

To: All interested parties  
From: Michele Morris, Director of Marketing & Communications  
Date: 11/14/22  
RE: Responses to questions regarding RFP 20221017 – New Website Development

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All questions received in response to CSWD RFP 20221017 – New Website Development are represented here. We are posting this document on [cswd.net](http://cswd.net) and the Vermont Business Registry and distributing it to all firms that submitted questions or otherwise expressed interest in this RFP.

### Budget, terms

1. Please specify the total budget allocated for this contract. Does the budget include tech support and hosting?
  - See RFP section *1.1 Budget*.
2. What was the investment in the previous website?
  - CSWD contracted with IvyCat Web Services for our first WordPress site, which largely incorporated content from an existing HTML site, in 2010 on a shoestring budget. CSWD staff has been tweaking and maintaining that site with some menu updates in 2014 and assistance from outside vendors only for and emergency and critical technical work. In 2020 we contracted with Bytes.co for a limited scope of work to rebuild the site's deprecated WordPress theme at a cost of \$19,350. Bytes.co completely rebuilt the current site's WordPress theme but made no functional or design changes other than minor color tweaks and recommendations for further work needed to achieve WCAG 2.1 compliance. The estimated total investment in the current site since 2010 is roughly \$30,000.
3. Is the due date still the same?
  - The deadline for proposals is 11/29/22.
4. In terms of the proposal selection process, does the Town take a lowest cost or best value approach?
  - See RFP section *9.1 Evaluation Criteria*

### Qualifications

5. Is there an incumbent on the contract?

- There is no incumbent on the contract for Phase 2 work for website development.
6. Who has previously developed the website?
    - See answer to Q3.
  7. How many resources could a vendor propose?
    - Vendors should propose resources deemed necessary for execution of the Scope of Work.
  8. Does the agency need the candidates to work full-time or part-time?
    - It is up to the vendor to propose appropriate resource and time allocation.
  9. Is there any local company preference? Are you open to perform the work outside the US (For example, India, Canada etc.)?
    - CSWD welcomes proposals meeting RFP requirements regardless of vendor location.
  10. Please confirm the anticipated number of awards.
    - There will be one contract awarded.
  11. Is sub-contracting mandatory for this proposal?
    - No.
  12. Is there a remote option available for candidates?
    - Yes. No work is required to be performed on-site.
  13. Could the agency kindly specify whether our NMSDC (National Minority Supplier Development Council) certification would be accepted as minority and women business enterprise participation?
    - Based on our review of the NMSDC, it would be accepted.
  14. How many firms did you send the RFP to?
    - The RFP was sent to 18 firms that had expressed interest in our RFP for Phase 1 of this website project. It is also posted on the Vermont Business Registry.
  15. Is Gravity Works Design bidding on the project?
    - This is a Request for Proposals, not a Request for Bids. Gravity Works is eligible to submit a proposal for this phase of work.

## Schedule, Process, CSWD Team

16. Phase 1 of this project took months longer than you planned, yet Phase 2 follows a similarly quick timeline for a larger and more technical scope of work. Is there flexibility on the delivery dates, or is May 1 2023 a hard deadline for website launch? Is there a specific event driving the launch date?
- The Phase 1 work required 15 weeks to complete from the beginning of work to the receipt of final deliverables. The original schedule in the RFP estimated 12 weeks for completion, so it required three weeks longer than planned. This RFP estimates just over 18 weeks for completion (12/21-5/1). The project must be complete within this Fiscal Year (ends June 30, 2023).
17. The RFP says the contract term is January 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023, for "one year" -- could you please provide the correct dates? What is the duration of this contract?
- See answer to Q16. The contract terms will be finalized during contract negotiations.
18. Does CSWD have a dedicated product owner for Phase 2? What does the working team and decision-making process look like? What does internal approval look like: How many people are part of that? Who will be the day-to-day contact? Are you open to stipulation on approval?
- The Website Team tasked with executing and maintaining the site consists of the Director of Marketing & Communications (Project Manager and primary contact for both Phases of this work); the Director of Information systems; the Marketing Communications Manager, and the Marketing Creative Specialist. The Project Manager is the day-to-day contact. She will solicit input from the Website Team and other CSWD stakeholders as needed to ensure she can provide informed and timely decisions to keep the project on track. We are open to considering stipulation on approval.
19. How many hours (monthly) does the current site require from support staff? Is there a target for a reduced number of hours?
- This estimate is a bit difficult since we have been limiting site updates to critical needs only in light of this work. A rough estimate would be 20 hours/month, on average, spread across four staff members responsible for routine content maintenance and troubleshooting. However, this does not include backlogged content updates and maintenance, and ongoing unaddressed needs for plug-in and site updates and compatibility troubleshooting. We have no specified target for reduction in time.
20. In the Current website, how has all the Content for the pages been managed? Need information about Fields and sections used by the Administrator or staff.
- Content is managed through WordPress CMS. Fields / sections vary depending on the plug-in used or activity. All pages are based on hard templates with heavy reliance on sidebars and mega menu. See RFP for content requirements and answer to #21 for types of users.

