, instead we will be establishing a budget based on the proposals. We are currently considering a budget below 150K -- most likely a range between \$40,000 - \$75,000. It has been over 6 years since our last redesign. For reference, our site that launched in 2016 was \$30,000. The budget includes tech support, but not hosting. As indicated in the RFP, "Propose an ongoing approach for keeping the revamped site current without having to overhaul it repeatedly in order to maintain its relevancy and effectiveness."

TIMELINE

Q Is there a specific event driving the launch date, and if so, what is it and what is the expected project start and launch date? Is there any flexibility in the timeline?

A. There is no specific event driving our launch date and our timeline is fairly flexible – essentially we want the best site possible.

We will be conducting interviews from December 2 – 9 and expect to select a vendor on December 10. We anticipate the contract to start as soon as it is finalized through our Purchasing Department. Our desired launch date should be no more than 6 months from the award date and ultimately no later than June 2022.

Q Can you please elaborate on conducting usability testing with consumers prior to launch? Are there any specifics (number of people, stakeholders, etc.) and is the testing considered as part of the 120-day timeline?

A. No specific numbers, just a few stakeholders. Again, there is flexibility as we want the best site possible.

SITE QUESTIONS

Q Who is your current website provider and is there any particular reason you are looking for a change in vendor?

A. Our current provider is Mikula – Harris in Roanoke, VA, and we are looking to update our site as it is over 6 years old.

Q Why are you revamping the current website's design?

A. The website was developed in 2015 and launched in 2016. We believe the technology and design to be out of date.

Q The RFP refers to a "revamp" of the current site—will the selected vendor be developing a new site or improving the current website?

A. We will be keeping the URL and hosting with the City's provider, but we are expecting a new site.

Q In your view what are some of the shortcomings, weaknesses or pain-points of the current site (functional, branding, messaging, etc.)?

A. Updates to the CMS, SEO, no individual pages for partners, no easy way to get partner events on the site. We do not have individual pages for our partners and so we are often linking outside of our site when writing blog content. Our Calendar of Events is a weakness of the site because it is a data feed from Virginia.org. We would like for it to be simple for our partners – possibly a data pull from Facebook as they all tend to post their events on Facebook. Search Engine Optimization as we continuously add new content.

Q What are the current technical challenges (if any)?

A. As WordPress updates occur frequently, we don't get trained on those changes, which can be challenging. We would like to be kept up-to-date on new emerging technologies in the tourism/DMO industry by our vendor.

Q Do you have up-to-date brand guidelines or style guide that the vendor will be able to leverage to create a consistent user and visual website experience?

A. Yes, we have a City of Staunton brand guide.

Q What are some of the specific things you will be measuring to determine if the project is a success?

A. Ranking on search, time on site, bounce rate, pages/session, and conversions.

Q Can you please provide examples of sites that are good models for what you want?

A. <https://www.charlestoncvb.com/>
<https://discoveratlanta.com/>
<https://www.visitchattanooga.com/>
<https://www.visitcharlottesville.org/>

Q What are some untapped opportunities you wish to take advantage of with the redesign?

A. Ability to build out landing pages internally, booking engine for lodging. We are looking for expertise from the vendor in Tourism/DMO website best practices.

Q Can you provide a rough breakdown of current visitation revenue: General tourism vs. meetings vs. special events?

A. Currently, approximately 60% leisure, 25% business/groups/meetings, 15% special events.

Q Will you be migrating hosts? Please let us know your present hosting provider.

A. The City of Staunton uses the Stellar Business Plan from Namecheap for current hosting. We plan to continue to use this vendor.

Q What specific third-party APIs and integrations are in scope?

A. CrowdRiff, Emma, a possible hotel booking engine, a way to pull our partners' events onto the site. We are looking for a vendor that knows API best practices for Tourism/DMO websites.

Q Could you please describe your desired functionality for an events calendar?

A. Currently, it is a data feed from Virginia.org. We would like for it to be simple for our partners – possibly a data pull from Facebook as they all tend to post their events on Facebook.

