



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

CONSULTANT SERVICES FOR WEBSITE REDESIGN

SECTION I - SUMMARY

1.1 **Purpose:** The purpose of this Request for Proposals ("RFP") is to solicit a qualified web design and development firm to redesign the Chesapeake Bay Trust's website (www.cbtrust.org).

The Chesapeake Bay Trust seeks a modern, visually engaging, accessible, secure, and user-friendly website that effectively communicates our mission and impact to a variety of stakeholders, supports our grantmaking programs, increases donor engagement, and improves the experience for all visitors. The redesigned website should meet current accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA), follow modern web design and development best practices, and provide an intuitive content management system that allows staff to easily maintain and update content.

SECTION II – BACKGROUND

2.1 About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (Bay Trust) is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to improving the watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland Coastal Bays, and Youghiogheny River. Created in 1985 by the Maryland General Assembly, our goal is to increase stewardship through grant programs, special initiatives, and partnerships that support K-12 environmental education, on-the-ground watershed restoration, community engagement, and the underlying science of these three realms. Through our grants, the Bay Trust engages hundreds of thousands of students and volunteers in projects that have a measurable impact on the natural resources of our region. Grantees include schools, local governments, community groups, faith-based groups, watershed organizations, and other not-for-profit entities.

Grants made by the Bay Trust include resources from a variety of sources: the Protect the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays vehicle license plate, donations made through the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund on the Maryland State income tax form, donations from individuals and corporations, and partnerships with private foundations and federal, state, and local agencies. The Bay Trust leverages resources from these sources in the most cost-effective way: 90% of the Bay Trust's expenditures are directed to its restoration and education programs, and the Bay Trust has consistently received the top rating, four stars, from Charity Navigator to acknowledge our efficiency.

2.2 Project Background

The Chesapeake Bay Trust website serves as the organization's primary public communications and engagement platform. It provides information about grant opportunities, funded projects, organizational impact, donor giving opportunities, “Protect the Chesapeake & Coastal Bays” (commonly referred to as the “Bay Plate”) information, news, events, reports, and other resources.

The Bay Trust seeks to redesign the site to improve usability, accessibility, visual design, search functionality, mobile performance, and content management. The Bay Trust is seeking a strategic partner to develop a modern, secure, intuitive, and scalable website that better serves its audiences while reflecting the organization's leadership in environmental stewardship and nonprofit grantmaking.

2.3 Primary Audiences

The website should be designed to effectively serve multiple audiences, including:

- Current grantees
- Prospective grant applicants
- Donors and funding partners
- Maryland Bay Plate drivers
- Legislators and government partners
- Community organizations and nonprofit partners
- Environmental professionals
- Media
- General public

2.4 Website Goals

The redesigned website should:

- Present a modern, professional appearance
- Improve navigation and information discovery
- Meet current accessibility requirements for compliance (WCAG 2.1 AA)
- Improve the grant application experience
- Better communicate organizational impact
- Increase donor engagement
- Highlight stories of funded projects
- Improve search functionality
- Reduce staff time required to maintain content
- Support future growth without requiring significant redevelopment

SECTION III – STATEMENT OF WORK and OFFEROR'S MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 Scope

Contract type: The agreement will be administered as a deliverables-based contract

Estimated Project Timeline: Approximately 8 months from contract execution (goal to launch new website in April 2027)

a. Technical Requirements – Scope of Work Deliverables

The selected Offeror will provide all professional services necessary to plan, design, develop, test, launch, and support a redesigned Chesapeake Bay Trust website. The project is expected to include discovery and planning, user experience design, information architecture, visual design, website development, content migration, accessibility compliance, testing, launch, staff training, and post-launch support.

The project should include, at minimum, the following deliverables in phases:

Phase 1 – Discovery and Planning

- Kickoff meeting
- Stakeholder interviews
- Review of existing website performance
- Content audit
- User experience assessment
- Audience analysis
- Information architecture recommendations
- Sitemap development
- Project timeline

Current Website Assessment

The Chesapeake Bay Trust encourages Offerors to thoroughly review the current website (www.cbtrust.org). As part of the proposal, Offerors should provide a high-level assessment of the existing website, identifying opportunities to improve user experience, accessibility, navigation, content organization, functionality, and overall performance.

