

Missouri Foundation for Health  
Request for Proposals

# **Missouri Health Literacy Enhancement (MHLE)**

## **Website & Technical Infrastructure for Health Literacy Missouri (HLM)**

2009



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## **Purpose**

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The Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) offers this Request for Proposals (RFP) to create a technical infrastructure for Health Literacy Missouri (HLM), a network of partners forming a health literacy resource center, serving the MFH region and beyond. The primary task of the successful respondent to this RFP will be to work with all HLM partners to: design, develop and support a new website; create a front-end user interface and integration with existing databases; and implement, organize and support the systems and processes that help information flow through HLM and to the general public.

The successful respondent will report to the MFH staff and form direct working relationships with the HLM interim director and all members and committees of the HLM Coordinating Council.

## **Background**

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MFH is a Missouri not-for-profit organization founded in 2000 with the following mission:

- » Identify and fill the gaps in the myriad of public and private health care services already available to the uninsured and underinsured in the 84 counties (plus the City of St. Louis) comprising the former service area of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Missouri (MFH region);
- » Identify and address unmet health care needs in the underserved populations of the MFH region as to which MFH can have a significant and objectively verifiable impact; and
- » Identify and fund health care program opportunities in the MFH region that can maximize the limited resources of MFH for the greatest possible effect on the communities it services.

Health literacy deficits and lack of awareness of this issue among providers, patients and society causes significant problems, including increased health disparities, suffering and death, and also results in increased health care costs. In an effort to address this issue, MFH developed the Missouri Health Literacy Enhancement (MHLE) funding program in 2007 to find solutions that will work in Missouri. MFH provided initial grants to the University of Missouri, Missouri State University, and a St. Louis-based collaborative headed by Saint Louis University

to begin work. From this effort, the MHLE Coordinating Council was created, with the goal of creating an interactive and comprehensive health literacy resource center – HLM – for the entire MFH service region. The Council, now called the HLM Coordinating Council, is composed of representatives from the three grantees and MFH.

HLM envisions a future in which the policies and practices of Missouri health institutions, together with an educated public, increase greater understanding of health and medical information, informed decision-making, and health actions and improved health outcomes.

The Council expects HLM to be fully operational as a free standing organization in 2009. To assist in that process, the Council is: 1) developing short- and long-term strategic plans; 2) initiating a statewide needs assessment and inventory of health literacy resources; 3) developing a health literacy curriculum for health professionals and students; and 4) developing a process to fund health literacy demonstration projects.

The next step is the design and implementation of an information architecture and knowledge management strategy for HLM. The primary objectives are to: 1) manage aspects of information and use of technology for HLM, and 2) develop a smoothly functioning public website as a portal for further dissemination of the Resource Inventory and health literacy information to providers, organizations, communities, and the public – key goals of HLM.

## **General Requirements**

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MFH is committed to assuring that equal opportunity is provided to minority and woman-owned enterprises, and that its contracting organizations have active programs for assuring diversity in their workforce and sensitivity to the issues of race and gender. No person shall be denied or subjected to discrimination on account of any services, or activities made possible by or resulting from an agreement resulting from this RFP on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, national origin, age (except minimum age and retirement provision), marital or veteran status or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical handicap. Any violation of this provision shall be considered a violation of a material provision of this procurement and shall be ground for cancellation, termination or suspension in whole or in part of any related agreement by MFH. The respondents shall at all times in the proposal and contract process comply with all applicable state and federal anti-discrimination laws, rules, regulations and requirements thereof.

## Services Required

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The contract duration is 18 months – July 1, 2009-December 31, 2010. The successful contractor will use the strategic planning guidelines related to this project that have already been established by the Council. From July 1-December 1, 2009, the contractor is expected to design and implement the HLM website, including developing the front-end interface for existing Resource Inventory databases. During 2010, the contractor will provide ongoing support and maintenance of the website, and develop additional enhancements as outlined in the contract and agreed upon by the Council.

