Exhibit A: Application Specification

I. Contacts
- Bay Nature Project Lead: Patrick Brod (Membership & Marketing Manager)
- Bay Nature Executive Director): Wesley Radez
- Agency Lead: Justin Chornenky (Chornenky Creative)
- Bay Nature Web Development Manager: Laurence Tietz

II. Project Overview
Bay Nature will modernize its existing WordPress.com site by replacing the current custom theme with the **Newspack publishing framework** and customizing it to meet Bay Nature's editorial and audience needs. This is a **theme modernization project** rather than a platform migration; the site will remain hosted on WordPress.com with its current CMS and database.

The project goals are to improve **mobile usability**, **navigation**, **content discoverability**, and **audience conversion pathways**, while reducing technical debt and ensuring long-term maintainability for Bay Nature's small staff through modern block-based editing.

This project is funded by a **$20,000 Google News Initiative grant**, administered by the Institute for Nonprofit News. In compliance with grant requirements, all Deliverables must be substantially completed and all funds expended by **December 12, 2025**.

III. Core Deliverables (Included)
Chornenky Creative will deliver the following:

Note: Many of the features described below are already supported in Newspack and WordPress. Bay Nature expects Chornenky to leverage built-in functionality wherever possible rather than developing custom solutions, except where additional customization is explicitly specified.

Newspack Implementation
- Select and implement a Newspack child theme (from the standard variations available under the Newspack parent theme) that aligns with Bay Nature's needs, and customize it to reflect Bay Nature's brand and editorial priorities.
- Ensure compatibility with Bay Nature's existing WordPress.com Business Plan hosting environment and maintain alignment with future PHP and WordPress updates.

Content Integration & Support
- Integrate Bay Nature's existing custom content types (Articles, Biodiversity, Base posts) into the Newspack child theme so that they remain fully functional and

editable.

- Ensure existing articles, posts, and pages are supported with new templates that approximate the current theme's layouts.
- Special sections will be handled as follows:
  - **Sea of Change**: expected to continue functioning as-is, with minimal adjustments required.
  - **Biodiversity**: must be relocated into the new theme directory; some adjustments may be needed to ensure proper rendering.
  - **Wild Billions**: created with the WordPress block editor and expected to port cleanly; these articles will be used as a benchmark to confirm compatibility between Newspack and existing plugins/blocks.
- Legacy content created prior to WordPress 5.0 (TinyMCE editor) may not render as intended; Bay Nature will preselect representative benchmark articles for testing.
- Preserve the distinction between magazine and online-first content through flexible URL structures, taxonomy, and visual labeling. Bay Nature and Chornenky will configure forward-looking URL patterns (e.g., /magazine/[issue]/[slug]) while maintaining legacy permalink structures and redirects to avoid breaking inbound links.
- Reuse Bay Nature's existing paywall functionality by importing the current functions into the new theme. Templates must support the existing flow (preview excerpts + membership CTA when locked, UTM master-key unlock, cookie persistence) to ensure parity with the current system.
- Provide at least two template types for migrated legacy content (banner and no-banner) plus up to three additional variations as needed to preserve formatting and keep content editable.

Templates
Article Templates (Existing Content Integration)
- Provide at least three template options to ensure all legacy articles are supported and remain editable:
  - **Banner (default)**
  - **No-Banner**
  - **Customizable Legacy/Edge Case** (flexible layout for older articles that don't align cleanly with the first two).
- During integration, assign legacy "no-banner" stories to the No-Banner template and others to Banner by default. Where needed, the Customizable template will be used to preserve layout integrity.

Article Templates (New Content, Forward-Looking)
- Provide 3–5 template variations for future publishing needs, drawing on Newspack's built-in layouts and customizing lightly as required. Examples may include:
  - Feature/Longform

- Magazine (with "From the Magazine" label treatment)
- Photo Essay (image-forward)
- (Optional) other formats identified during the design phase

- All templates must integrate Newspack's editorial features (multi-author bylines, social sharing, reading time, author bios, categories, etc.) and use modern block-based editing for staff flexibility.

Magazine vs Online Differentiation
- Maintain clear distinctions between magazine and online-first content through **visual treatments** (e.g., persistent magazine headers as currently used, "From the Magazine" badges, color-coded templates) and **structural cues** (URLs).
- Implement flexible, forward-looking URL structures to reinforce these distinctions (examples may include:
  - /magazine/[issue]/[slug] for magazine articles,
  - /news/[slug] for online-first articles).

- Legacy permalink structures must be preserved, with redirects configured as needed to avoid breaking inbound links.
- Bay Nature staff may update older content over time, but bulk reclassification or URL rewrites of existing content is **out of scope** for this project.

