Request for Quote (RFQ-0415)

Website Development and Hosting for Housing Navigator Massachusetts

Questions and Answers

Date Issued: April 1, 2025

Date Due: April 18, 2025

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Late proposals cannot be accepted. Bidders are prohibited from contact related to this procurement with any Housing Navigator MA employee other than the designated contacts listed below.

Designated Contacts for this RFQ:

Primary Contact: Grace Mitchell, Product Manager

Secondary Contact: April Ognibene, Chief Operating Officer

1. Is there a preference on the content management platform (CMS)? I.e., WordPress.

We are agnostic on the CMS, as long as it is something that can be easily updated by our staff going forward.

2. Is there going to be a deeper integration between the application and the website? If so, is there an API provided by the search tool?
   ○ https://search.housingnavigatorma.org/ including the Owners and Mangers authenticated area?

Our goal is to achieve a deeper integration between the search tool and the website. Currently, the search tool does not offer an API, but we plan to provide this functionality as part of our future services.

3. Do you have example websites that showcase the desired functionalities and content for your new site?

We are open to the design team to provide innovative ideas for the new site.

4. Do you have visual examples of websites that showcase the desired design and interaction style?

We are open to the design team to provide innovative ideas for the new site.

5. Will the website follow the existing branding, or is a brand evolution planned for this project?

We are open to the design team to provide innovative ideas for the new site.

6. In this statement from the RFQ: "Conducting thorough testing for functionality, usability, and performance across devices and browsers." - is there an expectation to conduct usability testing with actual users? And if yes, will Housing Navigator MA supply the users to be tested or do you seek help with user recruitment?

There is no requirement for usability testing with users, but the new site must be adequately tested by the creating organization and by our staff before deployment.

7. Are translations expected to be machine provided (like the google widget on the search tool today) or are you requesting full manual translation capabilities?

Translations are expected to be machine provided.

8. Is there a budget range for this website development project? This helps determine core project functionality compared to what we might recommend outside of the budget for "enhancements" such as user testing is not required but if the budget allows, it may be a recommendation versus a nice to have.

There is no set budget for this project at this time. Please propose what you feel to be a reasonable cost estimate.

9. The RFQ states under Evaluation Criteria - "Quality and creativity of proposed design", are designs expected to be included in the RFQ submission?

Yes, preliminary design ideas are expected as part of the submission.

10. **CMS Platform:** We believe that open source content management systems are usually best for most nonprofit organizations because you own your content, data, and the platform it's built upon. We only build sites for nonprofits, exclusively in **Drupal and WordPress**. We can do a CMS agnostic discovery to help you choose, but sometimes folks are specifically looking for one over the other. **Of those two platforms, do you have a leaning toward one or the other?** Or would you like your project partner to help you choose?

Please see response to Question 1.

11. **Budget Range**: There are many ways to approach website projects. Because all of our clients are nonprofit organizations, we are always working with some kind of budget cap. **Do you have a ballpark budget range that you can share with us, so we have a better understanding of what strategies to recommend for your site's design and build?** Website costs can be highly variable. For example, a very fancy, complex aesthetic design can be very expensive, but if your audiences would be best served by that, then it might be a priority for your project. Another example: we know you want to integrate your housing database into this new website. There are many ways to achieve this kind of integration, and some are far more time intensive and costly than others. Until we do Discovery and know more about you and your priorities, we don't know what level of integration you're looking for. So if you have a range you can share with us, it can help us right-size the project plan.

Please see response to Question 8.

12. **Launch and Timeline**: Given that a vendor selection process and contracting will need to happen before your project can kick off (likely May 1st at the earliest), an August 1st

launch might not be feasible. **Is there an event, funding requirement, or something else driving this launch date? Or is your launch date flexible?**

Our launch date is flexible, but we are anxious to get our new website live as soon as possible. The timeline proposed by the vendor will be a criteria for selection.

13. **MVP Process:** Our website projects, from Discovery to launch, typically take 9-12 months for a medium to large site (many hundreds to tens of thousands of pages). For a small site (a handful of pages to a couple hundred pages), it could be more like 4-8 months, depending on the length of time your stakeholders require to make decisions about information and aesthetic design, whether or not your new site's content is ready to be entered into your new site on time, etc. When clients have a launch deadline that is shorter than is ideal, we work with them in Discovery to define an "MVP", or minimum viable product. We figure out what pages and functionality are the highest priority, and build that first, launch it, and then keep working on the site after the MVP launch, enhancing and improving things in subsequent phases. **Are you open to the possibility of an MVP build process?**

Yes, we are open to the possibility of this process.

14. **Hosting:** We see your website is currently hosted on Kinsta. **We are standardized on Pantheon** as our hosting provider because of their top-notch security and data protection practices. We don't resell hosting; you pay Pantheon directly, and receive a significant discount on hosting costs if we or another Pantheon Partner supports your site post-launch. Are you willing to change hosting providers to Pantheon?

Yes, we are willing to change hosting providers.

15. **Project Partnership:** Do you have any in-house website design or development expertise? If so, what is your ideal working relationship with an outside agency?

We do not have in-house expertise in these areas.

16. **User Research:** Have you conducted any audience research to inform the creation and design of this new website? If so, can you share that research? Or is this something that you want done by your project partner?

We have done some relevant research, which will be shared with our selected vendor. We do not expect further research to be necessary.