

SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
Website Design and Development 2023 RFP responses due 10/18
Addendum #2
9/29/23

1. Our products are priced according to a library's service population. Could the Library share the exact population served, as last recorded?

188,000

2. For the room bookings aspect of the project, could the SCLSNJ share how many rooms are currently available for booking?

Currently there are approximately 28-30 rooms across 10 branches that are available for booking. Approximately 18 of those rooms are only available to patrons to book. The remainder can be booked by SCLS staff only. We have rooms where, for example, there is an A, B, and C room available. We give the option to choose A and B, B and C, or ABC.

3. What is the budget that SCLSNJ has earmarked for this project?

We are hoping to fix as many UX problems as possible with this redesign, and we know that there are budgetary tradeoffs to be made between using professional services and thoughtfully-designed products, and having in-house staff to adapt and customize for future needs. We are also open to proposals that have a proportionally large year 1 cost for design and implementation with lower hosting costs, as well as those which approach the project from an ongoing platform-as-service perspective. For these reasons, we do not have a specific budget earmarked. With that said, we are using NJ public procurement's competitive contracting process, which means that we may exceed SCLSNJ's \$44,000 bid threshold for this project.

4. What are the challenges that SCLC is facing with the current CMS?

Our current website was last updated in 2017/2018. Technology has advanced in the resulting years and it's now time for a refresh.

Our system is inflexible with editing or creating new page templates. Issues updating or editing, header, footer, and menu elements, integration of video content is lacking. Backend administration permissions are not tiered or customizable, which makes it difficult to separate content creation from publication. We have concerns with responsive design and how our site appears on tablets and cell phones. Ongoing maintenance is inconsistent, which causes security concerns.

5. Is the *CARL connect discovery* supported by a 3rd party or is this a custom in-house developed catalog?

Carl Connect Discovery is the OPAC for our ILS, provided by TLC. Carl Solution is our current ILS product.

6. Please describe how the Calendar integration is expected to function. Will content be iFramed into a page?

Patrons visit our website in order to register for programs and events. The calendar integration would be expected to be user friendly, allowing patrons to register for an event or book a room (see #2 above). Additionally, patrons should be able to add the registration to their calendar (ical, google, etc.), staff would have the option to send event reminders, and patrons can cancel if necessary. Ideally, calendar event information can be presented outside the calendar interface for marketing (e.g. during catalog searches). The calendar integration would be fully responsive on all device sizes and seamlessly integrated and offering full functionality in our web app.

7. Is a direct integration via APIs/web service required?

Yes. Even if the product is built into the website, we want to be able to use data in other places (e.g. adding upcoming event suggestions when auto-replying to customers who give us program ideas).

8. Would you be open to using the native Calendaring capabilities built into our CMS product?

Yes

9. Are programs handled differently than Calendars?

Programs populate the calendar

10. Is maintaining the existing mobile app in scope for this proposal?

Not necessarily.

11. Are you able to provide a complete list of services that will require direct integration via APIs/web services?

No. There are existing services that will require integration, but we also need to be able to develop in-house solutions to reuse data in novel ways.

12. How will library account information be managed? Is the current user account system managed by SCLSNJ or a 3rd party vendor?

Library account information is managed by Carl.Solution - our ILS. Most third party integrations happen via SIP2 or API.

13. What website-specific services are currently supported by 3rd party vendors?

Our mobile app, event calendar, meeting room reservation, and museum pass reservation products

14. What is your budget range for this project?

Please see #3 above

15. How many users currently make changes and will require training?

40 staff members (possibly less)

16. How many pages does the current site have and how many do you expect to be migrated to the new website?

Approximately 100.

17. We understand that your current site is built on WordPress and that SCLSNJ staff members are wishing to support and develop the back-end to add functionality after site launch leveraging their PHP and JavaScript skills. We have deep experience working in WordPress and Drupal. What is the current point of view from your team regarding working with WordPress? What about Drupal? We would certainly recommend the best CMS for your requirements but part of that decision is user adoption, experience and familiarity with the CMS.

Our team is adept at learning new platforms and finding new ways to connect services and add customer value. Whether WordPress, Drupal, or some other CMS, as long as there are connection points (e.g. API, embedding HTML as a site element, etc.) that our team can make use of, we will.

18. We understand that the new website needs to integrate with your existing mobile applications. Are these mobile applications to remain "as is" and are out of scope for any type of redevelopment?

Please see #7 and 8 above

19. Can you kindly share the approved or expected budget? We recognize that there is often reticence around providing a budget range. However, sadly, all too often, we invest considerable effort in developing a customized and thoughtful proposal only to discover that the budget allocated was a fraction of what we estimate would be required for a successful project. As a result, we only prepare proposals with some form of budget signal.

Please see #3.

20. "4. *The project is expected to be substantially complete by March 1, 2024.*" Would you kindly explain what is driving this date and what you consider to "*substantially complete*"? Does the site need to go live by March 1st? If needed, are you open to a longer project timeline?

