



**Request for Proposal (RFP) CREATE
Program Website Redesign
August 2019**

About the CREATE Program

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the nation's freight railroads. A project of national significance, CREATE partners are investing billions of dollars in critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicagoland residents.

Program Goals

- Improve passenger rail service.
- Reduce freight rail congestion to boost regional and national economic competitiveness.
- Reduce motorist delay due to rail conflict at grade crossings.
- Enhance public safety.
- Promote economic development.
- Create and retain jobs.
- Improve air quality.
- Reduce noise from idling or slow-moving trains.
- Ensure effective communications regarding program's importance with all stakeholders.
- Secure additional public funding to advance more CREATE projects through environmental, engineering design, and construction phases.

About the CREATE Website Redesign

The CREATE partners need to use their main public-facing website — www.createprogram.org — as an advocacy communication tool to better support program goals. However, the site was last updated in the early 2000s, leaving its design, content, user-experience, and back-end management severely outdated.

The CREATE partners desire an ongoing professional relationship with a qualified vendor that will develop, deploy and support a fully redesigned, modern, advocacy-focused website that meets the needs of multiple external audiences as well as existing internal stakeholders. CREATE's stakeholders will manage the website day- to-day, while the vendor will provide ongoing technical and content support, including bug fixes, answering technical questions, providing general best practice guidance, writing content and recommending/developing new site enhancements as needed.

In conjunction with this redesign, CREATE also looks for recommendations on an integrated communications strategy and for social media management support. However, these are not required qualifications.

Pre-bid Information & RFP Submission

The CREATE partners will hold a mandatory pre-bid information session August 22, 2019 at 9:00 AM central standard time at the Cook County Building, 69. W. Washington, 22nd Floor, Room C, which **interested vendors must attend** in person to remain eligible to submit a proposal. Make a reservation for the pre-bid information session by contacting Janice Scott at jscott@aar.org. Following the session, vendors must submit their RFP response via email to jscott@aar.org (Janice Scott, Association of American Railroads, Office Administrator CTCO/CIROC) by 5:00 PM central standard time on Thursday, September 12th.

The RFP response must demonstrate the vendor possesses the necessary qualifications, listed below, through a demonstrated record of accomplishment of developing, deploying and supporting similar advocacy-focused websites.

RFP submissions must:

- Outline vendor (and any partner's) technical qualifications to the bullet points enumerated below under the "Qualifications" and "Desired Qualifications" sections;
- Provide 3 – 5 examples of advocacy website development projects successfully undertaken;
- Include a client reference list, with accompanying scope of work performed on behalf of those references;
- Create a project narrative, implementation timeline, and price proposal outlining how the vendor would approach the www.createprogram.org website redesign as well as on-going technical content management service;
- OPTIONAL to provide a list an integrated communications strategy, including for social media management support.

Submissions will be evaluated based upon the aforementioned criteria as well as the proposed price. Preference will be given to firms with an office presence in Chicagoland and listed on the Illinois Unified Certification Program (UCP) directory, an effort by the CREATE partners to facilitate opportunities among the state's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) community. The CREATE partners reserve the right to select none of the vendors responding to this RFP and to reissue an RFP.

The successful vendor will be expected to enter into a contract covering provision of the services described in this RFP. AAR reserves the right to decline to select the low-bidder and to decline to select any of the vendors responding to this RFP. Nothing in this RFP creates any binding commitments on the part of AAR or any CREATE partners or grant any rights to any party, including but not limited to any responding vendor.

Required Qualifications

The vendor (including any subcontractors) must perform the following tasks:

