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June 5, 2025

Addendum 2

Request for Proposals # 25-15-212956

Corporate Website Services

This addendum is issued is to (1) extend the closing date for this solicitation, (2) summarize the pre-proposal conference held on Tuesday June 3, 2025, and (3) provide further clarification by answering questions pertaining to this RFP. ARRC intends to issue another addendum to address questions that have already been received, but are not addressed in this addendum.

Closing Date

The closing date for this RFP **has** changed. Proposals will be received until June 26, 2025 at 3:00 PM local time (AKDT).

Pre-proposal Conference Summary

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) is inviting proposals from vendors to modernize its website, with a focus on enhancing user experience (UX) and updating underlying technologies.

- The project involves enhancing the User Interface (UI) and replacing the existing booking module
- Vendors will assist in selecting technologies and hosing platforms
- Most content on the currant site already exists; minimal rewriting is expected
- Wireframes serve as a starting point for design, focusing on passenger service initially
- The project timeline is flexible, prioritizing quality over strict deadlines
- Current systems include a custom booking module and a travel trade partner portal
- Future enhancements may include adding package bookings and integrating chat functionality
- The demonstration phase allows vendors to showcase their capabilities and relevant projects
- User Acceptance (UA) testing will involve the passenger services team and utilize automated testing tools

Questions & Answers

About the Project Budget and Timeline…

1. Is there a date by which you intend to have the project start?
   ARRC would like to start the project as soon as we have awarded the contract, however, the schedule is flexible.

2. Is there a date by which the new website needs to be launched?
   ARRC would like to get the project done quickly, but realize that to get it done well ARRC may need to wait for resources to be ready.

3. Is there a target launch date for the initial phase of the redesigned website and the first stage of the booking module?
   As stated above, the initial phase to start the projected ARRC anticipating immediately after contract award.

4. Is there a budget maximum (not to exceed) or anticipated budget range?
   ARRC intends to answer this question in a future addendum.

5. Vendors have seen similar RFPs with budgets ranging from $100k to well into six figures. Where in that range is ARRC expecting to fall?
   Please see the previous question and answer.

About the Request for Proposals…

6. Is ARRC okay with a response that includes 2 Phases? Phase 1 being a fixed bid response including discovery, define, and design. And Phase 2 being a TBD for implementation based on the findings in Phase 1?
   ARRC intends to answer this question in a future addendum.

7. Considering the number of questions/answers, would ARRC consider an extension to the proposal due date?
   Yes, ARRC is extending the closing date for this RFP to June 26, 2025.

8. Does the Contractor Responsibility Questionnaire need to be notarized by an official notary public?
   Yes.

9. Is ARRC open to Canadian vendors?
   Yes, ARRC is open to international offerors.

10. Is there a preference for local vendors?
    Yes, there is an Alaska Bidder's preference. Please see page number 11 of the RFP for detailed instructions on how to qualify.

11. Is there an incumbent bidder?
    No.

12. Should hosting costs be included in the proposal or provided as separate options?
    ARRC will work with the vendor to select the appropriate technology and environment as part of the project. ARRC will pay for the necessary services and tools.

13. Conflicting proposal deliver requirements are provided in the RFP. Is the hard copy delivered by USPS/FedEx etc. actually required?
    A hard copy (original copy) is required to be delivered to 327 West Ship Creek Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501. Please see page numbers 11 and 12 of the RFP for detailed instructions on how to submit proposals.

14. Regarding the demonstrations stage after the initial RFP – can ARRC state expectations for this phase and the timeline for it? E.g., how much prep time would there be?
    ARRC will need time to review proposals and then select vendors for the demonstration stage (Phase 2 of the RFP process). The duration of that time is not definitive, but ARRC will work diligently to move from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of the RFP process. ARRC will provide a minimum of 7 days for selected vendors to prepare for Phase 2. ARRC expects presenters to elaborate on their written proposals, that may include a demonstration website. ARRC also expects demonstration of the project approach and methodology, and to answer questions from the Evaluation Committee during this stage. Vendor is not expected to demonstrate anything that includes data or content specific to Alaska Railroad.

About ARRC's Current Website, Vision, and Requirements…

15. How large is the website (how many pages)? And how many content types?
    Approximately 120 pages of content.

16. Is ARRC currently working with another agency or vendor on design for other aspects of its communications?
    No. The wireframes were developed with a vendor that ARRC is not currently working with.

17. Where is the site currently hosted?
    The site is hosted on premise in ARRC's data center.

18. What version of Drupal is being used?
    Drupal version is 10.3.1.

19. Is the Drupal on the currently a hybrid or headless site?
    ARRC's current use of Drupal is not headless. ARRC is open to the use of different technologies.

