Chicago Loop Alliance

Website Design & Development
Request for Proposal
LoopChicago.com

RFP Submission Deadline:

Friday, August 4th, 2017

INDEX

For purposes of this RFP, the terms "vendor," "respondent," and "agency" shall mean the party submitting a proposal for or entering into the contract for the performance of the services outlined herein.

Section I: Chicago Loop Alliance Company Overview

The Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA) creates, manages and promotes high-performing urban experiences, attracting people and investment to the Loop.

<u>Chicago Loop Alliance</u>

Chicago Loop Alliance is a 501(c)(6) business organization that represents Chicago's most dynamic mixed-use district—the Loop—and advocates for the rapidly growing central business area. CLA is focused on promoting and uniting Loop businesses and organizations to support one another in creating a vibrant, nourishing Loop where people live, work and visit.

CLA project area boundaries are the Chicago River on the north and west, Congress Parkway on the south, and generally Michigan Avenue on the east, with a few blocks extending northeast to Columbus Drive in an area north of Millennium Park called Lakeview East.

CLA members consist of more than 250 businesses, organizations and individuals located within the Loop and Downtown Chicago. CLA funds come from membership, events and sponsorships.

CLA is led by its Board of Directors, Executive Committee and President. The Board is comprised of business, civic and community leaders invested in the Loop's future. The Board-elected CLA officers and Executive Committee are tasked with overseeing the organization's day-to-day operations.

<u>Chicago Loop Alliance Foundation</u>

The Chicago Loop Alliance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) affiliate organization whose mission is to develop, support and promote artistic, cultural and public events that benefit businesses, individuals and stakeholders within the service area of Chicago Loop Alliance. The Foundation's tax exempt status allows CLA to secure government grants, larger private donations and foundation funding.

<u>Sole Service Provider</u>

CLA is hired by the City of Chicago as the sole service provider for the State Street Special Service Area #1 (SSA). An SSA is commonly known in other cities as a Business Improvement District (BID) and is a local assessment district that funds enhanced city services and programs within a targeted area. The SSA includes all property on both sides of State Street between Wacker Drive to the north and Congress Parkway to the south. Each year, the State Street Commission—made up of mayoral appointments with aldermanic support—approves a budget for SSA #1 which is determined by the levy the city collects.

Scalable Services

The SSA contract provides the majority of CLA funding for the services, programs and events CLA delivers along the State Street corridor. However, CLA activities, projects and programs are scalable to a larger geographic area. When warranted, CLA services can be effectively expanded to deliver necessary services over a larger area of the Loop.

Project Context

In 2013, CLA launched a 5-year Strategic Action Plan which outlined the organization's mission and values to define goals and objectives through several new programs. These efforts were designed to bring more visitors to State Street and in effect, benefit the State Street businesses as well as CLA members. With the implementation of these initiatives, another website audience emerged for Loop dwellers & visitors (Consumers). The 'new' consumer marketing focus has been built on the premise of building a narrative of the Loop as a visitor experience – the product is the place, giving visitors to the area a reason to explore!

The current website was designed for member usability and practicality of member management. Since then, the consumer audience has overgrown the corporate audience to become the CLA's primary demographic, which has created muddled and competing content throughout the current website by trying to appeal to both consumer & corporate member audience types. The question has now been brought up of whether or not separate websites are needed.

As long as there can be a distinct separation, both visually and navigationally for corporate and consumer audiences, we'd prefer to find a way to restructure the website to fit both audiences rather than operate two separate websites. If creating two websites is the only way to achieve this, then branding & marketing guidelines would need to be separately defined for the public-facing website.

Additional information on the Strategic Action Plan and its initiatives can be provided to bidding agencies upon request.

