



**Brand & Website Redesign
Request for Proposal
*December 2014***

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About Seed Savers Exchange

Seed Savers Exchange (SSE), a nonprofit organization, was established in 1975 and is guided by a mission to conserve and promote America's culturally diverse but endangered garden and food crop heritage for future generations by collecting, growing, and sharing heirloom seeds and plants.

Major programs include:

- Preserving thousands of heirloom and heritage seeds and plants on-site
- Facilitating the nation's largest seed swap - our members offer 13,000 unique varieties of fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs and grains through our online seed exchange and print Yearbook
- Teaching gardeners how (and why) to save and share seeds
- Distributing seeds and plants

Seed Savers Exchange, like many nonprofits, relies on memberships, donations, sponsorships and grants to maintain a diversified set of funding sources for our support. To supplement this income, we began selling seed packets in the late 1990's, with our first public seed catalog in 2000. These seed packet sales have now grown to be the primary source of funding.

Since our founding many new seed companies have started in order to sell heirloom seeds, and longstanding seed companies have seen how popular heirloom varieties are and have offered them to the public. Most do this without the preservation and education aspects that we offer, but do 'compete' with us from an ecommerce standpoint.

We've identified several issues with our current web and brand presence, and wish to have our sites reviewed and brought up to best-practice standards as an integrated, user-friendly platform for growing memberships, hosting and facilitating a seed exchange, raising funds by selling memberships, donations, seeds and products, and hosting paid and free events/workshops on and off Heritage Farm.

Project Background

This project is centered on the update of our branding style guide and redesign of our website. The goal is to create a look and presence that is an excellent resource for our constituents, easy to use, beautiful, forward thinking, scalable, and built to help achieve our online and offline goals. We want the design to carry across all of our media including our website, catalog, member publications, signs and brochures.

There is tremendous buy-in internally for this project, and we want to hear any and all suggestions on how to become a leader in the space.

Because of organizational and functional needs, we have chosen to stay with our main CMS platforms - NetSuite and WebEDIFY - for the next 5-10 years. Thus, we are not interested in moving to a new platform as part of this process.

Scope of Work

Brand

- Update and unify our brand by creating a comprehensive style guide for all SSE media (web, print, signage) including, but not limited to:
 - logo and secondary mark
 - Looking to keep the color green
 - Scalable to all sizes and devices
 - Communicate the network of seed sharing
 - color restrictions
 - font restrictions
 - formatting structures
 - Call-to-Action language
 - photo/visual guidelines
 - usage guidelines for all elements.
 - Brand and styles will also be carried over into print materials and signage, so please keep that in mind during this project.

Design

- Evaluate current SSE web practices top-to-bottom. What works and what does not.
 - Understand SSE's current technology, associated goals for each, and how a redesigned website would support those goals.
- Design a customer interface that guides gardeners, seed savers, and donors easily in their interactions with the organization - whether shopping, donating, learning how to garden or save seeds, or participating in the seed exchange.
- Create appropriate sitemap, wireframes and/or templates using new branding information, specifically for
 - Home page
 - Navigation
 - Landing pages for the following subjects:
 - Learn
 - Join
 - Shop
 - Visit
 - Other templates as discovered during this project.
- Develop CSS and/or HTML in order to implement new brand style guide
- Create a plan for Seed Savers Exchange staff to implement new design into all web platforms

- Share ideas with regards to how we can transition the new style guidelines into our catalog, print materials, and signage.

What we currently have and what we'd like to see:

- First time site visitors likely have difficulty determining who we are within seconds. We want to present a clear statement as to the mission/vision of our organization to new visitors without losing our appeal to long-time customers and members.
- Clear, concise, and easily accessible information about the organization.
- Current logo is exceedingly detailed and doesn't scale well. Our visual branding should also include some version of the color green, a mark that features only the name of the organization, and appropriate color, font, and visual usage guidelines for all aspects of our website.
- Our web content is currently very text heavy and is often written for a fairly high reading comprehension. Is there a web standard for web readability?
- We need a better sitemap that organizes the site in a more coordinated way. As the work of Seed Savers Exchange has grown, so has the navigation on the site leading to a twisty, disorganized flow.
 - Even if it means losing portions of what we currently have, nothing is off the table.
 - We'd like to improve navigation and search to make it easier for our visitors to find what they need.
- Optimizing the new site for search traffic is also a priority. Currently we have limited strategy behind SEO. Creation of the site design with SEO in mind is a must.
- Every year we produce a 100+ page catalog to sell our seeds to the general public. In 2013 we had our first interactive digital edition, but would like input on the future of digital printing for web, mobile, tablets and next-wave technologies
- This RFP is an open ended one, welcoming any and all suggestions on how to best integrate all of our web content across our various page/platforms.
- Not in Scope for this RFP, but as an FYI
 - Four times a year we produce a full color magazine and an annual yearbook for the seed exchange. They are sent to our supporters who are paid members. We would like to be able to move the magazine

online also, accessible to those supporters who prefer to not receive the magazine in the mail. Both from an environmental standpoint and for cost effectiveness.

