

Innovate Alabama Request for Proposals Release Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Innovate Alabama is seeking proposals with cost estimates to develop a new website by a qualified Alabama-based professional communications agency or vendor (Firms). Firms expressing interest should be fully qualified and capable of providing the RFP results outlined below.

ABOUT INNOVATE ALABAMA

[Innovate Alabama](#) is Alabama's first statewide public-private partnership focused on entrepreneurship, technology and innovation with a mission to help innovators grow roots in Alabama. With founding CEO Cynthia Crutchfield leading the charge, Innovate Alabama aims to foster an environment through forward-thinking policies and programs where entrepreneurship can thrive in every corner of our state.

Innovate Alabama's predecessor, the Alabama Innovation Commission, developed [a comprehensive report](#) to serve as a blueprint for its mission. This report contains key recommendations and strategies that Innovate Alabama has adopted, such as increasing access to capital, attracting and retaining talent and positioning Alabama's outdoor recreation and lifestyle assets as economic drivers in an innovative ecosystem.

From inventing windshield wipers, to becoming a leader in aerospace and biomedical research, to revolutionizing how essential items get delivered to doorsteps, Alabama has a rich tradition of innovation. At Innovate Alabama, we are working to foster Alabama's collaborative, vibrant innovation ecosystem where today's entrepreneurs and innovators are offered a desirable cost of living, a business-friendly climate and a supportive environment to grow, work, learn and play.

Innovate Alabama Pillars

- Talent Attraction and Retention
- Access to Capital
- Outdoor Recreation and Lifestyle

Organizational Goals

- Enable entrepreneurial development at every stage of business growth
- Design and implement programs to recruit and retain a workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary to sustain thriving innovation ecosystems throughout the state
- Foster an environment that increases commercialization and supports the state's economy as a whole
- Leverage initiatives and resources that support economic growth throughout the state
- Develop a knowledge economy ready to meet the demands of the future

Current Programs

- Council on Outdoor Recreation
- Innovate Alabama HBCU Innovation Experience

- Innovate Alabama Supplemental Grant Program
- State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)
- Innovate Alabama Network
- Fuel Alabama
- Innovation Scholars Program
- Innovate Alabama Tax Credit Program
- Ecosystem Asset Map

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Scope Outcomes

Execution of this RFP's scope responsibilities should accomplish the following:

- Position the Innovate Alabama website as the go-to resource for innovators and entrepreneurs looking to start, scale and grow their businesses in Alabama.
- Effectively highlight Innovate Alabama's expanding number of programs within the organization's three pillars.
- Align the new website's design with Innovate Alabama's refreshed brand components.
- Leverage Innovate Alabama content to keep users engaged on the website through interactive design elements (videos, buttons, carousels, CTAs, etc.).

Scope Responsibilities

Innovate Alabama is seeking a Firm to assist with the development, design, implementation and launch of a new website with the following scope roles and responsibilities:

- General Requirements:
 - Build-out on WordPress site or similar product.
 - Improve user experience and navigation.
 - Increase brand visibility and online awareness.
 - Design, coding and layout of website that is professional and visually appealing and aligns with Innovate Alabama brand identity (site architecture, content strategy, interactive/visual elements, etc.).
 - Copywrite and copyedit with Innovate Alabama's brand voice with oversight from public relations agency of record.
 - Include a newsroom section for publishing articles and news updates.
 - Integrate search engine optimization (SEO).
 - Incorporate user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) best practices.
 - Coordinate brand-aligned video/photography for site use.
 - Support ongoing day-to-day website maintenance and management (examples include updating copy, adding visual elements, creating new pages, etc.).
- Technical Requirements:
 - Cross-browser compatibility.
 - Fast loading times and optimized performance.
 - Secure and reliable hosting environment.
 - Technical transition process of the current website to the new website.
 - Latest version of WordPress site.
 - Compatible with current and supported versions of Chrome, Safari and Firefox.