Member-Only Functionality
- Templates must support Bay Nature's existing member-only gating: preview excerpts + membership CTA when locked, full content when unlocked.
- Must maintain parity with the current UTM master-key unlock flow and cookie persistence.

Template Review & Validation
- Chornenky will review proposed templates with Bay Nature's technical staff using sample articles, to confirm formatting, paywall behavior, and content rendering before implementation.

Clarification
These templates apply to articles and editorial content only. Separate page templates for organizational/functional needs (e.g., About Us, Donate, Events) are described in the next subsection ("Page Templates").

Homepage & Navigation
- Configure and customize the homepage within Newspack's layout options, prioritizing modern styling, usability, and mobile-first design.

- Implement a more intuitive menu and navigation structure across desktop and mobile, supporting clear pathways to magazine vs. online content, membership, donations, and events.
- Draw inspiration from peer nonprofit news sites (e.g., Grist, The Narwhal, Sierra Club, KQED) for navigation clarity and usability.
- Enable up to four WordPress-native menus (e.g., desktop, mobile, category menus, dropdowns) to support navigation flexibility.
- Build the homepage and navigation with editorial flexibility in mind, leveraging Newspack's built-in customization options so Bay Nature staff can safely adjust colors, banners, CTAs, and homepage modules for seasonal campaigns or special initiatives without developer support.

Page Templates
- Ensure core organizational/functional pages (About Us, Donate, Magazine hub, Events) can be built and customized using Newspack defaults.
- Provide up to three custom page layouts if Newspack defaults prove insufficient for these core needs.
- Custom page layouts will align visually with Bay Nature's article templates and overall site style.

SEO & Structured Data
- Implement schema.org markup across the site (articles, pages, events) to improve search visibility.
- Ensure SEO-friendly URLs and metadata, preserving existing permalink structures to maintain legacy link equity.
- Configure GA4 event-based tracking for key audience actions, including newsletter signups, membership clicks, donation clicks, event registrations, and site search queries.

Grant Deliverables
In compliance with Bay Nature's $20,000 Google News Initiative grant (administered by the Institute for Nonprofit News), the following requirements must be fully implemented as part of this project:
1. **Inline newsletter signup** blocks available within articles and landing pages, configurable for placement (e.g., top, mid, end of content).
2. **Different newsletter signup messaging across pages**, allowing context-specific variations (e.g., homepage vs. article).
3. **Desktop and mobile push notifications**, implemented and tested at launch to meet grant obligations, even if Bay Nature chooses not to use them actively post-launch.
4. **Article/NewsArticle structured data** (schema.org markup) applied to improve search visibility.

5. **Internal links** that support SEO, recirculation, and content discoverability.
6. **Always-visible CTA button** (e.g., newsletter, membership, or donation), presented in a user-friendly, mobile-optimized format.
7. **Optimized mobile and desktop landing pages**, tested for conversion and usability.

All seven deliverables are required, tested, and verified at launch.

Audience Engagement Features
- Inline newsletter signup blocks available within articles and landing pages (configurable for top, mid, or end of content).
- Persistent call-to-action buttons (newsletter, membership, donate) integrated in header/footer and/or as a mobile-friendly sticky element.
- Social sharing tools enabled on articles and landing pages.
- Standard advertising placements configured as supported by Newspack.
- Events showcased on-site using The Events Calendar plugin, with page build-outs for program details. Registration and payment will continue through Bay Nature's NeonCRM platform via outbound links from event detail pages.

Stability & Maintenance
- Reduce reliance on legacy plugins and custom code by leveraging Newspack and WordPress core features; any retained plugins must be actively maintained, security-reviewed, and compatible with current WordPress/PHP versions.
- Provide a six-month post-launch warranty period (as defined in the Services Agreement).
- Provide eighteen (18) months of prepaid maintenance, beginning at project launch and defined/capped in Exhibit C of the Services Agreement.

IV. Shared Responsibilities
- **Taxonomy & Tagging:** Bay Nature will lead on content categories, tagging, and taxonomy design. Chornenky will configure WordPress/Newspack tools (including category menus and related plugins) and, if requested, provide guidance on implementation best practices.
- **Internal Linking, SEO & Recirculation:**
  - Bay Nature will manage ongoing campaign elements, including lead magnets, funnels, and email automation through Mailchimp and OptinMonster.
  - Chornenky will ensure the site itself supports strong discoverability and recirculation by implementing SEO-friendly structures, related-content modules (e.g., "If you liked this article, read more about bees"), and optimized search using Newspack functionality or an approved plugin such as SearchWP (license to be purchased by Bay Nature if required).
- **Newsletter Content & Messaging:** Bay Nature will develop newsletter signup messaging and content. Chornenky will support placement, design, and integration into article and page templates.

