



NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS Website Design Services

ISSUED: Wednesday, March 23, 2022

**PROPOSAL DUE DATE:
Monday, April 18, 2022 by 5 p.m. (EST)**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

This document constitutes a request for proposals from qualified design agencies to provide website design services for the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks that is creative, flexible easy to maintain, and is viewable by desktop and mobile devices. This will be a creative concept project.



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SECTION 1: Introduction

1.1 The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks is seeking bids for a professional analysis of its website (www.columbuszoo.org) leading to the redesign, which should lead to an increase in user experience through simplification and modernization, stronger SEO rankings, navigation, semantic updating, speed, security, eCommerce, and conversions of visitors. The goal is to have a website design and development that allows moderately skilled in-house staff to make updates to the site and organize online information coherently and consistently. To integrate all the programs needed for our organization, we've chosen the WordPress platform. Our goals are to:

- Responsively showcase Columbus Zoo Family of Parks to all visitors
- Evolve alongside the business, delivering the same level of brand trust, loyalty, and expectations
- Strengthen social media marketing and SEO campaigns with engagement for call-to-action opportunities
- Enable future governance and flexibility through an ongoing strategic design

Most visitors to the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks website fall into one of two groups: members and the general public who are planning a visit and want to see what is available at each of our parks, purchasing (renewing) membership, or learn more about upcoming events.

We would need an estimate of templates for each park:

- Columbus Zoo and Aquarium | 14 templates
- Safari Golf Club | 8 templates
- The Wilds | 8 templates
- Zoombezi Bay | 8 templates

1.2 Overview of Columbus Zoo Family of Parks

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium resides on 588 acres (some of which are undeveloped) in a suburb northwest of Columbus. The campus includes the 22-acre Zoombezi Bay water park and 18-hole Safari Golf Club that contributes to the family-destination experience and provides revenue to support the nonprofit Zoo. The Zoo also operates The Wilds conservation center and safari park located approximately 100 miles away in rural southeastern Ohio. To learn more



about the four properties, familiarize yourself with www.columbuszoo.org and our social channels.

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium

Founded in 1927 with a small menagerie of animals, the Columbus Zoo gained international recognition and stature with the 1956 birth of Colo, the world's first zoo-born gorilla. Today the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is a nationally and internationally acclaimed conservation center and is home to more than 10,000 animals representing over 600 species displayed in naturalistic habitats according to zoogeographic regions. In the early 1990s, two conservation initiatives were formed separately and almost simultaneously. A grants program was established to fund grassroots conservation efforts around the world. Partners in Conservation was founded to save the endangered mountain gorilla by funding boots on the ground programs as well as humanitarian projects so the people in the region could thrive without negatively impacting wildlife.

This year, we are supporting 80 projects and organizations in more than 19 countries. These projects will help hundreds of species around the world, from Asian elephants to Siberian cranes.

In addition to its role as a global conservation leader, the Zoo is a renowned year-round education and recreation facility for visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Each year, the Zoo attracts and educates more than 2.1 million visitors and its mission is to lead and inspire by connecting people and wildlife.

The Zoo receives support from a ten-year county property tax levy and has approximately 100,000 household members.

2021 website data:

- Users: 2,784,289
- Sessions: 4,341,719
- Mobile and Tablet: 80%



Zoombezi Bay

From 1984 until 2006, the central Ohio region knew Zoombezi Bay as “Wyandot Lake,” a combination amusement and water park adjacent to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. Wyandot Lake was sold by Six Flags to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium in 2006, with Wyandot Lake closing in September 2006.

The Columbus Zoo began construction of a new 22-acre water park in January 2007, rebuilding the park from the ground up with new water rides and slides and an entirely new name. Chosen by nearly 3,000 citizens of central Ohio through an online vote, the name Zoombezi Bay beat out four other names and calls out both the “Zoo”, of which it is a part and “Zoom”, which describes its exciting rides. Zoombezi is also a play on the Zambezi River in Africa.

The construction of Zoombezi Bay was completed in May 2008 and the new park featured 15 water slides, a wave pool, an “action river”, and a children’s water play area. Several enhancements have been made since then including two additional slides in 2011, a multi-level children’s play structure in 2014, Otter Banks, the largest expansion in the parks’ history, in 2018, and the all-new Croctail Creek and Sandbar adults’ only area in 2020. In 2019, Zoombezi Bay had more than 460,000 visitors, including 25,000 season pass holders.

