

MLSC RFP Question & Answers

Budget

Question: What are the budget parameters, if any? Do you have an ongoing budget for SEO activities, and hosting? Is it broken out between the different services listed?

Answer: \$100,000. We do not have an ongoing budget for SEO activities and it is not broken out by the difference services.

Question: Does the budget include both agency fees and production costs? For example, for the collateral piece, are you including printing, paper, photography, etc. in your budget?

Answer: No, it does not include production for collateral.

Question: In the pricing there is a column for FY2020 - could you let us know what this is for or is there an anticipation for similar services next year or are you only looking for change to hourly rates if any?

Answer: Column FY 2020 is only if the work spills over in to FY 2020 which would start July 1, 2019.

Legal & Security

Question: The MSA and "legal" forms along with the RFP, is for reference for now or are we expected execute on them at this point correct?

Answer: Only for reference at this point.

Question: Since no personal/sensitive information is indicated as needing to be transferred via user input (other than standard business contact info), the agency does not see user-testing as needed for security issues. However website security settings employed on the backend would be fully reviewed with MLSC's technical team. Does MLSC see that as sufficient or is there a specific user-based security consideration MLSC has in mind?

Answer: No compliance standards have been developed. The MLSC desires the best possible security to ensure that the risk of unintended outside interference is mitigated. We do not take any personal information through our website except for maybe basic contact like name and contact info (email and phone number).

Question: The RFP is asking firms to sign the MSA without any negotiation. If firms cannot satisfy that term, does that eliminate firms from participating? Typically, we work back and forth with attorneys to align on MSA prior to beginning work.

Answer: The Center provides the MSA to inform applicants of the standard terms and conditions for providing services to the Center. The Center does not expect to make significant modifications to the MSA but will work with the awardee's attorneys in an effort to arrive at mutually-acceptable resolutions to any issues. Applicants would be advised to raise any significant concerns with the MSA as part of their applications.

Website & CRM

Question: Do we have a preferred CMS?

Answer: Currently using Word Press. Open to recommendations accompanied by a rationale. Additionally, would prefer a platform that has a plethora of training options available.

Question: What are your pain points with the current site and CMS?

Answer: Updating the new/events is cumbersome, use of front page real estate, lack of interactive features to engage viewers, and not mobile responsive.

Question: Are there legacy systems that need to be integrated with the new site?

Answer: No

Question: Are you looking to rethink the information architecture (site map organization) as part of this redesign?

Answer: Yes

Question: Do you have a current agency and/or web partner that you work with? Has there been unique strengths or areas for improvement in that relationship?

Answer: We are not currently working with any web companies.

Question: Do you envision that there will need to be different permissions for various staff members to make changes within the CMS, and if so, what are they? How many people contribute content (blogs, articles, etc.).

Answer: Yes. The MarComm will each have their own username to edit content, delete or create new pages. However, if we give other staff permission to the website, it will be to only edit content and MarComm team will have to approve/publish. We are open to suggestions/best practices. Currently, majority of staff contributes content for the website – roughly 10 people – by providing it to the authorized MarComm users.

Question: RFP states that the site needs to be compatible with the latest Microsoft OS + IE. What version of IE would we need to support?

Answer: 11

Question: 'Identify Website Visitors': Can you clarify these requirements?

Answer: We want the site to an effective mechanism for Business Development leads.

Question: Are you looking for a development team or a site management partner? Looking for long-term support? (SEO/Maintenance/Feature Enhancements)

Answer: Yes.

Question: How many interactive elements do you foresee using on the site? How often would you want to update this data? How do you currently hold and capture data that you want to use?

Answer: Looking for recommendations.

Question: For your integrated blog, how many authors would there be? Would you have guest authors? Do you foresee wanting to make the byline (the name of the author) visible? Is the requested blog intended to be in place of the current lifesciencesdiscourses.com site? Or is it something totally different?

Answer: There is only one author to the lifesciencesdiscourse blog and that is the President & CEO. Open to recommendations for the possibility of additional blogs.

