

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program



Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

Request for Proposal

Website Design and Development

March 2023

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1. Introduction:

The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is a new program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). TOPP is accepting proposals to design and develop a new website. This will be a concept to completion project. The purpose of this RFP is to provide a fair evaluation for all candidates, and to provide the candidates with the evaluation criteria against which they will be judged.

2. Background:

The Transition to Organic Partnership Program was launched in the fall of 2022 to provide technical assistance and support for transitioning and existing organic farmers. TOPP is a collaborative effort involving many partners working together towards a common goal of transitioning conventional producers to organic production. The TOPP network covers six regions: the Mid-Atlantic/Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Plains, Northwest, and West/Southwest. Organizations in these regions are actively forming partnerships to serve transitioning and existing organic farmers. TOPP regions are set geographically and form a mix of states that are well-represented in organic and states that are currently underserved.

The six regional leads across the United States will implement this program through direct farmer training, education, and outreach activities. Each region will work with state and local partners to create resources and implement programs that support transitioning and existing organic farmers.

Find more information about the TOPP on USDA's website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/topp>.

3. Proposal Guidelines and Requirements

This is an open and competitive process to vendors within the United States, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Project Timeline

Proposals will be accepted starting 12:00pm/noon PST, Day, March 8, 2023.

Proposals received after 12:00pm/noon PST, Day, March 22, 2023, will not be considered.

The desired start date of the website creation and announcement of our chosen developer is 12:00pm/noon PST, April 15, 2023

The contract will be for a 1 year period to start and has potential to renew up to 5 years.

We would like this website project to have **3 PHASES**:

PHASE 1

- Launch TOPP Homepage/Landing Page by May 1, 2023

PHASE 2

- Launch 6 Regional Pages by June 1, 2023

PHASE 3

- Launch all additional content/pages and functionality i.e. interactive content that will take longer than several months to develop as agreed upon after contract is signed

Budget Range

Total development cost for your recommendations must come in under \$100,000 for year 1.

Total hosting and maintenance of the website must come in under \$20,000 for year 1.

The price you quote should be inclusive of all fees or charges.

Subcontractors

If the execution of work to be performed by your company requires the hiring of subcontractors, you must clearly state this in your proposal. Subcontractors must be identified, and the work they will perform as well as all associated costs must be defined explicitly. In your proposal, please provide the name and address of the subcontractor. TOPP will not refuse a proposal based upon the use of subcontractors, but does retain the right to refuse the subcontractors you have selected. Provisions of this RFP and the contents of the successful responses are considered available for inclusion in final contractual obligations.

4. Contract Terms

TOPP will negotiate contract terms upon selection, and a project will be awarded upon signing of an agreement or contract, which outlines terms, scope, budget and other necessary items.

5. Description, Objectives and Guidelines

TOPP seeks to develop an informative, engaging, optimized website that will serve as a hub for the national program and regional-specific initiatives. A unifying landing page and user experience should explain the program's scope, while regional pages will display more detailed information on initiatives and opportunities for target audiences to engage with TOPP partners.

Six regional Leads must have access and editing capabilities to their assigned pages of the website. The website needs to be easy to maintain, optimized for SEO, and viewable on desktop, tablets, and mobile devices.

In addition to designing a user-friendly site with an intuitive interface, the vendor must incorporate a content management system that allows key personnel to easily update content without directly accessing source code. For pages and content that is not yet in existence, the preference is to have user-selectable, predefined templates to choose from that dictate the layout and color scheme. Any edits to the website must be trackable and must specify, at a minimum, the date, time, and author of the edits as well as details about the edits themselves.

TOPP will consider hosting options based on recommendations. We encourage website designers to offer suggestions and be creative in responding to this RFP.

Our website will require integration capabilities between the landing page and regional lead pages such as the events calendar. The following are examples of potential website features:

- Homepage/Landing Page
 - Resource library
 - Events calendar
 - Interactive map
- 6 Regional Pages
 - Database
 - Events calendar
 - Photo and Video

To be effective, our website must be:

- Created on Wordpress
- Safe and secure
- Quick to load and operate
- Responsive to desktop, mobile and tablets
- Easy to operate and navigate
- Visually pleasing
- Search Engine Optimized
- Accessible and Multilingual Content Tool: Manual Translation
- Interactive
- Utilizing Google Analytics Tracking
- CRM Integration on regional pages (Salesforce)

Objectives

Our website should be informative, engaging, and intuitive. The tools that are incorporated must allow for timely delivery of content using basic technical skills and limited personnel.

Guidelines

Discovery

Confirm audiences, objectives, graphic look and feel, navigation, site marketing, technology issues and assumptions, required functionality, phasing, and budgetary constraints, resulting in a creative proposal.

Design

Propose website graphic look and feel, user navigation, templates for each of the main pages and navigation links. TOPP will provide style and branding guidelines.

Development Guidelines

The web site designed by the successful candidate must meet the following criteria:

- The site must be easy to navigate. Information is grouped and presented in a logical manner. The navigation design should complement the capabilities of mobile and tablet devices.
- Each section of the site should have a similar look and feel. The USDA TOPP Program logo should be prominently displayed on every page as a common header, and will be provided by the TOPP Lead RFP contact.
- The use of photography, font and sizing should be consistent throughout the site, with the layout of each page having a great deal of consistency.
- Development of backend portals that allow each regional Lead center to edit their respective website pages.
- The site should be developed to meet all current federally-mandated ADA access requirements.
- The site must be built in accordance with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and should also be easily accessible to the novice as well as the experienced Internet user.
- The site must be optimized for SEO.
- Once the website has been completed and accepted by TOPP, the website design and all of its contents, software and architecture become property of TOPP.

