



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Montgomery County  
Economic Development  
Corporation

Website Re-design, Development,  
and Deployment

[thinkmoco.com](https://thinkmoco.com)

RELEASE DATE: July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

DEADLINE: August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at Midnight

PROPOSAL SELECTION, APPLICANTS NOTIFIED: August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023



## OVERVIEW OF RFP

The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) seeks formal estimates for the re-design, development, and deployment of the [www.thinkmoco](http://www.thinkmoco) website. We seek a strategic partner with a creative and technical team that will quickly grasp our brand, values, culture, and strategic direction.

This project will deliver a new and future-focused digital strategy and web presence that elevates our organization and reflects best practices in design, content strategy, user experience, usability, accessibility, and technical implementation. Both design and content migration need to be the focus.

MCEDC is looking for an experienced agency who has demonstrated experience with managing complex website projects and expertise with best practices for economic development corporations or government agencies.

## PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The MCEDC website is a key element of our organization's marketing and communications efforts and is an important vehicle for delivering information to external and internal audiences and key stakeholders. It is a vital outreach, recruitment, information portal and storytelling platform for our team.

MCEDC is looking to partner with an agency with significant digital capabilities to create a streamlined and customized digital experience for current and prospective customers. The ideal agency will incorporate SEO best practices to increase both the quality and quantity of website traffic, as well as exposure to our brand through nonpaid (organic) search engine results.

All project requirements and specifications support the project's core objectives:

- A site that highlights MCEDC brand strengths, qualities, and values.
- A site that targets our core audience.
- An information architecture that organizes content in an efficient and logical manner for primary target audiences, while preserving deeper content structures to meet secondary audience needs.
- Incorporate SEO best practices to improve site visibility.
- A site with a more modular, flexible visual design that is fully functional and responsive in design for display across many screen sizes and devices.
- A site that allows for businesses to register for events, programs, etc.
- An environment that is robust, yet flexible enough to continue to grow and evolve with our web presence. Ideally, we hope to easily update the template as the site evolves, while retaining an underlying platform and architecture allowing for long-term evolution.
- Evaluation of our current website governance and site management, site support, hosting, and recommendations to support our new website strategy.
- Increase conversion rates and inquiries, increase engagement, decrease bounce rates, and increase search rankings.



## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) is the official public-private economic development organization representing Montgomery County, Maryland. The MCEDC mission is to accelerate business development, attraction, retention and expansion in key industry sectors while advancing equitable and inclusive economic growth. MCEDC connects businesses to top talent, partnerships, resources and prime locations for success. Created in 2016, MCEDC is led by a Board of Directors of business executives.

Our vision is to be recognized as the convener and driver of successful economic prosperity initiatives and policies that create job growth, and an economic environment that supports a healthy and thriving competitive local economy, benefiting all residents of Montgomery County.

We intend to be one of the most innovative and desirable places to work, with a culture that exudes excellence through its diverse, inclusive, and equity-based work environment.

## OUR CURRENT WEBSITE

Information regarding the MCEDC website can be found at [www.thinkmoco.com](http://www.thinkmoco.com). Our current website is outdated, not efficiently organized, and difficult to use. We require a complete redesign to accomplish our organizational objectives and adequately support the broad and diverse audience that MCEDC serves. We have a large amount of content that is required based on the variety of programming and services that we offer; however, we need to be able to organize our pages in a clean, consistent, user-friendly way. Upon recent analysis of our website, our team found it to be text heavy--lacking a site-wide communication and SEO strategy and consistency our pages. An opportunity exists to redesign the site with the latest web technologies to better reflect the mission of MCEDC, foster brand engagement, and deliver on our organizational priorities.

## CALENDAR

RFP RELEASE DATE:	7.25.23
RFP PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE	8.9.23
RFP SUBMISSION DEADLINE	8.14.23 by midnight
APPLICANT INTERVIEWS	The week of 8.21.23
PROPOSAL SELECTION, APPLICANTS NOTIFIED	8.28.23
CONTRACT APPROVED AND EXECUTED	8.31.23
SERVICES ELIGIBLE TO BEGIN	9.1.23
TENTATIVE COMPLETION OF PROJECT	12.31.23



## **PROJECT DELIVERABLES:**

The primary objectives and goals of the website redesign are listed below. MCEDC is open to all recommendations for innovative design techniques and modern technologies that will provide a best-in-class digital experience.

### **DISCOVERY, STRATEGY, USER EXPERIENCE, AND INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE**

- Project discovery and research including stakeholder group sessions.
- Deep dive into Google Analytics for current website to inform redesign project.
- Review of provided brand documents.
- Web strategy brief, including development of website personas.
- Creative brief.
- Proposed information architecture, user experience and content strategy.