2021 website data:

- Users: 600,098
- Sessions: 1,007,444
- Mobile and Tablet: 84%

Safari Golf Club

In 1989 when the golf course adjacent to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium went up for sale, Zoo officials jumped at the chance to purchase additional land for future expansion. Since then more land has been purchased and it was decided to operate the golf course as another means of generating revenue to support the Zoo’s operation and mission. The facility has been completely renovated and today’s Safari Golf Club is an 18-hole, par 72, 140-acre mature course. The affordable public course includes wooded areas, rolling fairways, and waterways. Safari Golf Club includes a driving range, practice putting, and chipping greens, as well as a clubhouse with a pro shop and bar and grill with facilities to host group outings.



As part of our conservation and sustainability mission, we are very proud of Safari Golf's Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. This certification means we are creating wildlife habitat, and using environmentally friendly land management methods is important to all of the Columbus Zoo properties. With its pollinator garden, bird nest boxes, native vegetation, and safe chemical use, Safari Golf has a green fairway that is truly "green."

2021 website data:

- Users: 71,615
- Sessions: 92,801
- Mobile and Tablet: 59%

The Wilds

The Wilds is one of the largest and most innovative wildlife conservation centers in North America for endangered species. Located on nearly 10,000 acres in southeast Ohio, The Wilds is a private, non-profit safari park that combines cutting-edge conservation science and education programs with hands-on experiences and one-of-a-kind adventures. In southeast Ohio, The Wilds provides a natural, open-range home to rare and endangered species from around the globe, as well as home to hundreds of indigenous species. In addition to in-depth science and education programs, The Wilds offers guided experiences to the public on selected days May through October. Originally conceived as a private-public partnership involving the Ohio Departments of Natural Resources and Development, the Ohio zoological parks, and the private sector, The Wilds was formally incorporated in 1984 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit under the name The International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Inc. (ICPWA) dba The Wilds. In 1986 the ICPWA received a gift of 9,154 acres of reclaimed mining land from the Central Ohio Coal Company, a subsidiary of American Electric Power Company. The first animals arrived at The Wilds in 1991 and the facility opened to the public in 1994.

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium became involved with The Wilds in 2001 to support the struggling operation. While the two remain separate nonprofit organizations, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium now run The Wilds.

The scientific staffing at The Wilds includes professionals in the fields of restoration ecology, veterinary and conservation medicine, conservation education, animal management, and conservation science training. It is also a safari park with hands-on experiences and one-of-a-kind adventures that include open-air vehicle tours, zip-lining, horseback riding, fishing



excursions, and lodging including a luxury-tented experience. More than 115,000 people visit The Wilds annually.

2021 website data:

Users: 750,767

Sessions: 1,052,642

Mobile and Tablet: 74%

1.2 Organizational Background

Collectively, the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks had 2.7 million visitors in 2021!

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is a year-round attraction with attendance of over 2,100,000, with 60% being member-based. Other areas are made up of the main gate, group sales, promotions, and education. The primary months of operation are from May to September, which generates over 60% of the attendance. In addition, the Wilds is in operation from May to September, with an annual group and individual tour attendance of over 115,000. The Safari Golf Course does approximately 42,000 rounds of golf per year. Zoombezi Bay is open annually from May to September and is expected to draw 350,000 to 450,000 visitors. In 2021, we hosted the inaugural ZOMBIEzi Bay, which is a Halloween-inspired month-long event that features four haunted houses, two scare zones, rides, and zombie-themed food.



SECTION 2: Statement of Work

2.1 Scope of Work

The Zoo will be working with the selected creative agency to refresh, design, and organize our website into a cross-platform, responsive, intuitive, and user-friendly first point of contact for target audiences. All proposals should address the following:

- Work with Zoo staff in facilitated meetings to re-design the Zoo's site so the look is consistent with the Zoo's current brand and the layout simplified while at the same time allowing for growth and self-governance.
- Work with Zoo staff to optimize site content for up-to-date intuitive navigation by our external audiences, while maintaining ease in updates and management by Zoo staff.
- Guide the Zoo on options, opportunities, and costs of having a responsive dynamic website with action plans for current and future flexibility to continue to meet technology growth.
- Create eMarketing strategies for blending social platforms and websites for conversions.
- SEO and CSS overhaul, implementing for maximum results presence and crawling.
- Site to be designed with consideration for the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) published guidelines for levels AA compliant websites.
- Multilingual options for future application and roll out.

In conjunction with the Zoo staff, create and implement:

- Hours of operation presence on the home page that auto displays date/per day hour variations
- Strategize use of newer video streaming style into design considerations
- Quick orientation and clear navigation improvements for overall UX
- Ecommerce stores seamless integration



SECTION 3: RFP Process

3.1 Contacting the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks Staff

The contact below is the main point of contact for this RFP. All questions should be communicated by email only.

