



Questions and Answers for the RFP Website Development: Redesign, Content Management System, Hosting, and Engagement Tools for the Official Township Website

Contract No. C-2023-0273

The following questions were submitted via email by September 22, 2023, as outlined within the RFP. As a courtesy, the Communications team included questions asked during the mandatory pre-bid meeting held on September 18, 2023. Questions have been consolidated to eliminate duplication as well as adjusted for additional clarification.

1. Are you interested in incorporating AI?

Yes. Our current website utilizes a chatbot feature through CivicPlus and we would like to keep using the existing chatbot or review other options for online chats. In addition, another AI product provided by CivicPlus that we currently use is Monsido which is an ADA compliance tool that assists with ensuring our website aligns with all ADA compliance requirements at the federal, state and local levels. Vendors are encouraged to include similar features within their pricing, however, it is not required.

2. Is there a list of third-party applications?

We do not currently have an exhaustive list of third-party vendors. As required during the project's Discovery phase and outlined in the RFP, the selected vendor will need to conduct an audit to determine all third-party applications in use on the site. Vendors are encouraged to thoroughly review the current website prior to submitting an RFP.

3. Are any 3rd party services requiring integration via APIs/Web services?

Again, this will be part of the Discovery process.

4. Can we have the Recording of the PowerPoint, and the List of the Participant's list as well?

Yes, both are currently available as related documents to the bid posted online at www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/bids.

5. How many pages and documents are on the website currently?

Current estimates are around 12,000, however, the exact number of pages, documents and images will need to be determined during the Discovery phase of the project.

6. What size should the new website be based upon? The current site size with pages and documents?

During the Discovery phase, the vendor is expected to thoroughly audit and review the current site while also analyzing site metrics to determine how the site structure and number of pages and documents will change. It is unknown at this time how many pages and documents will be included in the new site.

7. How many pages need to be migrated?

Similar to the question above, this will not be determined until completion of the Discovery and Design phases of the project.

8. What are the main problems or challenges that the current website presents for general users and administrative staff?

The current site architecture needs to be improved and restructured based on resident user behavior. The site's navigation is cumbersome and site users will often click three or more times to find the information they are seeking. Content should be easier to find and outdated items need to be removed from the site's search feature.

9. Do you have an idea of what the budget is?

The initial design and development budget is approximately \$50,000. Additional funds may be available after review of submitted proposals. Vendors should provide line-item budget details for all proposed website project phases and additional features.

10. Are you anticipating for the budget the first year with implementation to be a bit higher than the following years of the contract?

The initial design and development of the site should be higher than the following years' ongoing maintenance, hosting and support fees. The Township has budgeted for ongoing maintenance and hosting fees and these fees should not exceed the design and development of the site.

11. Is the \$50,000 budget all in with implementation and product packaging?

Yes, and again this is an approximate budget. Additional funds may be allocated to this project upon review of proposals and this is why it is critical for the vendor to provide line-item costs and also include ongoing costs in the RFP, not just the initial build.

12. Is the \$50,000 budget based on the previous budget for the redesign work completed in 2016? If not, could you please share the technique, approach, or process for determining the appropriate budget range for this project?

Budget estimates were based on several factors including but not limited to the 2016 website build, industry standards, discussions with similar municipalities and a review of recent bids from similar municipalities.

13. Regarding the budget of \$50,000 that was mentioned within the pre-bid meeting, is that budgeted amount regarding annual management and maintenance allocations specifically? And if so, what is the budget for the new website design and development specifically?

As outlined in prior budget questions, the estimated \$50,000 is only for the design and development. Ongoing annual maintenance, hosting and support fees should not exceed the project's build.

12. What is the length of contract?

Multiyear and subject to negotiations.

13. Your RFP states that the CMS must be accessible via external access. What do you mean by external access?

This means that the CMS must be accessible via the Internet from any location and any device. It does not require being in the Township office to access.

14. When speaking of multi-lingual capabilities, do you require natively written pages as well as auto-translated pages?

We are currently looking for auto-translated capabilities. There is not a current need to have natively written pages in other languages.

15. How many language translations?

This would be determined in the Discovery phase of the project.

16. Are gender-neutral translations required?

No.

17. How many content editors would you like to have edit the website? Multiple departments with permissions, etc.?

The number of backend users and administrators will be determined during the project's Development phase. Township departments/divisions will be given edit access, however, the Communications Department should have review and final editing rights prior to publishing content generated by other departments/divisions.

18. Is there any incumbent for this opportunity working with you?

There is no previous RFP or incumbent for this project.

