

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Institute for Local Self-Reliance Website Redesign

Contact: Reggie Rucker, Communications Director (reggie@ilsr.org)

Proposal Submission Deadline: November 10, 2023

1. Introduction:

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) is seeking proposals from experienced web development agencies or professionals to redesign our organization's website and rebuild it on the current version of WordPress. The primary goals of this project are to create a site that:

- provides a compelling narrative and interface for our audiences, showcasing our mission and impact on issues they care about and inviting users to identify with and support our aims
- organizes and presents ILSR's extensive content in a way that allows users to find and engage with relevant content via a range of pathways (thematically as well as by program), and yet is streamlined and not overwhelming
- migrates a sizable portion of the current site's content to the rebuilt site and improves backend functionality
- improves accessibility
- boosts audience signups and active engagement

2. About ILSR

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance has a vision of thriving, diverse, equitable communities. To reach this vision, we build local power and fight corporate control. We are a national research and advocacy organization that partners with allies across the country to build an American economy driven by local priorities and accountable to people and the planet.

We believe that democracy can only thrive when economic and political power is widely dispersed. ILSR works to achieve this vision through four key initiatives that center local communities, giving citizens the authority, capacity, and responsibility to exercise power over their lives:

- Our Energy Democracy Initiative empowers households and communities to produce their own local, clean, and renewable energy and oppose the excessive power of monopoly utilities.

- The Community Broadband Networks Initiative promotes locally rooted, democratically accountable broadband networks that provide fast, affordable, and reliable Internet access to all Americans.
- Our Independent Business Initiative champions locally owned businesses, leads efforts to fight the unchecked power of corporate giants like Walmart and Amazon, and seeks to reverse the government policies that work against these small, independent businesses.
- Our Composting for Community Initiative is advancing local composting to create jobs, enhance soils, protect the climate, and reduce waste through advocacy, training, research, demonstration sites, and coalition building.

Across all of our initiatives, we're fighting unfettered corporate control in all its forms, from giant tech platforms to monopoly utilities, from Wall Street banks to garbage incinerators. We show how public policy currently favors bigness and perpetuates inequality, and we identify, develop, and promote policies at the local, state, and federal levels that help build healthy, sustainable communities.

We provide community members with the research and advocacy tools they need to reclaim power over local decision-making and hold corporations and government accountable. We direct our efforts to support the people most impacted when democracy is threatened, especially rural residents, diverse communities, and economically disadvantaged Americans.

Since our beginnings, ILSR has been building coalitions and working closely with allies, from entrepreneurs to city planners, retail workers to engineers, neighborhood groups to national advocacy organizations, as well as communities of color, low-income communities, and other people pushed to the margins of the existing economic and political structure. With our partners, we conduct research, run workshops, produce podcasts, and create popular education tools that support local campaigns.

3. Project Objectives:

The selected agency or professional will be responsible for achieving the following objectives:

3.1 Narrative Transformation:

Transform the website to tell a compelling story of localism's effectiveness and its impact on broader issues, such as rural development and health, moving away from a mere repository of ILSR's work from its initiatives.

3.2 Information Architecture:

Migrate, organize, and present ILSR's extensive content in a way that allows users to find and engage with relevant content via a range of pathways (thematically as well as by program), and yet is streamlined and not overwhelming.

3.3 Backend Functionality and Security:

Improve the website's backend functionality to simplify content management, reduce maintenance challenges, and eliminate security vulnerabilities.

3.4 Accessibility and User-Friendliness:

Enhance the website's accessibility, ensure compliance with relevant accessibility standards, and improve overall user-friendliness to encourage seamless navigation and interaction.

3.5 Audience Engagement and Development:

Increase the effectiveness of audience development by optimizing sign-up, subscription, and donation processes. Implement features that encourage social sharing and engagement with ILSR's content.

4. Scope of Work:

ILSR has the following existing assets:

- Text, photo, and video content on the current ILSR.org built on WordPress that we would like presented on the redesigned ILSR.org
- Briefs, fact sheets, and long-form reports
- A logo, visual identity, and brand and style guides
- Results of previous usability audits
- Email campaigns managed through Mailchimp
- Podcasts managed through Blubrry
- Various social media channels

The project will encompass the following tasks:

4.1 Discovery Phase:

- Collaborate with ILSR to understand the organization's mission, values, and goals.
- Analyze the existing website's strengths and weaknesses to inform the redesign strategy.

4.2 Design and Development:

- Develop a modern and visually engaging website design on the WordPress platform that aligns with ILSR's brand identity and messaging.
- Migrate, organize, and present ILSR's extensive content compellingly and intuitively, using a phased approach if necessary to accommodate an earlier launch.
- Integrate features to highlight success stories and demonstrate localism's impact on broader issues.

- Enhance backend security protocols to ensure data protection and user privacy.

4.3 Accessibility Enhancement:

- Implement SEO: Meta descriptions and meta keywords
- Conduct a thorough accessibility audit and implement necessary improvements to adhere to accessibility guidelines.

