

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**WEBSITE REBUILD, DESIGN, AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

Questions & Responses

CalHFA received approximately 85 questions in response to its Request for Proposals (RFP) for Website Rebuild, Design, and Development Services. To provide the most efficient and comprehensive responses, similar or repeated questions have been consolidated into summary questions, followed by CalHFA's corresponding responses.

Question Groupings

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Budget

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Can CalHFA provide a target or not-to-exceed budget range for the project, including any first year or ongoing costs?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA has allocated a maximum budget of \$500,000 for this project. However, vendors are encouraged to propose solutions that are strategically scoped and cost-efficient, whether or not they use the full budget. Proposals should reflect the complete scope of work; value and effectiveness will be factors in the evaluation process. Vendors may also include ongoing costs as separate, optional line items.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- What is the project budget (or range)?
- What is the budget allocated for this project?
- Can you share a budget range (even if it's very wide) for the first year of this project?
- What is the anticipated budget for this project?
- Can CalHFA provide a budget target or range for this project?
- What is the desired budget range for the project (round numbers are fine)
- Do you have a budget that you can't exceed for this project? If so, could you provide that budget?

- Do you have any specific budget allocated for this project?
- Is there a target or not-to-exceed budget range CalHFA is working within?
- Can CalHFA provide a budget target or range for this project?

Content Management System (CMS)

SUMMARY QUESTION:

What content management system (CMS) is CalHFA currently using and do you have a preferred platform or a shortlist of acceptable CMS platforms?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA's public-facing website is not currently built on a CMS. Through this RFP, CalHFA is seeking proposals for a CMS that best meets the Agency's needs and is open to considering any platform. The selected CMS should be customizable, scalable, and support long-term site management by CalHFA staff following final delivery.

SUBMITTED QUESTION:

Subsite or Microsite Presence: Will the new CMS need to support any microsites or campaign-specific subsites under CalHFA's digital presence?

RESPONSE:

Yes, we periodically run specific landing pages for events or program promotions. We also had external programs that once ran on independent sites, but when those programs sunset we pulled content into our site: <https://www.calhfa.ca.gov/kyhc/>

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- What CMS are you currently considering, or do you have a strong preference for a particular platform?
- CMS Preferences: While the CMS must be compatible with AWS hosting, does CalHFA have any preferences for open-source platforms (e.g., Drupal, WordPress) or proprietary CMS solutions?
- What CMS is the current website built on?
- What CMS (if any) is CalHFA currently using?
- Preferred CMS Guidance: Are there any CMS platforms already under consideration or explicitly disqualified? Additionally, does CalHFA have a preference for open-source versus licensed platforms?
- Does the agency have a preferred content management system?
- Does the agency have a preference between open-source and commercial content management systems?
- Do you have a short list of CMS applications that you are evaluating, or a specific CMS preference (such as WordPress - plugin updates are mentioned - Drupal, or other license-based)
- Current CMS Platform: What content management system (CMS) is currently used by CalHFA? Is there a preferred CMS for the redesigned website?
- Does CalHFA have a preferred CMS for this project? If not, will CalHFA consider open-source solutions, e.g., WordPress?
- Does CalHFA have a preferred platform for the Content Management System (CMS)?

Website Maintenance

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Who is responsible for maintaining the current website and will they be involved post-launch or during this procurement?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA staff currently maintains the current website structure and content and will continue to maintain after project delivery. However, we are also open to proposals that include system maintenance as an

optional service, with clearly outlined costs. Vendors may choose to include this as a separate line item in their pricing as part of the ongoing costs.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Who has been maintaining the existing website?
- Who will be maintaining the website after go-live?
- Is there an incumbent for this contract or project?
- We know there are some existing web portals on the HFA site. Who manages them and how are they currently maintained? And should reviewing or improving those be considered part of this project?
- Does CalHFA have an active vendor who built and or currently manages the website? If so, will they be participating in this RFP?
- Does CalHFA expect to assume long-term maintenance and operations of both the AWS hosting infrastructure and CMS software, or is CalHFA seeking a vendor who can provide 24/7 support and maintenance after the immediate post-launch support period?

Content Migration

SUMMARY QUESTION:

What is the expected scope of content migration, particularly regarding the conversion of PDFs or Microsoft Office documents and vendor responsibilities for content entry?

