

Request for Proposals: Redesign of MassLegalHelp.org

September 15, 2022

Summary

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) seeks to contract with one or more UX and/ or UI experts to redesign MassLegalHelp.org, the civil legal aid information and self-help website for Massachusetts. This RFP is Phase One of our upgrade process – the Research and Design phase; proposals to implement these designs and build the new site will be requested at a later date.

About MassLegalHelp.org (MLH)

MassLegalHelp.org was one of the original civil legal aid information websites in the United States. It currently contains a robust library of articles, videos, automated forms and other materials on civil legal aid topics including tenants' rights, family law, immigration, unemployment and more to help users learn more about their legal problems and to take steps to help themselves if they cannot find legal representation.

Articles are written in "plain language," at a 4th to 6th grade reading level. Content is translated into Spanish and other languages spoken by Limited English Proficient residents.

MLH is well used and ranks well in search engines – last fiscal year, there were over 3,600,000 sessions and almost 5 million page views. The core audience is low-income, low-literate Massachusetts residents, although the site is also used by many others, including social service providers, attorneys and librarians

The site is currently built in Drupal 7 and needs to be rebuilt, as Drupal 7 is being deprecated. We are using this as an opportunity to look with fresh eyes as to how the site is structured, and to improve the user experience for the public who are seeking legal information and self-help materials.

About MLRI and the Massachusetts Websites Project

The Massachusetts Legal Aid Websites Project, managed by MLRI and supported by funding from the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation, uses technology to provide easy-to-understand, free legal resources to low-income people in need of legal help. We operate a number of websites including MassLegalHelp.org, MassLegalServices.org, MassLRF.org and MassLAO.org.

Founded in 1968, MLRI is a nationally- recognized nonprofit poverty law and policy center and the statewide poverty law support center in the Massachusetts civil legal aid delivery system. Our mission is to provide statewide advocacy and leadership that advances economic, racial, and social justice for low-income people and communities. MLRI's multi-forum advocacy incorporates a racial equity lens and a

community-driven framework that centers the voices and experiences of people with lived experience of poverty, economic and racial injustice. See www.mlri.org.

Core Objectives of the Redesign Project

The overall goal is to design an intuitive, easy to use interface with an inviting design so that low-income, low-literate Massachusetts residents in need of civil legal information and self-help materials can easily find these resources on MassLegalHelp.org from their mobile phones or from a desktop.

In addition to the core objectives listed below, additional objectives related to the design may arise and will need to be incorporated into the design.

We anticipate that the site will be built in Drupal 9 or 10. All designs should be easily implemented in Drupal.

1) Improved findability of content

Findability of content within the site should be improved so that users are able to easily locate relevant content. This may require adding features such as “related content,” grouping content into mini-guides or tabbed interfaces, and revisiting content types. It will likely require a revamp of the current information architecture as part of this process.

2) Improved display of content, including long form content

Some of the content is lengthy due to the complexity of a legal issue or concept. Creative ideas are needed on how to help a user through several pages of text. The design should enhance readability and comprehension.

3) Accessible and Multilingual

The site must be accessible to those with disabilities.

There will be a mirror site in Spanish, and potentially other languages; in addition, there should be the ability to display selected content in languages other than English even if there isn't a mirror site in that language.

The site should be easy to use by people with low literacy and those not comfortable with technology. Many users do not have fast internet, are using the site on their phones, and have limited data plans.

4) Refreshed visual look

The site requires an updated, inviting visual design for both mobile and desktop.

5) Easy to maintain

A very small team maintains the site on an ongoing basis. The content must be structured so that it is easy to post, review and keep current. To the extent possible, updating content should be in one place, even if it displays in more than one part of the site.

Deliverables

1) Research and discovery

- a. Meet with the MLH project team to discuss scope, project requirements, design needs, needs of target audience, and basic navigation.
- b. Review and evaluate the strengths and areas to improve of the current site.
- c. Review existing usability studies of similar sites and best practices for legal information websites.
- d. Gather information from stakeholders (including a wide range of users) using surveys, interviews and/or other techniques suggested by the vendor.
- e. Assess and test comparable legal information websites.
- f. Document the results and lessons learned from this research and discovery phase in a report.

2) Design

- a. Develop wireframes for the information architecture.
- b. Develop a mobile-optimized layout of the website, as well as quality layouts for desktop. Designs should include the home page, topic and sub topic pages, search results and any other recommended content types. All designs must implement UI/UX best practices including but not limited to use of WCAG 2.1 guidelines, ideally Level AAA (level AA as a minimum). The website must be 508 compliant.
- c. Build an interactive prototype of the designs so that users can meaningfully interact with them at the initial testing stage.
- d. Documentation of final designs so they can be implemented by a programmer, including but not limited to:
 - i) At a minimum, provide style sheets and templates as an Adobe photoshop file, or in Figma, for both a mobile and desktop design for the new website, including the home page, topic and sub topic pages, search results, any content types that are recommended and all required website elements. Icons should be delivered as both SVG and PNG files as well.
 - ii) Style guide that includes all colors (including hex and RGB values) and font styles (font, size, weight) for headings (H1 to H5), and body elements. Designs should indicate which style is used on what element. Any interactions that are not visually obvious in the design should also be documented. Fonts should be freely available.

3) User testing

- a. User testing and feedback should inform the design process throughout. In particular, the vendor should be prepared to test comparable websites with users as part of the research phase.
- b. In addition, once the prototype is built, the vendor will test this prototype with users, and modify designs as needed (up to two times) based on the testing and on feedback from the MLH project team.

Items *not* included in the scope of work

Technical implementation of the design.