Nicolle Gómez Racey, VP of Communications and Marketing

Email: nicolle.racey@columbuszoo.org

- ❖ Participating Agencies are expressly instructed that the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is the only authorized source of information concerning the solicitation. Contact with unauthorized agents of the Columbus Zoo while solicitation and evaluation are in the process could result in immediate disqualification.

3.2 RFP Timetable **subject to change*

Target Date	Action	Additional Information
Wednesday, March 23, 2022	Issuance of RFP	
Monday, April 4, 2022	Deadline for Submission of Questions by 5 p.m. (EST)	Via email to nicolle.racey@columbuszoo.org
Monday, April 18, 2022	Deadline for Submission of Proposal by 5 p.m. (EST)	Mail or courier to address and individual on page 12 of RFP
Week of April 25th	Review of Proposals and Selection of Finalists	
Wednesday, May 4, 2022, and Thursday, May 5, 2022	Firm Presentations	Location TBD
Monday, May 9, 2022	Notification by Email to Proposers not Selected	
Tuesday, May 10, 2022	Award of Contract	Via email and letter



3.3 Evaluation Criteria and Process

During the evaluation process, the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from Agencies. At the discretion of the Family of Parks, vendors submitting proposals may be requested to make oral presentations as part of the evaluation process.

Upon completion of the evaluation process, The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks intends to select an Agency to proceed with the required design of the website. The successful Agency will be notified and a contract will be finalized. If for any reason a contract cannot be finalized, the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks may select another vendor to contract for these services.

Proposals will be evaluated by the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks staff and members of the Selection Committee on the following:

- The Agency followed instructions in structuring the proposal and preparing a cover letter.
- The Agency demonstrates familiarity with the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks.
- The Agency demonstrates an understanding of the scope of the project, specific activities to be completed, and deliverables to be produced.
- The Agency's work plan addresses all project activities, identifies specific action steps supporting each of the activities, and specifies reasonable time frames for completion.
- The Agency identifies personnel possessing skills and experience related to project tasks to be performed; the organization/management structure and time commitment of staff resources support completion of project activities and preparation of deliverables.
- The Agency's background and experience reflect the relevant experience and a capability to provide requested services.
- The budget and narrative justification are itemized and sufficiently detailed to show how the total project cost was derived and costs appear to be reasonable; a proposed payment schedule was provided with payment points based on completion of project activities and acceptance of deliverables and appears to be reasonable.

Applicants may be asked for additional information and clarification of plans and/or to give an oral presentation.



The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with any qualified source, or to cancel in part or its entirety the RFP process if it is in its best interest to do so. The RFP does not commit the Family of Parks to award a contract or to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of proposals.

Proprietary rights to all data, materials, documentation, and products originated by and prepared under the contract shall belong exclusively to the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks. The contractor will be prohibited from disseminating products and information developed under the contract without the prior written consent of the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks.

3.4 Special Instructions for Agencies

Agencies may not contact members of the selection committee or any other employee of the Zoo or its affiliated properties concerning this procurement while the proposal and evaluation are in process. Such contact will cause disqualification of the Agency's proposal.

All Agencies agree that they shall defend, indemnify, and hold the Columbus Family of Parks, its officers, employees, and agents harmless from and against all claims which arise out of the Agency's performance, negligence, or actions of its officers, employees, and agents in the performance of this selection process.

The Agency shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-226), which prohibits discrimination based on physical or mental disabilities in delivering contract services or in the employment of qualified individuals. People with disabilities who need special accommodation to participate in the proposal process or implementation may request special accommodations such as interpreters, alternative formats, or assistance with physical accessibility. Requests for special accommodations must be made within 72 hours prior notice by contacting the contracting officer listed on page 8 of this RFP.

The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks is committed to ensuring that certified minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs), women-owned business enterprises (WBE), disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE's), and U.S. Small Business Administration 8(a)-certified firms are afforded opportunities to compete for and participate in the Zoo's purchasing activities. If your company is certified as an MBE, WBE, DBE, or 8(a) company, please send your current certification with your response to this RFP.



SECTION 4: RFP Response

4.1 Instructions for Submitting a Proposal

All responses are to be signed by an individual who is legally authorized to bind the Agency to the proposed activity. Please send one original copy and one PDF (on a flash drive) copy of your response in a sealed package to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium business office no later than **5 p.m. (EST) April 18, 2022**.