RESPONSE:

Content ownership rests with CalHFA's Marketing and Communications Division. The scope of content migration will be determined during the discovery phase. While CalHFA staff can and will likely support the migration of content, we are also open to proposals that include content migration as an optional service, with clearly outlined costs.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Content Migration Scope: Can CalHFA confirm whether any of the 1,635 PDFs or 25 Office documents are expected to be converted into HTML content during migration, or will they remain downloadable documents?
- Do you have an estimation on what percentage of content will need to be rewritten vs migrated as is?
- What platform or technology is currently used to manage the existing CalHFA website content, including the 340 HTML pages, 1,635 PDFs, and 25 Office documents? Is there a preference on technology?
- Content Migration Scope Clarification: Can you clarify the expected role of the vendor in content migration? Specifically: Will the vendor be expected to migrate content beyond providing templates and guidance (e.g., actual page-building, metadata entry)?
- The RFP list 1,635 PDF's on the current site. Is there any expectation to convert any of these documents to web content, or will they either be migrated as-is or discarded?

Hosting & Technical Infrastructure

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Does the new website need to be hosted on CalHFA's existing Amazon Web Services (AWS) environment, or will alternative cloud hosting providers be considered?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA currently uses AWS to host its public-facing website. The proposed CMS must, at a minimum, be compatible with either AWS or Azure hosting, within a CalHFA-managed tenant. We are open to exploring alternative cloud hosting options, provided they align with our IT standards for security, performance, and compliance. Additionally, we encourage recommendations on technology stacks or infrastructure that best support the website's goals and ensure long-term maintainability by CalHFA staff.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Where is the current website hosted?
- Aside from hosting on AWS, does the agency have a preferred technology stack (e.g. .NET, PHP, Java, etc.)?
- Can you provide an overview of the current technical environment supporting the CalHFA website, including the platform, hosting infrastructure, and any key technologies in use?
- AWS Compatibility: Are there any specific performance or compatibility requirements for the proposed CMS solution to function within CalHFA's AWS-hosted environment?
- Is it an absolute requirement that the site be hosted on the Agency's AWS account, or are you open to an alternate commercial cloud hosting provider that will still meet the Agency's security and performance requirements?
- Does hosting have to take place on AWS? We've often found that we can find more affordable hosting options that rival AWS' security, scalability, modularity, customization, and optimization.

Multilingual / Translation Support

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Will the new website require support for multiple languages, and if so, what are the expectations for translation scope and approach?

RESPONSE:

Yes, we welcome vendor proposals on the most effective approach to implementing multilingual support—either through manual translation workflows, integration with third-party translation services, or other sustainable solutions.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Translation & Multilingual Support: Is there a requirement or expectation for multilingual capabilities (e.g., Spanish-language content) on the new website?
- Does the website need to support multilingual content or translations?
- What are the expectations around multi-lingual support on the new site?
- Does CalHFA expect multilingual support on the new website? If so, which languages? Also if so, will you provide a plan to fully translate each page, or will you rely on an automated tool to auto-translate the content on the site?
- Multilingual Support: Is there a requirement for the redesigned website to support multiple languages? If so, could you please provide details on the scope and expectations?

Design & Branding

SUBMITTED QUESTION:

Is there a desire for any refresh/update to the brand identity itself (or just the site)?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA is not seeking to update its brand identity currently but is looking for a complete website rebuild. This includes a modernized design, improved user experience, and full optimization for mobile devices.

SUBMITTED QUESTION:

Does CalHFA expect to adopt a standardized State of CA design system, e.g., <https://designsystem.webstandards.ca.gov/>, or is CalHFA looking for a bespoke design?

RESPONSE:

No, CalHFA is not required to adopt the *State of California Design System*. However, it may be used as a reference or resource. CalHFA is open to design approaches that best support the Agency's goals.

Stakeholder Engagement & Discovery

SUMMARY QUESTION:

What are CalHFA's expectations for stakeholder interviews, input processes, and communication tools during the discovery and design phases?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA prefers using email and Microsoft Teams for communication but is open to other tools. The number and scope of stakeholder interviews will be determined during the discovery phase, with CalHFA assisting in scheduling. Stakeholders will be identified as part of that process and will participate in design review and feedback to support iterative development.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- What is your preferred method for communication and collaboration throughout the discovery phase? Please specify if you utilize specific platforms (e.g., Slack, Teams, email) and your expectations regarding responsiveness and availability.
- Stakeholder Interview Scope: How many stakeholder interviews are expected during the Discovery phase, and will CalHFA facilitate scheduling?
- Can you define stakeholder in "Design & User Experience: Include at least one round of stakeholder follow up and iteration based on input"?