20. Please describe the functionality of any custom Drupal modules active on the current site.
Currently ARRC uses Drupal for the following activities:
- Rail booking
- Travel Trade Partner Portal
- Travel Trade Partner Registration
- Brochure Request
- Various simple forms (Lost & Found, Freight Quotes, Wetland Credits, Donation Requests, etc.)

21. Please provide a list of Drupal content types in the site, with the number of nodes per content type.
The site has HTML, images, and PDF documents. ARRC uses a variety of content objects, but does not expect that to be relevant to a future website.

22. Please provide usage data, or estimated expected traffic to the site.
In 2025 between January 1 and May 22, ARRC had about a million users. In the past 30 days, ARRC has had about 143k users.

23. Can ARRC share current website analytics, specifically peak season daily visitors and maximum concurrent users, for infrastructure and scalability planning?
Please see previous questions. ARRC intends to provide additional data in a future addendum.

24. Could ARRC please state how it see the partner relationship working beyond initial deliver? E.g., Is there a Phase 2 planned, and what kind of support or enhancements does ARRC envisage? With that being said, an implementation proposal as a Phase 2 does apply?
ARRC will evaluate contracting needs and options after the project is completed. It is expected that there will continue to be website enhancements undertaken, but whether those are done by internal staff or via a contractor is to be determined in the future.

25. Are all the functions under "Key Functional Capability" in the RFP currently available on the website?
No, some items will be new features. ARRC is hoping to expand the functionality of the existing site with the project, please see below.

CMS
- Multi-factor authentication. SSO preferred (future feature)
- Role based access controls (current functionality)
- Document management (options for version control/publishing) (current functionality)
- WYSIWYG interface with publishing controls (current functionality)
- Reusable content modules and templates (current functionality)
- Content integration for reservation system data required for APIs (current functionality)

Booking Module
- Rail Only (current functionality)
- Single Day Package (Day Tours) booking (future feature)
- Ability to book Motorcoach alongside Rail as a transportation option (future feature)
- Recall Option booking to review and apply payment to Confirm if booking criteria met (partial current future feature functionality for Travel Trade portal only)
- Recall Confirmed booking to Cancel if accept standard cancellation penalties and booking criteria met (future feature)
- Apply coupon code for applicable booking discounts (current functionality)
- CyberSource payment gateway integration (current functionality)

Site Performance
- Mobile-first design (future feature)
- Functional on supported, most frequently used browsers and devices (current functionality)
- Minimum response time meets industry standards (future feature)

Travel Trade Portal
- Login account password reset and forgotten username (current functionality)
- Booking search and review (current functionality)
- Ability to create Option booking (current functionality)
- Apply payment gross or net of commission based on agent type (current functionality)
- Registration form emailed to ARRC user (future integration with Salesforce) (current functionality)

Third Party Tools
- Google Analytics (current functionality)
- Google Tag Manager (current functionality)
- Cookie Consent (current functionality)
- Mailchimp (current functionality)

Future Integrations
- Salesforce (form integrations) (future feature)
- Click-to-Chat (future feature)
- AI Chatbots (future feature)

Miscellaneous
- Availability Calendar (current functionality)
- Various forms emailed to ARRC users (Lost & Found, Freight Quote Request, etc.) (current functionality)
- Address cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Pass cybersecurity penetration testing (current functionality)

Compliance Requirements
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA (future feature)
- Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) (current functionality)
- Privacy and Security Law/Standard (GDPR, CCRS/CCPA) (current functionality)

26. Are there plans in the medium-term to review the ARRC brand identity, and/or is there scope to look at some of the visual brand elements as part of this project?
No.

27. Does ARRC require the new website to support multiple languages or localization for internal visitors? For example, will there be a need for a Spanish or other language version of any content for the tourism audience, or will English-only suffice? There is no mention of the website requiring multiple languages in the RFP, so it is assumed I is only required to have English, but please confirm if multilingual support is anticipated in the future.
ARRC only requires an English website at this time, there is potential to have a multilingual website in the future, but is not within the scope of the project.

28. What payment gateways will need to be accepted?
At present ARRC uses CyberSource and would like to continue to do so. However, ARRC would consider changing if there were a compelling business case.

29. Which Customer Relations Management (CRM) does ARRC use? What types of interactions will need to be tracked from the website to the CRM?
ARRC is in the early stages of using SalesForce and future interactions are to be determined in later phases. ARRC considers the reservation system, Rail Studio, to be its main CRM as well.

30. Does ARRC need a contractual SLA for hosting (more expensive) or a best-effort SLA based on a 99.9% historical uptime (less costly)?
ARRC would be happy to review both options before deciding.