Audiences

Primary - Consumers

We want to be the central resource for visitors but also appealing to residents, workers, and students that are committed to being here in the Loop. This site should be the nucleus to inspire visitors, spend more time on the site figuring out what to do in the Loop and encourage repeat visitors.

a. **Tourists** - People who are already planning on being in the Loop. Goal is to get them to stay longer & to spend their time effectively, to complement the work of partner organizations like Choose Chicago.
b. **Loop Dwellers** - People who live or work in the Loop.
   i. Over 350,000 people work in the loop, accounting for 28% of Chicago's jobs

Secondary - Corporate

Our Corporate audience is made up of our 250 Members (whose industries range to include offices, attractions, restaurants, hotels, and cultural institutions) and our SSA (property owners along State Street). We want to present ourselves as a thought leader and professional member organization by providing a clear, one-stop-shop to obtain the information they need about what it means to be a member, about us as an organization, and to encourage new membership through highlighting the benefits and opportunities to get involved.

a. **SSA Members** - State Street Property Owners - gain membership through property taxes.
   i. Currently, 90 percent of CLA funding derives from a sole-service contract with the City of Chicago to provide an array of services to property owners along State Street from Wacker Drive to Congress Parkway.
b. **Non-SSA Members** - split between 'office-sector' and consumer-facing businesses, both of which have an interest in the networking and thought leader events and marketing opportunities that CLA offers.
   i. Membership dues, fundraising, and sponsorships account for approximately 10 percent of CLA revenues.

Section II: Website Project Overview

CLA needs a website that attracts Loop visitors and tourists while still retaining its corporate messages. The website's primary objective is to encourage visitors to 'stay longer' for activities and events, however it should act as a sales tool to new members just as much as a marketing tool for the Loop without these messages conflicting or getting jumbled.

On the back-end, a new website should enhance, not disrupt, CLA's current internal operating procedures. CLA is looking for an implementation & transitional strategy just as much as a launched site that functions according to these specifications.

Goals & Requirements

General

- A better conceptualized design and content structuring that speaks to both audience types: corporate and consumers. User navigation is not intuitive and information is buried within various and inconsistent drop-downs.
- An easy to use CMS
  - LoopChicago.com currently operates on a CMS specifically built for location-based organizations. Though we've started to outgrow this platform, it's provided a very user-friendly dashboard that we'd like to maintain with a new CMS.
  - Internal CLA personnel update content site-wide on a daily basis so choosing the right CMS is an important step in this process.

Consumer
- Increase site visits for both new traffic and repeat visitors.
  - Average session duration has fallen and bounce rate is still relatively high.
- Blog & event posts create the most traffic, want to keep event registration & directing people towards the content as the main calls to action.
- Content heavy pages could utilize a more visually appealing design.
- Better organized event listings, possibly with event calendars.
- The current Directory Map takes up prime space in design & requires a lot of manual upkeep. It is also not compatible with Google Maps and does not properly function on mobile. The proposed directory doesn't necessarily need to be displayed within a map as it is currently, but the new site needs to display member and nonmember business information as a representation of a directory in a visually appealing, easily manageable way.
- Eventbrite (or another RSVP platform or provider) event codes should be able to be easily embedded onto various pages which populate Eventbrite iframes that allow visitors to begin the RSVP or checkout process right from CLA's website.
- Email/ Newsletter signup forms should sync with various lists within Constant Contact.
- Activate.loopchicago.com is a subdomain that was created for Do312 to embed an iframe for Activate Event RSVPs. Ideally and if possible, this should be incorporated into the main site, LoopChicago.com.
- Website should have video embedding & hosting capabilities.
- Other plugins, like social media feeds, should be easily integratable.

Corporate
- The member dashboard is a toolkit for our members to access events, member-to-member contact information, and other future relevant info! We'd like to increase our Member interaction by giving them a more easily navigable member area and clearer calls to action throughout the membership dashboard, letting them know that

this is a benefit for them. Because of its poor UI, we often get calls or emails with questions about events or other information that's available in the members portal.

- The Members Portal should allow members to:
  - Update their contact info.
  - Edit the information which appears within the Member & Business directory.
  - Access the Member Directory, which includes contact information of other Members.
  - Purchase add-ons, like event sponsorships, and renew membership.
- eCommerce is currently handled through a 3rd party, FirstData Global Gateway Payment Processing, which is handled off site (users are linked away in the final step of checkout). This process should not change.
- Whatever portal is proposed should be compatible with any CRM system we implement going forward (new CRM is currently in discussion).

