



Request for Proposal: Website Development

Solicitation Title: **2018 miSci Website Development**

Solicitation Issued: **July 9, 2018**

Solicitation Due Date: **August 17, 2018**

Solicitation Award Date: **August 31, 2018**

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1.0 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

miSci seeks a partner (the “Proponent”) to respond to this Request For Proposal (“RFP”) to design and develop a new website at www.miSci.org to be completed and delivered to miSci no later than March 1, 2019. The successful candidate(s) will be selected to develop and deploy the completed website based on an assessment of skills and project scope.

2.0 PREPARATION OF RESPONSE

2.1 How to Respond

Please provide a comprehensive and sufficiently detailed Proposal, following the recommended format outlined in Section 5. Please include pricing details with a breakdown of work and design methodology that will permit a complete evaluation in accordance with the criteria set herein.

Proposals must be sent as a PDF file via electronic means. Submissions that include any comment over and above the specific information requested in this RFP should be submitted as a separate appendix.

Proposals should be delivered to: marketing@miSci.org with the RFP title in the subject line.

Proposals must be successfully received by the Solicitation Closing Date no later than 5:00 p.m. ET, August 17, 2018.

2.2 Bids

Proposals in response to this RFP shall be in US dollars.

2.3 Proposal Evaluation Criteria & Selection

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee based upon the following criteria:

- 20% - Innovative website design and brand identity experience
- 20% - Demonstrated expertise in website architecture and code
- 20% - Experience and availability of key individuals proposed for the project
- 20% - Demonstrated capacity to fulfill project deliverables within timeline
- 10% - Reputation for thoroughness, credibility, and responsiveness (references)
- 10% - Overall cost: all-inclusive

2.4 Contact

All correspondence, questions or requests for clarification concerning this RFP should be submitted by email by **Friday, July 20, 2018** with the RFP title in the subject line to:

Tara Burnham, *Vice President of Marketing & Communications @ miSci*
tara.burnham@miSci.org

Should additional critical proposal information come to light during the question phase, it will be shared with all RFP participants.

3.1 BACKGROUND

3.2 About miSci

miSci is Tech Valley's leading science museum, providing multi-media hands-on STEM learning to visitors of all ages. Located in New York's Capital Region, miSci is mission-driven to celebrate and explore science and technology, past, present and future. The museum explores the area's rich technological heritage, through an internationally-recognized archive and collection related to the regional and global history of innovation, the region's finest interactive STEM exhibits, a Challenger Learning Center, the Dudley Observatory, the Suits-Bueche Planetarium, dynamic standards-based education programs and outreaches, and soon the Vale Park Conservancy Trail.

Operating without public funding, miSci engages patrons, donors and strong community partnerships to deliver dynamic "edutainment" that fosters public understanding of scientific subjects, promotes STEM careers, and encourages scientifically-informed citizenship.

miSci's current tagline is "celebrate. explore. inspire."

3.3 Audiences

The audience of miSci.org consists of museum visitors, donors, educators, students, scientists, STEM professionals, science and history enthusiasts, scholars, and the general public. In the past six months, December 2017– May 2018, 5,223 users visited 14,233 unique pages on the existing site.

Our primary audience is users planning their visit to the Museum – mainly families (parents and/or grandparents) with school-aged children. Our secondary audience is people booking a class/group trip or registering for a STEM workshop, class or event.

Our most visited pages include membership, the events calendar, planetarium, class registration, and current exhibitions. We have increased overall web visitation over the same timeframe from the previous year, as well as an increase in visits from the city and county of Schenectady, where the museum is located. Web visitation from other surrounding cities and towns varies widely.

3.4 Strategic Goals and Objectives

The objectives for this project are to create a striking original website design with an intuitive, engaging interface; a flexible and extendable architecture; a responsive site design optimized for mobile access; metadata and site index for search engine optimization; increased activation of social networking sites; ecommerce functionality; ADA and W3C compliance; access to images, research, and rich media; dynamic presentation of news and events on the front page; ability to host content and applications, gallery wayfinding, tour resources and classroom-based and distance-learning resources.

miSci's current website was built nearly ten years ago and no longer serves the museum well. The design is outdated and does not accurately represent the Museum. The navigation is extremely clunky and not at all intuitive. Pages are disorganized and overloaded, and the content is neither dynamic nor engaging.