The Bay Trust welcomes recommendations using industry best practices that would enhance the effectiveness of the website while maintaining the organization's mission, branding, and communication goals.

User Experience (UX) and Information Architecture Requirements

The Chesapeake Bay Trust seeks a website that is intuitive, audience-focused, and easy to navigate. The selected Offeror will therefore be expected to recommend and implement an information architecture that improves the user experience and makes it easier for visitors to find the information they need.

The Offeror shall conduct a user experience review of the existing website and recommend improvements to site organization, navigation, content hierarchy, and page layouts based on industry best practices and the needs of the Bay Trust's primary audiences (see Section 2.3).

The redesigned website should provide clear pathways for users to quickly accomplish common tasks while reducing unnecessary navigation and duplicate content.

The Offeror should develop a proposed sitemap and navigation structure that reflects the organization's priorities and supports future growth.

User Experience Goals

The redesigned website should enable users to efficiently:

- Learn about the Chesapeake Bay Trust and its mission
- Find grant opportunities relevant to their organization
- Understand eligibility requirements and application processes
- Access grant resources and reporting materials
- Explore funded projects and organizational impact
- Make charitable donations
- Learn about Bay Plates and associated programs
- Find publications, reports, and other resources
- Read blogs, news, success stories, and event information
- Contact appropriate Chesapeake Bay Trust staff
- Access information on mobile devices with equal ease

Information Architecture Deliverables

As part of the project, the Offeror shall provide:

- Discovery findings and user experience recommendations
- Content inventory and organizational recommendations
- Sitemap for the redesigned website
- Navigation strategy
- Templates for key pages
- User journey maps for priority audiences
- Recommendations for improving search functionality
- Recommendations for consolidating, archiving, or removing outdated content

Search and Findability

The Chesapeake Bay Trust places a high priority on helping visitors quickly locate relevant information. The redesigned website should include improved search capabilities that allow users to efficiently locate grant opportunities, staff contacts, publications, news, forms, and other resources. Offerors should describe any recommendations for enhancing search functionality, filtering options, metadata, tagging, or content categorization to improve discoverability.

Future Flexibility

The website should be designed to accommodate future organizational growth, new programs, additional grant opportunities, and evolving communications needs without requiring significant structural redesign. The information architecture should be scalable, flexible, and easy for Chesapeake Bay Trust staff to maintain over time.

Phase 2 – Design

Develop a modern visual design that:

- Reflects the Chesapeake Bay Trust brand
- Highlights storytelling and impact
- Creates clear pathways for priority audiences
- Is fully responsive across desktop, tablet, and mobile devices
- Meets accessibility requirements (WCAG 2.1 AA)

Design deliverables should include:

- Header and footer concepts
- Homepage concepts
- Interior page templates
- Grant program pages
- Donation pages
- Bay Plate and other marketing pages
- Blog concept
- News and resource pages
- Style guide and design system

Phase 3 – Development

Build a website that includes:

- Responsive design
- Secure CMS (WordPress preferred unless alternative is justified)
- Flexible page builder for staff
- Optimized performance and page speed
- Search engine optimization (SEO) best practices
- Integration with Google Analytics
- Advanced search
- Interactive maps (current maps powered by ArcGIS)
- Newsletter signups
- Social media integration
- Accessibility compliance
- Secure hosting recommendations
- Content migration support
- Forms integration
- Spam protection
- Cross-browser compatibility

Technical Environment

The redesigned website must integrate with or accommodate the Bay Trust's existing technology ecosystem. During the discovery phase, the selected Offeror will work with Chesapeake Bay Trust staff to evaluate existing systems and recommend the most effective technical approach.

