Request for Proposal

Development of Digital Library System for Civil Society Organization

RFP No: MSP-2022-07-SP013
July 2022

The Asia Foundation’s Thailand Office seeks the services of a qualified and reputable contractor to support the USAID and Australia Mekong Safeguards Program (“Mekong Safeguards”) with the design and deployment of a digital library system for a civil society organization (CSO) located in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. The digital library will serve as a repository of information, data, research, publications, and other material related to the preservation of the Mekong River.

Background

The USAID and Australia Mekong Safeguards Program is a five-year (2018–2023) activity supporting policymakers, government regulators, major financiers, developers, contractors, and communities with technical assistance, knowledge, and tools to foster consistent application of strengthened environmental and social governance standards, particularly for the energy, transport, and water sectors. Administered by The Asia Foundation and funded by the United States Agency for International Development and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the program helps operationalize the vision of sustainable infrastructure development that Lower Mekong countries have put forward in their respective national green-growth strategies and regional platforms.

Mekong Safeguards initiated discussions with CSOs in Chiang Rai in 2020 and started scoping activities in March 2021 as part of stakeholder engagement to support Mekong communities. The goal is to support the CSOs’ plan to promote awareness of the various impacts on the Mekong River, notably river-widening activities, youth education, and advocacy for regulatory improvements at the local, regional, and national levels. After several meetings in November 2021, January, and March 2022, the program identified and confirmed support to the CSO in developing a digital library and integrating the library into the existing platform.

Objective

This request for proposal (RFP) is to support the development of a digital library which will serve as a knowledge base and repository of information, publications, and research pertaining to the Mekong River. The digital library will help targeted CSOs to disseminate information to a younger generation to promote understanding, awareness, and a sense of belonging and connection between people, livelihoods, culture and traditions, and the Mekong River’s ecosystem and ecology. The system will be integrated as a module under the CSO’s existing platform.
**Audience**

The digital library will be designed to provide information access by a general audience with local CSOs, communities, and academics as the main audience, but will also be accessible by a broader audience ranging from local governments, USAID, U.S., and Australian government audiences, to regional, national, and local stakeholders in the Mekong Subregion.

**Key Functions**

The digital library is intended to serve as a platform for the general public to access information relevant to the CSO’s work, the protection of Mekong River ecosystems and ecology, and Mekong community livelihoods. Suggested key functions are listed below, and confirmation of system functionality will be subject to consultation with Mekong Safeguards staff.

**User interfaces and permissions:**
- The system should support at least three (3) user-friendly interfaces: general users, librarians, and system administrators. General users access the system for information while librarians manage the object collection by adding new objects, cataloging, and object deletion. The system administrators oversee, maintain, and troubleshoot the system. Relating to the user interface is user permissions, authentication, and user account management. The system should support appropriate functionalities for each user type. Permission should also support different classifications of general users in addition to librarians and system administrators.

**Object management**
- The system should have the ability to manage objects stored in the repository. Object management includes but is not limited to inputting objects into the system, cataloging and indexing objects, searching and retrieving objects, and removing objects from the system. To enhance a user’s ability to retrieve information, the system should include a search interface, allow multiple criteria, and make use of metadata.

**Other features**
- As a repository, the system should be flexible for expansion and contain sufficient storage capacity for current and future needs.
- The system should be compatible across devices, operating systems, and web browsers.
- The system design should include consideration of copyright and licensing.

**Development Requirements and Application Platform**

The digital library will be accessible through web browsers and mobile devices. Application development for mobile devices (Android and iOS) is necessary.

The digital library will likely be integrated into the CSO’s existing website. Depending on the architecture of the system, involvement in designing the landing page may be needed. The contractor should present several options for implementation of the digital library with associated pros and cons, including options for a cloud-based platform. The key is to enable seamless operation within the existing environment and ensure ease of use.
Development of the digital library will adhere to the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC). Any applicable SDLC model can be used. Further detail of the digital system structure, information architecture, and content will be given to the contractor after contract execution. The contractor will be encouraged to propose design ideas, functionality, and configurations based on experience and best practices. Throughout development, the contractor is free to discuss and suggest possible changes to any guidance provided by the Foundation.

During the planning phase, the contractor should clearly understand the goals and objectives of the digital library. The contractor may build the application in their own environment during the development phase but will install the completed product on the platform designated by the Foundation and will provide full testing and quality assurance in its final location.

**Hosting**

Cloud hosting is preferred, but the contractor could propose alternative solutions that integrate well with the CSO’s existing platform. Hosting services will be selected and funded by The Asia Foundation. The contractor is required to provide hosting for use during development and testing. The contractor will be required to carry out the necessary configurations on the host to install and test a functioning copy of their application and platform onto the host.

**Training, Documentation, and Technical Support Requirements**

As part of this contracted work, the contractor is expected to develop a user manual and provide training to the appropriate personnel for each user classification, particularly for librarians and system administrators. This is to be achieved via live training as well as written resource materials. The contractor will provide written technical documentation of the finished digital library application, including descriptions of all modules, fields, databases, code, configurations, customizations done to the core application platform, and all other elements that must be understood by any application developer that is called upon in the future to modify or maintain the application.