The main site, miSci.org, also serves as the conduit to three existing modules that connect to our archive database, collection database, and portions of our point of sale (class registration, membership and donations) system, Versai. As a result, miSci.org is the foundation of several content components that will need to be accounted for in the design and development approach.

We want our new site to be friendly for a variety of user types. Within moments of visiting our site, we want users to know that miSci is a world-class science museum, and a welcoming place for everyone.

The new website should support the following goals:

- **Goal 1:** To inform, educate and engage our visitors before, during and after their physical visit to the Museum.
- **Goal 2:** Increase accessibility – mobile-friendly Universal Design principles should be followed, and accessibility features should be enabled.
- **Goal 3:** Increase and promote online admission/ticket sales and charitable giving to the Museum.
- **Goal 4:** Improve functionality and connection between the event calendar and third-party program registration software (Versai) including more robust search and export functions.
- **Goal 5:** Increase and improve other e-commerce transactions, including school and group bookings; class, workshop and event registrations; and membership and gift shop purchases.
- **Goal 6:** Provide engaging collection- and expertise-based content to our website visitors and increase visibility/access to our continually updated online collection database (NY Heritage Digital Collections, and soon Google Arts & Culture).
- **Goal 7:** Increase user engagement and social sharing.
- **Goal 8:** Track quantitative data about usage frequency to determine direction for future innovation and to build stronger and more lasting relationships with our guests.
- **Goal 9:** Improve internal museum staff communications.

3.4.1 Content Development

Once a content structure is designed for the new site, the contractor will work closely with miSci staff to create assets and content including but not limited to text, graphics, audio, video, and other tools that help enhance user experience. MiSci has an existing catalog of collection and gallery images as well as object text that can be used. We are not currently happy with the site architecture and pages and are open to guidance in how the content is created and displayed.

3.4.2 Technical Environment

Networked Environment

The new site will need to be hosted securely, either with miSci's existing host provider, or transferred to another reliable provider.

NOTE: The entire Museum will soon be wired for strong WiFi access. Any suggestion made by bidders to enhance location-based services during and after a museum visit, such as low-energy Bluetooth beacons, should be considered an addition to the project cost and appropriate costs for development and deployment should be included as a separate line item or addendum in the proposed budget.

Integrations

- Versai
- Google Analytics
- Email service provider – TBD (currently Constant Contact; alternatives welcomed)
- NY Heritage Digital Collections
- Social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube,

Content Management

miSci's current content management system is a custom-built platform, created as retrofit by miSci's IT provider. miSci staff are comfortable working with WordPress and Drupal but are not opposed to recommendations for other platforms.

APIs and/or additional services are available for our online giving/event registration system and online collection database. If the utilization of these APIs will advance our site, please include this information and budget in the proposal.

As part of the content management system, miSci staff will need the ability to upload and add a variety of content types including, but not limited to text, images, and video. A basic validation and approval process should be part of a production workflow and include at least two types of users covering basic authoring and approvals of content.

Cloud Approach / Server Locations

During the course of the project, it is acceptable for the contractor to maintain a development environment within their own technical environment as long as the software, content, and assets developed are migrated to miSci's preferred hosting environment.

Warranty / Maintenance

Developed software and systems as designed for this project should include a minimum of six-month warranty and maintenance period to cover additional software bugs and issues requiring additional effort to resolve not discovered during development. This warranty period initiates at the time of project completion. This warranty extends to any and all software, systems, integration, and other technical features designed by the contractor as part of their proposed solution but does not apply to software and systems not designed by the contractor. Where third party solutions are suggested for either software or hardware, proponents will need to disclose warranty information (or lack thereof) to help miSci fully understand potential risks and liability.

3.4 Staff Resources

A successful planning effort is driven by an interdisciplinary team of participants.

