Request for Proposal (RFP):

Website Design, Development and Testing

(www.col.org)

Open Date: April 9, 2021

Proposals Due: April 30, 2021 at 14:00 hours Pacific Time
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Website RFP: Design, Development and Testing

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) requests proposals from qualified agencies or organisations interested in providing the services described within. This document outlines the information necessary to understand the requirements and selection process.

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<th>Proposal Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFP Opens</td>
<td>April 9, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFP Submission Deadline</td>
<td>April 30, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor Selection</td>
<td>On or around mid-May 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit Proposals marked ‘Website RFP’ to</td>
<td><a href="mailto:opportunities@col.org">opportunities@col.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Address for Questions marked ‘Questions for Website RFP’</td>
<td><a href="mailto:opportunities@col.org">opportunities@col.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions due by</td>
<td>April 20, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of Project completed and delivered by</td>
<td>On or around June 30, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and Testing Phase completed and delivered by</td>
<td>On or around mid-August 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Testing</td>
<td>By end September 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Deployment/Go Live Date</td>
<td>On October 1, 2021</td>
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Background

COL, as an intergovernmental organisation, maintains close links with a diverse range of stakeholders that include Member States of the Commonwealth, development partners, institutions, organisations, the private sector and civil society. COL’s website is a key platform for keeping its stakeholders engaged and enabling them to benefit from COL’s expertise and resources as well as expanding its reach and visibility as a thought leader in Open and Distance Learning, Open Educational Resources and Technology Enabled Learning. COL’s work is grounded in the conviction that learning is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. See About Us for more details.

The website will serve to be the foremost source of information on all aspects of online and distance learning and reflect COL’s organisational culture which is respectful, ethical and fair. COL’s strategic goals are:

- Quality education and lifelong learning for all
- Skills development for sustainable livelihoods
- Gender Equality and inclusion.

The existing website was developed over five years ago using Drupal and aligned with organisational needs at that time. As COL is embarking on the implementation of its new Strategic Plan (2021-2027), there is a requirement to revamp and redesign the existing website in terms of: overall design for a contemporary look and feel; content restructuring to provide effective access to information, resources and services required by its various user constituents/stakeholders via intelligent semantic search and intent-focus navigation (that is,
the user will be able to easily access the intended resource directly without much navigation); and using innovative technology to meet COL’s requirement on accessibility.

In 2020, about 220,000 users visited the current website through the use of both mobile devices and computers.

**Scope of Services**
The scope of work will be as follows:

Work on the site will begin as soon as possible with a website launch date planned for October 1, 2021.

Some features of interest for inclusion are:

- Recommendation for a suitable content management system
- Uses a mobile-friendly and responsive platform that is accessible and easy to use
- A simplified navigation system
- A flexible homepage that helps to send visitors to the right place and provides greater flexibility for modifications when needed
- Aligns with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (see Table below)
- Accommodates low-bandwidth environments
- Allows seamless integration with mobile devices, apps, blogs, social media tools and video
- Provides state of the art security and encryption features, including secure channel for contacting COL for enquiries, job applications, feedback, etc.
- Version control system for development/staging and live sites
- Enables smooth and dependable interplay with internal websites, portals and journal, e.g. COLVEE, OAsis, OpenDoor, CommonwealthWiseWomen, JL4D etc. as well as external websites
- Utilises and aligns with web analytical tools (COL is using Google Analytics currently).
- Interface with systems such as ‘ConstantContact’ for eNewsletters (Connections)
- Ability to provide support for up to 36 months post-deployment may be desirable
- Site branding with themes aligned with COL's branding and priority areas
- A smart search engine that is user friendly, scalable and functional
- Simplification of presentation of site content
- Provide suitable online tools to assist COL in migrating the content
- Secure system for development and live site usage
- Testing before deployment of the new website.

**This scope is subject to change. COL acknowledges that this may impact the budget as submitted.**
Additional Details: Design and Infrastructure Requirements
COL’s new website must be robust, intelligent, engaging, and user-friendly, and accessible for Persons With Disabilities (PWD).

Search: Search function must address current limitations, specifically difficulties in finding the information users are looking for. A new approach that combines semantic elements with the current trend of deploying open source ‘elastic searches’ can be adopted. As visitor types in search word, suggestions should be shown to direct visitor to discover resources relevant to the keyword being typed by visitor.

Accessibility: COL’s new website must comply with the WAG standards referred below. In this project, only visual and hearing disabilities are in the scope. (Any additional experience of the Proposer in this area may be included in the Proposal for information.)

**Must Have’s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Meet the Accessibility requirements specified here:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Blind/partially blind reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Deaf/partially deaf reader</td>
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</table>

Considerations:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Make website keyboard-friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>All content is easily accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Do not use tables on anything except tabular data</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Enable resize text that does not break site layout</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Automatic screen-reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Read out aloud on select pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>‘Alt’ tags on all images and readable</td>
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<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Use icons &amp; buttons for easy access</td>
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<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Meet accessibility design standards per the link below:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• W3C: <a href="http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/">http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/</a></td>
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</table>

Social Media Integration: Dynamic linkages between COL’s website and its presence in social media platforms are vital. The new website should enable feeds from at least three platforms (FaceBook, Twitter and YouTube) into the website.

Look and Visual Appeal: A mock-up or a model site can be provided, based on the content structure/information architecture and requirements provided by COL.

