Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Request for Proposals: Website Development

General Information

Company Name: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver (Colorado Lab)

Website URL: https://coloradolab.org/

Contact Name: Shannon Willis

Email: shannon@coloradolab.org

RFP Release Date: August 8, 2023

Introduction

The Colorado Lab wants to redesign its website currently found here: https://coloradolab.org/. Our goal is to make a website that is easy to navigate by each of our three different audiences (current and potential government partners, producers of research/potential external research partners, and consumers of research interested in using our work to inform their own programs or practices) and to display project deliverables (e.g., reports, YouTube videos) in an appealing and accessible way.

If interested, we ask you to prepare a proposal to accomplish the task that includes timeline, cost, and deliverables. The following RFP includes a background of our organization and describes the purpose of the redesign, its desired functionality, and specific requests relating to the proposal. We understand that details may be subject to change upon designer recommendation and/ or research of more optimal solutions. In your proposal, please feel free to suggest alternatives where noted.

Table of Contents

1. Company Background

The Colorado Lab was created under the leadership of the Governor's Office to unlock data-informed solutions to our most pressing social problems. Working together with a broad range of government and community partners, we conduct research with rigor to obtain the best available evidence to address these challenges. With eight essential elements guiding our collaborative efforts to improve the lives of Coloradans, our goal is to leverage data to inform policy and practice, set the wheels in motion to achieve and sustain change, and position our partners to pursue additional, meaningful change for the communities they serve.

Colorado Lab project team:
- Kristin Klopfenstein, Director – co-lead
- Shannon Willis, Manager, Business & Operations – co-lead, website manager
- Gionna Pembroke, Executive Assistant & Project Coordinator – project support

2. Budget

We are budgeting $20,000 for this website, with a potential additional $5,000 for staff training and post-launch maintenance and support. When constructing the budget, please list the website, staff training, and post-launch maintenance and support as separate components. Please include any nonprofit discounts in your proposal.

This budget does not include assets such as photographs, illustrations, software licenses, etc. These items will be purchased separately by the Colorado Lab as needed/upon designer recommendation.

3. Timeline and Important Deadlines

RFP Release Date
August 8, 2023

Response Deadline
For best consideration please submit proposals by September 6, 2023.

Top designers will be notified of their selection for a screening interview by September 8, 2023 with interviews conducted by Zoom the week of September 11. Assuming an acceptable candidate has applied, a final decision will be made by September 29, 2023. If an acceptable candidate has not applied, the RFP will be re-posted.

The selected designer will enter into a contract with the Colorado Lab through the University of Denver. The average timeline for contract approval by the University of Denver is 5-6 weeks.

Project Kickoff
Project kickoff will occur after execution of a contract.

Desired Launch Date
March 2024

4. Challenges

As our organization has grown, so too has the need for an effective way to share content that speaks to our audience. One of our main challenges is the way in which project pages are displayed (example: RISE). While our current layout was designed to meet prior needs, we need to transition to a more thoughtful approach to current needs with an effective search function.

Highlighting products that are go-to references for our target audiences and members of the media.

Another challenge is the lack of internal resources and knowledge of web development. While we have staff with experience in WordPress, that experience is limited in relation to our future needs.

5. Goals

There are 22 curated landing pages listed in the top menu. An additional ~170 pages are blogs that consist of actual blog posts as well as project pages. Our top priority is to make a website that is easy to navigate by each of our different audiences for their unique purposes. Our secondary priority is to display deliverables (e.g., reports, YouTube videos) from our current and past projects in an appealing and accessible way. Examples of deliverables can be found here (reports/related resources sections) and here (accordion widget).

6. Audience

Our website aims to serve the following audiences:

- Current and potential government partners
- Producers of research/potential external research partners
- Consumers of research interested in using our work to inform their own programs or practices

The overall message we want to convey is who we are, how we are different, and how we can help (different for each audience, though grounded in the same essential elements). We also want to draw the audience's attention to our high-quality work answering interesting and actionable questions.

We often find ourselves repeating the following information to current/potential clients.

- Elevator Pitch and Essential Elements
- Steps to Building Evidence
- Evidence-Based Decision-Making
- Linked Information Network of Colorado

7. What We Like and Dislike About the Current Site

Likes:

- The drop-down menu in the About Us section is close to the way we want it
- We are generally happy with the substance of the content
- Use of graphics to prevent high-density text

Dislikes:

- Navigation to find material relevant to a specific audience is not easy—need better search functionality
- Organization of project pages
- Project-based deliverables are not displayed in an appealing way (currently a list of links)
- Categorization of newsletter stories and blog posts is not well defined (i.e., our monthly newsletter stories are turned into blogs, but that results in non-newsletter blogs being potentially "lost")
- Style of Team page
- Library – good idea in theory but is not as useful as originally planned. Staff currently use to search for their own projects because project page design is not intuitive.
- Lack of hover functionality over graphics (e.g., essential elements)
- Lack of central place for displaying ongoing evidence-based decision-making (EBDM) work / need a rational place for the EBDM work to live (currently its own category under projects)
- Need a place describing what Hubs are (Early Childhood Evaluation Hub and Family First Evidence-Building Hub, currently under projects) and why the Colorado Lab is well-situated to manage hubs
- Lack of audience testimonials

