MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP WEBSITE REDESIGN
RFP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Please confirm if the proposer can share work examples of private sector clients instead of municipal clients/projects.

- **A: We are okay with work examples of private sector clients.**

Q: What content management system (CMS) are you currently considering, or do you have a strong preference for a particular platform? If so, please elaborate on the reasons for your preference and any specific functionalities or features that are important to you in a CMS.

- **A: We are currently using Granicus for our CMS platform. The most important thing of us when it comes to choosing a platform is that it can handle high website traffic, has high document storage, and includes the features listed in Section IV of the RFP.**

Q: Do you have specific needs for SEO (Search Engine Optimization) for the new website?

- **A: One of the chief complaints about Meridian Township's website is its searchability and navigability, including occasional poor results in search engines for perfectly appropriate keywords. This complaint is reported by residents and staff alike, making it the largest SEO issue. To correct this, our website needs a full audit of its structure and content. This will likely include identifying and eliminating duplicate or unused content. This process may involve adjusting page titles and meta descriptions to better reflect page content and improve search engine results. Tools to support staff of varying SEO skill levels after the redesign are appreciated. However, these must only be considered as they fit within the project budget. Examples include CMS integrations with Google Analytics, keyword optimization, and page speed improvement suggestions.**

Q: Could you clarify if the budget range of 25,000–50,000 includes post-launch maintenance, or is that a separate allocation?

- **A: The price range of $25,000 - $50,000 includes the implementation of the website redesign as well as the annual fee to maintain the platform after it's launched.**

Q: Are there specific CMS platforms the Township prefers, or is the vendor expected to recommend the best fit?

- **A: The vendor is expected to recommend the best fit.**

Q: How flexible is the January 1, 2026 launch date if additional stakeholder feedback requires minor adjustments?

- **A: The January 1, 2026 launch date is not flexible, unfortunately. Our contract with our current vendors expires at the end of 2025, so we need to be ready with our new solution by then.**

Q: Would the Township consider phased deliverables (e.g., priority sections live earlier) to mitigate year-end timing risks?

- **A: No, we will not consider phased deliverables.**

Q: Is there a preference for in-person training for CMS users, or would virtual sessions suffice?

- **A: Virtual training sessions would suffice.**

Q: We are a Canadian company. Are you accepting proposals from foreign entities?

- **A: Yes, we are accepting proposals from foreign entities.**

Q: Are there any existing pain points or challenges that you want to address?

- **A: We've been told that it's difficult to find information on our website, so ease of navigation is a big item to address. We also want a better mobile view.**

Q: Do you have any examples of competitors that you admire or would like to differentiate from?

- **A: We don't have any examples of competitors to provide.**

Q: Could you tell us how this project would fit within the greater organizational strategy?

- **A: Our website is the focal point of our organization, both for our residents and employees. Having information available that's easy to access is a key part of our organization's strategy.**

Q: Are you looking to design from an existing template or are you looking for a custom design?

- **A: We are looking for a custom design.**

Q: Do you have any preference for the content management system (CMS) to be used?

- **A: We don't have a preference. We want the potential vendors to present the solution they feel would be best for us based on Section IV of the RFP.**

Q: Are there any specific technologies or platforms you'd like to utilize?

- **A: We are very open to all possibilities, so we don't have any specific technologies or platforms in mind.**

Q: What are your expectations for ongoing maintenance, updates, and technical support after the website is launched?

- **A: We would need the potential vendor to provide technical support and ongoing maintenance after the website is launched. This pricing should be built into the proposal.**

Q: What platform is the current website built on, and who currently manages content updates?

- **A: The current platform is built on Granicus, and it is mostly managed by myself and my coworker. However, we have a variety of staff members with access to upload documents, edit pages, and add calendar events.**

Q: Do you have a preferred Content Management System (CMS) you'd like us to use?

- **A: No, we don't have a preferred CMS. We want the vendors to present their best option based on what we're looking for.**

Q: Are there any new functionalities or content you would like to introduce that are not currently available on the site?

- **A: We want greater control over the design of our website. For example, if we wanted to change how the main page was organized, we would like the ability to do that ourselves. We don't have that capability with our current provider. We also want better search functionality on the front and back end so that it's easier to find documents and photos.**

Q: Are there any third-party services, APIs, or external tools that will need to be integrated?

- **A: We use UserWay on our website as an accessibility tool.**

Q: What SEO best practices do you typically implement during website development?

- **A: This is not an area we've had much experience with before, so we will be leaning on the vendor to help us come up with a solution.**

Q: Will an external accessibility audit be performed after development, or is the supplier responsible for validation and reporting on WCAG 2.1 AA compliance?

- **A: The supplier is responsible for delivering a website that is compliant with WCAG 2.1 AA requirements, but it is up to us to maintain that compliance after the website is launched.**

Q: What level of post-launch support do you anticipate (e.g., hours per month, SLA, dedicated rep)?