Accessibility

SUBMITTED QUESTION:

Will HFA be providing their own ADA guidelines, and are there any certification requirements to meet those standards? Also, is a third-party vendor required to ensure ADA and WCAG compliance, or would using one be optional?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA is required to meet WCAG 2.2 Level AA standards in accordance with California Government Code Sections 7405, 11135, and 11546.1. Vendors are expected to develop, test, and deliver an accessible website that meets these standards. CalHFA will conduct final accessibility and usability testing using internal staff and accessibility tools. While vendors may choose to use third-party services for accessibility validation during development, it is not required.

SUBMITTED QUESTION:

Regarding "Experience with government clients and accessibility standards", please confirm if the vendor can provide Experience/Reference details for Private sector clients?

RESPONSE:

Yes, private sector client references and experience are acceptable.

SUBMITTED QUESTION:

Is remediating and migrating PDFs for accessibility purposes within the scope, if so, to what extent?

RESPONSE:

Remediating and migrating PDFs for accessibility purposes are not within the scope. However, we are open to proposals that include document remediation and migration as an optional service, with clearly outlined costs.

Project Timeline

SUMMARY QUESTION:

What are the key timeline milestones, including launch date, post-launch support duration, and timing for user acceptance testing (UAT)?

RESPONSE:

The target launch date for the new website is December 15, 2026. CalHFA anticipates a post-launch support period extending through February 28, 2027. The timing for User Acceptance Testing (UAT) will be determined in coordination with the selected vendor but is expected to take place after design and development are complete and prior to final launch, as part of the final quality assurance phase.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Is there a particular launch date that CalHFA is striving for?
- At what stage in the development process does CalHFA want to conduct UAT. Is it after design only, or once both design and final content are in place?
- Post-Launch Support Duration: Can CalHFA confirm whether the “post-launch support period” referenced in the RFP is expected to extend from the target website launch date of December 15, 2026 through the final documentation handoff in February 2027?

Website Features, Applications & Tools

1. Authenticated Access & User Roles

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Will the new website include authenticated user areas or role-based access, or will it remain entirely public-facing?

RESPONSE:

While the primary website will be largely public-facing, CalHFA anticipates needing different user roles and access levels within the CMS, including administrative access for staff and potentially restricted areas for authenticated users. Specific authentication requirements will be finalized during the discovery phase.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Will there be any authenticated user areas, or will the site be entirely public-facing?
- Will Account Logins (<https://www.calhfa.ca.gov/myaccount/login.htm>) remain external links?

2. Third-Party Integrations, Custom Tools, Applications & Data Feeds

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Which existing tools, applications, third-party integrations, and data-driven features are expected to be redeveloped, integrated, or retired as part of the new website?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA currently uses a mix of custom-built features, some developed in JavaScript, ASP.NET, or similar

frameworks. These should be evaluated during the discovery phase to determine whether they should be redeveloped, reconfigured, or simply externally linked during the integration of the new CMS. Specific integration requirements will be defined through that process.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Will “widgets” like calculators and forms be revised during this redesign, if so, to what extent is anticipated?
- Is the Eligibility Calculator a tool that needs to be redeveloped for the new site? If so, could you explain how it works? It seems like any submissions just redirect to the loan program information below.
- Is the Loan Officer database a feature that needs to be redeveloped for the new site? How is this data maintained?
- Is the Lender Database a feature that needs to be redeveloped for the new site? How is this data maintained?
- Is the Loan Scenario Calculator a feature that needs to be redeveloped for the new site?
- How is the Housing Sponsor Certification data managed currently?
- Are Interest Rates updated manually, or is that data received from an external system?
- How is the Historical Rates report being generated? Is this a feature requirement for the new site?
- We identified some applications, such as the Home Loan Eligibility Calculator and the CALHFA Approved Lender Search, which are hosted under the /apps folder on the current website. Should the integration of these applications be considered part of the website rebuild scope?
- Third-Party Integrations: Are there any existing or planned third-party integrations (e.g., lending platforms, calculators, CRMs) that must be preserved or integrated with the new CMS?
- Can you provide a list of current or anticipated third-party tools and integrations that must be supported in the new CMS?
- Which third-party tools have already been identified for needing CMS integration?
- Can you list the third-party tools/APIs for which the site should have integration support (the part of the RFP is titled “Back-end & front-end development must include”)
- Third-Party Tools/APIs: Could you please specify which third-party tools or APIs (e.g., calculators, forms, payment systems) will need to be integrated with the new site?

3. Event & Calendar Features

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Will the new site include a built-in event calendar, and if so, should it integrate with Eventbrite or another event management tool?