The proposal should describe the Offeror's experience with:

- WordPress or comparable content management systems
- Google Analytics
- SEO optimization
- Website security and monitoring
- Website backups and disaster recovery
- Online donation platforms
- Grant management systems
- Email marketing platforms
- Social media integrations

- Third-party forms and applications
- Video hosting platforms

The Offeror should identify any anticipated third-party software, plugins, licenses, or annual subscription costs required to support the proposed solution.

Preference will be given to solutions that minimize ongoing maintenance costs and provide long-term flexibility for Chesapeake Bay Trust staff.

Content Migration Requirements

The selected Offeror will be responsible for assisting with content migration, including:

- Developing a content migration plan
- Mapping existing content to the new site architecture
- Identifying outdated or duplicate content
- Maintaining existing URLs where feasible or implementing appropriate redirects
- Preserving SEO value during migration
- Migrating images, documents, and media assets
- Ensuring links remain functional
- Testing migrated content before launch

The proposal should clearly identify which migration activities will be completed by the Offeror and which responsibilities will remain with Chesapeake Bay Trust staff.

Accessibility Compliance Requirements

Accessibility is a high priority for the Chesapeake Bay Trust. The redesigned website must comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA and reflect current accessibility best practices. The Offeror shall demonstrate experience developing accessible websites and describe its accessibility testing process.

Accessibility considerations should include, at minimum:

- Keyboard navigation
- Screen reader compatibility
- Appropriate heading structure
- Semantic HTML
- Color contrast compliance
- Alternative text functionality
- Accessible forms
- Accessible downloadable documents where applicable
- Captioning support for embedded multimedia
- Responsive design across devices

Prior to launch, the Offeror shall provide documentation describing accessibility testing performed, identified issues, and resolutions.

Phase 4 – Testing & Quality Assurance

Conduct comprehensive testing including:

- Accessibility testing
- Browser compatibility
- Mobile responsiveness
- Broken link review
- Performance optimization
- Security review

Phase 5 – Launch & Training

Provide:

- Launch planning
- Staff training
- Technical documentation

Training and Documentation

The selected Offeror shall provide training to Chesapeake Bay Trust staff to ensure the organization can independently manage and maintain the website after launch.

Training should include:

- Content editing
- Creating new pages
- Uploading images and documents
- Managing navigation
- Publishing news, events and blogs
- Managing forms
- SEO best practices
- Accessibility best practices
- Website maintenance procedures

The Offeror shall also provide written documentation and/or recorded training sessions for future staff reference.

Phase 6 – Warranty and Ongoing Support

Following website launch, the selected Offeror shall provide a warranty period during which programming errors, defects, or issues directly related to the development of the website will be corrected at no additional cost.

Offerors should specify:

- Length of warranty period
- Response times for support requests
- Process for reporting issues
- Items covered under warranty
- Items excluded from warranty

The proposal should also describe optional ongoing support and maintenance services, including:

- Software updates
- Security monitoring
- Plugin updates
- Performance monitoring
- Accessibility reviews
- Content support
- Technical support
- Hourly rates for future enhancements

Selection of ongoing support services will be at the discretion of the Chesapeake Bay Trust and may be contracted separately.

Success Metrics

The selected Offeror will work with Chesapeake Bay Trust staff to establish measurable goals for the redesigned website. The proposal should describe how success will be evaluated following launch.

Potential performance measures may include:

- Increased engagement with grant opportunity pages
- Increased online donations
- Increased Bay Plate information requests
- Reduced website bounce rate
- Increased average session duration
- Improved mobile usability
- Improved accessibility compliance scores
- Faster page load times
- Increased organic search traffic
- Higher user satisfaction based on stakeholder feedback

The Offeror should recommend appropriate analytics tools, dashboards, and reporting methods to measure website performance and support ongoing optimization.