19. The RFP speaks to the capability to produce RSS feeds, can you speak to the use cases for those RSS feeds?

RSS feeds can provide several benefits for the Township and our website visitors including but not limited to allowing syndication of our website's content, making it convenient for users to stay up to date on our content without having to visit the site regularly, increasing site traffic when users find our content in RSS feeds, improving SEO and the ability to distribute our content to other websites and platforms. This last is particularly important during emergency and crisis situations.

20. Do you need screen reader functionality?

The website must be ADA compliant with Universal Guidelines so screen readers can read our content accurately and properly.

21. Are there any additional ADA or 508 Compliancy standards that you want included that your 3rd party software does not cover?

We are required to be compliant with all federal, state and local laws. This includes any 3rd party software used on the site.

22. Are there any specific security requirements or compliance standards that need to be met (e.g., GDPR, HIPAA)?

The Township is a government agency and is required to comply with all federal, state and local laws in regard to privacy and security. In addition, as a government agency, we must also comply with the Texas Public Information Act, the Texas Open Meetings Act and other requirements as mandated by federal and state legislatures.

23. What are the accessibility expectations?

As a government website, the site must be easily accessible to all users including those with disabilities. We are required to be compliant with all accessibility laws and mandates.

24. Is it mandatory to have at least 10 years prior experience working with municipal and county agencies?

Yes, as outlined in Attachment A of the RFP.

25. Does The Woodlands utilize or prefer HUB, DIR or other Small Business requirements for vendors?

The Township will consider working with vendors that align with our purchasing and RFP requirements. This includes HUB, DIR and other programs.

26. Technology you like to use for building the application?

This is answered in the RFP. We currently use a content management system platform designed and built by CivicPlus and are looking for something similar.

27. Can we use WordPress?

Vendors may submit a proposal using WordPress as the CMS, however, our preference is a highly secured and customized CMS for municipalities and governments. WordPress and other similar CMS products such as SquareSpace, Joomla, Drupla, Wix and others are less secure and not as robust as a customed product similar to CivicPlus.

28. If not WordPress, what is your preferred CMS?

Please refer to Question 27. The Township prefers a highly secure and robust CMS similar to what we currently use. We prefer systems that are commonly used for municipal, county and government agencies.

29. Preference for technology stack?

No preference. The technology stack should align with the project requirements and budget constraints.

30. Your RFP states: "Select test participants that include a diverse group of individuals consisting of residents, Township employees, and community partners." Will 10 people work or you will need more?

The selection of the testing groups, including how many people will be identified as a test user, will be determined during the Testing and Review phase of the project.

31. For user testing, would you support us by providing people from the community and administrative staff to carry out the usability tests?

Yes, the Communications team will help to identify and develop the user testing groups.

32. Do you want remote support such as Team Viewer? Do you also want videos and guides on how to operate the site?

Yes, remote support will be needed. While training videos are appreciated, in-person training is required as outlined in the RFP.

33. Is physical presence required at office for vendor?

Selected vendor demonstrations may be set up virtually; however, training must be provided in-person. Ongoing support may be virtual or in-person as necessary.

34. Is The Woodlands Township good with remote work?

The site should be developed and hosted offsite as outlined within the RFP.

35. Is the preference fixed bid or time and materials? Should proposal have a finite cost or cost based upon time-based consulting?

No preference; this will be discussed and determined during contract negotiations.

36. Can vendors submit for a specific part of the project, for example just the UX research and edit?

No. We are looking for a vendor that can provide the entire website development project as outlined in the RFP.

37. Are commercial clients (NJ based) references accepted in case we don't have five (5) Texas-based municipality references?

If the NJ references are municipal/county/government clients, yes, they will be accepted. Commercial non-government clients should not be included as a reference.

38. Is it mandatory to provide 10 years of experience and work with municipalities?

Yes. Please see Question 24.

39. What are the main target audiences for the website (e.g. residents, visitors, businesses, etc.) and what are their specific needs?

Residents are the primary audience, and businesses and stakeholders are our secondary audience. Several different types of groups visit the website for various reasons, including but not limited to public meeting agendas and streaming, home and building permit processing, to view and reserve park facilities, to acquire information about special events and more. Groups that do business with the Township and applicants who are seeking employment with the Township are to be included in the audience demographic. The Township website is not a website for visitors to The Woodlands. Visit The Woodlands, our CVB, manages and maintains a separate website for tourism and visitors. While the site will link to our visitor website, this website is not aimed at visitors.

40. Microsites – how different in design from main site?

The Township is open to creative designs and solutions for microsites. We understand some vendors may only offer micro/subsites with limited design features based on the primary framework and we are also aware this may not be the case for every vendor. We are not opposed to varying frameworks and branding guidelines for microsites, as long as all the sites keep a consistent brand and work well together.

41. Is the visitor microsite one of the microsites for the main site?

No, the visitor site is separate and operated by a separate entity within the Township. Please see Question 39 in regard to our audience.