RESPONSE:

Yes, the new site should include a built-in event calendar. If this functionality is not included within the proposed CMS, vendors should include either the development or integration of a third-party tool along with associated costs in their proposal.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- There seems to be a lot of meetings and events listed on the site. Would the Agency prefer to have these managed through an integrated event calendar which would provide easier viewing/management? If so, would the Agency still like to use Eventbrite to manage signups?

4. Forms & PDF Conversion

SUMMARY QUESTION:

Is there a requirement to convert existing PDF forms into web-based forms, and will the site need to support the creation of new user-facing forms?

RESPONSE:

The scope and requirements for converting existing PDF forms to web-based forms, as well as the need to support creation of new user-facing forms, will be determined during the discovery phase.

List of similar or repeated submitted questions addressed in the summary question above:

- Is there a desire to convert any of the existing PDF forms (e.g. <https://www.calhfa.ca.gov/myaccount/forms.htm>) into web forms? If so, how many of these might there be across the site?

- Do you anticipate the need to have the ability to create forms on the site(s) for site users to enter information for contacting, signing up for newsletters, or anything similar?

RFP-related

Here is a list of **submitted questions** and responses specifically about the RFP:

Is DVBE participation required?

RESPONSE:

Not required but preferred.

Would you like us to include resumes for each staff member?

RESPONSE:

Yes, please.

Would you like us to include references for each staff member?

RESPONSE:

No, not necessary.

What is the process for obtaining approval to include a subcontractor in our RFP response?

RESPONSE:

Include subcontractor information in your proposal, we will review and approve as part of the evaluation.

Remote Work Eligibility: Can the scope of work be performed entirely remotely, or are there any on-site participation requirements?

RESPONSE:

While it is technically feasible to perform the work entirely remotely, onsite engagement and collaboration during the discovery phase would be preferable.

Business Licensing in California: Does the vendor need to be a licensed business operating in California at the time of proposal submission to be considered eligible?

RESPONSE:

No. A vendor does not need to be a licensed business operating in California at the time of proposal submission to be considered eligible. However, if selected for the award, the vendor must be authorized to do business in California.

Exhibit B Completion: Does Exhibit B need to be completed and submitted with the vendor proposal, or is it required post-award?

RESPONSE:

Exhibit B (Service Agreement) is provided to alert all respondents of the Agency's standard terms and conditions. While Exhibit B does not need to be signed or fully completed as part of the proposal, respondents are required to review the agreement and identify in their submission any objections, exceptions, or modifications requested to its terms.

In your evaluation criteria, are any weighted heavier than others? (i.e. price vs. technical expertise)

RESPONSE:

The Agency has elected not to disclose the specific weights assigned to individual evaluation criteria. However, all criteria listed in the RFP will be considered during the evaluation process, and proposals will be assessed based on their overall responsiveness, qualifications, and value to the Agency

Can CalHFA provide any additional detail, such as point values or percentages, for the evaluation criteria listed?

RESPONSE:

The Agency has elected not to disclose the specific weights assigned to individual evaluation criteria. However, all criteria listed in the RFP will be considered during the evaluation process, and proposals will be assessed based on their overall responsiveness, qualifications, and value to the Agency

Can you confirm whether the Mortgage Access System is in or out of scope?

RESPONSE:

Mortgage Access System (MAS) is not part of this scope.

Other Uncategorized Questions

Here is a list of **other submitted questions** and responses that did not fall into a category:

SEO Performance Metrics: Are there baseline SEO benchmarks available from the current site that vendors should aim to improve upon post-launch?

RESPONSE:

CalHFA currently uses Siteimprove to monitor SEO performance. Vendors should aim to meet or exceed industry standards. Detailed performance data will be provided upon vendor selection to support post-launch improvement efforts.

What has worked well with your current website, and what has not worked well?

RESPONSE:

Because the current CalHFA website is not built on a CMS, it has limited flexibility for content updates and ongoing maintenance. While this makes it difficult to fully assess what has or hasn't worked from a platform perspective, we recognize the need for a more user-friendly, modern, and scalable solution. Identifying what works well and what needs improvement will be a key focus during the discovery phase in collaboration with the selected vendor.

What is important to you in a vendor partner?

RESPONSE:

Referencing CalHFA's Core Values:

1. Accountable – We are each responsible for actions, decisions, and quality of work.
2. Impact – We are committed to achieving equitable outcomes and opportunities.
3. Integrity – We behave with honest and ethical purpose in all decisions we make, and the work we do.
4. Respect – We treat all people with dignity and accept them for who they are.
5. Teamwork – We value the collective and individual contributions of our team and collaboration with our partners.