All deliverables must be complete no later than June 30, 2027. The Chesapeake Bay Trust will retain ownership of any and all deliverables with this project.

b. Offeror Qualifications and Expertise

Offeror's personnel assigned to perform under the Contract should have the following experience:

- A. At least five years of website design and development experience
- B. Experience redesigning nonprofit or government websites
- C. Strong UX/UI expertise
- D. Experience developing accessible websites
- E. Experience with CMS implementation
- F. SEO expertise
- G. Website security experience
- H. Experience providing staff training and documentation
- I. References from similar projects

- J. Experience working with nonprofits (preferred);
- K. Experience working with individuals of diverse backgrounds (preferred).

SECTION IV – ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Additional Services. The Contract Officer may request ancillary or additional services as may be useful or necessary in the interests of the Bay Trust and the Project for any of the above Scopes of Work.

Add/Deduct: The Bay Trust reserves the right to add or remove items from the base bid proposal during the contract and modify or adjust scope of work and payment as needed.

SECTION V – SELECTION PROCESS and PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

5.1 Principal Solicitation Officer and Issuing Office:

Contract Officer: Celia Parker
Telephone Number: (410) 974-2941 x142
E-Mail: cparker@cbtrust.org
Address: Chesapeake Bay Trust
108 Severn Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21403

The sole point of contact for the purpose of this RFP is the Contract Officer.

5.2 Prospective Offerors: An “Offeror” is a person or entity that submits a proposal in response to this RFP.

5.3 Cancellation; Discretion of Contract Officer: This RFP may be canceled in whole or in part and any proposal may be rejected in whole or in part at the discretion of the Contract Officer. In addition, the Contract officer has the right to negotiate separately with any Offeror in any manner which will best serve the interests of the Bay Trust. The Contract Officer may waive any mandatory condition or minimum qualification if she determines that such action is in the best interest of the Bay Trust.

5.4 Submission Instructions/Proposal Closing Date:

Offerors must email proposals to cparker@cbtrust.org by no later than **4:00 p.m. EDT/EST on August 21, 2026** (the “Closing Date”). Offerors will receive an email confirming receipt within 48 hours. If no email receipt is received following the 48-hour window, contact cparker@cbtrust.org immediately. Requests for extensions will not be granted, late applications will not be accepted, and the opportunity will close promptly at 4:00 pm EDT/EST. **Offerors are strongly encouraged to submit at least a few days prior to the deadline.**

Questions about this RFP may be submitted by email to cparker@cbtrust.org from July 27 – August 14 at 4:00 p.m. EDT/EST. Questions will receive a response within 48 hours. If no response is received

following the 48-hour window, contact cparker@cbtrust.org immediately. All questions and their answers will be published by August 17, 2026.

All Offerors will be notified by email on September 1, 2026 by 4:00 p.m. EDT/EST regarding the status of their proposal.

Proposals are irrevocable for 90 days following the Closing Date.

5.5 **Proposal Format:**

Narrative:

Each proposal must include responses to a-e in a concise (≤5 pages) description. Items f), g), and h) may be addressed outside of the 5-page limit and may be attached as additional pages. All material must be submitted in one electronic file.

- a) Names of individuals providing the services and number of years of experience in such areas.
- b) The individual's proposal for how to address the elements of the scope(s) of work and required outcomes described in the services and deliverables section (Section III above).
- c) Response to the qualifications section: a description of the experience required as described in Section III.
- d) Weblinks to 2-3 examples of websites previously designed and developed, from discovery to concept to completion, produced by the bidder.
- e) Names, phone numbers, and email addresses of three references, preferably clients for which similar work was produced.
- f) The resume or CV of the individual(s) providing the service. Links must be provided for each example website and viewable by reviewers.
- g) Any other information which the Offeror considers relevant to a fair evaluation of its experience and capabilities.

h) Budget: The Offeror shall submit a deliverables-based budget and timeline using the following format:

Project Deliverables: Proposed Timeline and Cost			
Phase	Description	Delivery Date	Proposed Cost
Deliverable A: Phase 1 – Discovery and Planning	Conduct kickoff meetings, stakeholder interviews, comprehensive review of existing website performance, content audit, user experience assessment, audience analysis, information architecture recommendations, sitemap development, and recommended project timeline.		
Deliverable B: Phase 2 – Design	Design concepts and propose improved architecture that reflects the Chesapeake Bay Trust brand, highlights storytelling and		

	impact, creates clear pathways for priority audiences, is fully responsive across desktop, tablet, and mobile devices, and meets accessibility requirements (WCAG 2.1 AA). Design deliverables should include: • Header and footer concepts • Homepage concepts • Interior page templates • Grant program pages • Donation pages • Bay Plate and other marketing pages • News and resource pages • Blog concept • Style guide and design system		
Deliverable C: Phase 3 – Development	Build a website that includes responsive design, secure CMS, flexible page builder for staff, optimized performance and page speed, search engine optimization (SEO) best practices, integration with Google Analytics, accessibility compliance, secure hosting, content migration support, site search improvements, forms integration, spam protection and cross-browser compatibility.		
Deliverable D: Phase 4 – Testing	Conduct comprehensive testing including accessibility testing, browser compatibility, mobile responsiveness, broken link review, performance optimization and security review.		
Deliverable E: Phase 5 – Launch	Publish the new website. Provide launch planning including staff training and technical documentation.		
Deliverable F: Phase 6 – Warranty and Ongoing Support	Following website launch, provide a warranty period during which programming errors, defects, or issues directly related to the development of the website will be corrected at no additional cost. The proposal should also describe optional ongoing support and maintenance services.		

The proposed rates of compensation will be irrevocable for a period of 90 days from the Closing Date, or if modified during negotiations, for a period of 90 days from the date such modified rates are proposed by the Offeror.

Subcontracting Opportunities. It is assumed this solicitation will result in small procurements that will not provide realistic opportunities for subcontracting, though multiple organizations may apply as a collaborative or partnership with an identified project lead. If, however, an Offeror considers subcontracting of services to be available, they should so specify, and in that case demonstrate compliance with Good Faith Efforts to engage Disadvantaged Business Enterprises.

5.6 **Professional Liability Insurance:** The Offeror shall agree to maintain in full force and effect during the term of the Contract usual and customary amounts of liability insurance coverage in connection with the performance or failure to perform services under the Contract.

5.7 **Eligible Organizations:** No entity may enter into a Contract with the Chesapeake Bay Trust under this funding opportunity unless the entity has provided its W9-EIN #.

SECTION VI - EVALUATION PROCEDURE

6.1 **Qualifying Proposals:** The Contract Officer will review each proposal for compliance with the minimum qualifications set forth in "Offeror's Minimum Qualifications."

6.2 **Deviations and Negotiation.** The Contract Officer shall have the sole right to determine whether any deviation from the requirements of this RFP is substantial in nature, and the Contract Officer may reject non-conforming proposals. In addition, the Contract Officer may waive minor irregularities in proposals, allow an Offeror to correct minor irregularities, and negotiate with responsible Offerors in any manner deemed necessary or desirable to serve the best interests of the Project.

6.3 **Evaluation.** Proposals shall be reviewed by the Development, Marketing and Communications team and facilitated by the Contract Officer. Evaluation will be made on the basis of the evaluation criteria discussed below and may include any oral presentation that may be required by the Contract Officer, at his or her discretion. The Contract Officer reserves the right to recommend an Offeror for contract award based upon the Offeror's proposal without oral presentations or further discussion. However, the Contract Officer may engage in further discussion if he or she determines that it might be beneficial. In such case, the Contract Officer will notify those responsible Offerors with whom further discussion is desired. In addition, the Contract Officer may permit qualified Offerors to revise their proposals by submitting "best and final" offers.