Navigation: A responsive schema of primary menus with a smaller number of secondary menu items would be necessary. Drop-down menus should be avoided.

Ease of Administration & Maintenance: The delivered system should enable easy content and structure updates (including menus and sub-menus) by end-user editors without dependency or need for backend re-
coding. (For example: hierarchical layout and grouping on https://www.col.org/about/col-staff should be fully manageable by the editor.) Rollback on accidental updates should also be available. The system should have the capabilities to report dead or broken links or conflicting links. Some considerations are:

- Use of a sustainable platform that is easily upgradable
- No hardcoding
- Use out-of-the-box features; Minimize customization; Any customisation will require approval from COL
- Documentation (design, operation, users /editors/admin instruction), stylesheet structure and codes should be delivered to COL at completion.

**Security, Performance and Availability of Site:** Necessary security controls must be configured to protect COL website from being hacked/hijacked/defaced to prevent loss of information and to ensure high availability of services. Robust and automated backup and disaster recovery are essential and mandatory. Webpages should load rapidly and securely. System should be able to detect type of device and bandwidth availability and render the corresponding version to ensure rapid page loading and rendering.

**Bandwidth and Device Responsiveness:** Webserver should be able to detect bandwidth and device and render webpages to maximise responsiveness and performance of page rendering. In consideration that many of COL’s stakeholders experience connectivity challenges, the new website will have to be accessible in low-bandwidth environments. The system should have the capabilities to detect bandwidth availability and be device & browser agnostic.

**Analytics:** All pages, for example, should have tracking code in the header to enable analytics. Monthly analytics reports should be generatable by COL, including data on any broken links, failed search, etc.

**Budget**

The website is currently hosted off-site and COL intends to maintain the current hosting arrangement for the new website.

Please provide a cost proposal to accomplish the scope outlined above using the form to be provided by COL along with any supporting documentation as needed. The budget must encompass all design, development, acquisitions necessary for development, testing, and testing.

Please also include pricing in your proposal regarding technical support expenses for up to 36 months of support following the ‘Go Live’ date of October 1, 2021. This expense will be considered in addition to the budget for the design and development components above.
Instructions to Proposers

Experience and Qualifications

Desired vendor experience and qualifications include:

- Innovative enterprise-level website design, development and deployment
- Integration of third-party applications, such as social media, portals, etc.
- Visually appealing and search-friendly design
- Adherence to branding standards
- Search engine optimization
- Project management
- Modern content management system for easy end-user access.

Selection Process and Criteria

A committee of COL staff will review all responses received by the due date against the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience, skills and qualifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merits of the proposal, including scope of work and approach to addressing tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeline, proposed schedule and budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer support, responsiveness, and timeliness</td>
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<tr>
<td>References and prior experience with similar work</td>
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</table>

The Committee may request interviews with and/or presentations by the respondents prior to making its decision.

Proposals

Proposals must be organised in the order shown below with explanations for each section given and submitted by email at opportunities@col.org by the due date using the fillable form that will be made available on the COL website by April 13, 2021.

1. Acknowledgement of RFP Terms and Conditions
2. Company Information/Experience
3. Project Management
4. Technical Proposal (Design, Development and Testing)
5. Website Maintenance
6. Proposed Pricing

General Terms and Conditions

Ownership of Proposals

All Proposals become the property of COL. COL agrees to treat all Proposals as confidential and agrees to use the Proposals only for purposes related to this RFP process.
**COL's Intentions**
COL intends to obtain the offer most suitable and most advantageous to its requirements and interests. Notwithstanding anything else contained within this RFP, COL reserves the right in its sole discretion to reject or accept any proposal, compliant or not, including the right to reject all Proposals.

**Use of COL Logo**
Proposers may use COL’s logo only for the preparation of their Proposal for this RFP, with the stipulation that the Proposer follows the brand guidelines at: [www.col.org/about/col-logo](http://www.col.org/about/col-logo). The Proposers are not permitted to use COL’s logo for any other purpose without written consent from COL.

**Conflict of Interest**
Proposers must identify any real or potential conflict of interest that may exist in connection to this RFP and/or any subsequent agreements. A conflict of interest is any situation or relationship that give the Proposer a real or perceived unfair advantage or any situation or relationship that is not in keeping with the Proposer’s own conflict of interest standards. Any non-disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest may be sufficient cause to disqualify the Proposal or terminate/cancel any subsequent agreements.

**Irrevocable Offer**
Proposals constitute a valid and irrevocable offer which is open for acceptance by COL for a period of 60 days following the Closing Date of April 30, 2021.

**Compensation**
No Proposer shall have any claim for any compensation of any kind whatsoever as a result of participating in this RFP, and by submitting a Proposal, each Proponent shall be deemed to have agreed that it has no claim.

**Responsible Proposer**
For COL, a responsible proposer means:

- Does not discriminate and does not do business with others who discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, gender, etc.
- Takes steps to safeguards all those it comes in contact with from any form of sexual abuse, harassment and discrimination – see COL’s Policy on Safeguarding.
- Complies with all applicable laws and regulations
- Will make no reference to COL in any literature, promotional material, etc. without the express written consent of COL.
- Has the necessary experience, resources (people/staff/sub-contractors, financial and equipment and facilities) and technical skills to complete the Scope of Work

**Contract Term**
COL will negotiate contract terms and selection. All contracts are subject to review by COL and a project will be awarded upon signing of a contract which outlines terms, scope, budget and other necessary details.