21. How many types of User who will use the website? Front End and Backend and what will be their rights and responsibility.
- This is still to be determined but there will be at least 3 top level admins. We have not determined how we will handle other content roles such as super users or casual users.
22. Could you elaborate on “Burdensome maintenance”? what makes it burdensome?
- The current structure’s poor support for dynamic content has invited duplicative static content that requires making changes to the same information in many locations and invites mistakes and inconsistency, requiring further work.
  - Also, with 40+ plugins, staff is not always sure of how to change certain pieces of content. Example; Home page spotlight, sidebars, footer content, Uber Menu, etc. Since some of this content does not change on a regular basis, staff must “relearn” how to make the updates. Likewise, some of the plugins themselves upgrade/change frequently, complicating matters.

### Challenges of Current Site

23. If applicable, are there any challenges/key issues with the current WordPress set-up? What is the list of problems that the District encounters in the current website?
- Poor mobile experience
  - Duplicative or confusing information presentation (A-Z List)
  - Heavy reliance on static pages
  - Page templates(s) very limited. Need more variety in page structure to display different types of information
  - No tracking of downloadable material (PDFs)
  - Heavy reliance on plug-ins.
24. Was the impetus for the renovation of the CSWD website more internal than external - i.e. it was becoming a nightmare to maintain the content more than the public was complaining about the site?
- While the site has been adequately serving the public’s needs, we recognized that finding the most frequently sought-after information—what, where, when, and how much will it cost-- was more difficult and cumbersome than we would like it to be, particularly for mobile users. In addition, we needed ways to more effectively serve up mission-driven information the public doesn’t necessarily seek out but is central to our mission. Maintaining the structure and mechanisms for doing this was also becoming more burdensome, and the timing was good to address all of this while also creating a comprehensive Communications Strategy for the District. The website is of course a critical, central piece of this.

25. What are some of the "vexing UX challenges posed by the existing site"? Have they been adequately addressed during the Phase 1 process?
- Internal and external stakeholders reported difficulty finding core information and we identified inconsistencies in the A-Z list search functionality. The Phase 1 work confirmed the core needs of visitors, which is well reflected in the prominence of the A-Z list and core Drop-Off Center facilities in the wireframing. The search taxonomy of the A-Z list still needs to be refined, as does the display and access to information on the facility pages. Database mechanisms for managing and displaying information must be identified and structured; e.g., for the A-Z list data, Drop-Off Center materials accepted, and Board related materials.
26. What would you say are the main goals of Phase 2 in order of importance?
- Flexibility and adaptability (dynamic content)
  - Intuitive and user-friendly navigation/searchability
  - Mobile-ready core content
  - Intuitive back-end for admins
27. As stated in the RFP: "The Phase 1 work focused on incorporating certain mandatory elements as dictated by Vermont State requirements and/or as identified by CSWD staff." Upon review of the Phase 1 deliverables we believe these are the A-Z list and Hauling services listing. Are there other requirements for the website mandated by the State?
- The A-Z list, and specific content it must contain, is the most critical element required by the State that needs to be more flexible for staff maintaining the site and more user-friendly for site visitors. See Appendix D on page 34 of the Content Strategy (linked as Appendix E in the RFP) for a complete table of all State requirements.
28. Can CSWD give an example or two of how the website needs to "scale and adapt to constantly changing District and website visitor needs"?
- The most extreme example of this was when the District temporarily shut down all facilities during COVID and reopened them on a phased basis with new schedules, fee structures, and different materials accepted than before the closures. This was incredibly difficult and time-consuming to execute on our current website. Though this is an extreme example due to its sudden onset and comprehensive impact, we are continuing to implement post (?)-pandemic changes at our facilities, and the website team faces ongoing challenges of updating the website to reflect these ongoing facility and policy changes.
29. What are the current technical challenges (if any)?
- Apart from those already listed elsewhere, some plugins seem to require manual upgrades (i.e. we must ftp vendor code, rather than upgrade through dashboard) on a regular basis. This may be a function of the quality of plugins employed.