### **DESIGN / BUILD**

- Vendor will propose a process for automating/easing content migration and assist with this process
- Design renderings for page layouts (specific decisions to be determined in site strategy).
- Native integration of APIs (e.g., social channels: YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, MailChimp newsletters and additional channels.). We primarily use YouTube and Vimeo for videos. We want to be able to control the thumbnail image that is used.
- Graphic elements.
- Site style guide— including a pattern library, typography, various column layouts and cover all design and style options.
- Training curriculum.
- ADA compliant
- Must include language translation plug-in (we currently have 7 languages)

### **RESPONSIVE SITE**

- Our visitors must be able to access the site from a wide variety of devices and be designed to automatically detect the screen resolution of any device and respond with a view ensuring the visitor will have an optimized experience no matter what device they are using.

### **LEAD GENERATION AND LIFE CYCLE COMMUNICATIONS**

- Lead generation is a critical function of the website, and it must integrate with key lead generation technologies.



## **SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION**

- Findability (search) is critical to MCEDC and the site must be built with SEO best practices in place.

## **WEBSITE GOVERNANCE**

- Review of current website governance, site management and staffing and provide a brief
- with recommendations for any changes for current website management and support.

## **TRAINING MATERIALS**

- Training documentation for content editors.

## **OTHER ANTICIPATED DELIVERABLES:**

- Audience profiles and planned conversion paths
- Content models
- Wireframes
- Front-end development
- Implementation
- QA testing
- Site search



## ASSUMPTIONS

- **Strategic Partnership:** We are seeking a vendor who understands economic development and will help guide us from website design through development and will provide ongoing services as needed to help support us in the future.
- **Visual Design:** The final design will be a collaborative effort between MCEDC and the vendor. There will be a minimum of two design concepts and two rounds of revisions included in the cost estimate. The design should be visually appealing and effectively represent MCEDC's brand.
- **Information Architecture:** Website design must focus on creating a simple, intuitive information architecture with an SEO friendly navigation that is consistent site-wide and that leverages UX/UI best practices.
- **Easy Updating:** The site should be easy to use and update by our team of content editors, graphic designers, and digital marketers. Our team is very familiar with Squarespace.
- **Governance:** Recommendations on a sustainable model for post-launch.
- **Site Analytics:** The vendor should utilize historical site analytics to understand the patterns of our sites users to better help them shape the experience of the new design.
- **Vendor Experience and Criteria:** Preference will be given to vendors in Montgomery County, Maryland, with special attention given to vendors' breadth of experience, references, number of years' experience and expertise of staff.
- **Skilled Team:** The vendor will provide a dedicated skilled team of user experience, design, and development professionals.
- **Proven Project Management Process:** The vendor must have a proven project management process and flexible timeline structure that allows the vendor to adjust to the needs of the MCEDC team.
- **Design and Content Ownership:** MCEDC will obtain ownership of ALL design, code, and content of the website upon completion of the project. MCEDC does not authorize the use of any proprietary code throughout the scope of this project.



## INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

MCEDC is seeking a detailed website proposal, budget, and timeline that accounts for all work in accordance with the project objectives. Please include:

- General description of the firm, including number of years in business and overall experience in interactive web design and development, particularly in economic development.
- Detail the firm's experience with project discovery and research, persona development, digital strategy, user experience, information architecture, mobile and responsive web design, usability testing, website accessibility, SEO, content strategy and digital marketing.
- A list of all individuals and roles who will be assigned to work directly on the project along with their bios and a link to their LinkedIn profile.
- Case studies with URLs linking to examples of relevant work that is similar in scope to MCEDC's project.
- A project plan that describes the agency's approach, methodology, and includes timelines as well as the agency's commitment to culture and DEI.
- A minimum of three references MCEDC will contact about the firm's work.
- Pricing for the project including a breakdown by major elements or milestones (e.g., project management, discovery, strategy, UE, IA, design, build, hosting recommendations brief, content migration support, QA, usability testing, and post deployment); a total project cost; any incidental expenses that would be charged to MCEDC; and an applicable hourly rate for additional time and materials work that may result from a scope expansion or other unanticipated work.

MCEDC anticipates retaining a single vendor to perform the entirety of the scope of work. However, we reserve the right to make multiple awards, e.g., selecting one firm for project discovery, strategy, user experience, and information architecture and a second for design/build or to make no award.

## RFP SUBMISSION

This RFP is being managed by a third-party procurement agent, TPMA. TPMA will accept written proposals on MCEDC's behalf between the dates of July 24, 2023, through the deadline of Midnight (12:00 AM) on August 14, 2023.

