Online community platform development

Request for proposals (RFP)

Opening date: 30 January 2020
Closing date: 26 Feb 2020 23:59 GMT
Submission: Proposals should be sent to Joshua@isealliance.org by the closing date with the subject line “online community platform application”. Applicants should be prepared to start work in early March 2020.

Background

ISEAL is the global membership organisation for ambitious, collaborative and transparent sustainability systems. We support and challenge our members to continually improve their impact for the benefit of people and planet.

ISEAL’s headquarters are in London with a global membership base. Our members are voluntary standards and similar sustainability systems that meet our Codes of Good Practice and promote measurable change through open, rigorous and accessible systems. They include Fairtrade International, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council, Better Cotton Initiative, Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials and many others.

ISEAL online community platform

ISEAL’s online community platform is a dynamic hub of resources, news, events, jobs and trends for professionals who work in the sustainability standards, accreditation and certification sectors. It contains hundreds of in-depth reports, articles, webinars, expert interviews, sustainability news and events, and technical resources.

The platform is intended to be a one-stop-shop for users to learn about our sector’s latest news and trends and liaise with other like-minded experts working in credible standards. The platform serves two main customer groups with different access levels: (1) ISEAL members and (2) subscribers who have a more limited access to resources.

ISEAL’s current community platform is built on Drupal 6; additionally, ISEAL uses Salesforce as its CRM system, which is currently not integrated.
Platform development objectives

In December 2019, on behalf of ISEAL, independent consultants conducted interviews with a representation of the platform users – including ISEAL staff, members and subscribers. Although most users expressed basic satisfaction with the website, they also fed back a number of key challenges.

These have informed the following objectives for the new online community platform:

- **Interactive and more engaging website / learning management platform**

  Platform design to include an intuitive, easy-to-use interface, which allows different user groups (e.g., platform administrators, ISEAL staff, full members, subscribers) to complete tasks easily and quickly. More specifically the platform should:
  - ensure information from various knowledge resources is complete, relevant to the user’s query, accessible and up to date
  - include intuitive features that allow exposure to additional content that may be of interest
  - visually clarify and improve the accessibility of the site’s resources (e.g., blog posts, reports, guidance documents and frameworks, archived webinars)
  - have improved navigation and allow for personalised content
  - provide opportunities for curated learning, peer-to-peer interaction and knowledge sharing (e.g., introduction of online forums and other community spaces, online course offerings, etc.).

- **Flexible, easily maintained solution**

  The contractor should build the platform according to proven and accepted website development standards, whilst maintaining flexibility so the site can expand and new functionalities can be included over time at minimal cost. Solutions should be easy to maintain for ISEAL’s administrators and non-technical content creators, allowing ISEAL to streamline its business operations and increase productivity. Current systems used by ISEAL where greater integration with the community site is desirable include Salesforce and Mailchimp. In addition, the community platform should be able to reference resources currently hosted on its public site. ISEAL has been reviewing the information architecture of its public website, which is hosted on Drupal 8, focusing on an updated taxonomy for resource metadata. This taxonomy can serve as a model for resources referenced or stored on the community platform.
Scope of work

ISEAL intends the new online community platform to be more modern, including the pages, database of resources and associated tools. In addition, ISEAL intends to expand the platform’s functionality (including tools for community engagement and built-in analytics) and wishes to enhance the user experience and opportunities for knowledge exchange of its existing user member Working Groups and Communities of Practice.

ISEAL is seeking a technology contractor to design and implement, as well as to provide strategic recommendations for ISEAL in-house maintenance of the platform’s technology components and for optimal, ongoing operation of the platform.

Collaborative effort: The design of the online community platform will be developed through a cooperation between ISEAL and the technical contractor and will be facilitated by a project manager employed by the contractor.

Initial design guidelines and client engagement approach: The contractor should employ a data-driven design process to gather comprehensive information for online community platform development. The techniques should include succinct summaries of the best practices of usability and user experience and the proposal should indicate or outline how and when they intend to engage with ISEAL.

○ The technical contractor should review the user surveys and questionnaires conducted in December 2019 and conduct auxiliary interviews with ISEAL staff to validate the December 2019 survey and absorb and gather any additional information about the level of satisfaction, most frequent tasks and users’ potential goals.

○ Accessibility validation - the technical contractor should analyse the site’s current accessibility and establish recommendations for the design (validating or expanding on any existing recommendations developed by the independent consultants in December 2019).