Q Your RFP mentions the need to, “include forms for visitor use to request information.” Where do the RFI’s go?

A. The RFI’s go to different people on our team. RFI for groups or meetings goes to our Sales & Marketing Manager. RFI for filming in Staunton goes to the Director of Tourism. RFI for a Visitors Guide goes to Office Manager/Admin. All requests also go into a database within WordPress. RFI’s for e-newsletter sign-ups go to our email marketing provider, MyEmma.com

Q Please explain what you are looking for in terms of printable pages? Is that for the entire site, certain pages, itineraries, etc.?

A. Itineraries primarily. We are not asking for a print button on each page just that if someone wants to print a page it doesn’t look like a jumbled mess. For example,

Virginia.org site only prints text not photos. We are looking for guidance from our vendor on this issue.

Q Will the City of Staunton be providing all content ready to upload or will the vendor be responsible for producing and editing original content on the site (editorial content, graphic design, etc.)?

A. We will be transferring all of the content from the current site, but the vendor will be expected to edit for SEO standards and offer suggestions on best practices for Destination Marketing Organization websites. Updated graphic design is expected from the vendor.

Q Will the City of Staunton provide all site imagery and graphics or will the vendor be responsible for sourcing or producing original images and graphics?

A. The City will provide all imagery and the City logo along with our brand guidelines.

Q Can you provide the list of systems and 3rd party API that needs to be integrated to the new web site?

A. CrowdRiff, Emma, a possible hotel booking engine, a way to pull our partners' events onto the site. We are looking for a vendor that knows the API best practices for Tourism websites.

Q Are there any custom widgets/components required, either currently existing or desired for the new system (ex: Calendar widgets, surveys, interactive components)

A. Calendar, yes, and possibly other widgets. Again, we are looking for a vendor that has expertise in Tourism/DMO websites and can make suggestions to us on best practices.

Q Are any forms implemented on the current system? If so, how many and what is their nature?

A. There are four forms on the current website – Request More Information, Meetings Form, Submit an RFP, Request to Film Form.

Q Approximately how many pages/assets of content are to be migrated? What format can/will the content be provided?

A. All the content will need to be migrated. It can be downloaded from our site into Excel format.

Q Open source? Drupal/WordPress?

A. Between Drupal and WordPress, we would prefer WordPress.

Q Who are your primary and secondary users?

A. Tourists are primary, locals secondary.

Q Would you like detailed research in terms of your audience in the form of an audience needs assessment?

A. No

Q What is the current hosting environment?

A. The city uses a hosting provider. We use the Stellar Business Plan from Namecheap for the current hosting.

Q How many visitors does the current website receive on a monthly basis?

A. 211,000 annually. Monthly varies on the time of year/tourism season.

Q How many pages of content do you anticipate transferring to the new site?

A. All content will be transferred.

Q How many site administrators will you have?

A. 4

Q Will you require different levels of admin permissions?

A. Yes

Q Do you expect copywriting or editing services as part of engagement?

A. It depends on the assessment by the vendor of the current content and if it's written for SEO.

Q There are several mentions of ongoing work requirements outside of the initial build and launch phase in the RFP, specifically in the Scope of Project (#5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) and in the Technical Requirements section (#17 and 18). For these aspects of the RFP, what timeframe should be included in the pricing sections (6, 12, 24 months, or ongoing)? Would you like that pricing broken down by month or year?

A. The timeframe is ongoing. We are looking for a partner and not a one and done website designer. You can break down pricing either way.

Q Will CrowdRiff integration continue to be a major source for content?

A. Yes.

Q Will the client provide all other content such as photos, video and text?

A. Yes, we will provide all other content, but expect the vendor to optimize the content for SEO.

Q The RFP states, "Selected firm should have the ability to set up campaign URLs for Visit Staunton's marketing campaigns for the purposes of tracking and reporting." Is the selected firm also to establish, configure and optimize said campaigns, or is this handled by the staff of Visit Staunton?

A. We would like the ability to create landing pages. We expect either Visit Staunton staff or a digital marketing agency will establish, configure and optimize the campaign.

