

# **TOWN OF CANTON**

## **Digital Marketing Program**

### **Request for Proposals**

#### **Background**

Canton is a small town in north central Connecticut. It has a tremendous amount to offer both tourists and residents, but is engaged in only limited marketing and promotional efforts. Since most of the businesses are smaller, many lack their own robust promotional or digital marketing resources.

Canton has witnessed other towns that have greatly benefitted from implementing a strong digital marketing program surrounding a core website developed with this specific purpose in mind. The Town would like to replicate that success in our own small municipality.

The Town of Canton seeks a partner to help develop, resource and manage an ongoing Digital Marketing Program to support economic development, tourism and communication objectives for the Town and its constituent businesses.

The primary initial component of this program will be a website dedicated to promoting the town, its events, businesses and activities to residents and visitors, as well as forming a platform by which entities are able to promote themselves. The expectation is that there will be a content management system by which Town personnel and business representatives will be able to add and edit content, as well as an ongoing relationship with the selected vendor to create and add content and create functionality as appropriate over time.

It is important to note that the proposals will be reviewed by individuals with experience in Digital Marketing and Communications. As such, agencies should expect the Town to be both demanding of quality and fair concerning budgets and timelines.

Aesthetic appeal, user experience, accessibility (compliance with ADA AA), search optimization, analytics reporting and access, and functionality will all be core components of the evaluation of submitted proposals. The Town will be closely looking at prior work and case examples that are similar to this effort.

This effort represents the first time that the Town of Canton has developed this kind of coordinated approach dedicated purely to promotion and marketing. As such, the Town is seeking a true partner, a vendor able to understand the beauty and appeal of Canton as well as work with the Town to find the best possible solutions within a tight budget and with limited town resources.

#### **SCOPE OF WORK**

This effort will represent a new website comprised of new content created for this purpose, alongside a broader digital marketing effort. This RFP is divided into two components: the initial

development of the website platform, and the ongoing service requirements for marketing support.

## 1. VISIT CANTON WEBSITE

### **Content Management Platform**

This committee expects that any submitting agency will have a content management system (CMS) that they regularly develop for. We are platform-agnostic for purposes of this RFP, but request that agencies be prepared to explain the benefits, advantages and possible disadvantages of any CMS they are proposing.

This will include security, ease of update and maintenance, ease of use/site management, functionality, plugin architecture, developer ecosystem, cost of hosting, and server platform and language requirements.

We expect that both agency staff members and town resources will be editing and updating the website over time, so the ease of use for the administrative back end of the site will be a significant factor, as will the mechanics of how the site is developed and implemented.

### **Site Design & User Experience**

The Committee expects an extremely high level of quality pertaining to the design and user experience of the website. We fully expect submitting agencies to use templates – either created by the agency or adapted from existing templates within the CMS ecosystem — but we equally expect those templates to be highly usable, aesthetically pleasing, fully responsive for a broad set of device sizes, and to reflect the existing brand standards of the Town of Canton.

Please provide examples of work your agency has performed, especially including tourism and/or municipal marketing work. Canton would like to see at least one case study as well as any other visual examples.

Agencies should be prepared for a higher degree of expectations and scrutiny as pertains to the user experience.

Additionally, we require that the user experience meet ADA AA requirements. Your proposal should include examples of accessible websites that your agency has developed, and demonstrate an understanding of the principles of accessibility.

Agencies should be prepared to discuss their UX and design process, and particularly to explain what the town will see and when (e.g., information architecture, UX concepts, wireframes, designs and what those designs will be comprised of, etc.) We do not expect or desire a lengthy or belabored process, but an explanation of your standard process and how and why it works will be expected.

Speed and performance will also be expected to be addressed, especially given a potentially image-heavy user experience. We will expect the site to pass industry-standard speed benchmarks as defined by Google, and to perform well on mobile devices.

## **Content Creation & Search Engine Optimization**

The town has limited resources for content development, but does have a fair amount of existing content, in a very wide variety of places and formats, that could potentially be adapted if desired. Respondents would have to decide whether it is more cost effective to utilize existing content or create new content.

In particular, content about the town's attractions and amenities, potential town-wide itineraries and tourist paths, PR and social content, videos, photo galleries, and other content will all be needed to fully realize the vision for this website. Proposals should incorporate a plan and process for developing this content.