Please provide your best estimate based on our specifications and requirements. Our preference is to have a fully formed and appropriately tested product before releasing it.

Please outline suggestions on the timeframe in your proposal.

21. On page 4 you mention that the new website should be based on current visual identity guidelines. Can these guidelines be shared with vendors? How much do these guidelines differ from what you have now?

SCLSNJ has a brand style guide that can be shared with the successful vendor and it outlines colors, fonts, tone of voice, etc. The guidelines are slightly different than what can be seen on our website because of our current inability to make changes to the core layout (headers, drop down menus, etc.)

22. The solicitation states that cost is a key evaluation factor. Is cost the most important evaluation factor? Does SCLSNJ intend to award the contract to the lowest cost that is technically acceptable, or are you using best evaluation methods?

SCLS has a set of criteria from which to base the final evaluation upon. Price is part of that consideration, but we are not required to award to the lowest cost proposal.

23. On page 4, 1.2, you mention, "Our mission requires us to maintain as much backward compatibility as possible." Can you please provide additional detail on this, and what it

means for the next iteration of the website? With this in mind, are there any specific legacy systems that should be taken into consideration for the new website?

As a public library, we explicitly serve the long tail of technology adoption. Our website needs to be accessible on a wide range of devices, operating systems, and browsers that go farther back than many private organizations would be concerned with. We know that the cost of maintaining backward compatibility increases the farther back you go and are open to conversations about what is practical, but we are committed to serving as much of our community as possible, including via our website.

24. On page 5, 2.2, you list, “Re-organizing site content” as a major component of the project. Further on, you state, “A small team of library staff will review existing usability research, and will develop a plan for organizing and presenting site content in a way that best meets the needs of the public.” What are your expectations with regard to how the chosen vendor will work with you to determine the final outcomes of this work?

We are open to vendor suggestions and ideas about usability testing with a wide range of library customers, but this is not a proposal requirement.

25. On page 3, you mention that the Communico integration is handled by an iFrame widget. However, we noticed many of these pages link to an external website that inherits your main theme. Can you provide more details about this integration and how this works now?

The iFrame widget is a Communico feature that allows us to put upcoming events on our home page, but all further navigation is performed by the external website. We are open to alternate solutions.

26. On page 4, you mention that you currently use Google Workspace domain as your primary identity and permissions infrastructure. Can you describe what this means for the website? Are your editors and site administrator required to authenticate via Google? Would you consider an alternative approach in the future like Okta?

This presently does not have an implication for the website. However, if we are able to use Google or OAuth in some way, that would save us from duplicating user accounts and security grouping and permissions.

27. On page 6, you state that, “we anticipate that SCLSNJ staff members will not only maintain the site, but will continue to develop the back-end to add functionality.” Can you describe

what additional back-end functionality you expect? Can you also describe your team's skill sets, specifically with regards to open source platforms? How large is the team?

We have a very small but very creative and fearless team who routinely find novel solutions to integration problems. Examples include:

A widget to pull upcoming staff training events out of Communico – marked private and not viewable in the public calendar – and display it on our employee intranet (Google Sites).

A custom script that runs on the 1st and 15th of each month to query the database that drives our library catalog, pull out recently added titles with new items, and update the content on our "New and Coming Soon" page (<https://sclsnj.org/read-listen-view/new-coming-soon/>).

28. In section 3.2. Basic Functionality, you mention that the site needs to integrate with “Integration with PCI-compliant ecommerce platform for processing fine payments, donations, etc.” Can you describe what SCLSNJ is using now? Would you be open to using this product on the new website or are you looking for a brand new solution?

eCommerce is currently limited to functionality within the CARL Connect.Discovery product, and allows customers to make online payments related to their library account (using authorize.net). If we were to expand functionality outside of the library account to accept donations, payment for printing or copying, or other transactions, this would need to be separate from our current authorize.net usage. With that said, we have no firm plans to expand payment options at present.

29. Under 3.4 Technical Specifications, it says “SSL – is this required and how it should be implemented.” Can SCLSNJ clarify the answers to the questions posed in this requirement?

Our apologies. The statement “is this required and how it should be implemented” should be disregarded. Please respond to the topic of SSL as a technical specification.

30. The following additional requirements can be simple or difficult depending upon the exact requirements, can SCLSNJ provide more details on each of these requirements:

a. e-Commerce functionality such as payment gateways

Please see #28.

b. Multilingual capabilities

From a UX standpoint, providing translation for website content (especially in Spanish, but in other languages as well) is a high priority. When we last redesigned our website in 2017, the cost of providing translation on demand was outside of our budget, but we are hoping a more cost-effective solution has been developed in the meantime.

c. Performance requirements

Please see #23.

d. Specific functionality around search

We are very happy with the search functionality in our library catalog. We would be open to other federated searching options that work across content silos and might include the website, but this is not a requirement for this project.

e. Integration with calendaring software, social media, mobile app (preferably within one system or with third parties)

Please see #13.