4.4 Audience Engagement Optimization:

- Implement strategies to increase user engagement, social sharing, and interaction with content.
- Optimize user journeys to encourage sign-ups, subscriptions, and donations.
- Implement Google Analytics and/or other analytics tools that provide seamless tracking of content engagement, including views, downloads, sign-ups, etc.

4.5 Testing and Quality Assurance:

- Rigorously test the website across different devices, browsers, and platforms to ensure compatibility and responsiveness.
- Address and resolve any bugs or issues identified during testing.

4.6 Training and Documentation:

- Provide training to ILSR's team on how to effectively manage and update the website using the new CMS.
- Provide comprehensive documentation outlining website maintenance procedures.

5. Proposal Submission:

Interested parties are invited to submit their proposals containing the following information:

- Company profile and relevant experience.
- Approach to addressing each project objective.
- Proposed timeline with milestones and deliverables.
- Budget breakdown including development, design, testing, and any additional costs.
- Previous work examples that demonstrate expertise in similar WordPress projects.
- Information on team members who will be involved in the project.
- References from previous clients.

The prices quoted must be all-inclusive; anticipated additional costs should be itemized and called out in an exhibit or schedule. Any work that will not be completed by the agency or professional with its staff and internal resources must be specifically called out.

6. Contract Terms

ILSR will negotiate terms upon selection of the agency or professional. The project will not commence until an agreement is signed which outlines the scope of work, budget, terms, and all necessary items.

7. Timeline:

- Proposal Submission Deadline: November 10, 2023
- Selection of Shortlisted Candidates: November 17, 2023
- Interviews/Discussions with Shortlisted Candidates: November 27 - December 1, 2023
- Project Kick-off: December 11, 2023

8. Contact Information:

All inquiries and proposals should be directed to Reggie Rucker at reggie@ilsr.org by the submission deadline.

ILSR appreciates your interest in contributing to this project and looks forward to receiving your proposals.

Sincerely,

Reggie Rucker
Communications Director
Institute for Local Self-Reliance

Frequently Asked Questions

Can we set up a time to talk?

It would be difficult to do general conversations with everyone interested in submitting. We would prefer to address any specific questions you have based on the RFP over email if possible.

Is there a budget?

We intentionally left the budget out because we are looking for an agency that can help us address the issues in the RFP as cost-effectively as possible and are relying on candidates to share with us what they believe it will take to do this. If there is a number you won't even get out of bed for, we would be happy to let you know if that is within the realm of possibility for us and save you some time that way. Otherwise, we'd prefer candidates build a proposal to our needs as opposed to building a proposal to our budget, allowing us to understand our options as fully as possible and make a decision accordingly.

What are the pain points with the current site?

The RFP covers our challenges in enough detail for the purposes of a proposal, with maybe some added detail about the maintenance challenges and backend functionality we allude to. The site is painfully slow. We are not 100 percent sure what is weighing it down, but it can easily take 5-10 seconds for pages to load on the backend as we try to make updates to the site. The front end is not quite as slow, but certain pages certainly suffer from considerable loading times.

What is the development timeline?

We celebrate our 50th anniversary on May 1st, 2024, and would love to have a significant portion of the new site in place at some point before then. We make reference in the RFP to a phased approach, meaning we are open to the idea of launching the new site with some minimum amount of content migrated (at some point in March/April if possible), and then continuing the migration behind the scenes ongoing after that. In our minds that seems possible, but we're not the pros and so are looking for guidance on if that can be done and how to best do it.

How much content is on the site?

We have nearly 7,000 published posts and 200 published pages of which most will be migrated. We are open to guidance on how much needs to be migrated before launching the new site.

Is content creation/copywriting assistance needed?

Yes, however, we have the capacity to play a role in content development if budget considerations make that a prudent allocation of resources.

Will ongoing support be needed?

There will be minimal ongoing support necessary — bug fixes, installing updates, and general infrastructure upkeep, but we will manage all of the content on an ongoing basis.

Is there a geographical preference for the location of the vendor?

We are a largely remote workplace, so a remote vendor relationship is in keeping with the way we currently operate. International applicants are not excluded from submitting, but all else being equal, preference will be given to U.S.-based entities.

Where is the site hosted?

A2Host

What integrations will there be?

We use Mailchimp for email and Bloomerang for fundraising purposes. We currently use Blubrry for our podcast integration but are considering moving our podcast to Buzzsprout. And we are moving into Hubspot as a CRM and looking to integrate that into the website.

Are we looking for any intranet or portal functionality?

This is not a stated objective of the new site, but it could be a useful feature that we would consider for staff, and separately for partners and members of our various coalitions.

How are brand guidelines, model sites, and prior usability audits guiding the vision?

These are questions better left for conversation during the interview and discovery phase to avoid limiting creative inputs.

What time is the proposal due on November 10?

11:59 p.m. local time (local to the vendor).

Who will we be working with on the rebuild?

There will be three of us making the primary decisions on this project — the communications director, the co-director, and the development director. Our selected partner will primarily interface with the communications director. Each of the initiative directors are additional primary stakeholders (there are 3 additional folks there), but any input from additional stakeholders will come through the communications director.