8. Requirements

a. Homepage interaction: Send site visitors to the right "next page" based on which audience they represent and their interests. We do not do this well currently because a lot of the information about who we are and why we are different is relevant for all audiences while other information is unique by audience.

b. Site navigation: Designer suggestions for how to restructure the site based on our audience, goals, and what we like/dislike about our current site

c. Project pages: Restructure for more efficiency (joint effort between designer and Colorado Lab)

d. Media and press page: Revision of current Media, Newsletter, and Blog pages to be more cohesive and seamlessly transition between

e. Templates:
   i. Landing pages
   ii. Project pages (including sections for abstract, partners list, and deliverables (e.g., reports, embedded videos)
   iii. Blog posts
   iv. Testimonials

f. Front-end coding (HTML/CSS, animations):
   i. The Colorado Lab works with a graphic designer to create visual elements. Our hope is

that these graphics can be transformed into interactive elements by the designer. Ongoing support would be required as new graphics are developed.

   ii. We utilize both HTML coding and the Elementor theme builder, however, we would like to limit the need for in-house coding and transition to a more responsive WYSIWYG such as Divi, in which we have an active subscription. We are open to best designer suggestion on how to achieve. There is one Elementor-built static page with dynamic content that the designer will fully support transitioning to the new site.

g. Permalink structure:
   i. Currently, the blog plays a dual role as posts and "static" project pages. Permalinks for posts are manually created to differentiate between a page and post. We would like to explore options to automatically distinguish the two while retaining some functionality provided by the blog feature (e.g., excerpts, "Completed, In Progress" category tags).

h. Content transfer:
   i. One static page with dynamic content built with Elementor that the designer will fully support transitioning to the new site
   ii. All other content will be transferred by Colorado Lab staff

i. Lead generation:
   i. Revised newsletter subscription popup form on homepage and footer
   ii. Attractive calls to action

j. Email marketing integration: *Potential* use of MailChimp or equivalent.

k. Social media engagement:
   i. Twitter - https://twitter.com/ColoradoLab (if easily viable)
   ii. LinkedIn - https://www.linkedin.com/company/colorado-lab
   iii. YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/@coloradolab

l. Mobile responsive design: Optimized for use on desktop and mobile

m. Uploaded content optimization: Support optimizing current media library including images and PDFs

n. Accessibility:
   i. Compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1
   ii. Accessibility statement

o. External user experience testing: Nature of work requires objectiveness. User experience testing is necessary to validate assumptions with target audience(s)

p. Website management training: Training for two staff members with existing WordPress experience

9. Content and Assets Provided by the Colorado Lab

a. CMS: designer must be proficient in WordPress

b. Hosting: WPEngine. Preference to retain as a second website owned by the Colorado Lab is also hosted here

c. Google Analytics

d. Maintenance: Colorado Lab staff will maintain the website and any updates after deployment (with the exception of dynamic content)

e. Brand identity: The Colorado Lab follows the University of Denver's [branding guidelines](#) (pages 65-95 of the linked file) and native files will be made available for designer

f. Site architecture: Our website has existing sections and navigation schema that are tailored to our most important/relevant information. While we require new navigation, we do not require a full overhaul (see Requirement B above)

g. Content strategy: Content will be created in-house and with the support of our communications specialist. The majority of the current copy content will be transferred over to the new site by the Colorado Lab.

h. Photo library: Designer will have access to our photo library. Encouraged to use existing stock photos. Suggestions welcome on best free and paid stock photo sites should we need additional content that better resonates with the new site.

10. Tasks and Deliverables

- Discovery
- Strategy (RACI Matrix, Wireframes, Sitemap)
- High Fidelity Mockups
- Development
- Content Integration and Transfer
- QA/QC
- Deployment
- Staff Training
- Progress Meetings

11. Website Examples

Inspiration:

- For sending different audiences to different places: https://www.ats.edu/
- Strategic placement of quotes: https://digitunity.org/our-programs/
- Homepage mission and deeper dive into each part: https://end.org/

Industry-related:

There are several industry websites we have come across in the last few years. The Lab @ DC's [project page layout](#) is inspiring, however we utilize more text content on [landing pages](#). We are also inspired by the California Policy Lab's use of graphics on their [publications pages](#) and their display of projects by [topic](#) and [subcategory](#). These are more aspirational given our limited internal capacity to support such content development. However, we would like a design that allows us to grow in this way.

12. Submission Instructions

Please send completed proposals in PDF format to shannon@coloradolab.org.

All proposals should include the following details on company background and project estimates:
- Name, address, email, phone, website
- Number of years in operation
- Top nonprofit clients and when (date) they partnered
- 3-4 relevant projects and link to case study or website URL
- Number of individuals (approx.) that will work on the website project, their roles and responsibilities
- Team size, bios, years of experience for each, their role
- Any additional resources required for support (ex: subcontractors)
- Number of hours and general timeline from start to completion (approx.)
- Project management approach
- General overview of website build process end-to-end