Team Lead

- Tara Burnham, Vice President of Marketing & Communications – Responsible for keeping the project on schedule and within the budget and maintaining communication between other team members and stakeholders.

Additional Stakeholders

- Gina C. Gould, PhD – President
- Amy Burns – CFO
- Susanne Dorr – Vice President of Education
- Chris Hunter – Vice President of Collections and Exhibitions
- Carmel Patrick – Vice President of Development
- miSci Board of Trustees

3.5 Competitive Set, Comparables, and Admirables

Competitors – *local, regional and statewide competitors*

- [Children’s Museum of Science and Technology \(CMOST\)](#) (Rensselaer)
- [The Children’s Museum at Saratoga](#) (Saratoga Springs)
- [The New York State Museum](#) (Albany)
- [Sciencenter](#) (Oneonta)
- [Museum of Science & Technology \(MOST\)](#) (Syracuse)

Comparables – *national analogs*

- [Discovery Museum](#)
- [Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium](#)
- [Discovery Center Museum](#)
- [Powerhouse Science Center](#)
- [Mid-America Science Museum](#)
- [DaVinci Science Center](#)
- [Museum of Discovery](#)
- [Lancaster Science Factory](#)
- [Eugene Science Center](#)
- [The Wolf Museum of Exploration + Innovation](#)

Admirables – *notably innovative websites of national and international Arts & Cultural organizations*

- [Milwaukee Ballet](#)
- [Rethinking Guernica](#)
- [Carnegie Hall](#)
- [Smithsonian \(National Museum of the American Indian\) “Americans” microsite](#)
- [National Museum of Australia “Songlines” microsite](#)

4.0 SCOPE OF WORK

4.1 Scope of Services

miSci requires the services of a vendor to provide planning, design, and implementation of a striking, dynamic, website identity and architecture to support and advance the mission of the Museum, including: user experience design, software development, content structure and optimization, audio-visual integration services, launch and warranty for miSci.org as detailed below.

The contractor must demonstrate their capability in performing the following typical tasks:

1. Prepare and specify all labor, software, and equipment required to perform the work indicated and specified in the proposal documents, including technical specifications, wireframes, narratives, storyboards, drawings and other associated documentation. Work to include the design components, content management, systems design, and other custom solutions as required.
2. Collaboration with miSci staff in understanding, developing, and supporting, the proposed experience design including necessary media and technology delivery.
3. Providing additional insight, guidance, and experience in support of miSci's stated goals for design, content delivery, and overall experience.
4. Working with miSci staff and other partners as appropriate to prototype, beta-test and/or verify software development efforts as needed. Prototypes should be used to verify proposed solutions. A quality assurance program will also need to be specified to ensure testing of all software and equipment as appropriate.
5. Preparation of handover documentation including, but not limited to, software, and systems manuals, maintenance and operation manuals, and as-built package (including electronic and hard copies of drawings and site architecture) indicating any changes to the original design, systems, specifications, and installations as previously indicated. Training shall also be provided to pertinent miSci staff about basic operation of and maintenance of all systems
6. Provision of a suggested ongoing annual maintenance schedule and regimen, including suggested software and any equipment.

4.1.1 Specific Project Requirements

Specific features are expected in the scope of work to be completed by proponents.

- An easy-to-use Content Management System supporting miSci.org
- Intuitive navigation with clean and focused design, with specific focus on transactions: tickets, memberships, donations, registrations
- Content organization and optimization leveraging existing miSci resources
- Optimized SEO
- Integration with Google Analytics
- Social Media and Email Marketing integration
- Integration with existing interfaces: Versai, NY Heritage Digital Collections, Office365, Dropbox
- Contact form capacity
- Ability to add marketing tracking pixel to individual pages
- Staff login/access to internal document site for administrative purposes
- Documentation & staff training
- Ongoing hosting and technical support

4.1.2 Project Wish List

The features listed below are not necessary for the initial launch. Please include a description of how these elements would impact the timeline and/or budget. Please provide the cost as a separate line item or an addendum.