Questions: How do you define necessary compliance for testing? Could you provide more detail on MLSC standards?

Answer: Need recommendations.

Question: Do you currently use a lead generation tool that you want to integrate the website with?

Answer: No, but would like to add a lead generation tool for BD.

Question: Which website(s) do you see as an excellent example of what you would like your new site to look, feel, and function like?

Answer:

- Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. <https://www.fairfaxcountyedea.org/>.
- Maryland TEDCO and its sister agency the Maryland Venture Fund. <https://www.tedcomd.com/> and <http://www.marylandventurefund.com/>
- IDA Ireland. www.idaireland.com/
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/>

Question: Will MLSC provide the user groups or would the agency be required to locate/coordinate user groups and cover upfront costs?

Answer: We can provide the user groups.

Question: At what state or stages of the process does MLSC envision involving user group testing. For instance, involving user group testing all the way through the process (i.e. messaging feedback, design/prototype feedback, beta site feedback, pre-launch testing, etc.) would be a major cost driver because of the requirement to build early prototypes and coordinate multiple rounds of user touchpoints. Also, how many data points (users) does MLSC envision requiring (i.e. a few key industry influencers vs larger groups with varied backgrounds, etc.)?

Answer: Hope to do the testing mid-way through the process with 10-12 stakeholders.

Question: Can you confirm if the Website Redesign scope of services assumes site updates (adding desired functionality to current WP instance) versus a full website redesign and CMS upgrade? If not a full redesign - currently the site is not responsive. Assuming that making it responsive would be part of the ask?

Answer: Looking for a full website and CMS upgrade to a responsive site.

Question: The RFP lists a couple of desired functionality updates. Is that the entirety of “desired functionality” or is there/could there be additional?

Answer: There could be additional.

Question: Where is event data currently stored? In the WordPress database or in a separate database? Does the event data go through an approval process before being posted to the site? If not, manual, what does your ideal process for events submissions look like?

Answer: Currently, all events that are submitted via MLSC gmail account. The events are reviewed, and then re-entered in the website database. We are seeking a process that eliminates the copy/paste and Looking for a process that streamlines the process allowing for review to publish. Ideally, it would be great to have a submission site online, that we can accept or deny events through our website. Plus, allow users to search and filter for events on our website.

Question: Is there additional functionality that will be built into the website beyond its current functionality (aside from the deeper analytics, SEO, etc. that you outlined in the RFP)?

Answer: Possibly, open for discussion.

Question: Is the written content currently on the website representative of the content for the new website? Is there new/additional content that will need to be developed? If so, would you provide that new content for us to edit and refine? Or would we be creating that content for you from the ground up?

Answer: We will be writing the majority of the content and repurposing some content from the current site.

Question: What currently happens to leads that come in through the website? Where are the holes in the process? Does it currently integrate with a CRM system? Would you like it to?

Answer: Currently goes through a designated email box and does not integrate with the CRM.

Question: Please list all 3rd party systems that will need to be integrated into the website.

Answer: Smart Simple and the blog website.

Question: Do you plan on introducing any new functionality to the site in addition to what is outlined in the RFP? If so, please describe in detail.

Answer: Dependent upon recommendations.

Question: What platform/system do you use to manage your email subscriber list? (CRM, MailChimp)

Answer: MailChimp for e-newsletters.

Question: Do you currently have a social media management system?

Answer: HootSuite

Question: Do you have dedicated staff responsible for routine updates for your website?

Answer: Staff routinely makes content updates on the website.

Question: Regarding the interactive element detailing MLSC's investment activity, how often do you envision this being updated?

Answer: Quarterly.

Question: You say on page 2 of the RFP that you are looking to "design new collateral" but the scope of services seems to be limited to messaging and web. Are you looking for pricing for different types of collateral (print, email, direct mail, etc.) and do you have specific formats in mind?

Answer: We are looking templates to be included in the proposal and will consider separate pricing other collateral for post refresh.

Question: Website analytics: What are you monitoring & evaluating currently with Google Analytics?

Answer: Currently, minimal use of google analytics but would like to make this more routine and informative.