42. Does hosting have to be within the US?

Yes.

43. Are offshore resources allowed for RFP?

While vendors located outside of the US may submit a proposal, all hosting and resources must be located in the United States. Vendors located outside of the U.S. who wish to submit a proposal must be able to conduct business within the U.S.

44. Are you accepting proposals from agencies based in India?

Please refer to Question 43.

45. Do you want it to be hosted on cloud platforms and if yes do you have any specific cloud in your mind?

The site must be hosted by the vendor, therefore, it will be up to the vendor to determine the hosting setup. Security is imperative and as mentioned all hosting must be located in the United States.

46. Are systems currently hosted on-premise or on Cloud?

The current website is not hosted onsite at the Township. Our current site is hosted and maintained by CivicPlus and the website CMS is accessible via a browser through the Internet (i.e. via the Cloud). All CivicPlus servers are located within the U.S.

47. Regarding the subsites and other departments, will the project include rebranding for those departments or simply website focused?

Currently, these subsites do not exist, so there will be a need to brand each subsite individually and this will be determined during the Design phase. The Communications team will assist with the branding of each subsite.

48. Does the Township already have a branding document that we can work in collaboration with the Communications Department?

Yes; this will be provided to the selected vendor.

49. What are the primary business drivers for issuing this RFP?

The current website, built in 2016 is outdated and is in need of restructuring and improvements. In addition, The Woodlands Township Board of Directors identified the redesign of the website as a strategic priority. Additional information is outlined within the RFP.

50. Can we please have details regarding the IT/System landscape at the Woodlands Township that would be relevant to this project?

Because the vendor is required to host and maintain the website offsite, the Township's IT/System and landscape is not applicable to this project. The selected vendor will work with IT staff to ensure IT protocols are followed and that

the site is safe from cybersecurity threats. Per Township policies and procedures, detailed information about our IT System/landscape is not shared.

51. Can you please share the current support team structure for IT support at The Woodlands Township?

The Township has an extremely qualified and supportive IT team and the selected vendor will work with IT staff to assist with the safe and secure development of the site. Per Township policies and procedures, detailed information about our IT team is not shared.

52. Can The Woodlands Township provide the availability of the resources from their team that will be allocated for this project?

The Township's Communication team will assist and provide the necessary resources for the successful completion of this project. The redesign and build of the new website is a top priority of the team.

53. Please share details regarding customizations and interfaces.

Please refer to the RFP.

54. Do you need a complete resume or a summary only?

This information is outlined within the RFP.

55. Any major projects planned in coming years that vendors should be aware of?

None that would impact the development of this project.

56. What are the essential features and functionalities that the new website should include and that we should include in user testing?

Please go back and review the Testing phase outlined in the RFP. All website features and functionalities should be tested.

57. How will the success of the new website be measured? Are there key metrics?

How we measure the success of the website will be an ongoing and ever-evolving process. Key metrics will be identified during the Discovery phase and will change as deemed necessary after the launch of the website.

58. What main actions and objectives do you have for the department/micro/subsites for the Fire, Parks, and Transportation departments? It also mentions considering these microsities and asking for more as we go. Will you have an estimate of how many microsities will be made?

The development of the requested department/micro/subsite should provide dedicated spaces to these departments allowing for more in-depth and customized content and removing cluttering from the primary site. These sites have additional targeted audiences that will incorporate specific campaigns and events. Microsites should also improve the SEO for specific keywords or topics related to specific departments. At this time, we are limiting it to the departments outlined within the RFP. These should be priced separately, so if an additional site(s) is needed, we **MAY** consider additional site(s) contract negotiations.

59. Which site features does The Woodlands Township require to be managed by the Township?

Township staff should have the ability to edit ALL primary site features. This includes but is not limited to, home page layout and content, page content, images, icons, documents, navigation, calendars, html embeds, custom html,

the ability to add meta and keyword information, etc. Content will be provided and updated by Township staff directly.

60. Which site features does the Township expect to be managed by the selected vendor/consultant?

The selected vendor will be responsible for the hosting, support, backups and other maintenance operations that keep the site healthy and secure.

61. How many Township users will need access to the system?

Please refer to Question 17.

62. Please provide the complete list of departments requiring separate identity/sites within the Township.

This is identified in the RFP under Objectives on page 3.

63. Has the Township conducted a survey regarding utility and/or accessibility of the existing website?

No.

64. What feedback has the Township received from residents concerning the website?

The site structure is difficult to understand, and the navigation is cumbersome. Residents and employees alike feel like information is buried and difficult to locate. Internal searches result in outdated information.

65. Are there any current website analytics that can be provided for review?

Website metrics will be reviewed during the Discovery phase of the project.