- **A: We would prefer to have a dedicated representative in case we ever have questions or issues, but we also expect to have access to technical support for the entire duration of our contract.**

Q: Do you have a list of critical URLs that must be preserved in redirects?

- **A: Yes, we do. Those would be provided once the contract has been awarded and we've started working on the redesign.**

Q: Do you have a current email or SMS platform, or preferred platform, for delivering eNotifications?

- **A: Yes, we currently have email notifications through our website that people can sign up for. This sends notifications about events, news stories, job postings, and RFP postings. We don't use SMS and are not interested in pursuing that route.**

Q: Regarding the Google Maps integration for the events calendar, would this be for users to get directions to the event?

- **A: Yes, that's correct. Our current website has that ability within a calendar event.**

Q: The RFP mentions wanting customizable fonts, layouts, and themes - could you provide more direction about the amount of customization you're looking for on a page-by-page layout basis? Do you have an existing brand guide that the designs would be based on?

- **A: On our current website, our design ability is more limited. Only the vendor is able to change the color scheme, font, and certain layouts of the pages, so we would like the ability to change the entire look of our website if needed. We do have a brand guide for our font, colors, logos, etc, so we would like to have our website design incorporate those elements if possible.**

Q: Is there a preference for local vendors?

- **A: We are open to working with any vendor who has a solution that fits our needs, so the location of the vendor is not something we're scrutinizing.**

Q: Are you still accepting proposals from outside agencies?

- **A: We are still accepting proposals until the May 16 deadline.**

Q: Do you have a preferred vendor already in the running, or are you open to new partners?

- **A: We are open to all new partners and the proposals they submit.**

Q: Which qualities or capabilities will be most critical in your evaluation?

- **A: We want a vendor who is going to meet all of or most of the requirements we listed in the RFP. A modern design, ease of navigation, and ADA compliance are our top priorities.**

Q: First, regarding the budget and timeline: We understand that the project needs to be completed in 2025, but payment would occur in January 2026 due to the fiscal year. Are there any options for partial payment before that date—such as a deposit or milestone-based invoicing? We're happy to work with your team on a structure that supports the Township's process while ensuring sustainability on our end.

- **A: I can't say for certain if there is room for a partial payment. Since this wasn't a budgeted item for 2025, I would need to request a budget amendment. That requires approval from the township manager and our township board, so they would make the decision.**

Q: Second, we typically work in WordPress and have used it successfully for municipalities and nonprofits with similar needs. Would a customized WordPress solution be acceptable, provided it meets all the functionality, accessibility, and administrative requirements outlined in the RFP?

- **A: Yes, WordPress would be an acceptable solution as long as it meets the requirements of the RFP.**

Q: It is assumed that Meridian Township will provide access to the existing CMS backend to facilitate structured content extraction, metadata retrieval, and smooth migration planning. Please confirm.

- **A: Yes.**

Q: Can the Township confirm the format of the exportable data to be migrated, such as XML, JSON, SQL database, APIs, etc.?

- **A: We don't have this information.**

Q: What is the approximate size of the data that needs to be migrated?

- **A: We don't have this answer. Only our current vendor can see our data size.**

Q: Are there any third-party APIs that the new website needs to integrate with at launch? (Assuming that the current third-party integrations are User Way and Constant Contact.)

- **A: We would also like the ability to link our various social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor.**

Q: Is there any specific UI/UX-related expectation from the Township? Would they prefer a theme-based design framework (leveraging pre-built themes) or a fully customdesigned interface tailored to their brand?

- **A: We acknowledge that many vendors use theme-based design frameworks and can accept these for the website if Meridian Township brand standards (colors, logos, imagery) can be applied.**

Q: Apart from standard CMS backend features, is there any specific feature requirement that the Township is expecting from the Admin Panel?

- **A: Not that I can think of.**

Q: What are the different User Groups expected to access the Admin Panel? Will there be access restrictions for any specific Module/Category/Feature set?

- **A: User groups will be applied by department – 13 departments, as well as superuser accounts with full website access. According to the needs of a specific department, restrictions can apply to categories (also set to department), features, and modules.**

Q: Has the Township identified any specific pain points with the current implementation?

- **A: The main complaint about Meridian Township's website is its searchability and navigability, with many users reporting that they are unable to find the content they need. These pain points apply to the website structure and the search function within the website. We receive few other concerns about the website.**

Q: Is there any preferred choice of technology for site development?

- **A: No, there is no preferred choice for technology for site development.**

Q: Could you kindly confirm if some of the content pages are intentionally hidden or not directly accessible from the public-facing site?

- **A: Some of the content pages are intentionally hidden and not directly accessible from the public-facing site. That was in place before I took this position, so I'm not sure why they did that.**

Q: Would it be possible to receive either: Full backend access to the CMS (even in a read-only mode), or An export of the full sitemap or URL list from your current CMS?