Example Websites We Like

Consumer

- http://www.rushdenlakes.com/ - background image animation, tiles for sound bites of information, easy to navigate, visually appealing.
- http://www.capitolriverfront.org/ - background video is captivating, easy navigation toolbar across the top, visual boxes make scrolling down appealing.
- http://www.downtownsm.com/ - visually led, easy to understand what the offering is and how to get to the information, events calendar page easy to see and gives background to each event.

Corporate

- http://newwestend.com/ - visually easy to navigate, does a good job of redirecting visitors to the site from the very beginning depending on what they might be looking for.

Section III: Project Scope & Process

Performance standards

The winning agency will have 2 main points of contact from CLA throughout the duration of the project, who will be heavily involved in its entirety. Regular communication is extremely important and meetings and check-ins will be expected on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Discovery

Discovery Requirements

- Written content & imagery will be provided by CLA; however, we are looking for a hands-on content strategy to assist with this process. Ideally, the vendor will re-structure the sitemap & user flows and generate wireframes prior to the CLA finalizing the site-wide content. Content will consist of imagery, pdfs, interactive map(s), and some video.

Discovery Questions for Respondent
1. If you are proposing to build two websites, please explain why you believe this is a more viable option.
2. What project management and communication systems and tools will be used?

Design

Design Requirements
- Design should be focused on improving UI/UX and user-flows to better fit both Member & Consumer audience types
- Must follow CLA Branding Guidelines (to be provided)
- Designs should be mobile optimized (not just compatible)

Design Questions for Respondent
1. What are the proposed design deliverables? ie. Web Style Guide, Desktop Visual Designs, Mobile Visual Designs, etc.

Development

Development Requirements
- Mobile friendly & responsive
- Developed with SEO best practices
- Developed with no outdated technologies, like Flash

Required Functionalities
- Events & event registration
- Visually Appealing Member & Business Atlas
- Members Portal with user-specific login credentials
- Member data displays within the Members only Portal
- Member data displays within the user-facing Member & Business Atlas
- Member fees paid through portal

Development Questions for Respondent
1. What CMS do you propose using and what are the benefits?
2. What other technologies will be used?

3. What web languages will be used?

Deployment

Deployment Requirements
- Strategy for internal transition
- Internal CMS training
- Strategy for rolling out to Members
- Launch strategy with additional information on hosting & ongoing maintenance (site upkeep only) with additional information on the operating system of the intended server
- Ongoing advertising or marketing is not required at this time
- Prior to launch, the vendor will be required to present the website and launch strategies to the Board of Directors for final feedback and approval.

Deployment Questions for Respondent
1. What is your process for QA before and after launch?
2. Do you offer hosting and maintenance packages post-launch? If so, what are included in these?

Section IV: Proposal Evaluation Process

CLA Decision Makers

Key Decision Makers:
- CLA President
- CLA Marketing Director
- CLA Marketing Manager

Decision Influencers:
- CLA Marketing Steering Committee

Evaluation/ Selection Process

CLA will select the firm that best meets the organization's needs, with price being only one factor that CLA will consider to make this determination. Finalists may be asked to give an in-person presentation of their proposal to key decision makers, and/or the Marketing Steering Committee. CLA will award the contract to the vendor based on the following key evaluation criteria:
1. Applicant's capability and history in the facilitation, leadership and development of a comprehensive website for similar clients and/or comparable services.

2. Quality of the proposed service to include unique systems, current best practices and approach to the development of website which reflects the unique characteristics and needs of the Chicago Loop Alliance and the residents & visitors we serve. Best practices include: navigation, structure, visual design, functionality, and overall experience.
3. Ability to demonstrate the technical competence of the project team to perform the work.
4. Past record of performance as determined from available information and the qualifications and experience each team member will bring to the project.
5. Demonstrate capability under current workload and resources available to perform the work within the project schedule.
6. Vendor locality. A local agency is a plus, however vendors outside of Chicago will still be considered.