Further, this content should be created with an eye towards improving the Search engine optimization (SEO) of the website. We will prioritize user experience and relevance over SEO — we do not want content to feel forced or artificial — but we will want content to be crafted with SEO in mind and using current benchmarks.

Ideally, a plug-in (i.e. Yoast) will be incorporated to facilitate SEO during and after site development.

Proposals should also acknowledge the role of social media in content dissemination and provide details about any social media channel integrations, plugins or mechanisms by which site content can be easily propagated to social media. We will expect the website to be appropriately tagged with necessary metadata to facilitate easy social sharing with appropriate thumbnail image and meta descriptions (Open Graph tagging.)

## **Core Functionality**

The method of development will be evaluated. The Town specifically request that any development associated with the Content Management System (CMS) support ongoing system and platform upgrades without further development necessary. For example, if a custom plug-in is required, the upgrade path must not be interrupted and maintenance must be accomplished without additional costs to the town. Commercially available plugins and native functionality are preferred to any complicated software development.

The Town desires that the main functionality of the website can be accomplished by using one or more off the shelf business listing and/or event listing plugins or features. Your proposal should provide an overview of your agency's recommended approach.

### **a. User Roles & Workflow**

One key factor of this website will be the expectation for business owners to be able to create and submit a business listing and to input events or submit events to be listed by site administrators. These individuals should not have access to any other aspects of the website. Include your proposal a description of how your agency would address this, recommendations for implementation and workflow, and what if anything is needed from the Town to make this happen.

### **b. Events Calendar**

Among the most crucial elements of the website will be an events calendar. Businesses should be able to submit events into the calendar without intervention from the town (or, possibly, requiring approval of the submitted listing by a site administrator – but not content entry.) This can be a plug-in, and would be beneficial if it had the following features:

- Various list views (monthly, daily, weekly)
- Categorization and meta-tagging (e.g., show kids activities, food events, music, etc.)
- Some mechanism to promote the event on the rest of the website (either a direct link to the event listing or more sophisticated functionality)
- Ability to feature specific events
- Ability to sell tickets (PayPal integration is sufficient; the website is **not** expected to accept credit cards or handle full e-commerce)
- Possibility: Ability to export to/subscribe via Google Calendar
- Possibility: Ability to incorporate events into an email (export to text/html is sufficient; Town does not require integration)

#### **c. Business Listing**

We require a listing platform that allows each business in town to have a single page with all of their requisite information. Each business listing should contain the ability to enter at a minimum:

- 1 – 3 images
- Categories/tags – metadata allowing us to deploy categorization and site search to support a multifaceted set of access points to each business (e.g., “outdoors,” “hiking”, “picnic”)
- Location and contact information, including hours
- Written description
- Events associated with that business
- External links to a business website and social media properties
- Ability to pay for a sponsored/featured listing

#### **d. On-site Promotions**

Town prefers businesses to be able to pay for and place featured listings and events on the website. For example, the events calendar might display all events for a given date, with a selected event listed at the top and with more emphasis for a promoted event.

#### **e. Site Search**

Town expects a highly functional and easy to use on-site search system and results display. If this will be the out-of-the-box CMS site search, please demonstrate how it can be deployed in a usable and well-functioning manner.

**f. Itineraries**

The Town of Canton prefers to display collections of businesses or activities such that a visitor (or resident) can view them in a curated fashion (please see the Washington, CT website (<https://explorewashingtonct.com/>) for examples.) However, the Town expects these itineraries to be entered as content pages. This requirement is more of a design and content consideration than an expectation of any dynamic functionality.

**g. Email List Signup & Deployment**

Town prefers an email signup form to be present on each page.

Ideally, the CMS would be integrated with the Email Service Provider (ESP) in such a way that the ESP can access the live list of email addresses (an export is also acceptable) and pull content directly from the website. However, the Town is open to suggestions from submitting agencies about the selection of the ESP and the best ways to develop an email marketing program within our limited budget.

**h. Blog/Regularly Updated Section(s)**

Town requires a section of the site to operate as a blog, where the Town and the marketing agency can post fresh content on a regular basis to support ongoing marketing and promotional efforts.

