April 24, 2018

Request for proposals for website development

The Public Justice Center is requesting proposals to develop a new website for our organization.

About the Public Justice Center
The Public Justice Center pursues systemic change to build a just society. Founded in Maryland in 1985, we use legal advocacy tools to pursue social justice, economic and race equity, and fundamental human rights for people who are struggling to provide for their basic needs. As a civil legal aid office, we provide advice and representation to low-income clients, advocate before legislatures and government agencies, and collaborate with community and advocacy organizations. We choose projects and cases that will make a significant impact on systems, laws, and policies. Current projects include bringing actions on behalf of low-income tenants, low-wage workers, students, and families needing health care and benefits; using appellate cases to establish good law in poverty and civil rights cases; and coordinating a national coalition that works to establish a right to counsel in civil cases involving basic human needs.

Project
The Public Justice Center's current website, www.publicjustice.org, was designed in 2011. While the site has served as an introduction to the PJC's work, it has sometimes trended toward being an online brochure or archive rather than a place where people return frequently for news, ways to get involved or legal assistance. The website also needs updates that make it easier to access content, including responsive design, an effective search function, accessibility for people with disabilities, and translation into other languages. Finally, we would like our website to have a visual design that is consistent with all of our communication vehicles, such as print materials, email, and social media. In short, we are seeking to build a dynamic website with fresh design and content that better communicates with our audiences and improves the user experience.

Audiences
Our website must be able to speak to several audiences.
1) In general, the website should describe the PJC's mission and projects, both in terms of our systemic advocacy and the specific legal services we provide to individuals.
2) Beyond overarching descriptions, however, the website should be a place where supporters can find news about the PJC's work and learn how to get involved, whether through giving, attending events, legislative advocacy, volunteering, signing up for e-alerts, or connecting on social media.
3) The website should make it easy for potential clients (low-income renters, students, low-wage workers) to find out what services we offer, how to get help, and access know-your-rights information. We are also considering the possibility of including an online form to request legal assistance, as well as a way for clients to send us documents securely for their cases.
4) The website should also be a place where nonprofit advocates, private lawyers, government workers, and journalists can find PJC training resources and research that they can use in their work.

We would appreciate guidance in organizing the website in a way that directs our multiple audiences to the information they want.

Communications strategy

The website will be an important tool in the development of a communications strategy that positions the Public Justice Center as a hub for people who care about justice and equity. Focusing on the audiences and goals described above, we will drive traffic to the website via email, social media, and basic search engine optimization. To that end, the website should allow us to create appealing landing pages, integrate well with social media, and be built to increase site visits from search engine results. We would also like to explore ways to encourage visitors to come back and interact with the site, such as a news/blog section connected to an RSS feed.

Throughout the website, we hope to use storytelling to communicate the impact of our work, inspire donations and advocacy, and shape public opinion about the issues we take on and the clients with whom we work. We would appreciate a web developer partner who can share well-informed insight on how to use the website to tell stories, as well as how to employ priming and debiasing techniques on our website that promote positive perceptions of people of color and people living in poverty.

Ease of use

Visitors to the PJC website should find it easy to use, regardless of device, language, or disability. We would like the website to be responsive, adjusting whether a person is viewing it on a computer monitor, cellphone, tablet, or other device. We would also like to be able to translate website content into other languages, particularly Spanish, so that more clients can use our website. The website should also meet accessibility standards for people with disabilities, including Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA and Section 508.

Design

We are working with our longtime contracted graphic designer to standardize the PJC's visual identity across communications channels. We would like the developer of our website to work with our graphic designer to ensure that the website design is consistent with the look of our print materials, email, and social media.

The back end

The content management system should make it easy to update the website without knowledge of code, from adding text and images to embedding videos, infographics, PDFs, etc. We would like to have capability of adding sections to the website as needed, such as a blog or special pages for new projects or reports. We would also like to have the website connected to Google Analytics for tracking traffic.

Timeframe

While we anticipate launching the new site by the summer of 2019, we desire to work with the selected developer to establish a viable timeframe. Variables such as funding, content development and design choices will affect this timeline. We have some of the content available, but will need to write some sections.

Funding

We have a ballpark preset budget limit for the website, and we expect to refine this budget with our developer partner. The greater the cost estimate, the likelier that we will need to fundraise to pay for it. Consequently, it would be quite helpful for us to receive modular bids with different levels of complexity and price points.

Response requirements
We are seeking proposals from experienced web developers who are interested in building this site. Your proposal must include:

- Estimated cost and anticipated time frame. Your proposed budget should include a breakdown of expenses for the entire process, from consultation and design through troubleshooting, training and written instructions on how to use the website.
- Description of the way you prefer to work with clients and several examples of how your previous website development work helped boost your clients' visibility and their audiences' ease of interaction with their website. We are especially interested in knowing about those websites created for nonprofit advocacy organizations.
- Also include 2-3 recent client references (especially include nonprofit and/or advocacy clients).
- Description of your company and the values that guide you.
- Description of your commitment to race equity as a company and demonstrated expertise with incorporating race equity into website development.
- Demonstrated expertise in web accessibility for people with disabilities.

Submit proposals by May 24, 2018, to Erin Brock, Development Manager, brocke@publicjustice.org, (410) 625-9409 x242