30. We believe a large portion of what is contained in Appendix A is related to content and site architecture, which is important but if CSWD needs to make maintenance easier it seems like there needs to be more effort put into content curation. Would the CSWD team agree with this sentiment?
- This is an accurate observation. The Phase 1 work confirmed the website's content and audience priorities. We are reinforcing that by developing Content Guidelines in tandem with this project to ensure the new site is not burdened with nonessential or redundant content and functionality.

### Resources/Output from Previous RFP--Phase 1 (discovery)

31. Do you have a style guide or a brand guide?
- Here is a link to [our existing Brand Guidelines](#).
32. Who are your primary and secondary users?
- See links to the Phase 1 findings in Appendices B and E of the RFP.
33. Would you like detailed research in terms of your audience in the form of an audience needs assessment?
- This was adequately met during Phase 1 of this project.
34. Will Gravity Works be available to answer questions or comments about their work to date?
- The Gravity Works Project Manager volunteered her willingness to answer questions about their work.
35. The mockups provided in Phase 1 Deliverables were for the desktop. Meanwhile, the majority of the site's users are mobile, so a mobile design would seem to be critical. Is this accurate? Were any mobile mockups created or started?
- Mobile, responsive design is a critical deliverable in this phase of work. Mobile mockups were created for the Homepage and A-Z list search page. We will want them for all Content Pillar pages.
36. How satisfied is CSWD with the results from Phase 1? Were there any big surprises? Are there gaps or unaddressed issues that deserve more consideration?
- We are very satisfied with the Phase 1 work and were encouraged that the findings supported CSWD's understanding of what the public seeks from our website. There were no big surprises. Issues that require more attention include:
    - i. Determination of the CMS best suited to meet our needs
    - ii. Development of the A-Z taxonomy and management
    - iii. Development of the design aesthetic

iv. Wireframing of remaining mobile versions

37. How satisfied are you with the overall Phase 1 design work? Does it represent the design direction you want the new site to take?
- The design aesthetics developed in the Phase 1 work were applied primarily to enhance the visual processing and UX/UI testing of the wireframes by a wide variety of stakeholders. We agree with and appreciate the emphasis on “hero” images and graphic elements in particular. Use of iconography needs more discussion. The CSWD team welcomes fresh design perspectives that prospective vendors believe best reflect CSWD’s brand and goals, that will appeal to and engage our constituents, and that reflect the vendor’s abilities and experience.
38. One item in Appendix A was "Over reliance on plug-ins". Can you illustrate what you mean by this or provide an example or two?
- The current site includes more than 40 plug-ins to deliver what we consider to be core functionality such as calendars, forms, event scheduling, alerts, redirects, maps, and more. Keeping these plug-ins updated and working well with WordPress updates is burdensome and vulnerable to glitches.
39. Please provide the Content Inventory referenced in RFP Appendix B.
- Here is a [link to the Content Inventory](#). NOTE: This was not created by CSWD, and we do not endorse the recommendations it contains since we do not intend to keep much of this content in its current form.
40. Please provide the Heuristic Evaluation referenced in RFP Appendix B.
- [Link to Heuristic Evaluation](#).
41. Could you let us know how we would receive the wireframes and the designs completed? Would there be a design spec/guideline? Would assets be provided separately for all aspects of the site? Would there be a prototyping tool like Adobe XD/Sketch/Figma/etc access that we are provided?
- All wireframes and designs were developed in Figma and full access to those files will be provided to the selected vendor. Fully realized designs were not a Phase 1 deliverable, and we do not consider the designs to be complete (see answer to Q37). We invite proposals for this RFP to suggest how the vendor would improve or enhance the designs from Phase 1. Complete Phase 1 deliverables will be provided in the format that enables the selected firm to build on them for the remaining work. CSWD will provide full access to any other assets—images, graphics, copy—retained from the current site.
42. Did the previous scope of work include suggestions on how to merge the core functionalities and goals of the Green Mountain Compost site into the CSWD site? What other work has already been done to incorporate Green Mountain Compost into the CSWD site?