This section can operate as a standard blog does, and is expected to be able to use categories and tags in a similar fashion.

**i. Photo Galleries**

Some mechanism by which users can browse photos is required. The Town is open to suggestions as to the best way to implement this and integrate it into the website.

**j. Video**

The Town expects to develop and maintain a YouTube channel that will contain the videos for the website. However, the Town will want to be able to embed and promote these videos within the site itself. This will need to be done in a way that meets accessibility requirements as noted above (e.g., avoid modals and lightboxes.)

**k. Taxonomy**

While a robust taxonomy is not required, the Town will expect to be able to tag and categorize content throughout the site, as well as to allow users to navigate via these tags and categories.

Whether that has any deeper ramifications (i.e., custom post types, custom fields, etc.) has yet to be determined and we would seek input from the submitting agency as to the best way to handle any taxonomic development above and beyond the standard CMS capabilities.

## **Analytics and Reporting**

The Town expects that any submitting agency will have standard practices for reporting about site traffic and other analytics. Please include a description of your usual reporting cadence, included information, and reporting format.

However, it is a requirement of ours that we have direct access to the Google Analytics account associated with the website, and that that account be dedicated to our site and not an agency account. The Town further requests that a Google Tag Manager (GTM) code be implemented to allow for further analytics as needed.

If the submitting agency is able to deploy heatmapping technology (i.e. Hotjar) to the website, we would also be very interested in that option.

## **2. ONGOING MARKETING SERVICES**

Once the website is launched, the Town will be seeking a moderate amount of content development and social media promotion to support our own internal efforts. This will require:

- Regular blog post creation
- Ongoing photography and videography for social media
- Posting on social media
- Minor website updates as needed
- Content optimization
- Potentially, more robust photography and videography efforts (these are expected not to be in the smaller maintenance retainer, but may be quoted separately as needs arise)
- Online/display advertising and SEM

## **Hosting**

The Town is open to suggestions for hosting. If the selected agency has a relationship in place for site hosting, the Town would entertain that option; if not, the Town is able to source a hosting provider once the CMS platform has been determined.

# PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

In order to properly evaluate each response, the Town requires the following proposal components:

- Cover letter
- Background of the firm, including history, key clients, leadership team, and project team
- Overview of all services and capabilities
- Three to five relevant case studies demonstrating capabilities
- Work samples of relevant materials or project components (can be associated with the case studies or independent examples).
- An overview of your proposed approach to this project, including your process, how you organize your project teams, communication protocol and how you would collect and organize relevant data and information.
- Any outstanding questions, challenges, or strategic insights your firm has identified.

Other Important Notes:

- The Town request that you provide an overview of your proposed project stages and milestones as a part of your budget and timeline section.
- Please provide relevant examples (URLs and/or visual samples) with your letter of intent; specifically tourism or municipal marketing examples. If you do not have examples of that type of work, please provide other examples you consider relevant with a brief explanation of why.
- We will consider all work provided as part of this project to be owned and copyrighted by the Town of Canton; if you wish to retain any ownership of work or intellectual property please detail what aspects and your reasoning why.
- The Town of Canton has a fairly robust branding guide and brand standards; branding is not a component of this proposal and you will be provided with a complete identity guide and set of logos in appropriate formats.

# SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Seven (7) copies of the proposal and fee schedule shall be submitted no later than **12:00 p.m., Friday, April 3, 2020** to:

Robert Skinner  
Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Canton  
4 Market Street  
P.O. Box 168  
Collinsville, CT 06022-0168

The seven (7) copies of the submitted proposals and other material submitted to the Town of Canton will be retained by the Town and will not be returned.

## **Non-mandatory RFP Conference**

The Town has scheduled a non-mandatory RFP conference for 2:00pm on Thursday March 12, 2020 at Canton Town Hall, 4 Market Street Collinsville, CT, 06019 in the second floor conference room. The purpose of the conference is to provide RFP respondents an opportunity to become more familiar with the digital marketing initiative and the Town's expectations regarding the proposal. Potential respondents are encouraged to ask questions pertaining to the RFP.