66. Which productivity suites (Office 365, Google Workspace, Outlook Exchange etc) are currently used within the domain? Will the Township staff be responsible for handling any integration with those systems?

Township staff utilizes Office 365 and the functions of these are developed and maintained by IT personnel. These processes will not change or be impacted by this project.

67. What is the expectation for the "Bids" page on the current site - <https://www.thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov/bids.aspx>. Will this need to be re-created in the new site?

Yes. Township staff needs the ability to post RFPs, RFQs, and other bid-related projects as outlined by federal, state and local laws. Users must be able to sign up to receive notifications when postings to this page have been made or updated.

68. What are you looking in a Style Guide? ("Design", Page 8, "Prepare a comprehensive Style Guide that can be edited by the Township as necessary")

The website Style Guide is a set of documented guidelines and standards that define the visual and functional elements of the website. It serves as a reference point for those maintaining, adding and removing content to the website and ensures consistency, cohesiveness and a unified user experience across all web pages and digital assets associated with the website. Elements to be included are but are not limited to, typography, color palette, layout and grid system, image and media guidelines, accessibility, content guidelines, branding guidelines and version control.

69. Are there any preferred technologies or platforms that The Woodlands Township wants to utilize or avoid?

The Township is open to review and consideration of any technology or platform that will enhance and improve the website. Vendors should include what they believe would be relevant to this project and all technology and platforms should be priced individually for consideration.

70. In the Discovery Phase:

- a) **Can you provide more details about the Township's mission, vision, and branding that we need to consider in the project?**
- b) **What are the specific objectives of the external and internal website audits?**
- c) **Are there any particular online resources or third-party applications that require special attention during analysis?**
- d) **Could you share more information about the historic website analytics and the specific objectives for using this data?**
- e) **Is there any flexibility in the project schedule, and what factors might influence it?**
- f) **Please list down the integrations you are looking forward to and who will be providing the APIs.**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor during the Discovery phase of the project.

71. In the Design Phase:

- a) **Are there any branding guidelines or design preferences that should be highlighted during the redesign?**
- b) **Can you provide examples of the types of micro/departmental/subsites that need to be designed?**
- c) **Are there specific accessibility standards that the design should adhere to?**
- d) **How should we handle content ownership, especially written content, images, and videos?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor during the Design phase of the project.

72. In the Development Phase:

- a) **Which Content Management System (CMS) solution does the Township prefer or recommend for the project?**
Please review prior questions, specifically Questions 27 and 28.
- b) **Could you specify the third-party applications that need integration or be open to integration?**
Please review prior questions, specifically Questions 2 and 3.
- c) **Are there any particular requirements or preferences for the CMS's content management and navigation features?**
- d) **Do you have specific expectations for the website's performance and security features?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor during the Development phase of the project.

73. In the Content Migration Phase:

- a) **What is the volume and type of content that needs to be migrated from the existing website?**
- b) **Are there any special considerations for optimizing migrated content for search engines and ADA compliance?**
- c) **Can you provide more details about user roles, groups, permissions, and approval levels?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor during multiple phases of the project.

74. Review and Testing Phase:

- a) **Could you clarify the performance and compatibility testing requirements?**
- b) **Are there specific scenarios or tasks you'd like users to perform during usability testing?**
- c) **What is the desired outcome for security testing?**
- d) **Do you have any specific accessibility standards that the website should meet?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor during the Testing phase of the project.

75. During the Launch Phase:

- a) **Do you have any preferences or guidelines for the soft launch and official launch processes?**
- b) **What kind of technical support is expected during the launch period?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor.

76. For Support and Hosting:

- a) **Are there specific hosting providers or platforms that should be used?**
- b) **What are the expected response times for addressing technical issues?**
- c) **Are there any security measures or compliance standards that we should be aware of?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor.

77. For Website Analytics:

- a) **Are there specific key performance indicators (KPIs) you'd like to track using Google Analytics?**
- b) **Who will be responsible for accessing and creating analytic reports?**
- c) **Are there any additional analytics tools or integrations that should be considered?**

These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor.

78. Considerations for the Budget

- a) **What is the allocated budget for Project?**
- b) **What is the hosting budget and do you want offer or to provide hosting?**
- c) **Are you looking for Support and Maintenance SLA? What is Assigned budget**
- d) **For integrations you will be providing APIs and any cost related to them will be out of proposal scope, is it right understanding?**

Please refer to questions already answered regarding the anticipated budget. The cost of the project and recurring fees will be finalized during contract negotiations. These details and specifications will be determined with the selected vendor.

Thank you for your interest in our RFP. If you did not find the answers you were looking for in the questions above, please re-review the RFP. Many of the questions submitted were directly addressed within the RFP. In addition, some of the questions received will be determined, discussed and addressed during the project build.