- The Phase 1 SOW included incorporating the core content from the Green Mountain Compost (GMC) site into the CSWD site, retaining the GMC brand identity as a program of CSWD. The wireframing developed for the “locations” includes one for GMC though it has not been fully fleshed out. There is no ecommerce function needed, though other minimal functionality such as a [compost calculator](#) may be desired.

## Phase 2 Deliverables

43. General: Please explain your intent regarding ownership/copyright of the completed website and all of its code.
- CSWD will retain ownership/copyright of the completed website and all of its source code and design elements, in its entirety.
44. How many pages of content do you anticipate transferring to the new site? Can you please identify the approximate number of basic website pages envisioned to be on the new website (25 – 50, 50-75, 75-100)?
- See *Appendix D—Draft Sitemap* linked in the RFP for proposed architecture and pages. The vendor will be responsible for migration of the A-Z list data and should base their proposal on the current A-Z scope of ~315 entries though we have identified several opportunities for consolidation with improved taxonomy and search functions. CSWD staff will be editing and consolidating other content to ensure the Sitemap stays focused on the core content identified in Phase 1.
45. Could you let us know if you need copywriting or content migration services? If yes, could you quantify the requirement?
- Copywriting and text content creation will be handled by CSWD staff. Though it is not part of the RFP scope, prospective vendors are welcome to include a fee schedule and work process for these services if desired. The basis for nearly all content needed exists, but CSWD staff will need to substantially cut, rewrite and edit what is on the current site before providing it to the selected developer for the new site.
46. What are the fields for managing Disposal Item list content A-Z and who will add all the information? Do we need any verification/approval process here?
- See answer to Q44. We will establish a migrating and approval protocol with the selected vendor.
47. What photo and video assets does the CSWD have? Will you require any original or stock videography or photography? If yes, could you quantify the requirement?
- CSWD will provide all necessary photography and video assets.

48. What type of support and maintenance does the District expect from the Vendors? Is it on an as needed basis / 24/7 or 5 days a week support?

- Per section 4.1.3, this is optional. If provided, we would seek a recommended maintenance interval for theme/plugin updates and for emergency support on an as-needed basis.

49. Do you need an Intranet Portal? If so, do you need it as a sub- domain. How many users do you need to access the portal?

- See section 3.0 – *Background* in the RFP.

### CMS, Hosting other Technical

50. Does the District have any preference on the open-source CMS? Does the CSWD have any opposition to continuing to use WordPress? Gravity Works recommends Drupal over the current CMS of Word Press. Is CSWD in agreement with this change? Is CSWD concerned at all about the staff learning a new CMS technology?

- Our primary concerns about the CMS are that it be stable, open-source, and allow for easy and flexible administrative management and maintenance. Firms who believe an alternative CMS would be preferable to WordPress should provide a convincing case for this. The investment made in the current WordPress theme and need for staff training on a new platform should be addressed but will not prevent us from achieving the best website to meet our goals. The expectation is that CSWD staff will be able to update and maintain all content and perform basic page configuration modifications without advanced knowledge in HTML or CSS coding. We will consider contracting for external support for routine maintenance of the CMS and any plug-ins or other add-ons required for the functionality we seek.

51. We understand that “The budget for this Scope of Work does not include hosting services.” Do you expect the vendor to provide hosting services? What is the current hosting environment?

- The cswd.net and greenmountaincompost.com websites and domain records are hosted on SiteGround. In addition to A records for domains, CSWD's mx record (pointing to O365), various CNAME records and lync/sip SRV records for Teams are hosted in this environment. Obviously it is more convenient to host these resources in the same environment, but we are open to exploring other services if the cost is competitive and there are technical advantages. SiteGround provides a comprehensive software stack to host and manage Wordpress and other CMS platforms, though their focus seems to be leaning toward Wordpress currently.

52. Do you need Training for this project? If so, provide the number of staff that need to be trained?

We understand, “The website will be updated and maintained by the existing CSWD Marketing Manager, Marketing Creative Specialist, and Director of Information Systems.”