Questions about Proposal Requirements: Respondents with questions regarding this RFP may contact the following individual **by email only**:

Neil S. Pade AICP  
Director, Planning and Community Development  
Town of Canton  
npade@townofcantonct.org

Addendums: Addendum(s) to the RFP may be issued by the Town. When issued, addendum(s) will be posted on the Town's website under the "Request for Proposals" link. It is the respondent's responsibility to check to see if RFP addendum(s) have been issued by the Town and to ensure that its proposal addresses all addendum(s).

The Town is not dictating the form or format of your proposals, but you will be evaluated based on how well your proposal answers each point in this RFP.



## BUDGET & TIMELINE REQUIREMENTS

Canton is requesting that each proposal offer two price options, a Tier 1 and Tier 2 option, for both the initial website development and the ongoing marketing. Please specify exactly what is contained in each tier and how they will be measured (e.g. hours, functionality, number of resources, timeline, etc.)

While we would like each submitting agency to deeply consider their pricing and tiered offerings, we also must acknowledge that this is a challenging proposition without any awareness of Canton's perspective on this matter. As such, we have provided the below ranges for guidance.

Tier 1:	\$30,000 — \$50,000 Website	\$3200/Month Ongoing
Tier 2:	\$20,000 — \$30,000 Website	\$2600/Month Ongoing

The Town requests that proposals include a milestone-based timeline. The Town expects that the website to be developed and launched within 4 — 6 months from the project start.

## CONDITIONS

The Town of Canton reserves the right to reject any or all submitted proposals and to amend this Scope of Services in the process of selecting a Consultant.

All submissions shall be final and binding on the respondent for acceptance by the Town for 120 days from the proposal closing date and time.

A respondent filing a response to RFP certifies that no officer, agent or employee of the Town who has a pecuniary interest in this request for proposal neither has nor shall participate in the contract negotiations on the part of the Town, that the proposal is made in good faith without fraud, collusion or connection of any kind with any other respondent of the same call for proposals, and that the respondent is competing solely in its own behalf without connection with or obligation to, any undisclosed person or firm.

Respondents must fully disclose, in writing to the Town on or before the closing date of this request for proposals, the circumstances of any possible conflict of interest or what could be perceived as a possible conflict of interest if the respondent were to become a contracting party pursuant to this request for proposals. The Town shall review any submissions by respondents under this provision and may reject any proposals where, in the opinion of the Town, the respondent could be in a conflict of interest or could be perceived to be in a possible conflict of interest position if the respondent were to become a contracting party pursuant to this request for proposals.

Respondents shall make all investigations necessary to inform it regarding the service(s) to be performed under this request for proposal.

Any act or acts of misrepresentation or collusion shall be a basis for disqualification of any proposal or proposals submitted by such person guilty of said misrepresentation or collusion. In the event that the Town enters into a contract with any respondent who is guilty of misrepresentation or collusion and such conduct is discovered after the execution of said contract, the Town may cancel said contract without incurring liability, penalty, or damages.

All costs incurred in the preparation of proposals will be borne entirely by the individual/firm submitter.

All responses submitted become property of the Town and attached thereto shall be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

An electronic copy of this request for proposal, along with any changes, will be posted on the Town web page (<http://www.townofcantonct.org/>).

The applicant is responsible for monitoring the Town website for any possible amendments to this request.

Minority and Woman Business Enterprises are encouraged to consider submitting qualifications for consideration. The Town is an Affirmative Action - Equal Opportunity Employer.

The Town is issuing this request for proposals for the purpose of determining the benefits of retaining consultants to provide the services described in this Scope of Services and reserves the right to reject any or all responses and to amend this Scope of Services in the process of selecting a Consultant. The Town reserves the right to enter into a contracted service agreement with more than one consultant, to divide up services, and to include or not include portions thereof, within any such service agreement as may be required to meet the specialized needs of the Town.

The Town will establish a selection committee to review, evaluate and rank submitted responses according to the qualification and criteria important to this project.

The selected consultant, at no cost to the Town, shall be responsible for attending any and all meetings, public or internal to secure funding for the contracted work program. The contract service agreement will be contingent upon municipal approval of funding.

The Town reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals in whole or in part that it deems to be in the best interest of the Town.

The individual or firm selected will be required to abide by the Town Municipal Code of Ethics.

Dated at Canton, Connecticut this 26<sup>th</sup> day of February.

Robert Skinner

Chief Administrative Officer