



Request for Proposals: Website Design

Website Redesign, Development, and Hosting Service for VisitShelbyKY.com
ShelbyKY: Your Bourbon Destination® and the Saddlebred Capital of the World™

I. Overview

ShelbyKY Tourism is accepting proposals from qualified website design firms for the redesign, development, launch, and ongoing support of VisitShelbyKY.com, the official destination website for Shelbyville, Simpsonville, and Shelby County, Kentucky, to launch no later than June 30, 2027. The goal of the new website is to create a high-performing, future-ready platform that supports brand storytelling, trip planning, partner visibility, and measurable economic impact, while evolving alongside changing technologies, traveler expectations, and business needs.

The selected agency will bring demonstrated experience working with destination marketing organizations, navigating complex stakeholder environments, and building high-performing digital platforms.

TIMELINE

- Issued: April 9, 2026
- Questions Due: May 1, 2026
- Proposals Due: May 29, 2026 (5:00 PM EDT)
- Finalist Notifications: No later than June 18, 2026
- Finalist Presentations: Weeks of July 6 and 13, 2026
- Contract Awarded: Week of July 27, 2026
- Project Kickoff (estimated): August 2026
- Project Duration (estimated): 8-12 months, based on discovery outcomes and final technical approach

Click [here](#) to view bidder questions and answers. All questions should be submitted by email to mason@visitshelbyky.com by May 1, 2026.

STAFF CONTACTS

- Mason Warren, Vice President, mason@visitshelbyky.com
- Ethan Fisher, Marketing Coordinator, ethan@visitshelbyky.com

In the interest of fairness and to keep the bidding process transparent, all bidder questions must be submitted by email and will be answered publicly. ShelbyKY Tourism will not conduct meetings/calls/virtual meetings with bidders without making all questions and answers publicly available.



2. About ShelbyKY & ShelbyKY Tourism

Shelby County, Kentucky, with a population of 50,000, is located in the heart of Kentucky’s Bluegrass region, between the state’s two largest cities—Louisville and Lexington. ShelbyKY offers authentic Kentucky experiences, including bourbon heritage, equine culture, history, and outdoor recreation. ShelbyKY is Your Bourbon Destination® and the Saddlebred Capital of the World™. More information about ShelbyKY is available at visitshelbyky.com.

The tourism industry contributes significantly to the Shelby County economy and we are committed to strategic, measured growth that preserves our community character while expanding our visitor base. Hear from local business owners how ShelbyKY Tourism has supported their business [here](#).

At ShelbyKY Tourism, we take pride in doing good—and award-winning—work well. Industry peers and organizations recognize us as leaders in tourism and travel, and we continually push the envelope of what a destination marketing organization can achieve. Recent accolades include Best Use of Augmented Reality and more than a dozen awards from the Kentucky Travel Industry Association for excellence, including the 2025 Most Innovative award for our scratch-and-sniff visitor guide. In December 2025, we released our newest brand campaign—Sounds Like ShelbyKY. Watch the hero video [here](#).

[VisitShelbyKY.com](https://visitshelbyky.com) serves as ShelbyKY Tourism’s primary owned digital platform and the central hub for destination storytelling, trip planning, partner visibility and visitor conversion for ShelbyKY. The site, which is primarily operated by two core staff members, attracts more than a quarter of a million users annually and \$308,721 in attributable visitor spending in calendar year 2025. The site functions as a key landing destination for brand, content, and campaign traffic across paid, earned and owned media channels. The site also serves as an important performance and insights tool, helping inform marketing strategy, content optimization and investment decisions. Additional research on the ShelbyKY visitor profile and website performance metrics is available upon request.

3. Project Summary

We are looking for a firm to design, develop, and launch a new destination website that is modern, intuitive, and mobile-first; meets accessibility standards; is fast, SEO-optimized, and AI-search ready; uses an open, non-proprietary CMS; gives ShelbyKY Tourism full ownership and control; avoids vendor lock-in; and as ShelbyKY Tourism is a tax-funded organization, is delivered in the most cost-effective manner possible.

We are primarily interested in a new, modern, scalable digital platform to replace our current CMS (Simpleview/Granicus) while improving the visitor experience through better content organization, search, and itinerary planning, and enabling stronger storytelling. When done correctly, the website should support engagement with visitors just as strongly as local tourism partners (lodging, restaurants,



events, etc.). Though ShelbyKY Tourism will also be migrating away from the Simpleview CRM, our CRM vendor has already been selected, and the website redesign/development vendor will be expected to work collaboratively with the CRM vendor to build the site.

4. Qualifications

ShelbyKY Tourism's ideal partner meets the qualifications outlined below. If your firm does not meet all qualifications, we still want to hear from you—and why you think you're a great fit:

- Recent (within the last year) work with DMO, attraction, or hospitality website work
- Familiarity with the tourism industry
- Understanding of the Kentucky tourism landscape
- Ability to deliver a complete website within budget and timeline
- Commitment to transparent pricing