Q How would you describe the highest value role your website currently plays today?

A. For travel inspiration, to raise awareness of our destination, offer visitor travel information, and to convert the website visitor into a destination visitor.

Q When you think about the future-state website, how does that high value role differ?

A. Quantifying the conversion of a website visitor into a destination visitor, increasing repeat visitors.

Q What target audience data do you currently have? Do you have personas that you'd be willing to share?

A. Well-educated and employed in professional occupations or retired. The typical age range is 40-60 years old. Love history, architecture, the arts, and the outdoors. Primary geographic targets – Northern Virginia/Washington, DC; Richmond, VA; Hampton Roads, VA.

Q Do you want the site coded to support WCAG 2.1 Accessibility, or would you consider using a plugin/widget that enforces compliance?

A. We are looking for guidance from our vendor.

Q Does Visit Staunton use a CRM?

A. We have used iDSS, but we are not currently using a CRM.

Q Is there a preference for a local vendor?

A. No.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Q Does the City have a CMS preference, like open source (Drupal, WordPress) or proprietary CMS? Are there any CMS options that you are not interested in?

A. The City has no preference for a specific CMS. We have only used WordPress in the past and are currently using WordPress, and so have no comparison to other CMS options. There is a preference of WordPress over Drupal, but we are open to considering other CMS's and proprietary CMS's.

MULTIPLE LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Q Requirement 6 states, "The website content should be available in multiple languages." Are you looking for native translation of specific pages or a site-wide translation tool? Will the use of a translation plugin satisfy this requirement? If not, how many and which languages would you like the site translated into?

A. One of our other DMO partners uses <https://accessibe.com/> for accessibility and multiple languages. We are looking for our vendor's guidance on this issue and we are open to other suggestions. I would expect our vendor to research our Google Analytics and offer their own suggestions.

TRAINING

Q For the finalists interviews and CMS training, are you open to considering off-site virtual meetings via Zoom or is on-site a requirement?

A. Training can be done via Zoom.

RFP PREPARATION

Q Has a Q&A or an addenda been released yet?

A. No

Q Is there a mandatory pre-proposal meeting?

A. No

Q Is the due date still the same?

A. Yes

Q We are IT service providers and software developers from outside of the United States, are we eligible to submit the proposal?

A. As long as you are in compliance with all of the requirements in the RFP, you would be eligible to submit a proposal.

Q It's clear we have to fill out Attachment E and return it with our proposal, but do we also need to sign and return Attachment C, even if we don't have any proprietary/confidential information to identify?

A. Please insert "No proprietary/confidential Information" on the form, execute and return with your proposal.

Q We noticed there's a 15 page limit on our response/proposal. Does this include the front & back cover & table of contents, Attachment E and/or C, or an appendix?

A. Front page, back page and table of contents do not count towards the 15 page limit. Required attachments do not count towards the 15 page limit. An Appendix is allowed beyond the 15-page limit.

Q We noticed it's required for us to submit our proposal via physical mail, but thought we'd ask if it could be possible for us to submit our proposal via email or electronic file upload?

A. Please follow the directions in the RFP, we will not accept proposals via email or file upload.

Q Would it be acceptable if our cost proposal has a range in cost for some project phases, to be refined after discovery and planning?

A. Yes.

Q We do not have an SCC number. We can apply, but not sure we would have it by the time this has to be delivered. Alternatively, we can obtain one if selected. Is this a problem?

A. Please refer to the RFP Procurement Guidelines section S.

Q Do the insurance requirements have to be met by the time the proposal is submitted, or as long as we meet it if we are selected?

A. Insurance requirements must be met before contract award.

Q Is the current web development company included in the RFP process?

A. No.

Q Is there an incumbent company or organization with an advantage for this project?

A. No

Q We intent to handle all the project evaluation and development remotely thru platforms like Team or Zoom, can you clarify is the proposed schedule on page 7 of the RFP, would be mandatory, and if we cannot be on site, will it disqualify us from the process?

A. We can meet via Zoom.