- Conduct an in-depth discovery phase and deliver associated documentation. This includes auditing and assessing the current site, solidifying audience personas and needs, and outlining clear website goals and objectives.
- Assess and recommend the best content management system (CMS) option to meet website goals and objectives. Fully develop, design and deploy the new site on the CMS, including developing components such as custom templates or application program interfaces (APIs) and plugins that are not “off-the-shelf.” The CMS must allow people without web experience to easily manage the site and for new managers to be trained as needed. The site must also be “future-proof” so that CREATE can make adjustments and enhancements, such as adding new functionality or new interactivity, without having to do another redesign.
- Ensure the site is fully responsive and mobile friendly across multiple platforms and devices.
- Develop a clear content strategy and information architecture (sitemap).
- Make recommendations for removing/adding content to the new website. Work with CREATE to write new or rewrite old content, following web-style best practices. Provide technical writing guidance and assistance as needed.
- Fully develop a brand new front end design, including colors, fonts, user interface (UI) styles, photos, etc. and make recommendations for updating the current CREATE Program style guide.
- Determine and ensure the website meets any/all accessibility standards.
- Ensure the site is secure and protected against vulnerabilities going forward.
- Create a strong in-site and external web search through SEO best practices.
- Ensure website key performance indicators (KPIs) are set up and incorporate Google Analytics with custom tracking as needed.
 - Particular attention focused on the new website’s click-thru rate, including content examined by site visitors.
 - Monitoring web traffic levels including the originating source of the traffic (search engine, social media, news article, direct website entry, etc.).
 - Distinguish, as practical, external visitors from internal CREATE stakeholders.
- Determine a solution for how to house PDFs that only certain front-end users have access to, as well as a solution for housing content and materials only internal CREATE stakeholders need access to.
- Develop associated website documentation such as user manuals, governance documents, writing style guides, etc.
- Provide full deployment support, including in-depth pre-launch testing, immediate post-launch fixes, setting up redirect links, retiring the old site, providing training for CMS managers, etc.

- Provide and maintain a staging site that CMS managers can test on before making changes to the live production site.
- Provide recommendations and guidance on hosting services.
- Provide ongoing, rapid-response technical and maintenance support, including fixing bugs, answering CMS manager questions and ensuring elements such as plugins, security certificates and hosting requirements are up-to-date.

Desired Qualifications

- Work closely with CREATE to develop a fully integrated communications strategy, including how to use the new website, social channels and paid media to meet program goals and objectives.
- Provide day-to-day community management and content creation support for social media channels including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr.

Helpful Background Information

Existing Condition

- URL: www.createprogram.org
- Fonts: Verdana and Geneva
- Web platform: HTML
- Hosting service – term and type: Domain registration: Networksolutions.com (Until August 24 2023); Website files hosted: Cambridge Systematics internal server
- Server type/size: Windows Server 2012 R2 (IIS) / 60 GB
- Website size (MB or GB): 6.56 GB
- Webpages (.htm or .html): 137 (36 hidden)
- Image files: 333 (.jpg, .gif, .png, .tif) (120 of these are orphaned/hidden)
- PDFs: 967 (210 orphaned/hidden)
- About 45 other document files (.doc, .xls, .ppt, .mp4/.mp3/.mov); (31 of which are orphaned/hidden)

Website Audiences

- **Primary:** Influencers for public funding, including local, state, and federal elected and transportation officials, advocacy organizations and freight rail customers, who need to remain educated on the national benefits of the CREATE Program’s projects.
- **Secondary:** Overarching wider audience including media, transportation planners, railroad contractors, consultants, and vendors. Secondary audiences need extensive project library resources for project tracking and to provide a single-source location for audiences who seek a deeper inquiry related to specific projects including current and future bid opportunities.

Website Goals

- Help secure additional public funding to complete more CREATE projects by educating primary audiences about the importance of the CREATE Program and how it affects them.
- Provide a trusted, single-source location for resources and information related to CREATE.
- Highlight investment opportunities for vendors and suppliers outside of the larger CREATE project and explain the bidding process.
- Advocate on behalf of the freight rail industry by promoting freight rail's overall investments, diverse workforce and positive impact on the economy and nation.

Website Objectives

- Users:
 - Find the site visually appealing.
 - Have a positive experience across multiple browsers, platforms and devices, including mobile and tablet.
 - Can easily find and consume content through internal search and friendly navigation.
 - Can easily sign up for newsletters and share webpages and content on social media.
- Content managers can:
 - Be easily trained on the CMS system.
 - Quickly edit pages, create new pages and manage multiple content types including image files, embedded videos, PDF files, etc. without the help of outside consultants.