

Columbia Legal Services Request for Proposals: Website Redesign

Columbia Legal Services, a state-wide, not-for-profit legal aid and advocacy organization, seeks proposals for the complete redesign and build-out of its official website.

Please respond no later than April 10th, 11:59pm PT

Organization Profile

Columbia Legal Services (CLS) traces its roots to the origins of the legal aid movement that coalesced in Washington State in 1967. A member of the Washington State Alliance for Equal Justice, CLS specializes in providing civil legal assistance and public advocacy for people living in poverty. CLS is unique in Washington as a provider of civil representation for people who are not eligible for assistance from other providers, including undocumented immigrants and the incarcerated, among others. Unlike many civil legal aid organizations in the United States, CLS does not receive any federal or state funding. Instead, CLS is funded by grants and fundraising activities which enables it to take on work that is considered controversial by some lawmakers. In the current political moment, CLS has an essential role to play in fighting for marginalized communities and supporting grassroots community advocacy across our state. Given the social contours of economic deprivation and predation in the United States, CLS addresses issues of racial, ethnic, gender, and abledness equity alongside basic economic issues in attacking the root causes of poverty.

CLS splits its work among five project group teams, with areas of specialization that include homelessness, youth incarceration, sexual harassment, labor rights, farmworker safety, and access to affordable healthcare, among other areas. CLS operates five offices in Washington State: Olympia, Seattle, Tri-Cities, Wenatchee, and Yakima. In addition to providing legal representation for individual clients, CLS works for systemic change on behalf of the most marginalized members of our community, including immigrants, people of color, the incarcerated, and the economically marginalized. The mission statement of the organization is provided as an appendix.

Goal of Work

Columbia Legal Services operates an outward facing official website as an element of its strategic communications strategy. The site was last redesigned in 2012 and is now due for a major update that reflects current design standards, better reflects the current strategic priorities of the organization, and creates opportunities for more supporter engagement. In the past, the primary audience for the website was identified as current and potential funders, along with collaborating organizations and attorneys. As such, the current website is rich in text content that aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the organization's long history, major accomplishments, and current work. As CLS has greatly expanded its use of social media, multimedia content, and other messaging tools, the role of the website in the organization's outreach has shifted such that the audience has expanded to include ally organizations, policy makers, journalists, and a more general audience.

The vision for CLS's new website is one that centers CLS as an essential actor in the movement for justice (particularly in the context of the current administration) and references CLS's long history in the civil legal aid movement. While the day-to-day work remains state-focused, CLS has been working to develop its identity as a national expert on the issues facing

farmworkers, families living in poverty, prisoners and former prisoners, and other low-income people. The new website will reflect that focus, showcasing our work as politically powerful, socially meaningful, and inspiring to those who identify with our work. The new CLS website will feature compelling client stories combined with dynamic information and multimedia about our advocacy. The overall messages will position CLS as an expert on finding solutions to the many issues contributing to marginalization and, driven by community organizations, will focus on the interests of justice for our client communities. The CLS website will be a tool for influencing policymaking and case outcomes by contributing to public narratives about the living and working conditions of people who are living in poverty and struggling against institutional barriers and endemic discrimination in Washington State and elsewhere.

Design Concepts

In keeping with emerging design standards, the CLS website will rely less on text-based content and focus on the power of visual imagery and clean design. Website visitors will be greeted with a compelling, strong image that features a rotating highlight of current advocacy, litigation, and policy work. The home page template will be mobile-friendly and feature a current exploration into a case, policy, or story. The home page will include contact info and social media content. Jump pages will step up the level of text detail slightly on specific topics while continuing to present an image-rich experience. In keeping with a de-emphasis on traditional navigation links, the site orientation will be broad, not deep. Additional page templates will provide for more detailed content, such as news updates, media collections, and legal briefs and other documents.

Relatively little navigation will be shown. Instead, issues or campaigns will take the place of navigation, particularly on the landing pages. Images should allow for overlaid text/links. Navigation will occur organically as the user chooses issues presented graphically, or from issue links where provided. The goal is present a user experience that is light and clean, maintains user engagement, does not distract or present obstacles to reaching desired content, does not require understanding our navigational logic or organizational structure, and simultaneously conveys a strong editorial view and narrative force on key issues.

