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Request for Proposals
Vendor for Website Additions to www.plt.org

Issued: September 12, 2016
Proposals Due: September 30, 2016

Summary

Project Learning Tree is requesting proposals from web, digital and technology consultants with strong experience in non-profits, WordPress, and preferably the field of PreK-12 education for the following projects:

1. Create two microsites in WordPress, incorporate them into PLT's newly launched website www.PLT.org and migrate to PLT's new server.
    a. One already largely developed WordPress microsite will support PLT's new, online instructional materials ("E-Units")
    b. One new microsite will support a private, password-protected extranet site containing shared content ("Coordinators' Corner")
2. Provide ongoing technical support for both microsites, plus PLT's newly launched WordPress site www.plt.org.
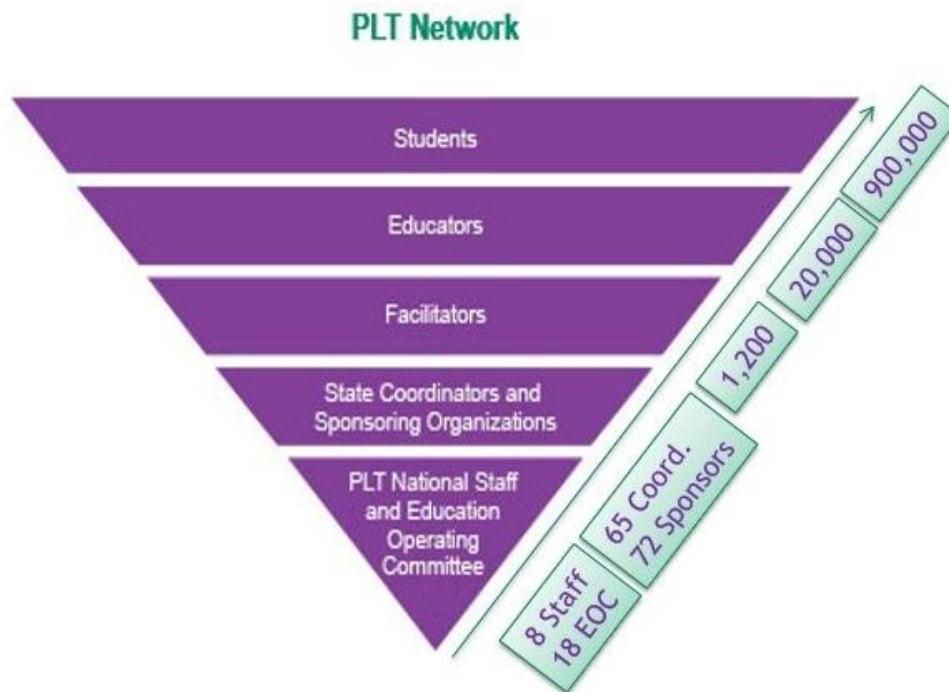
Background & Current Situation

Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a national environmental education program designed for PreK-12 classroom teachers and other adults who work with children, such as youth group leaders, park naturalists, nature center staff, foresters and other natural resource professionals, community members and parents.

PLT helps educators connect kids to nature, take students outdoors to learn, and increase their understanding of the environment, and foster actions to improve it. PLT teaches students how to think, not what to think about complex environmental issues and develops critical-thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision-making skills.

We provide training and professional development for educators, educational materials aligned to state and national academic standards, a GreenSchools service-learning program, and GreenWorks! grants for action projects.

Started in 1976, PLT is a program of the American Forest Foundation (AFF), a 501(c) non-profit organization. The program is delivered in all 50 states, and several other countries, through formal agreements with a large and diverse network of partners. These sponsoring organizations include non-profits, state agencies, trade associations, and universities. The figure below illustrates PLT's extensive network, showing the number of individuals engaged each year.

PLT Network

About Our Web Presence: In late August 2016, PLT launched a redesigned, mobile-friendly website www.plt.org built on WordPress. The project included an in-depth user analysis of the prior website, development of a digital content and marketing strategy to reach and engage target audiences, information architecture, and a fresh, responsive design. With this new site in place, PLT is ready to supplement it with two microsites (described below.) PLT also now seeks a vendor to provide ongoing maintenance and support for the newly launched website www.plt.org, as well as the microsites, through the end of this contract and beyond (pending positive results).

E-Units. PLT is in the final stages of developing and field testing 3 new E-Units with a goal of launching them nationally in 2017. These E-Units function as interactive instructional materials for teachers. They were built on WordPress and underwent user testing in 2016 for functionality and content. They are currently located at www.pltpilot.org (username and password will be provided as needed). They contain basic content, including but not limited to text pages, example images, fillable PDF worksheets, and Articulate quizzes. Final edits are currently being made to the content and PLT now desires a web developer / web graphic designer to create the design "shell" and user access rules. The current E-Unit user base is approximately 200, but expected to grow significantly after the nation-wide launch (anticipated early 2017). The new E-Unit microsite will function as an extranet, with only certain

individuals being allowed access, initially through PLT's Learning Management System (Litmos) and then through PLT's new data warehouse that we anticipate launching in March 2017.