○ Site analytics - the technical contractor should use historical site analytics and information useful to the platform’s development.

○ Recommended navigation and layout should undergo early usability testing.

○ Key findings report (ppt format) that can also communicate data-migration strategy or different options as well as Salesforce integration functionalities.

Strategy for in-house maintenance of the platform: This should include estimates of the amount of time that will be needed for ISEAL to maintain the site, taking into consideration that non-technical ISEAL staff must be able to update and use the site. It will also need to be easy to train new staff to use the site.
Timeline

ISEAL envisions an iterative project delivery approach with clearly marked milestones, with delivery of a pilot-ready platform by early June 2020 and the platform ready for public launch by early August. Applicants should outline the timeline and steps needed to deliver the platform’s key objectives and scope of work.

Budget

The project budget for the online community platform development services is £30,000 GBP. Based upon the responses to the RFP received and other considerations, ISEAL may modify the scope of work to best meet the RFP objectives and proposed budget allocation.

Selection criteria and qualifications

ISEAL will evaluate respondents based on the following criteria:

- Availability to start once the contract is signed, expected to be early March 2020, and evidence of ability to deliver on deadline
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience of developing, customising or otherwise implementing or working with online community platforms, creating / fostering community engagement and successful implementation of learning management systems
- Specific experience in e-learning integration and skilled user design
- Evidence of technical capability as shown by previous work
- Demonstrate successful, completed technology projects
- Strength of the respondent’s proposal (see below)
- Proposal is within budget.

Successful respondents will be able to demonstrate experience and expertise in the following areas:

- **Technical** – Development of online communities; e-learning integration; developing searchable online document repositories; user profiles and enhanced communication functions; attractive web design creation of interactive mapping features; relative ease of use of other attractive, interactive visual representation of data and documents; integrating online platforms with those of third parties (e.g., ISEAL’s CRM system Salesforce—which hosts ISEAL's compliance portal); approach to data and content migration; a simple and intuitive interface; and consideration of how best to reference our existing database of technical resources which is on our public site. ISEAL would like to see an emphasis on user-centred design.
- **Working Practices** - Creating compelling, imaginative yet highly practical user interfaces; identifying cost-effective and practical solutions within the limited budget of a small not-for-profit; flagging
major decision points and offering practical, creative ideas and options when required; good communication skills, framing technical issues in everyday language; excellent quality assurance systems for testing solutions and fixes before they are moved onto the live site and accountability if fixes/solutions are flawed. Post meeting reports or notes should also be written in plain English. Although not required, ISEAL would favour a technology contractor with a history of working with non-profit and sustainability organisations.

- **Remote Engagement and Collaboration** - ISEAL’s offices are in London. International applicants are welcome to apply, but ISEAL is unable to provide any travel expenses to the contractor as part of this project. Applicants should include interviews with ISEAL staff, including remote engagement where face-to-face meetings are not possible, as part of their proposed methodology.

**Proposal requirements**

Please submit a proposal that includes:

- **Approach or work plan** - Proposals should include a draft methodology or work plan (how the contractor will conduct detailed requirements gathering and analysis, including, for example, user/audience segmentation analysis, story boarding, and other activities relevant to the design and launch of the platform; design, technical build and support approach for a more engaging, interactive front-end and an expandable back-end with appropriate integrations and data migration elements. Strategic recommendations for the platform’s launch and ISEAL in-house maintenance. The work plan should support on-time delivery with clear windows and deadlines for the contributions required from ISEAL staff.

- **Proposed project budget** - As stated, ISEAL’s estimated project budget is £30,000. Please provide an itemised budget (table / spreadsheet) with justification notes for costs associated with the scope of work and/or a description of your fee schedule.

- **Bios and capability statement** - Proposals should also include bios of staff committed to working on the project as well as a capability statement describing past performance of similar projects, with links to completed projects. If the prospective contractor is familiar with Salesforce, this should be highlighted. Proposals should include at least references of former clients who could be contacted and are encouraged to provide links to and/or screen shots of completed project websites that demonstrate their capabilities for attractive and functional design.

As stated, ISEAL expects to start this project immediately after the contract has been signed, expected in early March 2020.

Short listed candidates may be contacted for an interview as part of the selection process.

ISEAL reserves the right not to accept any proposal submitted.