- **Analytics Data Sharing:** Bay Nature will provide Chornenky with GA4 analytics data (e.g., device mix, screen resolutions, browser share, traffic sources) to inform design, testing, and optimization. Chornenky will use this data to validate performance across devices and ensure the build aligns with Bay Nature's actual audience usage patterns.

V. Out of Scope (Excluded)
- Full visual rebrand or new design system (e.g., official fonts, colors, logos, or brand guidelines).
- New custom API integrations (e.g., NeonCRM) unless separately scoped and funded.
- Bulk retagging or reclassifying of legacy articles (>2,000 pieces).
- A/B testing, detailed user research, or in-depth funnel analysis.
- Creation of new microsites beyond the identified existing migrations.

VI. Optional Deliverables
- Future enhancements identified jointly and approved in writing as separate scopes of work.
- Enhancements may include, but are not limited to:
    - Additional article or page template designs.
    - New microsites or special landing pages beyond those identified for integration.
    - Expanded advertising placements.
    - Interactive maps, data visualizations, or other multimedia features.
    - Advanced site search functionality beyond baseline implementation.

VII. Acceptance Criteria
- Fully functioning Newspack-based site is live, accessible, and accepted by Bay Nature.
- Homepage, navigation, and article templates are implemented and tested.
- Newsletter signups, CTAs, SEO markup, and analytics tracking are tested and validated as operational.
- Content migration completed with banner/no-banner distinction preserved, and legacy content (including Article and Biodiversity post types) migrated into templates that remain editable in a modern way. Migration ensures the core content types and identified microsites function properly in Newspack. Bay Nature acknowledges that fixing broken links, outdated embeds, or isolated formatting issues carried over from legacy systems is outside agency scope and will be handled by Bay Nature unless separately agreed.
- Bay Nature staff can manage content and core site functions without developer intervention.
- All grant deliverables (see **Grant Deliverables section**) are implemented, tested, and verified as operational.
- All project funds expended by December 12, 2025.

VIII. Technical Baseline & Quality Requirements
Chornenky Creative will ensure that the site is built and delivered in line with modern technical, performance, and accessibility standards, including:

1. **Hosting & Core Environment**
   ○ WordPress, running the latest stable release at time of launch.
   ○ PHP 8.3+ or latest stable release supported by WordPress.
   ○ MySQL 8+ or MariaDB equivalent, optimized for WordPress.
   ○ DNS and CDN configured through Cloudflare (or equivalent), with caching and SSL/TLS enabled.
   ○ Newspack theme framework and child theme will be deployed on a version current and stable at launch, with all security patches applied. Major updates released immediately prior to launch may be deferred until after go-live if necessary to maintain stability.

2. **Plugin Standards**
   ○ Minimize reliance on third-party plugins by using Newspack and WordPress core functionality whenever possible; introduce additional plugins only when required.
   ○ Plugins must be actively maintained, security-reviewed, and compatible with PHP 8.3+ and Newspack, with demonstrated long-term support.
   ○ Any new premium/paid plugins (e.g., advanced search, events) must be pre-approved in writing by Bay Nature and licensed at Bay Nature's expense.
   ○ Existing mission-critical plugins (e.g., Events Calendar, SearchWP, Gravity Forms, Mailchimp for WP, OptinMonster) will be evaluated for continued use. Chornenky will recommend removal or replacement of redundant or unsupported plugins, but the final decision rests with Bay Nature.

3. **Performance & Security**
   ○ Optimize site performance following Core Web Vitals best practices, with the goal of measurable improvements on both mobile and desktop PageSpeed Insights scores relative to the current site.
   ○ Configure CDN caching, image compression, and lazy loading to improve page load times.
   ○ Configure scheduled automated backups with offsite storage and provide Bay Nature with access and restoration instructions.
   ○ SSL/TLS enforced site-wide.

4. **Accessibility & Cross-Device Testing**
   ○ Cross-browser support: latest stable versions of Chrome, Safari, Firefox, and Edge.

- Cross-device optimization: desktop, tablet, and mobile, tested at common resolutions (e.g. 1280×960, 390×844, and others based on GA4 analytics).

5. **Analytics & Monitoring**
   - GA4 tracking configured and validated for key conversion events (e.g., membership clicks, donation clicks, event registrations, and site search queries). Popups and promotions delivered through OptinMonster (including newsletter, membership, and other campaign signups) will be tracked if technically feasible within current integrations.
   - Google Search Console integrated to monitor indexing, coverage issues, and search visibility.
   - Error logging and uptime monitoring implemented, with Bay Nature provided access to reporting dashboards.

6. **Future Flexibility**
   - The site will be built with extensibility in mind, ensuring that future enhancements (e.g., new content types, integrations, or features) can be added without requiring a full rebuild.