- Elements of unique storytelling, mapping, and wayfinding while visiting the Museum, e.g. beacons, augmented reality.
- Museum photography or video production

4.2 Schedule

The target date for awarding the contract is **August 31, 2018**. To facilitate this turnaround, the RFP schedule is as follows:

RFP Issued	July 9, 2018
Questions Due	July 20, 2018
RFP Closing	August 17, 2018
Contract Award	August 31, 2018

Start Date:	September 2018
Expected Completion:	February 2019

4.3 Budget

Our budget is in the \$20,000 range. While we prefer the most cost-effective solution, all proposals that fall reasonably around this range will be considered based on the value they provide. Proposals that offer trade, as well as flexible billing for non-required elements added to the website after initial launch will also be considered, as we may be able to budget for additional funding for these elements.

4.4 Responsibilities, Expectations and Requirements

The main responsibilities of miSci are as follows:

- Review and approve the proposed approaches and solutions for miSci.org, assigning roles and responsibilities to project partners and staff as necessary;
- Review and approve the proposed user experience intended for miSci.org;
- Guide, review, and approve the overall design direction miSci.org;
- Provide relevant documents and specifications as needed to inform the implementation of miSci.org;
- Provide original content for the proposed solutions in partnership with the selected contractor;
- Establish budgets and other criteria;
- Monitor results according to the specifications and scope defined in this RFP;
- Attend progress meetings to review progress and inspect work

Contractor shall:

- Develop media and technology treatments, designs, and any hardware selection in accordance within the scope and budget as finalized through this RFP;
- Work with miSci to provide input, opinion, and guidance as part of the design process for miSci.org;
- Design and implement a content management system supporting miSci.org;
- Work with miSci resources to aid with content production, any infrastructure, media, or other technology requirements in order to implement the intended design;
- Provide regular reports regarding progress (progress may be documented in any number of ways including, but not limited to, written treatments, proposed architectures, diagrams, sketches, still images, audio, video, and working prototypes);
- Notify miSci of any issues that may impact the timeline, budget, and/or any deliverables.
- Incorporate a 3 business day response time into schedules for miSci staff review.

Any additional requirements and clarifications can be provided as part of the RFP response. The general intent is indicated in the outlined responsibilities and should not be considered exhaustive.

Requirements include but are not limited to the following:

- The Contractor must identify one (1) person to serve as primary contact, project manager, and liaison to miSci
- The Contractor shall provide internal project management and administration services throughout the duration of the project as needed. The Contractor solely shall coordinate the services provided by its staff and subcontractors. The Contractor will provide miSci with a list of its subcontractors, if any, prior to contracting. Subcontractors remain the sole responsibility of the Contractor and miSci reserves the right to reject any or all subcontractors proposed by the Contractor.
- The Contractor shall maintain regular communication as appropriate with miSci (in person and/or by telephone and/or by web conference). This interaction will be used to inform the needs of the project, maintain a cohesive schedule and to coordinate, oversee and manage work produced and provide timely notification of deviations from the project schedule. Meetings and correspondence will report on and track the process and establish and implement mechanisms for ongoing communication.
- Software specified should be extensible where possible while being mindful of costs related to development, installation and ongoing maintenance. The Contractor should consider integration issues pertaining to existing miSci systems, resources and IT policies where relevant.

5.0 PROPOSAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

For the proposal, bidders must provide a description of the solution(s) that will meet the requirements outlined in Section 4 of this document, highlighting key benefits to miSci.

Bidders should organize their proposals to provide the following information sequentially:

5.1 Corporate Summary

A company synopsis, including the following:

A) Organization and Identity

- Legal name and address;
- Telephone and facsimile numbers;
- Online contact information;
- Primary contacts on a national and regional basis.
- Separate pricing from proposal narrative.