Project Budget

The project budget will not be disclosed to bidding agencies.

Section V: Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposal Structure

Section 1: Firm's Profile
1. Name, Address, Contact Person, Phone, Email and Website.
2. General Background.
3. Service Offerings.

Section 2: Project Approach
1. Description of the approach your firm would use to meet the expectations of the CLA and the results of this approach.
2. Include the project management systems and communication tools that your firm would use to complete website.
3. A project timeline which includes major milestones and deliverables within each milestone.

Section 3: Project Deliverables
1. List the main objectives and final deliverables of each project phase: Discovery, Design, Development, & Deployment. Please include thorough explanations of how you aim to achieve each requirement listed in the 'Project Scope and Process' section on this RFP.
2. Explicitly state any deliverables that are not included or that will need to be provided by CLA.

3. Answers to all respondent questions listed in the 'Project Scope and Process' section of this RFP.

Section 4: Ongoing Website Maintenance
1. Post-launch website hosting and maintenance fees should be broken down as a separate, optional service from the website design and development project.

Section 5: Project Team
1. A narrative describing the roles of each team member assigned to the project.
2. Technical backgrounds and relevant work experience of project team members.
3. Information on "sub" contributors for the project, if any.

Section 6: Related Project Experience
1. State experience in completing websites.
2. Provide examples of projects completed by firm.
3. Description of creative examples used in development and design of website.
4. Description, scope and size of completed projects including destination and/or tourism portfolio items.

Section 7: References
1. Provide a minimum of five (5) references on similar projects including the year of project.

Section 8: Project Costs
1. Provide a detailed breakdown of all project fees and expenses and when payments are due.
2. Project fees & expenses should be submitted as a separate document as the rest of the proposal.

Deadlines

RFP Release Date: Wed 6/28/2017
RFP Questions to CLA Due By: Tues 7/11/2017
CLA Responds to Questions By: Tues 7/18/2017
Proposal Due Date: Fri 8/4/2017
CLA Response Date: Fri 8/11/2017
Finalist Presentations: Thurs 8/17/2017 & Fri 8/18/2017
Award of Project: Tues 8/22/2017
Project Kickoff Date: Mon 8/28/2017
Project Completion: Feb 2018

Submission Process

Questions
RFP questions should be emailed to: clainfo@chicagoloopalliance.com. Questions are due by Tuesday 7/11/2017.

Proposal Submissions
Proposal submissions should be both mailed and emailed in the following formats:

By Email:
Project fees & expenses should be included as a separate attachment from the rest of the proposal.

Email to: **clainfo@chicagoloopalliance.com**
Subject Line: **CLA Web Proposal - [Respondent Name]**
Proposal Attachment Title: **CLA Web Proposal - [Respondent Name]**
Costs Attachment Title: **CLA Costs - [Respondent Name]**

By Mail:
Project fees & expenses should be sealed in a separate envelope than the rest of the proposal.

Mail three unbound copies to:
Chicago Loop Alliance
Attn. Mary Elizabeth Rankin
27 East Monroe Street
Suite 900 A
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Terms & Conditions

1. Vendor's Understanding of the RFP
   a. In responding to this RFP, the vendor accepts full responsibility to review and understand the RFP in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to the CLA as necessary for clarification and information. Once the award has been made, failure to have read all the instructions and specifications of this RFP shall not be cause to alter the original contract or to request additional compensation. Further, the CLA reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to eliminate from further consideration any proposal the CLA deems to be substantially or materially

unresponsive to the requests for information contained herein. Such elimination shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to the CLA.

2. Costs
    a. This RFP does not obligate the CLA to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever that may be incurred by a vendor or any third parties, in connection with the RFP response. All RFP responses and supporting documentation shall become the property of the CLA, subject to claims of confidentiality in respect of the RFP response and supporting documentation.

3. Intellectual Property
    a. Any vendor in receipt of this RFP is prohibited from using any intellectual property of the CLA including, but not limited to, all logos, registered trademarks, or trade names of the CLA, at any time without the prior written approval of the CLA, as appropriate.