Proposals must be sent to TPMA at the following e-mail address: [procurement@tpma-inc.com](mailto:procurement@tpma-inc.com). Proposals must be sent with the subject line/title: MCEDC WEBSITE RFP SUBMISSION

A pre-proposal conference to all interested applicants will be offered on August 9th during normal business hours to answer questions and further clarify the project if requested. Please email Steven Gause at [sgause@tpma-inc.com](mailto:sgause@tpma-inc.com) for the Zoom invitation if you are interested in attending.



## EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

The following is the total weight for this RFP. Bidders must have 80 points or more to be recommended for final selection.

### Scoring Methodology

FIRM QUALIFICATIONS	20
STAFF QUALIFICATIONS	20
APPROACH	40
COST + PRICE REQUIREMENTS	20
TOTAL AVAILABLE POINTS	100 PTS

\*TPMA will limit any discussion to those bidders whose proposal have the potential for selection.

MCEDC is committed to supporting minority-owned and local businesses and strongly encourages qualifying organizations to submit a quote for this opportunity.

In accordance with MCEDC's commitment to supporting local and minority-owned businesses, bonus points will be awarded to bidders who qualify as local and/or minority-owned. In order to qualify for these bonus points, bidders are asked to self-identify on the cover page of their quote. For the purposes of validating these designations, bidders should also include information in their executive summary regarding their rationale for claiming these distinctions.





## **SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

### **COMPLETION OF PROPOSAL**

The Proposal must be complete in all aspects. The Proposal may be rejected if it is found to contain conditional or incomplete language or contain any alterations of form. The Proposal may be rejected if any defect or irregularity is shown to have materially changed the quoted price.

### **SIGNATURE OF PROPOSAL**

The Proposal shall be signed as provided for in the "Signature Authority" (Attachment A) by a duly authorized representative of the supplier. A Proposal submitted unsigned or signed by agents not authorized will be considered incomplete and WILL BE REJECTED.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any specifications, drawings, sketches, data, or documentation, or other technical or business information furnished or disclosed to the supplier hereunder shall be deemed the property of MCEDC and, when in tangible form, shall be returned to MCEDC if requested. Unless such information was previously known to the supplier free of any obligation to keep it confidential as evidenced by supplier records or has been or is subsequently made public by MCEDC or a third party, it shall be held in confidence by the supplier and shall be used solely for the purposes hereunder.

### **COMMUNICATION**

All communication, including bid clarification questions, should be sent to TPMA at [procurement@tpma-inc.com](mailto:procurement@tpma-inc.com) and copy Steven Gause at [sgause@tpma-inc.com](mailto:sgause@tpma-inc.com). Failure to comply with these instructions could result in disqualification in this RFP.

### **MODIFICATION AND SUPPLEMENTS**

Modifications and/or supplements to this RFP issued by MCEDC will be in writing and will become part of the RFP documents.

### **DISPOSITION OF PROPOSALS**

All material submitted as part of a Proposal or in response to this RFP will become property of MCEDC and may be returned only at the option of MCEDC and at the expense of the supplier. All Confidential information that is identified Confidential information should be on each document that is Confidential. MCEDC will, with all reasonableness of care, protect said information. In any case, one copy shall be retained by MCEDC for official files.

### **RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE**

MCEDC reserves the right to negotiate and hold discussions with Suppliers as necessary to protect its own best interest. However, MCEDC may award a contract based on the initial offer without discussion of such. Accordingly, supplier should offer the most favorable terms from a price and service standpoint in their Proposal.

### **NOT AN OFFER TO CONTRACT**

This RFP is not an offer to contract, nor does it commit MCEDC to award a contract. MCEDC reserves the right to make one award, multiple awards, or no award under this RFP. Additionally, MCEDC may cancel this RFP at any time, if so, doing is in the best interest of MCEDC.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

[WWW.THINKMOCO.COM](http://WWW.THINKMOCO.COM)

## Attachment A Signatory Authority

By signing below, you affirm the following. Please sign and submit your proposal.

### AFFIDAVIT I

The Contractor, his Agent, servants and/or employees, have not in any way colluded with anyone for and on behalf of the Contractor or themselves, to obtain information that would give the Contractor an unfair advantage over others, nor have they colluded with anyone for and on behalf of the Contractor, or themselves, to gain any favoritism in the award of the contract herein.

### AFFIDAVIT II

Neither I, nor the Contractor, nor any officer, director, or partners, or any of its employees who are directly involved in obtaining contracts with the client have been convicted of bribery, attempted bribery, or conspiracy to bribe under the laws of any state, or of the federal government.

### AFFIDAVIT III

Neither I, nor the Contractor, nor any of our agents, partners, or employees who are directly involved in obtaining contracts with the client have been convicted within the past 12 months of discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment, nor have we engaged in unlawful employment practices as set forth in the Annotated Code of Maryland or the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

I do solemnly declare and affirm under the penalties of perjury that the contents of the foregoing affidavits are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Signatory Authority	
Date	
Proposed Budget Amount	