

## Request for Proposals: Endangered Languages Project - Full Website Redesign

**Background:** Of the 7,000+ languages spoken on earth today, nearly half are in danger of falling silent. The [Endangered Languages Project](#) (ELP) works to celebrate and support linguistic diversity, and help slow the loss. Our mission is to provide a collaborative online space where the endangered languages of the world have a voice, and where *all* people can come together to share information, multimedia resources, guidance and community.

Launched in June 2012 as a collaboration with Google.org, ELP is led by an international coalition of Indigenous organizations, academic linguists, and language technology experts. Our current lead partners are the [First Peoples' Cultural Council](#) (Canada) and the [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Department of Linguistics](#) (US). We're a resource serving the people who work at the grassroots level to keep their languages strong - providing free training, reliable information, news & updates from the world of endangered languages, and a warm, welcoming space for knowledge-sharing.

**Project overview:** ELP is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to technology firms for a redesign of the ELP website, and the development of new features for this site. We are seeking a technology firm with strong web development experience, UI/UX expertise, and preferably a history of serving Indigenous and/or international audiences. We plan to select a contractor by November 30 and prepare the new website for launch by September 2021.

### Scope of work/deliverables:

- Redesign ELP website, both desktop and mobile
- Rebuild underlying database while maintaining contents
- Develop new site features: learning and knowledge-sharing platform, user directory, "help desk," assessment and planning quizzes, resource discovery system (see below)
- (Preferably) Provide ongoing technical support for site and database
- Develop new user interaction mechanisms, including commenting and discussion functions

**Further information on current site structure ([endangeredlanguages.com](http://endangeredlanguages.com)):**

- A structured database of language information, which displays a page about each language in the database (e.g. this [sample page](#))
- A collection of user-submitted materials about these languages, all of which are hosted externally (YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, etc.) and linked to language entries in the database (e.g. this [resources page](#))
- Mechanisms for users to submit language information (to be vetted by experts) and multimedia materials (to appear immediately on the site)
- A map and search interface for users to find languages and materials
- Built in Django (a Python framework), hosted at University of Hawaii

**Current roadblocks - why we need a new site:**

- Hard to work with - Django isn't widely used; major learning curve for any new programmer on the team
- Unclear audience/purpose in the current site design - a hybrid academic reference work/crowdsourced multimedia site
- Mechanisms for moderating user suggestions are clunky and buggy
- Keeps falling out of date - Django packages constantly requiring updates, site breaks down piece by piece every year
- Poor (and few) mechanisms for user interaction - Disqus commenting, but it's not used much, and hard to moderate

**New site concept:**

A collaborative space for resource-sharing, learning and information discovery, and user interaction, which is focused around language revitalization and documentation.

The new site will incorporate the existing language database and user-submitted materials, while making them more accessible and user-friendly.

**The new site should be:**

- Clear in its purpose/audience.
  - Primary audience: people (especially members of Indigenous, endangered, or minoritized language communities) seeking guidance or information about language revitalization/maintenance/documentation.
  - Secondary audience: linguists and people seeking general information and resources about endangered languages (educators, press, policymakers, the interested public).
- Low learning curve to use - easy to navigate and contribute to
- Easy to localize - clear mechanism for editing/adding PO files for site translations
- Ideally, easy to work with on the back end, e.g. for future contractors or student programmers

- Able to retain our language information database, but this will likely need to be rebuilt outside of Django
- Easily editable by ELP staff for text/content updates
- Relatively sustainable - we can't afford a total redesign every 5 years
- Designed with an eye to Indigenous communities' needs, preferences, and sovereignty over their own data (e.g. moving away from hosting materials exclusively on platforms owned by Google, Facebook, etc.)

#### **New features to be developed:**

- Improved resource discovery area - basically a CMS for articles, videos, etc. where users can submit and browse content by topics, tags, languages, countries, etc.
  - This should also include resource discovery for existing, language-specific resources
  - Current database structure requires all multimedia resources to be tagged to one (and only one) language - will need some tweaking of the database to allow resources with a more general scope, or those which pertain to multiple languages
- Revitalization self-assessment flowchart: an interactive quiz to help users assess the current state of their language, and discover relevant resources on the site (ELP will provide content for flowchart/quiz)
  - This will need some careful UX design to make it accessible to users of varying degrees of tech-familiarity and different cultural backgrounds.
- A revitalization "helpdesk", where users can submit questions to experts, chat with each other, and schedule appointments to talk with specialists via chat or video conferencing
- A revitalization survey (currently hosted externally on [SurveyHero](#)) and infrastructure to feed responses into the site's database, so they can be incorporated into language pages directly
- A "user directory" feature, where users can add information about skills they can volunteer for language work, and language communities can find volunteers
- Public health resource discovery area, for COVID-19 info in all languages (currently hosted externally on [GitHub](#))
- GOOD interactivity functions! A solid mechanism for commenting and discussing - preferably something that doesn't *require* a social media account elsewhere
- Changes to the database structure which allow some languages to be marked "not endangered" and displayed differently on the list of languages
- Keep the homepage map! It's one of our most popular and widely used features.
- A good, modern, sustainable blog system.

**Budget:** We anticipate a budget of \$100,000-\$120,000 for this project, but we understand that this may need to be adjusted after further conversation. Please include detailed budget estimates with proposals.

**Timeline:**

<b>October 14, 2020</b>	RFP issued
<b>November 13, 2020</b>	Deadline for submission
<b>November 30, 2020</b>	Selected contractor to be notified
<b>Sept. 2021</b>	New website to launch

**Approvers:**

The ELP Governance Council will vote to select the contractor for this project. Anna Belew ([anna@endangeredlanguages.com](mailto:anna@endangeredlanguages.com)) will be primary contact.

**How to submit:**

Please submit:

- A portfolio of your web development and UX/UI work, especially any projects for Indigenous and/or international clients
- A cover letter describing how you would tackle this project, including your approach to designing, the technical frameworks you work with, and any experience you have working with Indigenous communities
- Detailed cost estimates, with three different budget outlines for low-end, mid-range, and high-end development options
- Anticipated timeline, with dates for testing, feedback, and revisions
- Description of your firm's long-term support options and services for your projects

Send your submissions or questions via email with the subject line "ELP Website Project" to Anna Belew ([anna@endangeredlanguages.com](mailto:anna@endangeredlanguages.com)) by November 13, 2020.

***Indigenous-led firms encouraged to apply***

In keeping with the project's mandate, we would especially like to work with an Indigenous-led web development company, and/or companies with leadership from groups involved in language revitalization.