- Limited technical developer training will be helpful for staff responsible for that area—two to three people. Content contributor training and overall site functionality orientation and basic updating and maintenance training will be needed for 3-5 people.

### Existing Site Specs, Functionality, Permissions

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

- In 2021 the CSWD website received 13,500-18,000 visitors/month.

54. How many pages are there on your current website? How many forms are there in total where users can apply for requests or submissions?

- As noted in the RFP, we feel that one of the detriments of the current site is that it carries too much nonessential content. The current site includes 121 published pages, 24 published posts, ~315 A-Z list items, 62 active forms, and 8 published “Locations” (established to manage pages about CSWD facilities).

55. Do you have a list of all non-standard website features on your sites? e.g. Filters, interactive tools, e-commerce, blogs, etc anything that goes beyond a webpage with content on it?

- Appointment calendar for material drop off at Environmental Depot, events calendar (would be nice to have built in RSVP component, many forms in use for a variety of purposes (Gravity Forms), Media gallery to manage digital assets on site ( I.e. photos, videos, documents).

56. Is there any payment gateway integration to collect payment/grant/donation? What systems, applications, and other business products/tools must the site integrate with?

- There are no integrations needed. Our ERP system (NetSuite) has not been integrated with our website and we currently have no plans to do so as we do not plan to accept online payment or have any ecommerce functions.

57. Does CSWD already have a redirect map of the current site pages, and how should those pages map to the new navigation shown in the Draft Site Map?

- We are interpreting this question as assuming that all current website pages will be mapped to the new sitemap. This is an incorrect assumption. See all previous answers regarding existing and new content.

58. We require to know how this Calendar is managed currently and which user has the right to manage all the events. <https://cswd.net/about-cswd/calendar/>

- We currently use the EventON WordPress event calendar plugin. We need at least that level of functionality as well as flexibility and ease in posting and updating events. We require at least two users to be able to manage events.

- Currently using Easy Appointments plug-in (for Environmental Depot hazardous waste appointments only) and Jotforms (for scheduling webinars/tours/workshops) but we welcome proposals for alternatives with similar or better functionality and security and back-end ease of access, reporting, and maintenance. We require at least two users to be able to manage the appointments.

59. Re: Section 4.3.3: Permissions. Is it a requirement that some CSWD staff be full administrators of the new site (is it intended in scope of work 4.1.2 that they be trained by the vendor to be experts in managing a complex CMS platform?) Is it satisfactory if this is NOT provided, and instead such administration is a part of the ongoing web site service provided by the vendor?

- We will need up to three primary technical administrators with full permissions who can manage version and plug-in updates, performance glitches, etc. One may be for an external vendor for maintenance and troubleshooting.
- We will need three to five primary content administrators with full access to content and limited access to site functionality. Our current site has six Administrators and five Editors.
- Other access and permissions levels will be determined by site functionality. For example, we currently have 6 custom roles to accommodate our appointments, events, and reporting functionality management, plus two more for staff and volunteer Waste Warrior management. We are seeking to limit overall site access by splitting off the Intranet and managing volunteer participation via another mechanism not connected to the website.

60. Total How many places from where Appointment booking / Scheduling Appointments have been managed and what is the next set of items in the backend when someone books an appointment? So need to understand the whole workflow who can create it, and how it will be managed.

- These details will be provided to the selected firm. Firms that feel the detail is essential for proposal development may request it with a rationale for why it is essential for the proposal.

61. Do we need to allow users to upload audio/video/pdf/doc resources? How many types of resources are there we need to manage from the backend?

- Two users will need permissions to upload resources, depending on the nature of the resource. These details will be provided to the selected firm. Firms that feel the detail is essential for proposal development may request it with a rationale for why it is essential for the proposal.

62. In Section 4.3.3 Permissions. The RFP says, "we currently have six custom roles to accommodate our appointments, events, and reporting functionality management, plus two more for staff and volunteer Waste Warrior management. We are seeking to limit overall site access by splitting off the Intranet and possibly the volunteer portal." We'd like to understand better these roles and

what UX/UI considerations we need to consider to accommodate functionality for these different user types.

- See answers to previous questions regarding permissions.

63. What is being used to broadcast the CSWD Digest?

- We use Constant Contact. It is not currently integrated with the website.

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