Specifically, the successful respondent will:

1. During the first five months of the contract, create and maintain a user-friendly public website and information portal for HLM, and integrate the two databases as outlined in Item #2 below. This website has the potential to become a community of professionals and interested public around health literacy, and a national point of reference. This website, which is intended for health and health care professionals, educators, community-based organizations, the general public, etc., will display the integrated information from HLM.

The website should have a structure which allows for ongoing enhancements and new features to be implemented during the last 12 months of the contract. The contractor will help HLM develop and use additional Web 2.0 options, such as:

- › Online training capabilities.
  - › Video broadcasting.
  - › Blogs.
  - › Social networking and recommendation tool in the Resource Inventory (e.g., “people who like X also liked Y and Z”) and a feature that allows users to add their own ratings to resources (such as star ratings) and comment on the resources.
2. Develop and implement a front-end user interface, using PHP, JavaScript, and Mysql, to work seamlessly with the Resource Inventory’s two existing web-based databases – the Resource Inventory Database and the Resource Evaluation Database. The Resource Inventory is the primary database that contains records of bibliographic information of health literacy resources, currently numbering in the thousands, such as

books, curricula, websites, trainings, etc. These records have fields for select descriptive characteristics with search features. The Resource Evaluation database holds records of resources that already have been evaluated on both qualitative and quantitative criteria. Each of these records contains about 60 individual fields. Both databases were developed using PHP, JavaScript, and Mysql so front end compatibility is a requirement. Development of the front end will require the contractor to work closely with the HLM Resource Inventory Committee.

3. Conduct extensive usability testing of the HLM site and the Resource Inventory user interface, as well as seek qualitative input from intended users during the last 12 months of the contract in order to further refine the site.
4. Support HLM with database planning, web portal design, administration and analysis. Systems analysis should include usage statistics for HLM products, including portal page hits and usage by specified groups.
5. Have primary responsibility for website management, including updates and content maintenance as directed by the Council and HLM. This includes working with HLM to identify and work with a web hosting service.
6. Provide any necessary training to HLM and project partners to allow them to serve as secondary resources to update portions of website pages as needed.
7. Provide HLM staff and project partners with the technical capacity to post and update portions of website information in order to share and disseminate information and work products. This includes templates, standards, resources, products, end-user applications, and data quality standards. These are specific postings and sharing of information as designated by HLM.

Summary of Key Deliverables:

- » Acceptable HLM website live by December 1, 2009, identifiable by its own URL, and which allows new features to be added based on user feedback, need and at HLM's discretion.
- » Health literacy information website to serve as a single access point to HLM information for public use, health literacy data and education.
- » Seamless integration of the Resource Inventory and Resource Evaluation databases,
- » Web-based user interface for the databases with the following features:
  - › Universal design/ADA compliant.
  - › User-friendly "look and feel."

- › Multiple search and sort strategies using fields and search mechanisms present in the existing databases.
- › Users will be able to:
  - Register (minimum of name and e-mail address), and create a profile and “personal library” of favorite resources.
  - Comment on resources and provide personal ratings.
  - Participate in usability testing.
  - Suggest resources to add to the inventory.
- » Provide a web-based structure to support information outreach (e-mail, newsletters, announcements, training invitations, dashboard views of HLM data, event calendar, etc.), and provide social network building features such as, registration process that allows users to make a profile that can be shared with others, listservs or discussion boards, content pages for different audience subgroups, etc.
- » Methods for creating “channels” of health literacy data and information targeting designated sub-groups.
- » Information architecture integrating the databases, HLM intranet and operations of Council workgroups and committees.
- » Access through the HLM external website to the HLM intranet and other password-protected pages for a discrete group of users.
- » Data management to ensure accuracy across systems, applications and databases.
- » Sustained management of the HLM site and technology through the contract period.

In order to provide these deliverables, the contractor will work closely with all Council workgroups to identify information technology needs, provide needed support and technology services as outlined in the contract, and document and disseminate shared standards and methods for exchanging health literacy data and information.

MFH retains the right to all materials produced and to their publication and distribution.