Question: How many pages will the website be, approximately?

Answer: Current site, plus or minus 200 pages.

Question: Are there additional domains or subdomains that need to be considered?

Answer: No – just the blog site but that would be incorporated into the new website.

Question: Do you have an IT and/or technical person internally who will be involved in the project?

Answer: Limited IT involvement.

Question: Are you open to discussing analytics packages for metrics and tracking?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you have any sort of paid search, banner ads, or any other materials driving traffic to the site currently? Are you opening to developing any of them?

Answer: No we do not, but we would be open to them.

Brand & Design

Question: Your RFP mentions revised topline messaging being a deliverable for this project. Do you already have supporting language like mission, vision, and core values? Will those be changing at all as part of this process?

Answer: Kicking off a new milestone (10 years), although our mission will stay the same, we are open to new ways of talking about the work.

Question: Will you be looking for this vendor to refresh any of your existing logos, or is the brand work strictly limited to key messaging and an overall look & feel refresh?

Answer: Open to all options.

Question: You've asked for a firm to "create branded templates" – could you let us know how many templates, and what types of templates specifically that you're looking for?

Answer: Newsletter, letterhead, brochure, presentation slides, etc.

Question: Do you require multiple design concepts for consideration? If so, how many?

Answer: Yes, minimum of 3.

Question: Will the selected vendor need to support/produce art beyond the design framework for deeper content pages or promos? Or will MLSC do that in-house? For example, hero banners, art for articles, events, etc.?

Answer: We are initially looking for the vendor to create the design framework.

Question: Can you give us expected specs for "design new collateral... including an overview or business development piece" so that all RFP responses will be offering you a scope that can be compared apples-to-apples?

Answer: We are looking for printed piece and accompanying recommendations for related business development tools.

Question: Can you give us specs/more detail for the "infographic series" and "infographic template" so that we can accurately scope this project? How many infographics do you anticipate?

Answer: MLSC has a lot of strong content and statistics for its programs and the MA ecosystem that we would like to be put in infographics to help easily and quickly tell a story in a snapshot. These infographics would be used for social media, web, presentations, marketing pieces, etc. Potentially 6-10 infographics.

Question: Brand Strategy/Message Development - this can and usually is a larger lift than expected and takes a fair amount of time to execute stakeholder interviews, move into concepting for tagline/logo/messaging, reviews, approvals before other marketing tools like the website can be fully developed. What are your expectations around this? Have you considered breaking this brand exploratory out as a separate track of work and/or project? In our experience this may run anywhere from 6 weeks to 3 months depending on client dynamics.

Answer: Our timeline for the branding/messaging would be to have something launched no later than April 1st.

Question: Can you further define this requested deliverable? "Design new collateral to effectively convey the scope of MLSC programs for different life sciences stakeholder communities, including an overview or business development piece." → is the request for any materials above and beyond an overview/business development piece? Is the vendor expected to create the content for this overview piece, or just the visual design and layout of the pieces?

Answer: Looking to create a piece that is consistent with the new brand guidelines.

Question: How many print, PowerPoint, and other templates do you expect you'll need?

Answer: 10-12

Question: Do you have further details into expectations around the individual parts of the Brand Strategy/Message Development scope of services? For example, do you have a set list of required types and numbers of collateral, types of templates, infographic content etc.?

Answer: We do not have a set list but looking for templates for brochure, letterhead, powerpoint, fact sheet, newsletters, etc.

Question: In the RFP, you have a request for “branded templates consistent with the new messaging.” Can you provide a high-level outline of the type of templates you typically use? (PowerPoint Slide Decks, Data Sheets, White Papers, Emails, Etc.)

Answer: brochure, letterhead, powerpoint, fact sheet, newsletters, etc.

Question: In reference to “new collateral” for different stakeholders, can you provide a high-level overview of the types of collateral you typically use in your communications?

Answer: Strictly print.

Question: What percentage (roughly) of your collateral is printed vs. digital?

Answer: Maybe 50/50 but we would like to move towards more digital.