B) Overview and History

Bidders are to provide a company overview, including:

- Current work methodology (i.e. project management philosophy);
- Key vendor partnerships (if any);
- Number of years in business;
- Description of current workload and client base;

C) Subcontractors / Partnerships (if any)

Please provide the following:

- Legal Name and Address;
- Contact Information;
- Work methodology and organizational structure;
- Services to be provided and why this is a preferred partnership of the Proponent;

Submitting parties are advised that all subcontractors and partnerships are expected to meet the same general requirements as the primary vendor for this proposal. MiSci may ask for additional detail and information as needed. MiSci's approval will be required for any scope of work intended to be assigned to sub-contractors or partners.

D) Proposal Questions

Provide answers to all questions outlined in section 5.2 Proposal Questions.

E) Additional Information

Provide any additional information you feel is relevant to the proposal including, but not limited to, customer testimonials that contribute to demonstrating the Proponent's qualifications, experience, capabilities and resources to meet miSci's requirements as stated in this RFP.

5.2 Proposal Questions

5.2.1 Proposed Solution

- Please describe a proposed solution to successfully developing miSci.org. Provide narrative description, illustrations, etc. to demonstrate the intended approach and requirements to implement the proposed solution. Capture the imagination of the reviewers, demonstrating an ability to be thoughtful, considered, and creative.
- Please indicate how the intended audiences will be served by the different elements of the proposed solution. Please indicate the overall system adaptability to future growth and expansion.
- Please indicate expected opportunities, risks, and assumptions in making this proposal. Process is every bit as important as the actual elements of the proposed solution. How do you anticipate being proactive and resolving these issues within the constraints of the project's schedule and budget?

5.2.2 Related Experience

- Please describe your qualifications and experience, including that of key personnel, which will be involved in this project. Provide resumes, references, and bios of personnel to be directly involved in this project, such as the project manager, professional staff, and others expected to perform work. This overview should include optional services and subcontractors that the Contractor believes will contribute to the needs of the project.
- Please provide documentation for up to three (3) contracted projects that your firm has produced that are comparable in physical size, budget, and scope to the proposed services.
- Provide references, including the company name, address, contact name, and title as well as contact number and email for each of the aforementioned projects.
- Provide any additional information you feel is relevant to the proposal including, but not limited to, customer testimonials that contribute to demonstrating qualifications, experience, capabilities and resources to meet the project's requirements as stated in this RFP.

5.2.3 Schedule and Organizational Chart

- Given the overall key project dates (*see section 4.2*), please provide a proposed schedule that indicates key tasks, milestones, and internal/external dependencies. This schedule should include, but is not limited to the following:
 - Client Review;
 - Prototyping; Menus, Calendar, style guide, etc.
 - Design, Production, and Launch;
 - Documentation and Training
 - Performance indicators associated with project success
- With reference to the proposed schedule please provide a description of process including desired communications tools for the design, development, approval, and launch of miSci.org.
- Please provide an organizational chart of your company indicating who will be assigned to this project. Further, provide a second priority contact point within your organization (Please include name, position, and telephone contact details).

5.2.4 Budget

Given the best understanding of the scope of the project, please provide an itemized budget for completion of the project. This budget should include, but is not limited to the following:

- Project Management
- Conceptual Design
- User Experience Design
- Prototyping
- Content Management System Design and Integration
- Media Asset and Content Development
- Design, Production, and Installation of all components
- Documentation and Training
- Expected Ongoing Maintenance and Service Contracts

5.2.5 Software, Systems, and Control

- Please describe your qualifications and experience in developing software systems and solutions that can address the intended goals of miSci.org.
- Please discuss your approach to release and deployment of miSci.org for both testing and eventual public release.

5.2.6 Prototyping

- While prototyping is invaluable to the development of high quality experiences, it can be cumbersome to control in terms of cost and budget. Please describe how you would approach prototyping for this project.

6.0 STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

miSci will negotiate contract terms upon selection of a vendor. All contracts are subject to review by miSci legal counsel, and a project will only be awarded upon the signing of an agreement or contract (including a non-disclosure agreement), which outlines terms, scope, budget and other necessary items. miSci will not incur any costs until all agreements or contracts are signed. All developed software (including source code) will be published and owned by miSci.