



## Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Request for Proposal (RFP)

### Request for Proposal

The Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability (CLiGS) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) seeks to expand enrollment in our courses, certificates, and masters degree programs.

We are inviting proposals from search engine optimization consultants to help us optimize our website, <http://cligs.vt.edu>, and market our post-graduate programs to potential students worldwide.

### About CLiGS

The Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability (CLiGS), a center within Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment (CNRE), provides interdisciplinary graduate education, cutting edge research, and strategic leadership needed to navigate a rapidly changing world.

Our work spans five continents and engages key stakeholders from education, business, government, nonprofits, and local communities. Our goal is to create real solutions to the world's global sustainability challenges. To learn more about our programs, services, and global engagement, please visit: [cligs.vt.edu](http://cligs.vt.edu).

### Introduction

The largest part of our services and work is focused on our Masters degree – Master of Natural Resources – which is provided in three different formats (soon to be four) to meet the needs of different students. Our degree is not the traditional Master of Natural Resources degree that is offered by most other universities, but we recognize that other schools continue to be strong competition for prospective students.

### About Our Target Market

We offer post graduate courses, certificates, and degrees in sustainability and natural resources. Historically, the majority of our students are local to Virginia, DC, and Maryland. We seek to expand our marketing efforts to recruit students from across the country and the world.

We know two things for certain about our students:

- They rely heavily on Google Search to discover programs that may be a fit for their goals
- Upon discovering a promising academic program, they explore the website thoroughly before initiating contact with program staff or faculty

*Invent the Future*

In addition, current CLiGS students and alums fit this general profile:

- About ½ have a Bachelor of Sciences degree and about a ¼ have a Bachelor of the Arts degree
- About ¼ have an advanced degree of some kind already
- Almost all are seeking a practitioner-oriented degree to advance their professional careers, few if any intend to remain in academia
- A plurality of candidates are already working in the environmental field. Those looking to transition to this field come from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- Our target market overwhelmingly participate in online social and professional networks
- Current and past students report that the reputation of the parent academic institution was their top consideration, more important than the curriculum or program format.
- Nearly all students and alumni considered at least one other program at a competing institution before selecting their CLiGS program.

### **Scope of Work**

Broadly speaking, we seek a qualified vendor to help our prospective students find our program when using Google and other search engines. We want this vendor to also help us maximize the rate at which visitors convert to active prospects by initiating contact with our staff.

More specifically, we seek a vendor to:

- Perform keyword research to develop a prioritized list of search terms that our target market is likely to use when first researching potential graduate programs
- Review our website and make recommendations for us to optimize this site to appear in natural search results for top keywords
- Review our website architecture and make recommendations to optimize our conversion rate from first visit to a request for an personal consultation
- Implement the recommended website modifications if they are beyond our ability to handle ourselves
- Develop a paid search advertising program, that includes:
  - Recommended keywords
  - Bidding strategy
  - Ad copy
  - Landing pages
  - Proposed budget
  - Projected results
- Conduct all work in strict adherence to search engines' webmaster guidelines

### **Proposals to include:**

- The qualifications and relevant experience of the bidding firm
- Case studies of comparable projects

- A proposed scope of work and timeline
- A description of how your agency proposes to handle a paid search advertising retainer relationship

### **Our Website**

The website in question is: [www.cligs.vt.edu](http://www.cligs.vt.edu)<http://www.cligs.vt.edu>

We are currently consolidating a handful of independent sites into a single website on the WordPress platform.

We have Google Analytics data for the vendors review, but this data is for previous iterations of the site. We also have some data available through HubSpot tracking for review.

### **Timeline**

September 30	RFP release date
October 10, 5PM EST	RFP due date
October 15	Bid award, Project start
October 24	First Report due

### **Please submit proposals to:**

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