- Responsive on all devices, including desktop, tablet and mobile.
- Connects to Google Analytics and Google Search Console accounts.
- Plug-in abilities.
- Website size aligns with current size of website pending findings in the selected Firm's discovery phase.
- Budget and Project Timeline:
 - Transparency on any foreseen hard costs, including disclosure of any third-party contractors the Firm plans to bring in for specific services (i.e., coding, copywriting, photography, etc.).
 - The new website must go through at least two revision periods, a soft launch and an official launch by November 30, 2023.
- Innovate Alabama Brand:
 - In addition to the design and technical aspects of the website, understanding Innovate Alabama's voice, tone and messaging is critical to achieving the RFP goals. Therefore, Innovate Alabama requests that the Firm have a dedicated copywriter. Please provide the copywriter's experience and sample of similar copywriting (no more than 3 samples of work).
 - Innovate Alabama can share current brand guidelines the selected Firm will integrate across website design.
- Project Management Processes:
 - Firm's point of contacts for the following must be clarified at onset of project for the following: project manager, designer, copywriter and copyeditor.
 - Firm must be willing to manage the project through project management system, Monday.com.

Proposal Section Requirements

Innovate Alabama requests that all potential Firms submit a proposal (no more than a 4-page PDF – no front and back) outlining the following:

- **Executive Summary:** provide a high-level synopsis of the Firm's RFP response.
- **Innovation Experience:** in-depth understanding of Innovate Alabama and Alabama's innovation and entrepreneurial landscape.
- **Website Experience:** experience with similar website development and hyperlinked samples of work (no more than 3 samples of work).
- **Copywriting Experience:** the selected in-house copywriter's sample of work, demonstrating that this professional can capture Innovate Alabama's voice (no more than 3 samples of work).
- **Project Vision:** firm's proposed approach and vision with its website development.
- **Project Timeline:** a detailed timeline, including a proposed structure for achieving goals, outcomes and deliverables identified in the RFP.
- **Firm Availability:** confirmation of availability for website buildout through 2023 and ongoing support following the website launch.
- **Account Team:** individuals who will work on the project and their designated roles and responsibilities.
- **Project Management:** approach to project management, including how qualified the Firm is with the project management system, Monday.com.
- **Website Client Reference:** please provide at least two client references with project listed and reference contact information.

- **Fees:** fee structure, including a detailed and comprehensive fee breakdown by projected hours, deliverable estimates, hard costs, anticipated upfront costs, use of outside contractors and cost estimates (if any) and estimates for ongoing maintenance/management.

ADDITIONAL RFP CLARIFICATION

Questions about the RFP should be submitted through this [SurveyMonkey link](#) by Monday, May 29, at 5:00 p.m. CDT. Innovate Alabama will review the questions and disseminate a comprehensive FAQ sheet in response by Thursday, June 1.

Innovate Alabama is an EEO and encourages WBE and underrepresented companies to apply.

RFP TIMELINE & DELIVERY

- **FAQs:** please submit any FAQs by Monday, May 29 at 5:00 p.m. CDT through the following [SurveyMonkey link](#).
- **Proposal Submission Guidelines:** all proposals must be sent as a PDF attachment with a clear subject line stating “FIRM NAME – Innovate Alabama RFP Response” to info@innovatealabama.org. Please detail the proposal section requirements listed above. All submissions should be received no later than 5:00 p.m. CDT on Wednesday, June 7. Include a portfolio showcasing previous website development projects.
- **Selection and Project Timeline:**
 - RFP release date – May 24, 2023
 - Deadline to submit RFP questions – May 29, 2023
 - Formal FAQ sheet distributed – June 1, 2023
 - RFP response deadline – 5:00 p.m. CDT, June 7, 2023
 - Invitation to top Firms for presentation to Innovate Alabama – June 13, 2023
 - Finalists’ presentations – June 19, 2023
 - Vendor selection – June 21, 2023
 - Desired website launch goal date – November 30, 2023

EVALUATION

We anticipate a two-week period for reviews. During this timeframe, we may request additional information and interview a selection of Firms who submit proposals. The target for award is late June, with work beginning shortly thereafter. The timeframe for this work is June 2023 – December 2023.

The finalists will meet with the Innovate Alabama team for a formal pitch on Monday, June 19, to answer follow-up questions and share more details pertaining to their strategy before Innovate Alabama leadership selects a chosen firm on Wednesday, June 21.

Innovate Alabama reserves the exclusive right to reject any or all proposals submitted, subject only to Innovate Alabama’s sole discretion. Innovate Alabama assumes no obligation, no responsibility and no liability for costs incurred by the responding firms prior to issuance of a contract. Innovate Alabama will negotiate all contract terms upon selection.