5. Scope of Work

- **Strategy & UX**
 - ShelbyKY Tourism has exhaustive visitor research on audiences, brand, KPIs, etc. Strategy decisions should rely on those data points. A summary is available at bit.ly/ShelbyVisitorProfile.
 - Stakeholder and user journey review
 - Review of current site analytics and SEO
 - Content audit and migration plan
 - Clear, intuitive site structure
- **Design**
 - Wireframes for key page types
 - Responsive, beautiful, and function mobile-first design
 - Accessibility-compliant (WCAG 2.1 AA minimum)
 - Aligned with ShelbyKY Tourism [brand guidelines](#)
- **Development & Technology**
 - Open-source or non-proprietary CMS (open to anything)
 - Optimized performance and load speed
 - Full ownership of all code, templates, and content upon handover
 - ShelbyKY Tourism shall retain admin access at all times upon handover
 - Vendor shall identify their preferred hosting system (hosting system or Vendor should provide daily backups and uptime standards)
- **Search & SEO**
 - SEO best practices (schema, metadata, semantic HTML)
 - Optimization for AI-powered search tools
 - Full URL redirect strategy to preserve SEO standing
- **Integrations**



- Whereabouts CRM
- Datafy (attribution)
- WhatsGood (events)
- Flodesk (email signup)
- Support for lead capture (Currently using an embedded Jotform; would like to handle this natively though the CMS or CRM)
- Google Analytics (historical data should not be lost in the transition from one platform to another)
- Social media feeds
- Google Tag Manager (pixels, etc.)
- **Content Migration**
 - Migration of existing pages, blogs, and events
 - Content cleanup and restructuring as needed
 - Complete redirect mapping for SEO preservation
- **Training & Support**
 - Comprehensive pre-launch training for staff (virtual or in-person)
 - Written documentation
 - Minimum 90-day post-launch support included in scope
- **Testing & Launch**
 - Cross-browser, mobile, and accessibility testing
 - Performance and SEO checks
 - Go-live support and 30-day punch list

6. Current Platforms

- CMS: Simpleview (now Granicus) – moving to Vendor’s recommendation
- CRM: Simpleview (now Granicus) – moving to [Whereabouts](#)

7. Budget

As a small destination marketing organization, ShelbyKY Tourism has limited resources to allocate to this project. Accordingly, the anticipated budget for this project will range from \$25,000 to \$50,000, inclusive of any out-of-pocket expenses and first-year hosting expenses.

8. Proposal Requirements

While there is no format or page limit aside from delivery requirements outlined in §10, please keep proposals concise and practical, and include the following information. Please do not deviate from this order:

- **Executive Summary**
 - Your understanding of our goals



- Why you/your solution is a strong fit
- **Team**
 - Key staff assigned to the project.
- **Recommended approaches and key differentiators for each of the following:**
 - CMS / Website Platform
 - Hosting approach
 - Accessibility and SEO/GEO approach
- **Artificial Intelligence**
 - Your perspective on the use of artificial intelligence in marketing/website development
 - Provide a copy of your agency AI use policy (if available)
- **Ownership & Portability**
 - How you will ensure full ownership and avoid lock-in
- **Project Plan**
 - Timeline, milestones, and communication approach.
- **Support & Service**
 - Training plan
 - Post-launch support structure and response times.
- **Relevant Experience**
 - At least three recently launched destination websites (live sites preferred; if live sites are not available, explain why).
- **Pricing**
 - Total project cost (including implementation cost, CMS licensing if applicable, etc.)
 - Phase-by-phase breakdown
 - Hosting and ongoing costs
 - Optional add-ons
 - Estimated 3-year total cost of ownership
- **References**
 - Three recent clients (ideally in the tourism/destination space)
- **Optional:** mockups, sitemaps, or site-specific insights. (The ShelbyKY Tourism brand book is available [here](#) for reference.)

9. Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weight
Design & Technical Quality	35
DMO Experience & References	35
Cost, Ownership & Transparency	30



Criteria	Weight
Total	100

10. Timeline

- Issued: April 9, 2026
- Questions Due: May 1, 2026
- Proposals Due: May 29, 2026 (5:00 PM EDT)
- Finalist Notifications: No later than June 18, 2026
- Finalist Presentations: Weeks of July 6 and 13, 2026
- Contract Awarded: Week of July 27, 2026
- Project Kickoff (estimated): August 2026
- Project Duration (estimated): 8-12 months, based on discovery outcomes and final technical approach — **final launch deadline is June 30, 2027**

11. Submission Instructions

QUESTIONS

- Submit all questions regarding this RFP by email to mason@visitshelbyky.com. Questions due by COB on May 1, 2026.
- Questions will be answered as they are received; all answers are available [here](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1CQyOANXEzT-yhSNSz4YhqZbyn5URulImhoU4ENZlmBU/edit?usp=sharing) (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1CQyOANXEzT-yhSNSz4YhqZbyn5URulImhoU4ENZlmBU/edit?usp=sharing>).
- Please include “RFP - Website Design Question[s]” in the subject line.

PROPOSALS

- Submit all responses to this RFP by email to mason@visitshelbyky.com no later than COB May 29, 2026 (5 PM EDT).
- All proposals should be sent as a single PDF with the subject line: “RFP - Website Response - [Firm Name].”
- Late, improperly formatted, or incomplete submissions will not be considered. If the file is too large to email, send a Dropbox or Google Drive link and ensure the file is set to allow external viewing.

12. Terms

ShelbyKY Tourism reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. Publishing is subject to Kentucky open records regulations. Submissions should not be considered confidential or proprietary, and submitting a bid does not guarantee a contract will be awarded to any bidder. ShelbyKY Tourism is not



responsible for any costs associated with the preparation of a response to this request for proposals. This Request for Proposal does not constitute a commitment to award a contract.