Coordinators' Corner. PLT's prior website included an extranet for PLT State Coordinators (state leaders and partners). This content was not brought over when we launched the newly redesigned PLT.org in August 2016. With the redesign of PLT's new website and adoption of WordPress as our CMS, PLT wants to redesign and update Coordinators' Corner content. Staff has framed new information architecture for the site's design and identified key desired functionality with our users. Access to this content will be granted by PLT staff to our national state coordinators and sponsoring organizations (approximately 150 users) through PLT's new date warehouse (to be launched in March 2017).

Scope of Work

Below is an outline of proposed project tasks.

E-Units – Design, Integration, Launch and Documentation

1. Develop new graphic design for the microsite's existing content and information architecture that fits with PLT's branding (the 3 E-Units have been built in WordPress and currently reside at www.pltpilot.org). All 3 E-Units can use the same design "shell" with some small variations in aesthetic elements to distinguish them from one another.
2. Work with PLT staff to determine optimal solutions to meet customer needs for printing the E-Units.
3. Integrate the new microsite with external services (initially with Litmos in December 2016, and then with a new data warehouse in March 2017.)
4. Transfer the staging site to the same server as PLT.org (hosting account on WiredTree), test all functionality, and coordinate the launch in December 2016.
5. With the launch of a new data warehouse in March 2017, adjust the integrations as necessary.
6. Deliver a final document with passwords, an outline of custom features, and important notes for website managers, as necessary.

Coordinators' Corner – Content Strategy, Information and Technical Architecture, Design, Development, Integration, Launch and Documentation

1. Review PLT's proposed content strategy and information architecture for this extranet and make recommendations as appropriate for a streamlined layout.
2. Develop the graphic design based on the new PLT.org design.
3. Build the site architecture for this extranet using WordPress CMS. Key identified needs for functionality include:
    a. easy to navigate
    b. robust searchability
    c. integration with online reporting and purchasing
    d. integration with a learning management system (Litmos)
    e. notifications of new or updated content

       f.   ability to archive comments/listserv
       g.   calendar
       h.   mobile friendly

4. Work with PLT staff to determine optimal solutions to meet user needs.
5. Integrate the new extranet with a new data warehouse (and other potential external services) in March 2017.
6. Make arrangements for hosting Coordinators' Corner on PLT's server, test all functionality, and coordinate the launch.
7. Deliver a final document with passwords, an outline of custom features, and important notes for website managers, as necessary.

Ongoing Support

1. Provide ongoing maintenance and post-launch support for the E-Units and Coordinators' Corner, as well as the newly launched website www.plt.org through the end of the contract.
2. Recommend and implement updates to WordPress and all the plugins.
3. Review website analytics on a quarterly basis to provide a clear picture of what's working and what's not working on our sites.

Budget and Timeline

The budget for this scope of work is up to $24,000.

In case of delays associated with the launch of a new data warehouse, PLT proposes this contract will begin on October 14, 2016 and end on May 31, 2017.

Proposed Timeline:
    October 14: Sign contract with selected firm
    November 30: New graphical design approved for E-Units
    November 30: New architecture and graphical design approved for Coordinators' Corner
    December 15: E-Unit design implemented, set up and test integrations with Litmos
    December 27: Migrate E-Units to WiredTree server host and launch
    March 15: In conjunction with launch of a new data warehouse, adjust integrations for
    www.plt.org and E-Units, and integrate and test Coordinators' Corner with new data warehouse
    March 31: Launch Coordinators' Corner

    Ongoing through May 2017: Maintenance and support for www.plt.org and newly launched microsites.

Requirements

Experience: Consultants must possess relevant experience and should be able to provide 3-5 references or case studies describing recent projects for similar clients.

Capabilities and Services: Consultants may offer the whole portfolio of services (e.g., digital marketing and content strategy services, graphic design, web usability and user experience, responsive web design and development, and web content management implementation, support and training), or consultants can indicate their specialty / areas of expertise.

Invitation to Respond

Please provide information about deliverables and estimated timelines for each phase, total project expenses, and an hourly rate schedule for all team members. Pricing should list an estimated number of project hours. Please include itemized cost estimates as much as possible, and any other anticipated relevant project costs, such as 3rd party tools and services, ongoing support and maintenance, etc. Consultants should also indicate any focus or special expertise with a particular open source platform.

RFP Schedule

Request for Proposals Issued: September 12, 2016

Proposals Due: September 30, 2016

Interviews will be conducted with finalists in early October 2016.

A vendor will be selected by October 14, 2016.

Submit proposals and questions to:
    Vanessa Bullwinkle, Director of Communications
    Project Learning Tree
    American Forest Foundation
    2000 M Street NW, Suite 550
    Washington, DC 20036
    vbullwinkle@plt.org

Questions Regarding this RFP

Our intent is insure that we provide you with as much information as we can for you to present PLT a complete response to this RFP. Please email your questions to Vanessa at vbullwinkle@plt.org in advance of the deadline.