- We produce many educational videos, hosted on YouTube and embed in our sites.

Branding Information

Seed Savers Exchange brand strategy is centered on our mission to collect, maintain, preserve and share heirloom seeds and plants. Our membership has grown to nearly 13,000 members, but our fully-engaged members (Listed Members) has been under 1,000 for many years.

Our visual branding hasn't been used consistently across our departments, so direction on visual look and feel is also needed.

Our Logo



The website should demonstrate the following key brand strategy elements:

- "Heirloom" - Seed Savers Exchange has worked since 1975 to increase the profile of heirloom seeds, and while that strategy has been successful, we believe that heirlooms are important not just for their connection to the past but their potential for the future.
- "Pioneering" - SSE has been a pioneer in the seed saving movement
- "Experts" - We need to showcase our, and our members, expertise in seed saving
- "Non-Profit" - With our public seed sales, it's important to maintain our recognition as a non-profit entity.
- "Easy Action" – we want the website to make it easy for current and future seed savers to find what they want, learn what to do, and share in the mission to save and share heirloom seeds

- Balance: The work we do is multifaceted, moving between education, fundraising, and sales in any particular season. Our audience ranges from urban to extremely rural, from young to old, and with a range of income. There must be balance in all of these things in the design.

- The work we do is made possible by the personal and financial support of a network of members, community and corporate partners. To further generate this support, providing guidance on focusing our calls to action appropriately is important. Some examples of CTA's today are:
 - Become a member
 - Donate funds (separate from our membership)
 - Buy seeds, plants and products
 - Online
 - At our visitor center
 - From our members of the exchange
 - Share seeds through the exchange
 - Sign-up for our e-newsletter
 - Request a catalog
 - Watch our webinars
 - Volunteer
 - Request seed donations
 - Read our blog
 - Become a seed rack customer
 - Fundraise using our seeds
 - Request a speaker
 - Attend our events (on-site and off the farm)

Technical Information

- The majority of Seed Savers Exchange managed websites are hosted in the cloud using NetSuite, SquareSpace, WebEDIFY, vBulletin, and Planned Giving (Stelter and Company)
 - NetSuite eCommerce and CRM (seedsavers.org)
 - SSE's Forum (forum.seedsavers.org)
 - SquareSpace blog (blog.seedsavers.org)
 - Online Seed Exchange (exchange.seedsavers.org)
 - Garden planner (gardenplanner.seedsavers.org)
 - Planned giving (seedsavers.planningyourlegacy.org)
 - Garden Seed Inventory (future)
 - Preservation database (future)
 - Other web site considerations for branding updates
 - Social media accounts, presentation/webinars (Adobe Connect), surveys (SurveyMonkey), email (MailChimp), volunteer center, campaigns, other microsites and landing pages, and etc
- Razuna (sseimages.seedsavers.org) a Tomcat based internal server that hosts our digital assets, which we may make accessible to the public

Project Guidelines and Important Dates

Guidelines for RFP:

Introduce Yourself

- Let us know about the history and philosophy of your company in a short but complete overview
- Explain the specific pieces of this RFP that you are most excited to work on, and at least 1 point outlined in the scope of work that you feel will be difficult to accomplish, and why you feel that way.
- Outline how you develop a plan and timeline for a project. Explain how you work to meet deadlines and give a sample timeline of a previous project similar in scope to this project.
- Share with us some of your favorite projects and explain how you worked to meet your client's goal. Without listing names, tell us about one project experience that was dissatisfying for you and why.
- As best we can do through a document, we'd like to know more about you and how we might get along as we work together on such a project. Which members of your team are we likely to be working with? Do they have experience with gardening, climate change, or food security issues?
- How do you track projects? What communication channels would we use to keep track of progress, decisions?
- Do you have experience working with large nonprofit and commercial/retail sales organizations? What are some of your successes and experiences, both positive and negative?
- Please let us know how much you know about online education and fundraising through multiple channels and how you believe those integrate
- Why are you better suited to work on this project than other firms with similar backgrounds?

Budget Questions

The budget will be no more than \$30,000.

- How much of your work (programming, design, etc.) is done in-house? If outsourced how will that affect final cost?
- Please explain your pricing structure/fees for this project
- How will you bill for this project (hourly, daily, lump sum)?
- Help us understand how you'll be good stewards of the donor money we are entrusting you with
- Before Phase 1 can begin, we would appreciate a line item budget broken down by each part of the project (design, planning, implementation, etc.)

Important Dates

Dec 1 2014	RFP document distributed
Dec 19 2014	Please notify SSE of your intent to participate
Jan 14 2015	Seed Savers Exchange availability for informational calls ends
Jan 23 2015	Completed proposals due no later than 5pm CST
Jan 30 2015	SSE reviews proposals and determines if there is a viable candidate. If criteria met, short list of agencies announced and notified
Feb 6 2015	Presentations from short listed agencies given to SSE team
Feb 11 2015	Agencies notified of final selection and contracts finalized
Mar 1 2015	Project begins
May 15 2015	Project ends

Contact Information

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