Page templates needed for this site include: Main page, content pages, blog/news, staff and office directories, jobs/opportunities pages, and media collection pages. The main page template must be flexible enough for use as sub-pages that focus on specific projects or issues.

A key goal for the new CLS website is ease of maintenance by editors who are not trained in web technology. The current site runs under the Drupal CMS, which has not always proven itself to be either very flexible, straightforward to maintain, or easy to manipulate by lay editors. We are attracted by what we know of WordPress (simplicity, ease), but are open to other options that meet our goals. The new site should have few components that cannot be substantively altered by web novices and updates/maintenance should similarly be a low burden. The scope of this **flexibility and ease of use is a central concern to the organization**, which cannot assume the ongoing cost of professional interventions. Given the choice between exciting features and ease of editing, we will choose the latter in most cases.

Comps/Examples

Site	What We Like	What Else
Southern Poverty Law Center	Great use of images and text, color scheme, branding, mobile-friendly. Good scroll	
Define American	Great use of images and text, user-focused, mobile-friendly. Good scroll	Not interested in pop-ups, screen-overs, etc.
ThinkProgress	Forceful image presentation. Issue links instead of navigation	Long scroll might be too rich, too long
Children’s Alliance	Clean and bright. Message is clear	
(Additional comps tbd)		

Budget and Communication

CLS has a budget of up to \$15,000 for this project. The budget includes basic design, spec, wireframe, build, and test. Contracted organization will provide a warranty period for at least 90 days post-launch that includes bug fixes and minor modifications. CLS will provide site content and labor for content entry, logo and branding materials, as well as images from stock photo providers and internal sources. CLS will assign a contract project manager to represent the organization and provide a single-point of contact for feedback and decision-making. The CLS PM has experience with web technology and terminology.

Timeline Feasibility

CLS is highly motivated to kick off this website in as short a time as possible. RFPs should contain a statement of feasibility that identifies the path (and obstacles) to project completion within 90 days of commencement. Other timelines will be considered with sufficient framing and justification.

Equity Statement

CLS is committed to gender, racial, ethnic, and abledness equity in all facets of its work. We encourage proposals from applicants who identify as members of all social and economic backgrounds. We will consider all proposals that meet our quality standards and requirements, and within the framework of the organization’s existing equity goals.

Qualifications and Evidence

As part of your response, please provide examples and reference information (including company name, project name, company contact name, phone number, e-mail address) demonstrating experience in the areas listed below:

- Provide examples of your work that effectively connects to demographically diverse communities.
- Provide examples of your work with non-profit, public sector, higher education, and/or similar organizations.
- Provide examples of your methodology for web development and UX design.
- Provide examples demonstrating expertise in UX to drive flexible design that performs effectively on desktop, mobile, and tablets, across all operating systems and common browsers.

Proposal Process

Interested firms shall provide a full proposal of work that includes

1. Budget
2. Working methodology
3. Examples of prior work
4. Additional comps that are responsive to client's stated goals
5. Contact information
6. References

Submit all materials to websiteRFP@columbialegal.org

APPENDIX

VISION OF JUSTICE

When people have the necessary tools and opportunity to achieve social and economic justice, a more inclusive and equitable society is possible.

MISSION

Columbia Legal Services advocates for people who face injustice and poverty. We seek to achieve social and economic justice for all, using policy reform, litigation, and innovative partnerships to reveal and end actions that harm the communities we serve.

VALUES

- People living in poverty have an equal right to justice regardless of who they are, where they live, or the language they speak;
- To remove the barriers of injustice and poverty, we must seek solutions that create equitable, positive, long-term change for as many people as possible;
- To address the diverse and critical legal needs of low-income people in our state, legal representation must be available not only for individuals, but also for communities and large groups of people in order to achieve systemic change;
- “Access to Justice” for low-income people means that we will serve as legal counsel on their behalf and in places where decisions affecting their lives are made -- including courts, legislative and administrative bodies, and other community forums.