## **Proposal Format**

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Proposals should be no more than 15 double-spaced pages, using no less than an 11-point font.

The proposal should include the following information:

- » Name of the consultant/firm.
- » Relevant experience/qualifications. If there will be a project team, include the names of all individuals who will be involved in this project and relevant experience/qualifications.
- » References from at least three clients/projects, with details of the work completed.
- » Description of the approach to be used to complete the website and related technical infrastructure, including a detailed timeline.
- » Description of project deliverables.
- » Detailed project budget including estimated expenses (i.e., travel) and billing and payment structure.

Respondents should use the following format in submitting a proposal:

1) Letter of Transmittal

A brief letter of transmittal should include the following information:

- » Respondent's understanding of the work to be performed.
- » Commitment to perform the service within a specified time period.
- » Names of persons authorized to represent the organization, their titles, addresses and telephone numbers.

2) Title Page

Each proposal must contain a title page that identifies the Health Literacy Missouri Technical Infrastructure RFP and provides the organization's name, address and telephone number; the name and title of a contact person; the date the proposal is submitted; and the time period for which the proposal is effective.

3) Table of Contents

Include a clear and complete identification of the materials submitted by section and page number.

4) Applicant Organization Profile and Qualifications

Provide the following information relative to the applicant organization:

- » Narrative identifying the applicant's experience providing technical infrastructure and designing websites.
- » Resumes of personnel to serve on the project team. (as an appendix)
- » Client references for similar activities, including contact persons, addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers.

- » Availability for the project, including anticipated start date relative to the time requirement outlined in this RFP and any other conditions that restrict availability to work on this project.

5) Respondent Approach to the Services Desired

- » Response to all items referenced in Services Required section, including a timeline and staffing required. Include a clear explanation of how the applicant will interact with members of the HLM team during the process.

6) Cost Proposal

List the following items:

- » Total of all professional time to be spent on this project.
- » Hourly rates for each staff member assigned to the project and the total amount of hours each will spend on the project.
- » Material and supply costs associated with creating the website and providing technical infrastructure.
- » Costs of any subcontractors to be used by the respondent.

7) W-9

A copy of the applicant organization's W-9 form should be included in the response. This page does NOT count as part of the 15-page limit.

The contractor will be required to maintain an equivalent level of professional experience on the team at all times as described in the proposal.

Cost and price information provided in the proposal will be held confidential.

## **Proposal Review and Evaluation**

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Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the requirements of this RFP. MFH will not reimburse a respondent for the cost of developing or presenting a proposal in response to this RFP.

Only proposals that meet all the mandatory criteria in the RFP will be given consideration.

A respondent's submission of a proposal in no way guarantees procurement by MFH.

## **Contractual Agreements**

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MFH will negotiate a contract with the successful firm following review, setting forth specific terms, provisions and all legal contracts required for the project as outlined in this RFP.

## **Timetable**

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Applications for this RFP are being accepted beginning May 15, 2009, with an anticipated award date of December 1, 2009.

**Application Available:**

May 15, 2009

**Application Deadline:**

June 8, 2009

(must be received in the MFH office by 4 pm)

**Anticipated Award:**

July 2009

## **How to Apply**

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Proposals should include one (1) original and two (2) copies of the materials listed in the *Proposal Format* section on page 5.

Any proposals without the required items will not be accepted for review.

Proposals must be mailed or hand-delivered to MFH offices – no faxed or e-mailed proposals will be accepted. Mailed applications can be sent to the address on page 9.

## **Right to Reject**

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MFH reserves the right to:

- » Reject any or all proposals submitted.
- » Request additional information from any or all respondents.
- » Conduct discussions with respondents for the purpose of clarification to assure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the solicitation requirements.
- » Negotiate modifications to a respondent's proposal prior to final award for the purpose of obtaining best and final offers.

- » Approve subcontractors proposed or utilized in carrying out the scope of the work.

## **Inquiries**

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Direct all inquiries about the RFP process to Thomas Adams, Program Officer, at 314.345.5534 (toll-free at 800.655.5560) or tadams@mffh.org.

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