- **A: They would be able to provide a full sitemap to you.**

Q: I noticed on your website that the Proposal Due Date for the Website Redesign RFP has changed from May 16th to May 23rd. Have there been any addendums posted or any changes in scope to the project? I assume it may be because other vendors have asked for additional time, but I wanted to confirm to ensure we respond to the proper scope and areas of focus for you and the Township.

- **A: Yes, we extended the due date by one week. We are currently in FEMA's public information officer training class, which runs this entire week and lasts the whole day, so we've had limited access to our email. Because of this, we wanted to extend the deadline, so we have time to answer vendor questions.**

Q: You mentioned a desire for fuzzy search and better asset discoverability for administrators. Would you prefer a search experience that supports filtering by content type and department, or are there specific user journeys (e.g. find permit form, locate zoning official) we should tailor search facets around from day one?

- **A: We would prefer a search experience that supports filtering by content type and department.**

Q: Since over 40 admin users will be editing content across departments, would you like us to implement predefined editorial roles with workflow queues (Draft → Review → Publish), or do you envision different/specific permissions per department (e.g. Communications vs Parks)?

- **A: Yes, we would like to implement predefined editorial roles with workflow queues.**

Q: You've noted the need to preserve old URLs and remove outdated content. Would it be helpful for us to build a 301 redirect dashboard and automated content audit tool to identify duplicate pages and broken links throughout the migration process?

- **A: Yes, I think having a 301 redirect would be helpful.**

Q: You mentioned including residents, businesses, staff, and the Township Board in the redesign engagement process. Would you prefer that we coordinate a digital feedback hub (a few examples: interactive wireframe reviews, public comment surveys) or would internal workshops, or focus groups suffice for stakeholder alignment?

- **A: I think that internal workshops or focal groups would suffice.**

Q: Given your site's traffic (1.5M annual pageviews) and the desire for continuity during storms or outages, would you like us to simulate a disaster recovery failover drill during staging, and include Pantheon's global CDN metrics in post-launch analytics reports.

- **A: I'm going to be completely honest, I'm not sure what that means.**

Q: Is there an incumbent? Will they be bidding?

- **A: Yes, there is, but we haven't looked at bids yet, so we're not sure.**

Q: Is there any preference for local vendors?

- **A: No, there is no preference for local vendors.**

Q: Who built the current websites - your internal team or a vendor? If it was a vendor, who was it?

- **A: Our current website was built by Granicus.**

Q: If you used an outside vendor, how much did you spend on the implementation of your current sites?

- **A: I wasn't in this position when our website was built, so I'm unsure of how much time we spent on implementation.**

Q: Is there a plan (or desire, if it's easy to do so) to create more sites in the future?

- **A: No, this will be our only website.**

Q: What is the current CMS?

- **A: The current CMS is govAccess by Granicus.**

Q: What are some things you DO like about your current CMS?

- **A: I feel like it's easy to use**

Q: What shortcomings of the current CMS do you hope to remedy with this effort? What are some things you DO NOT like about your current CMS?

- **A: Our biggest complaint is that information is difficult to find on our website, so our focus is ensuring ease of navigation when people use our website. But that issue is because of the website's structure, not the CMS itself. One shortcoming is the limited design ability. We don't have control over the home page, so it would be nice to have access to that so we can change the layout if we want.**

Q: What sets firm/org apart from the alternatives?

- **A: Sorry, can you clarify this one please? I'm not sure what you're asking.**

Q: Who/what are the primary alternatives?

- **A: Same as above.**

Q: Are tables used for layout in the existing content?

- **A: Yes, we sometimes utilize tables in existing content.**

Q: What is your plan for editing/creating content during the redesign?

- **A: We are going to lean on the vendor we choose to assist us with the plan.**

Q: Do you expect copywriting or editing services as part of engagement?

- **A: No.**

Q: Can you provide examples of sites that are good models for what you want?

- **A: I don't have any examples to provide. We want the vendor to provide us with examples of other websites they've built so that we can see how they compare to ours and other municipal websites.**

Q: Do you have high-quality photography/media assets available for the new site?

- **A: Right now, we have to convert photos to different sizes when posting on our website, but we do have high-quality photos.**

Q: Please confirm that the awarded vendor will primarily work remotely, with regular web conference meetings as needed.

- **A: Yes, the awarded vendor will work remotely through the entire project.**

Q: Please describe the internal team who will be responsible for the website post-launch (developers, non-tech users, etc)

- **A: The main people responsible for the website post-launch are myself and my employee Rachael. She is our marketing and public relations specialist and assists me with the website.**

Q: Do different teams/departments manage their own sites? Or does one team own all web work?

- **A: Myself and Rachael are the primary managers of the sites, but we do allow a select number of employees access to edit their webpages.**

Q: We are a US company with some remote team members working from outside of the US. Is there any restriction on their ability to contribute to the project?

- **A: No, there is no restriction.**

Q: How do you envision the relationship with the developer post-launch? Do you need a maintenance contract to keep sites patched and secure?

- **A: Yes, ongoing maintenance and technical support is a must for us. If we ever have technical issues, we want to be able to open a support ticket.**