6.4 Evaluation Considerations: Proposals and any oral presentation by Offerors who meet the minimum qualifications set forth in Section III will be evaluated by the following factors:

- A. Proposed Team (Specific Individual(s) Responsible for Performance of Contract). Evaluation of the qualifications, reputation, and compatibility with needs of the Bay Trust and the Project of the individual or individuals who will perform the Contract.
- B. Proposed Approach. Evaluation of the work to be performed to accomplish the goals outlined in the Scopes of Work in Section III.
- C. Experience of Offeror. Evaluation of the quality and quantity of the Offeror's experience and expertise in the areas proposed, supported by references.
- D. Capacity. Evaluation of the Offeror's ability and commitment to meet timeline for the Project.
- E. Price. Rate devoted to the project to achieve the deliverables in Section III.

SECTION VII: OTHER INFORMATION

7.1 Disclosure: Proposals submitted in response to this RFP may be provided to government agencies and be subject to disclosure pursuant to the provisions of the Access to Public Records Act of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland (the "Public Information Act"). Offerors must specifically identify those portions of their proposals, if any, which they deem to contain confidential or proprietary information and must provide justification why such materials should not, upon request, be disclosed by the State under the Public Information Act.

7.2 Expenses: The Bay Trust and the Contract Officer are not responsible for any direct or indirect expenses which an Offeror may incur in preparing and submitting a proposal, participating in the evaluation process, or in consequence of this solicitation process for any reason.

7.3 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions: By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, (A) the Offeror accepts all of the terms and conditions set forth in this RFP; (B) the Offeror, if selected for award, agrees that it will comply with all federal, State, and local laws applicable to its activities and obligations under the Contract; (C) the Offeror shall be deemed to represent that it is not in arrears in the payment of any obligation due and owing the United States Government or the State or any department or unit thereof, including, without limitation, the payment of taxes and employee benefits, and, if selected for award, that it shall not become so in arrears during the term of the Contract; and (D) the Offeror, acknowledges that they are compliant with federal employment and non-discrimination laws and have not been debarred, convicted, charged or had civil judgment rendered against them for fraud or related offense by any government agency (federal, State, or local) or been terminated for cause or default by any government agency (federal, State, or local).

7.4 Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/Minority Business Enterprise (DBE/MBE)

Participation: This RFP encourages the participation of DBE/MBE firms (members of a group as defined in the State Finance and Procurement Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland (the "Procurement Article"), Section 14-301(f)(i)(ii)). The Bay Trust encourages DBE/MBE firms who meet the minimum qualifications to respond to this RFP.

7.5 Parties to the Contract. The contract to be entered into as a result of this RFP (the "Contract") shall be between the successful Offeror (the "Contractor") and the Bay Trust, and may be subject to the Chesapeake Bay Trust approval prior to Contract award.

7.6 Contract Documents. The Contract shall include the following documents: this RFP, the Contractor's Proposal (to the extent not inconsistent with the RFP or the Contract), and the Contract. In the event of an inconsistency, the Contract shall have priority over the other documents and specific conditions of the Contract shall have priority over General Conditions.

7.7 Contract Term. The Contract term shall commence as of a date to be specified in the Contract and, unless sooner terminated in accordance with the Contract, shall end when all work authorized under the Contract has been successfully completed, unless the Contract is renewed or extended at the sole option of the Contract Officer.

7.8 Billing Procedures and Compensation.

A. **Method.** The Contracts to be entered into as a result of this RFP will not exceed the small procurement threshold fixed at 41 U.S.C. 403 (11) (currently \$250,000.) The Contractor(s) must comply with billing procedures as may be required by the Contract Officer and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. These may entail monthly reporting of time and eligible expenses, or may be based upon satisfactory completion of benchmark tasks.

B. **Records.** The Contractor(s) shall submit invoices in a form acceptable to the Contract Officer and maintain records relating to the costs and expenses incurred by the Contractor(s) in the performance of the Contracts for a period of three years from the date of final Project payment under the Contracts.

7.9 Certification. The Offeror shall certify that, to the best of its knowledge, the price information submitted is accurate, complete, and correct as of the Closing Date, and if negotiations are conducted as of the date of "best and final offer."

8.0 Branding. All products (outreach materials, events) will be branded with the Chesapeake Bay Trust logo.