The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks will not reimburse responding vendors for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this request. The Columbus Zoo must receive all responses no later than **5 p.m. (EST) April 18, 2022**, at:

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
9990 Riverside Drive, Box 400
Powell, OH 43065-0400
Attn: Nicolle Gómez Racey
VP, Communications and Marketing

No changes, modifications, or additions to the response submitted will be accepted after the deadline for submission has passed.

- Agencies requesting clarification regarding the Request for Proposal or the content therein must be sent via email and must be received by **April 4, 2022**.
- The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks will choose an appropriate number of finalists for in-person interviews to be held at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium either **May 4, 2022**, or **May 5, 2022**.
- Any questions regarding this RFP will be handled as promptly and as directly as possible. If a question requires only clarification of instructions or specifications, it will be handled verbally. If any question results in a change or addition to the RFP, the changes or additions will be forwarded to all registered vendors as quickly as possible by addendum.
- Agencies shall designate and provide contact information for an individual to contact should any questions arise concerning a proposal. The Agencies shall also state the name and title of individuals who will make final decisions regarding contractual commitments and have the legal authority to execute the contract on the vendor's behalf.



4.2 Incomplete Responses

Failure to respond to any item, including providing any requested information, or failure to follow these instructions shall be considered the submission of incomplete response and may result in disqualification.

4.3 Proposal Requirements

Qualified agencies should be able to demonstrate the design and technical abilities to perform the required scope of work on this project by identifying similar projects completed in the last five years, and providing three references that the Zoo can contact about this project. If using a third-party organization for any portion of the project, please provide that organization's name and the scope of work that they will be addressing. Applicants should also explain their workload capacity and current projects, demonstrating the organization's capacity to take on this project.

The Zoo will look closely at each proposed plan and use of allocated funds to complete the project, so a thorough description of both is greatly encouraged.

Summary of Proposed Content

- Cover letter: The cover letter should be signed by a representative authorized to legally bind the Agency and include:
 - ❖ Name, address, telephone number, and email address of a contact person with authority to answer questions regarding the proposal
 - ❖ Name, address, telephone number, and email address of a contact person to be notified regarding contractual issues
 - ❖ Identification of the firm as a corporation or other legal entity
- The Agency's ownership and history
- The Agency's background and areas of expertise relative to this project and organization.
- The Agency's background information on key individuals anticipated to be involved in the project, including capabilities and qualifications, years of experience, group affiliations, previous relevant experience, and communications approach while working.
- Examples of work performed for other organizations. Note those of similar size and scope.
- Three references you have worked with within the last five years on a similar project.



- Project approach
- Budget allocations detail, coordinating with the Scope of Work
- Experience with nonprofit organizations, conservation organizations, and/or attractions.
- Provide any relevant information that would aid the Zoo in the selection process. Include how the firm is ideally suited to address the challenges and opportunities of this account.
- The proposing Agency should identify the principal staff member(s) who would be assigned to the account, provide a resume(s) for such individual(s) and hourly fees for each.
- List and description of project deliverables.
- Contact information for the lead consultant.

4.4 Qualifications of Agency

- Minimum of five years' experience of website design, either with an Industry, corporation, nonprofit organization, attraction.
- Extensive experience in strategic marketing, including an established body of work in a nonprofit or entertainment industry, or similar destination/entertainment marketing.



SECTION 5: Rights of the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks

The Columbus Zoo Family of Parks and properties reserves the right to:

- 1) Select the vendor that in the judgment of the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks best meets its needs.
- 2) The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium reserves the right without prejudice to cancel or reject any proposals.
- 3) All material submitted by an Agency as part of the response to this Request for Proposal shall be considered the property of the Columbus Zoo Family of Parks.
- 4) The Columbus Zoo will not be responsible for proposals that are not received at the proper location.

5.1 Non-Disclosure Agreement

The Agency acknowledges that during the project, the Agency and its employees will obtain and have access to confidential information that is important to the Columbus Zoo's business. This confidential information includes but is not limited to matters relating to its donors and members such as donor and member names, addresses, financial information, trade secrets, marketing documents, business projections, plans and strategies, legal matters, and other personal information (collectively referred to as the "Confidential Information").

The Agency acknowledges that such Confidential Information is worthy of protection and is the sole property of the Zoo. The Agency agrees that during the term of this Agreement and thereafter, the vendor shall not divulge or make use of any Confidential Information, directly or indirectly, personally or on behalf of any other person, business, corporation, or entity without the prior written consent of the Zoo. The parties hereby acknowledge and agree that the prohibition against disclosure of Confidential Information is in addition to, and not instead of all rights or remedies which the Zoo may have available under the laws of any jurisdiction or at common law to prevent the disclosure of trade secrets.