After the digital library is completed, the contractor will arrange testing session(s) with relevant stakeholders as designated by the Foundation. The Asia Foundation will provide approval of the system’s readiness for launch after addressing all technical problems and/or bugs. Once approved for launch, the contractor will arrange training session(s) with relevant groups as designated by the Foundation and remain available to aid and repair any technical problems with the functions that were within the scope of the agreed-upon contract at no additional fee for a period of 60 calendar days. Training should include three (3) sessions for general users, one (1) session each for the librarians and system administrators, and one (1) optional session for any additional user classification.

**Design and Communications**

The contractor will be responsible for providing mockups of three (3) options for the visual look and graphic design elements of the digital library interfaces. The Asia Foundation will select one and indicate any desired changes to that design. Based on that input, the contractor will create and submit a mockup of the final graphic design for approval.

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The contractor is required to hold weekly meetings unless otherwise indicated by The Asia Foundation, where progress, necessary inputs, and other issues are discussed. Weekly meetings may be attended by a representative from the targeted CSO. Ongoing communication is encouraged as needed to clarify or provide guidance from the Foundation to the contractor.

**Required Compliance**

The digital library under this RFP is funded in part by USAID and DFAT, and it must meet certain compliance requirements. Full guidance will be given to the developer and includes but is not limited to:

- Compliance with items under [Section 508](#), including requirements that all images be coded with alt text; each page should contain an invisible “skip navigation” hyperlink in its header that links to an anchor tag on the same page that is located at the top of the main content block on that page; etc.
- Compliance with USAID-branding standards. The USAID Graphic Standards Manual and Partner Co-Branding Guide (February 2020 revision) are available [here](#).
- DFAT branding guidelines are available [here](#).

**Travel**

Travel for in-person meetings, system deployment, and/or training at Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand, is expected as part of the digital library development. The contractor will be responsible for any travel and accommodation arrangements and should include travel costs in the proposal. Travel is estimated to be six trips per below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Trips</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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**Timeline and Deliverables**

Duration of the work under this RFP is estimated to be four (4) months (*tentatively July 2022-November 2022*), including training activities. The contractor is expected to start the work within one (1) week of contract execution and participate in weekly progress meetings to be arranged at dates and times under consultation with Asia Foundation and CSO representatives. The table below provides an indicative timeframe for principal activities and deliverables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Deliverable</th>
<th>Tentative completion date</th>
<th>Suggested % of total contract</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial kick-off meeting for requirement gathering and planning</td>
<td>1 week after selection</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deliverable</strong>: Meeting notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop system designs and solutions</td>
<td>4 weeks after kick-off</td>
<td>10%</td>
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### Deliverables:
- Proposed application/solution architecture including features/functionalities
- Three options for design mockups/interfaces

Finalize system design and solution submitted for approval

**Deliverables:**
- Final application/solution architecture
- Final design mockups interfaces

Development completed and fully functional on test environment for testing by Asia Foundation and CSO representatives (including upload of initial content)

**Deliverable:** Digital library in testing environment

**System Training**

**Deliverables:**
- User manuals for each user classifications
- Training materials

Deployment of system to final platform for final testing

**Deliverable:**
- Digital library in the final environment
- Bug fixes report

**System Launch**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Milestone</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development completed and fully functional on test environment for testing by Asia Foundation and CSO representatives (including upload of initial content)</td>
<td>6 weeks after kick-off</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development completed and fully functional on test environment for testing by Asia Foundation and CSO representatives (including upload of initial content)</td>
<td>10 weeks after kick-off</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deployment of system to final platform for final testing</td>
<td>Between weeks 10 – 12 after kick-off</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deployment of system to final platform for final testing</td>
<td>12 weeks after kick-off</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>System Launch</td>
<td>Within 4 months after kick-off</td>
<td>20%</td>
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### How to apply:

Interested and qualified service providers must submit proposals (including technical qualifications and financial proposals) in electronic format only to Mekong.Safeguards@asiafoundation.org by **July 29, 2022, 5:00 pm Bangkok time**. The email subject title must include “Submission of RFP No.: MSP-2022-07-SP013”

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment, nor does it commit Mekong Safeguards, The Asia Foundation, USAID, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or any of its funding partners to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of applications. Further, Mekong Safeguards Program reserves the right to reject any or all applications received. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant, and all preparation and submission costs are at the applicant’s expense.

Award of the contract resulting from this RFP will be based upon the most responsive organization/company whose offer will be the most advantageous for Mekong Safeguards as specified in this RFP. The Asia Foundation will issue a service agreement or contract following its internal policies and procedures and applicable donor regulations. Payments will be made as per the agreed schedule, which will be negotiated and finalized before signing the agreement/contract.
The Asia Foundation reserves the right to:

1. Reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential bidder.
2. Accept other than the lowest-priced offer.
3. Conduct discussions with the applicant for the purpose of obtaining “best and final offers.” To obtain the best and final offers from bidders, the Foundation may do one or more of the following: Enter pre-selection negotiations, schedule oral presentations, and request revised proposals.