Proposed Timeline

The successful vendor should be available to begin work as soon as feasible after the contract is signed. Deliverables to be completed as follows:

- Research report completed: December 15, 2022
- Initial wireframes and design of the new site completed: January 20, 2023
- Prototype for testing: Feb 3, 2023
- Completed testing of the prototype: Feb 24, 2023
- Final designs: March 10, 2023

All work to be completed by March 10, 2023.

Payment

Payment will be made in installments as agreed-upon milestones are met. Proposals should be “total cost” bids covering all specifications. All proposals must be fixed bid with a not-to-exceed amount.

Vendors should anticipate payment at the end rather than the beginning of the invoice period in which they provide services or after they submit any deliverable for which a payment is due.

Appendix A: RFP Administration and Instructions

RFP Schedule and Selection Process:

- RFP released – September 15, 2022
- Responses due not later than 11:59 pm ET on October 6, 2022
- Successful vendor announced – October 20, 2022
- Contract signed and work commences – October 27, 2022

The proposal must be delivered via email in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format to the RFP Coordinator. The email subject should be clearly marked “Massachusetts MLH Proposal.”

Vendors should allow enough electronic delivery time to ensure timely receipt of their proposals by the RFP Coordinator. Vendors assume the risk for any email delay problems.

MLRI’s Evaluation Team (Team) will evaluate the responses to this RFP. The Team may also check references beyond those listed in the vendor’s response. MLRI reserves the right to waive minor administrative irregularities contained in any response.

As part of the evaluation process, at the discretion of the Team, vendors may be asked to clarify specific points in their response and the Team may seek to interview the vendor by telephone.

Vendors whose responses have not been selected for further negotiations or award will be notified via email.

Vendors selected to provide application services will be expected to enter into a contract with MLRI.

RFP Coordinator:

Upon release of this RFP, all vendor communications concerning this acquisition must be directed to the RFP Coordinator listed below via email. Any oral communications will be considered unofficial and nonbinding on MLRI. Only written statements issued by the RFP Coordinator may be relied upon.

Rochelle Hahn
Director, Massachusetts Legal Aid Websites Project
MLRI
40 Court Street
Boston, MA 02108
rhahn@mlri.org

All questions must be received prior to the response due date and time listed above.

Response Format, Requirements and Content:

- 1) Introduction/executive summary, including project understanding, recommendations, objectives, and a description of your approach to completing the Scope of Work and Deliverables described in the RFP.
- 2) Scope of work, including description of work to be performed and list of deliverables and services.
- 3) Detailed timeline based on MLRI's needs enumerated in this RFP, with realistic milestone goal dates.
- 4) Project budget estimates and cost projections, including breakdown of costs and expenses. Please include your total cost for completing this work.
- 5) Information as to who would be working on this project, and whether anyone working on this project from your company would be a subcontractor, vendor, or other non-employee. If so, please identify those people and the roles each person will play. Please attach a resume/CV for each person to work on this project.
- 6) Company profile, including information highlighting company's diversity, minority ownership, or equity and inclusion efforts.
- 7) Provide three work samples of similar projects or links to a design portfolio.
- 8) Two to three references (with phone and email contact) for other related projects you have completed or are currently working on.
- 9) Vendor's Name, address, federal tax identification number or Social Security Number (SSN), Uniform Business Identifier (UBI) number, and a description of the vendor's legal status, e.g., corporation, sole proprietor, etc.
- 10) Vendor contact's name, telephone number, fax number and email.
- 11) A statement that guarantees that the response constitutes a firm offer valid for sixty (60) days following receipt and that MLRI may accept any time within the sixty (60) day period.
- 12) A statement on whether the vendor or any employee of the vendor is related by blood or marriage to a MLRI employee or member of its Board of Directors or resides with an MLRI employee or member of its Board of Directors. If there are such relationships, list the names and relationships of said parties. Include the position and responsibilities within the vendor's organization of such vendor employees.
- 13) State whether the vendor has been a party in any litigation during the past five (5) years, all such incidents except employment related cases must be described, including the other parties' name, address, and telephone number. Present the vendor's position on the matter.

Disclaimers:

- 1) MLRI will not pay any vendor costs associated with preparing responses, submitted in response to this RFP.
- 2) MLRI reserves the right to change the RFP Schedule or issue amendments to this RFP at any time. MLRI also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP. All such actions will be posted on MLRI's website.

- 3) MLRI reserves the right to eliminate from further consideration any vendor that MLRI, because of legal or other considerations, is unable to contract with at the time responses are due in accordance with the schedule contained above.
- 4) The release of this RFP does not compel MLRI to enter any contract.
- 5) MLRI reserves the right to refrain from contracting with any vendor that has responded to this RFP whether or not the vendor's response has been evaluated and whether or not the vendor has been determined to be qualified. Exercise of this reserved right does not affect MLRI's right to contract with any other vendor.
- 6) MLRI reserves the right to request an interview with any vendor and/or a demonstration from any vendor prior to entering a contract with that vendor. If a vendor declines the request for an interview or demonstration for any reason, the vendor may be eliminated from further consideration.
- 7) MLRI reserves the right to enter contracts with more than one vendor as a result of this RFP.
- 8) The selection of a vendor pursuant to this RFP does not constitute an endorsement of the vendor's services. The vendor agrees to make no reference to MLRI in any literature, promotional material, brochures, sales presentations, or the like without the express written consent of MLRI.
- 9) Website, product, deliverables, data, and other shall be owned by MLRI, its successors and assigns.
- 10) All intellectual property rights shall be owned by MLRI, its successors and assigns.
- 11) All responses, accompanying documentation and other materials submitted in response to this RFP, or in response for more information, shall become the property of MLRI and will not be returned.
- 12) The vendor chosen will be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement affirming the confidentiality of MRI's content and other aspects of the project.