31. Are vendors expected to redesign both Passenger and Non-Passenger sections from scratch or work from provided UI concepts?
ARRC desires to redesign both Passenger and Non-Passenger sections, but use similar styling for look and feel. ARRC would like to use the provided UI concepts as a starting point to develop it into a final product.

32. Does ARRC anticipate adding e-commerce features beyond ticketing, such as merchandise or gift card sales? Should the proposed solution accommodate that potential growth?
ARRC has a separate website for its gift shop which will not be a part of this scope. Future e-commerce features may be considered and so flexibility and scalability are important. Potential gift card sales may be considered in the future but would require analysis of the accounting and reservation system requirements to achieve and support.

33. What are the data storage requirements (files, database, etc.) for the site?
    Files for the entire site is 7.84 G, about 91k files. Not all of these will be migrated.
    There may be additional content required to support additional features.

About Content Management Systems (CMS)…

34. What CMS is ARRC using for the current site? Are there any pain points with this
    solution that the new recommended CMS should solve?
    ARRC is currently using Drupal. ARRC seeks to implement a modern website that
    offers improved site performance, scalability, accessibility to support and development
    resources, and ease of use for content maintainers.

35. Are there any specific CMS ARRC is interested in for this work? Are there any that
    ARRC will not consider for the work?
    ARRC is open to evaluate any potential solution as part of the project after it is awarded.

36. The RFP mentions wanting a "headless or hybrid CMS" solution. Is there a specific
    functionality ARRC is hoping to accomplish or problem it is trying to solve with a
    headless or hybrid CMS approach?
    ARRC is seeking modernized technology for better performance and ease of
    development and maintenance.

37. The RFP mentions wanting an SSO (Single Sign-on) solution and multi-factor
    authentication for user sign-in. Does ARRC have a preferred software solution for these
    functionalities that it is currently using, or is ARRC looking for a recommendation from
    the selected partner?
    ARRC would like to utilize its existing Microsoft Entra accounts, if possible, but will
    consider other options. ARRC uses Duo for multi-factor authentication at present.

38. Can ARRC share API documentation for the Rail Studio reservations system that will
    need to be integrated?
    ARRC is working on preparing documentation about Rail Studio interfaces that it is are
    authorized to share. ARRC intends to share this information in a future addendum.

39. The RFP states that the selected partner should "Catalog and inventory required
    page(s)content and plan for refresh, validation and population within the CMS". Is
    ARRC looking for the selected partner to help refresh the content (i.e. new images,
    copyediting, etc) or will that be handled by Alaska Railroad's internal team?
    ARRC expects that a great deal of the existing content will be repurposed and some will
    be refreshed. ARRC's internal team will be available to work with the selected vendor to
    develop a plan for this content as part of the project.

40. The RFP states that the vendor should "design a modern, clean, and mobile-first website
    based on provided UX design and wireframes." However, the wireframes that were
    shared appear to be fairly thought-out site design files rather than just black and white
    wireframes. Given that, can ARRC provide clarification about the expected design
    exercise? Is ARRC looking for the selected partner to simply expand on the design files

provided, including mobile design mock-ups? Is ARRC looking for the selected partner to re-evaluate this design direction, and potentially suggest a different overall direction?
The wireframes provide a general idea of what ARRC is looking for, but ARRC is open to either option if it expediently produces a better website.

About Content Migration…

41. Will ARRC provide updated content or should the vendor plan for full content migration and rewriting?
ARRC desires the vendor to assist ARRC's internal Technology team with developing a plan for this, but expects a significant amount of content to be reusable.

42. What is the estimated volume of content (e.g., number of pages, documents, products) for migration from the current website?
See answers to the following two questions below.

43. How many non-structured content pages need to be migrated?
Approximately 120 pages of content needs to be evaluated for potential migration. https://www.alaskarailroad.com/sitemap is the location of our site map.

44. How much of the above content does ARRC estimate is obsolete and would not need to be migrated?
There are only a couple of pages that have been identified as no longer needed. Of note, the History page can be made into more traditional content, rather than the sliding page that exists today. Evaluation of the content with ARRC content owners is a part of the project.

About the Wireframes…

45. How true to the provided wireframes does ARRC want to stay during the design phase?
ARRC is flexible in considering alternatives and adjustments to the wireframes if it will produce a better website in an expedient manner.

46. The RFP indicates a user-centered design process is expected, yet ARRC has provided 58 high-resolution wireframes for layout and design. Please elaborate on how the provided wireframes should be used in the project.
The wireframes that were included were a result of a user centered design process. The wireframes should be used as a starting place for design in the project. ARRC is open to alternative concepts but interested in expediency (prefer not starting from scratch).