Question: Which design elements of the brand are on the table for being redesigned? As I recall, the logo was redesigned relatively recently. Is it safe to assume the scope would be focused on supporting materials rather than the center's logo? Where and how are those design elements currently falling short?

Answer: We want to focus on creating a broader range of marketing pieces to elevate the center’s presence in the life sciences industry globally.

Question: If our discovery/research findings recommend to refresh the graphic design of the logo in addition to adding a new tagline to it - will MLSC be receptive to this?

Answer: Yes

Question: Are you open to additional services such as social media advertising? Billboards?

Answer: Yes, depending on what and rationale for why.

Question: Has any audience or branding research been conducted? If yes, what has been done and can it be shared?

Answer: No.

Question: Are you able to provide brand guidelines or standards for us to use as guiderails?

Answer: Yes, but looking to develop new/expanded brand guidelines as part of the refresh.

General

Question: Will you require onsite meetings for the discovery, strategy and design phase or will web meetings be sufficient?

Answer: Yes, onsite meetings will be needed.

Question: Who will be the decision makers for strategy and design approvals?

Answer: President & CEO and Marketing and Communication team

Question: You've outlined a solid list of target audiences. Is persona development needed for this project or do you already have that input for the vendor? Would you need research and definition from an agency partner or would that information be handed-off to inform digital strategy?

Answer: We have some information to hand off.

Question: When does the project need to be launched? Is there a timeline for when you'd like to see certain key deliverables like new messaging, collateral materials, and website launch? Please outline.

Answer: MLSC would like the brand refresh to be launched no later than April 1st. Ideally, a new website would be launched May 1st.

Question: How many firms have been invited to respond to this RFP?

Answer: 25

Question: "Information Required" asks for resumes for each individual who will be providing Design Services. Will a bio and relevant experience for the identified core team suffice?

Answer: Yes.

Question: What are your top priorities and what are their drivers?

Answer: A new website that is dynamic and engaging and simple for our audience to navigate; visually appealing to enhance our stories and information; functionality that is easy to manage. For the brand refresh, to ensure that our logo and tagline are digestible, compelling and recognizable.

Questions: Did the messaging and website project from a couple of years ago ever come to fruition? If so, are some learnings from research that could be drawn on for this project?

Answer: No.

Question: Have you conducted any research/focus group testing with MLSC audiences? Should such research be included in the scope of work for this project? If so, would you be able to connect the vendor to members of your target audiences so we can conduct research with them? Do you have any other existing research (market research, SEO audits, Google Analytics, etc.) that you would be able to share with this vendor?

Answer: We have google analytics.

Question: Is there a page limit for the full proposal?

Answer: No.

Question: The RFP mentions the use of your own “custom photography.” Do you currently have a library of custom photography, or is that something that needs to be developed?

Answer: We have our own library and are building this out more. We’d like to have more photos from actual sites, of clients, events, etc. instead of relying on stock.

Question: Are you currently using a customer relationship management (CRM) platform? (HubSpot, Salesforce, Etc.)

Answer: Smart Simple for all our applications and Microsoft Dynamic CRM.

Question: Is the target audience based in MA? Or are you trying to reach out-of-state audience?

Answer: Our audience is unique in the sense that some are located in MA, some are located domestically, and others are international.

Question: Our brand messaging typically involves qualitative interviews with stakeholders from each of your target audience groups? Will you be able to identify and connect us with these stakeholders so that we can conduct interviews and discussion groups?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do you have specific SEO goals and what does your current SEO efforts include?

Answer: We do not currently have an SEO strategy.

Question: Are you open to hiring separate companies to complete the project? We don't rebrand but have a close partner that would respond for that work and we would respond for the website and we have an SEO specialist partner.

Answer: Yes.

Question: Are you open to hiring a company for just digital planning and strategy prior to the execution of the total project?

Answer: There are RFP timelines that would not allow for this.

Question: Will we need to have content in any languages other than English?

Answer: No.

Question: Could you let us know if you would be open to a Canadian agency that does and has done work for clients in the US previously?

Answer: Yes.