Website Redesign & Development
Request for Proposal

This RFP is for design and development services for a new website for the Connecticut Historical Society.

RFP Released: January 24, 2021
Responses Due: February 28, 2021 11:59pm

Send any questions on the RFP to: Marissa Baum, Marketing and Communications Manager, Marissa_Baum@chs.org

Send proposals to: Marissa Baum, Marketing and Communications Manager, Marissa_Baum@chs.org

Budget for new website: $35,000 - $40,000, but will consider the merit of proposals that fall below or above this range.

Goal for new website launch: September 1, 2021

Connecticut Historical Society Overview
The Connecticut Historical Society (www.CHS.org) is a privately funded, independent, not-for-profit educational organization that includes a museum, library, the Edgar F. Waterman Research Center, and the Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program. Founded in 1825, the CHS is Connecticut’s statewide historical society, and a Smithsonian Affiliate. At the CHS, we cultivate understanding of the history and culture of Connecticut, and its role in the United States and the world. Through our collections, research, educational programs, and exhibitions we reflect the past, actively engage with the present, and innovate for the future.

As we look to celebrating our 200th anniversary in 2025, we see an opportunity to solidify our image, take the lead as a cultural ambassador, historical steward, and presenter of the Connecticut experience from beginnings to beyond.

As the greater Hartford region looks to build cultural tourism, we would like to spotlight how the CHS is enthusiastically renewing and re-centering itself as a destination poised for audience expansion and growth, putting forward a new and updated vision for the future.

Our Audience
Our primary audience is lifelong learners. These are families or individuals who visit our exhibitions, participate in our programming (both virtually and/or in person), and support the museum through financial gifts.

- Physical visitors to galleries, programs, and research center
  - The majority of our current visitorship is from the Hartford area (nearly 70%), with 10% of our visitors coming from outside of New England. 1% of our in-person visitors are international, with all remaining visitors coming from elsewhere around CT. The majority of our visitors are perceived as white.
- Our virtual programs serve a majority of visitors from the New England area, but also a significant reach from across the country, including Alaska, and a few international digital visitors. This audience also includes those who interact with us on social media.

Our secondary audience is those who use CHS for formal education or research purposes. This includes school groups, and individuals using the Research Center.

- The majority of school group visitors are Kindergarten through 5th grade classes.
  - Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our school group visitors were in person with 66% coming to the Museum for fieldtrips, or our education staff going to their classrooms for outreach (33%)
  - During the COVID-19 pandemic, all educational programming has moved online. This includes lesson plans, live and interactive teaching, and “order and ship” activities.
- Researchers are mostly (72%) independent researchers, interested in our collection items, family genealogy, and general history.

Our tertiary audience is audience segments who have not yet engaged with the CHS but would have a direct interest in our mission. This could include other museums and libraries that would borrow traveling exhibits, corporate partners that might be interested in sponsorship, and special interest groups that have a connection to our collections or programs.

**New Website Objectives**

Our core objective for our new website is to maintain much of the existing information and resources but in a more streamlined and user-friendly format. This includes graphics and aesthetics, menu and search navigation, information hierarchy, and back-end developer use. We would also like to have an audit performed, helping us to understand which pages and components are being used most, and least.

Our secondary objective is grow our audience both in person and digitally. The CHS currently experiences an opportunity for increased visibility and engagement. Stronger SEO, cross platform integration, and mobile responsiveness.

An additional objective for our new website is to allow for simplified, autonomous management for CHS staff to maintain and build the website.
Current Website

Our current website, [chs.org](http://chs.org), is bright and clean, but there is an opportunity to make it more organized and incorporate more images in a meaningful way. Navigation is clunky and not at all intuitive. Even museum staff have a hard time finding things they need on the website. Overall, it lacks a clear path for our visitors to follow to find what they want, and contact us or support the Museum.

Because our programming and activity calendar is so robust, staff members from all departments regularly participate in website updates or content creation. Therefore, it needs to be WYSIWYG in as many areas as possible. Additionally, our current website does not integrate with Abila, our CRM system, nor Robly, our email marketing system. There is no ability for e-commerce.

New Website Functionality Requirements

Our new website will need:

- An easy-to-use content management system that will allow for independent site management, updates, etc. by CHS staff
- Intuitive navigation
- Clean and focused design that incorporates CHS brand
- All applicable content imported from current site, and streamlined.
- Optimized with SEO best practices
- Social media integration (share buttons, follow buttons, etc.), to include YouTube video embed capability
- Pop up forms
- Secure access portal for housing and sharing information with audiences like Board of Trustees
- CRM platform (currently Abila) integration, though we are currently exploring new CRM solutions.
- Reservation scheduling
- E-commerce for merchandise and ticketing
- Mobile responsive

Optional New Website Functionalities/Wish List

We would love to have the following in our new website, depending on how these elements would impact timeline and/or budget. Please provide cost for these elements separately, and note if any additional design or development time would be required.

- Dynamic blog feeds throughout website
- Advanced SEO work
- Separate login area for members
- Product sales, inventory management integration

Ecommerce Details
We do not currently have e-commerce functionality but would like our website to, at minimum, allow for ticket sales and event registrations online. Ideally, this process will integrate with our CRM and Quickbooks as well.

**Budget Details**
As listed in the summary, our budget for this project is $35,000-$40,000. While we of course prefer the most cost-effective solution, all proposals that fall reasonably near this amount will be considered and weighed based on their merits. Proposals that offer flexibility in 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 additional website elements or ongoing marketing efforts after this fiscal year ends on December 31, 2021.

**Proposal Requirements**
Please include the following in your proposal response:
- Overview of your company
- Overview of how you will meet our objectives
- Explanation of your proposed platform
- Outline of your website design & development strategy
- Proposed website timeline from kickoff to launch
- Details about your team
- Recent design & development examples
- References
- Any key differentiators about you?
- Pricing with optional elements line-itemed
- Terms & conditions

**Right to Reject**
The CHS reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids received as a result of this request; to negotiate with all qualified sources; or to cancel in part or in its entirety this RFP if found not in the best interest of the CHS. This RFP does not commit the CHS to award a contract, to pay costs incurred for the preparation of proposals, to pay for any legal liability in refusing to award a contract, or to procure or contract for services.

**Submission**
It is the responsibility of the vendor to ensure that the proposal is received by CHS by the date and the time specified in this RFP. Proposals should be formatted as PDFs and emailed to Marissa Baum, Marketing and Communications Manager at Marissa_Baum@chs.org.

**RFP & Anticipated Project Timeline Details**
RFP Released: January 24, 2021
Responses Due: February 28, 2021 11:59pm
Winner Selected & Contacted: March 31, 2021
Project Kick-off: April 11, 2021
New Website Launch Target Date: September 1, 2021

Thank you for your interest in responding to this RFP with a proposal for our website rebuild. We look forward to your response.

If you have any questions, please contact Marissa Baum at Marissa_Baum@chs.org or 816-392-1167.