47. What is the expected balance between adherence to the provided wireframes (AKRR_Wireframes_April 2022.pdf) and the opportunity for offerors to propose evolved design solutions based on these initial concepts? Is the expectation for us to design the new site or use the existing wireframes with some slight modifications?
ARRC values the collaboratively developed wireframes and prefers to use them unless there is a valid business case that supports change. ARRC is open to revisions that provide clear benefits or return on investment.

48. Will a comprehensive brand style guide be provided in addition to the existing wireframes?
ARRC will continue with its corporate branding guide.

About Rail Studio API…

49. Could ARRC provide the full API documentation for the Rail Studio XML-based system?
Please refer to question # 38 on this addendum.

50. Can ARRC confirm that the REST APIs with Rail Studio can provide all the data we will need to implement ARRC's vision for the booking engine on the website?
Rail Studio supports SOAP APIs. They do not contain all of the information needed to implement some of the functionality of the booking module that ARRC hopes to have. For those items ARRC anticipates the need to create auxiliary data structures and services to provide the website customers with the information needed. For example, while there is a great deal of data around the add-on excursions for a rail trip, some of the metadata required, such as images and descriptions, does not exist in Rail Studio and those would not be provided via that API, but rather from an alternative source and method (to be identified as part of the project).

51. Does ARRC envision leveraging existing middleware for the required API and CMS interactions, or should offerors propose a new solution? Are there any technology preference for this component?
While ARRC does have some middleware that might be reusable, ARRC expects the bulk of it to require development. ARRC prefers REST/JSON APIs, but is open to considering alternative solutions.

About Third-Party Tool Licensing…

52. Could ARRC provide an overview of the various workflows within the Travel Trade Portal? Vendors are trying to get a better understanding of the needed functionality.
The booking flow for Travel Trade Portal is very similar to the public booking flow except clients are able to see their commission throughout the process. They are able to pay Gross or Net and in Option of Confirmed status. For bookings in Option status, they are able to recall the booking and change the status to Confirmed. Some clients are able to book on credit and so do not need to make a credit card payment to make a Confirmed booking. Other details were listed in the scope:

Travel Trade Portal
- Login account password reset and forgotten username (current functionality)
- Booking search and review (current functionality)
- Ability to create Option booking (current functionality)
- Apply payment gross or net of commission based on agent type (current functionality)
- Registration form emailed to ARRC user (future integration with Salesforce) (current functionality)

53. What third-party tools, if any, are used to manage accessibility?
ARRC currently does not have any tools for ADA accessibility.

54. Are there any other third-party integrations beyond Rail Studio that vendors need to be aware of?
- Google Analytics
- Mailchimp
- CyberSource
- Salesforce (future – use cases to be determined at a later time)
- Phone and Communications System (Future: ARRC is pursuing a replacement for its current phone system which may coincide with the project. There are potential integration use cases we would like to consider.)

55. Will ARRC provide existing licenses and administrative access for third-party tools (e.g., Google Analytics, Mailchimp) and planned integrations (e.g., Salesforce), or should these be factored into the proposal?
ARRC will pay for necessary third-party services and/or tools. Please also see the response to the previous question.

About Cybersecurity…

56. Will penetration testing be conducted by ARRC, or is the selected vendor responsible for arranging and covering the cost of this testing?
ARRC will provide pen testing for its website.

About Administration…

57. Will ARRC's team be conducting any User Acceptance Testing (UAT) (either through the vendor or independently during the development process)?
ARRC expects that the vendor and ARRC teams will conduct User Acceptance Testing throughout the project for both site content/usability and for integration with the reservation system.

58. Will single sign-on be used to control administration access to the site? If yes, please elaborate.
ARRC would like to utilize its existing Microsoft Entra accounts, if possible, but will consider other options.

59. The RFP states that the selected partner should "Identify and implement appropriate user account management and access control functions." How many users/editors does ARRC anticipate, and how many different user role/permission sets?
ARRC estimates approximately 15 or more user roles will be needed to cover the different account management and access control functions. There may be multiple users per role.

60. Regarding time zones, if ARRC works with a Europe based company, how does it envisage this working? And What sort of requirements/ideals does it have?
   ARRC works with companies in various international time zones, and is able to make the partnership work with flexible schedules. ARRC would prefer to have a standardized process for project management that uses collaborative software such as Microsoft Teams and issue ticketing systems.

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. **Please acknowledge receipt of this and all addenda in your firm's Service Bid Form (Form 395-0129).**

Please direct all responses and/or questions concerning this solicitation directly to:
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