6. Audience

The website needs to serve several audiences. First, the website must inform the general public by addressing what the TOPP program is, which partners are involved, and offer educational materials to help the public learn and transition to organic farming. Secondly, the website will be a resource for farmers that helps:

- Connect transitioning farmers with mentors throughout their transition years and for at least one year after certification.
- Build paid mentoring networks to share practical insights and advice.
- Provide community building opportunities to include:
 - Train-the-mentor support
 - Technical assistance
 - Workshops and field days covering topics including organic production practices, certification, conservation planning, business development (including navigating the supply chain), regulations, and marketing
- Educate farmers and the public on overcoming technical, cultural, and financial shifts during and following certification.
- Engage educational and training institutions on organic workforce training and education and future human capital planning.

A third target audience is TOPP regional partners. This website will serve as a reference and resource for TOPP regional partners.

7. Timeline

- This RFP is dated March 8, 2023. Proposers may request more specific, detailed information by emailing contact@organictransition.org.
- Proposals are due no later than 12:00pm/noon PST, March 22, 2023.
- Proposals will be evaluated immediately thereafter. During this time we may require interviews (via videoconference) with our evaluation team. You will be notified if this is requested.
- Negotiations will begin immediately with the successful candidate.
- Announcement of chosen developer will be made on April 15, 2023.
- All other candidates will be notified once a developer has been chosen.
- The completion and delivery dates of the project and its phases will be mutually agreed upon prior to signing a contract.

8. Vendor Requirements

The budget and proposal must include all design, production, software acquisition, integration and necessary development and maintenance of the website. Proposals must address the following:

Executive Summary

1. Summarize your proposed development plan for our website.
2. Give company details that include:
 - **Company Overview** – Tell us about your company, length of time in business, your experience in web design and production for projects similar to ours, and your experience in working with clients in higher education. Provide links to your agency website, online portfolios, and social media.
 - **Team** – Identify your firm’s organizational capacity to produce the TOPP website. Describe the team who will work on this project. Include name, title/role, and brief background/experience of each. Include subcontractors if applicable. Describe the workflow process and method of contact.
 - **Communication** – Please state how you intend to communicate with the contact at TOPP during the period of design/development, and at what intervals.
 - **References** – Provide a list of three references who can speak to services requested in this RFP. Please include contact information and a brief description of work done for those clients.
3. Provide a summary of pricing for the proposed services and products.
 - **Solutions Menu with Pricing** – Based on the elements included in the Project Scope/Objective section, tell us about your proposed creative design strategy, methodology, plan, and other important aspects of the design process. Please be sure to address the following:
 - **Project Management** – Describe your project management process including how you will track and document project status.
 - **Deliverables** – Outline the products, services, and reports that will be delivered.
 - **Schedule** – Provide a timeframe for completion. Detail the time required for each major step or phase of the project. This will be evaluated and will be part of the contractual agreement, so a realistic time frame for completion is essential. Detail your development style - typically agile - and how reviews will be held after development cycles.
 - **User Training** – Provide details on the user training included for our content editors along with the training support format (i.e., onsite/in-person, live web, chat, email, phone-based, hard copy, other documentation, etc.).

- **Hardware** – List any hardware necessary to host and/or support the proposed solution. Also list any recommended configurations for a robust and reliable environment. Include hardware redundancy and/or disaster recovery recommendations. If using a third-party hosting solution, describe what hosting company will be used; hosting fees must be included (and broken out) in the bid. Please include SLA information as well as security information including how data is stored and encrypted, backup frequency, encryption, and storage location.
 - **Support and Maintenance** – Describe the support you offer after the development phase of the website is complete. This should include information about your normal security and patching of the website and supporting systems, bug fixes of the website and supporting systems, but also information about how updates to the site can be made.
 - **Warranty** – This is a 5-year initiative, explain your support for fixing the website when needed.
 - **Payment** – Include any requirements or preferences regarding invoicing and payment.
- Anything else deemed relevant/important to the vendor.
 - Include all terms and conditions.
 - The proposal must contain the signature of a duly authorized officer or agent of the company submitting the proposal.

9. Format for Proposals

Please use the following guidelines to format your proposal:

Length and Font Size

Please use fonts no smaller than 10 point. Include a title page, cover letter, proposal, qualifications and costs.

Title Page to Include

Your company name, address, website address, telephone number, e-mail address and primary contact person.

10. Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will form the basis upon which TOPP will evaluate proposals. The mandatory criteria must be met and include:

Receipt of your proposal must be received no later than 12:00pm/noon PST March 22, 2023. Your proposal must include a cost proposal as described above. All costs associated with the delivery of the project should be presented in a flat rate, fee for service format.

Submit proposals to contact@organictransition.org.

Proposals meeting mandatory requirements will be evaluated with the following criteria:

- The proposal meets the needs and criteria set forth in the RFP.
- The proposal is presented in a clear, logical manner, is well organized and has the appropriate information the RFP calls for
- The candidate has successfully completed similar projects and has the qualifications necessary to undertake, and be successful with this project.
- The candidate firm has an appropriate number of staff and necessary expertise to develop the site in a timely manner.
- The price is appropriate for the value being offered by the proposer.