



VANCOUVER WRITERS FEST REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Website Redesign

Deadline: October 7, 2026

Background

The Vancouver Writers Fest (VWF) is a charitable, nonprofit arts organization. We offer free and paid events featuring established and emerging authors, as well as youth education opportunities. Every October, our flagship literary festival—one of the largest and most prestigious in North America—brings writers from across Canada and the world to Granville Island, where they connect with tens of thousands of enthusiastic readers. Our programming runs year-round, featuring special events with world renowned writers; the free Incite program offered in partnership with the Vancouver Public Library; the Books & Ideas series on Granville Island; an online Digital Festival; and much more. Annually, we invite over 180 local and international authors to events which draw over 30,000 readers of all ages. We also have an active online community, with 16,000+ subscribers to our weekly newsletter, and 30,200+ combined social media followers across all platforms.

VWF is guided by its mission: to connect people to exceptional books, ideas and dialogue that ignites a passion for words and the world around us. We envision a world in which the transformative power of books and ideas creates the foundation of an empathetic, inspired, and just society, and we are seeking a new website which will support this work through improved functionality, discoverability, and accessibility.

Proposals will be accepted until October 7, 2026.

Purpose

We are inviting proposals from qualified Canadian web design and development partners to lead the redesign of our website at **writersfest.bc.ca**.

This project represents a restructuring of our online presence. The redesigned website must be built on an established visual direction and planning documents, and clearly represent VWF's distinctive brand, purpose, and flagship programming while supporting our long-term organizational growth.

The selected vendor will rebuild the existing website through the development of flexible templates, responsive mobile layouts and behaviours, custom WordPress architecture, data management, and system integrations to improve site performance and deliver an accessible, discoverable, and user-centred website experience.

- **Simplify the content** so users can quickly find and absorb information, especially when it comes to event programming. The current site contains a high volume of organizational content, which has diminished clarity. The new site must balance comprehensiveness with clarity.
- **Improve the information architecture** to enable easy navigation and make event content discoverable by both users and search engines. The new site must strengthen relevant data interconnections while reducing unnecessary steps in key user journeys.
- **Optimize responsive design and website performance** to deliver a consistent, fast experience across desktop and mobile devices. The new site must support our growing media and content needs.
- **Improve website accessibility** to meet WCAG standards. Provide an inclusive experience across content, navigation, forms, and interactive elements.

- **Develop a sitewide search system** to enable finding event information by various criteria, such as names, dates, book titles, tags, genres, etc. Develop a global search box that leverages existing metadata and restructured information.
- **Develop flexible WordPress templates** to support diverse programming. It could be used in new events, initiatives, reading lists, and custom landing pages for marketing campaigns. The new site must allow certain information to go live at a specific date and time.
- **Enhance the visual experience** with dynamic effects and interactive elements. The current site makes limited use of visual media and has an inefficient layout that hinders user engagement. The new site must better convey the VWF festival atmosphere in an aesthetic way.
- **Streamline the ticket purchase** with a global “Buy Tickets” button and additional purchase prompts at relevant touchpoints throughout the site.
- **Ensure meaningful integration of third party APIs**, including Meta Pixel, Google Analytics, Showpass, Keela, Mailchimp, AirTable, and other system tools.
- **Enable basic form functionality** on the website for contact and intake purposes, while continuing to integrate with the organization's existing external databases and tools.

Scope of Project

1. Technology environment and integration

The new site should build on and improve VWF’s existing WordPress environment while integrating third-party services. The selected vendor should assess the current technology stack, draft a redesign, and introduce appropriate architecture that supports efficient content management and future development.

- The current site contains 95 pages, around 220+ author and moderator bios added annually, 130+ books in our annual festival reading list, 105+ events added annually, 61 podcasts, and approximately 4000 media items.
- Existing integrations include Showpass, Keela, Youtube, Meta Pixel, Google Analytics, WPForms, and Spotify Podcasts.
- The current site is hosted on DreamHost. The new site should be migrated to a Canadian hosting environment that meets performance, security, storage, and ongoing maintenance requirements.
- Desired technologies include Airtable, Google Tag/Event Manager, and other potential plugins or APIs.

2. Detailed UX/UI requirements

The new site should provide an engaging and flexible experience that reflects VWF's branding, festival events, and year-round programming, while remaining functional for ticket sales and fundraising and compliant with Google Nonprofit requirements. Interactive elements could be global to the website. The content should suit standard screen sizes across desktop and mobile.

Information architecture

The information architecture should be clearly translated into the WordPress templates, which accommodate the different content needs.

- Restructure the information architecture to create clear relationships between year-round programs, festival events, author bios, reading lists, venues, box-office, volunteering, fundraising, and other relevant information.
- Increase the visibility of year-round programs, such as Youth Education Program, Special events, My Roots, etc.

- Simplify the current content and redesign the hierarchy. Especially for information-heavy pages such as the Box Office, Accessibility and Support Us pages.
- Redesign user-oriented navigation including simple dropdown menus and shortcut pathways to key content.
- The new site should follow Google Event Schema suggestions, and Google Nonprofit web requirements.
- Include ability to manually set or rewrite shortlinks on individual web pages.

Content management

The Festival makes use of a number of content management systems (AirTable, Showpass), including Keela as its CRM. The new site should integrate these tools where possible and secure for the end user.

- Ideally, integrate Airtable with WordPress to streamline updates to events, authors, venues, programs, ticket status, etc. Support dynamic calendars and filtering.
- Schedule announcements and event updates to allow certain information to be live to the public at a precise time.
- Develop a News and Announcements section for other organizational updates, with the option to manage this content as a separated content type.
- Integrate an appropriate DAM solution for storing, organizing, managing, and delivering large volumes of digital assets (e.g. images, videos, audios, etc.)

WordPress architecture

Establish a structured content model in WordPress that supports the interconnection between different content types.

- Translate approved information architecture into WordPress content model

- Custom theme development or identification of existing theme fitting for the site development, optimized for performance and scalability
- Develop template system allowing team to create or update pages independently
- Create library of reusable blocks/components
- Establish a global metadata system for events that is fully connected to search functionality (both on and off-site)
- Hybrid approach incorporating a visual builder with limited content flexibility where additional layout is required by internal staff (for example, in building custom landing pages for venue guides, contests, auctions, or other promotions)

UI design

Improve page layouts to make more effective use of screen space. The new site should be more engaging through dynamic visual effects while ensuring responsiveness across devices. The layouts must consistently align with VWF's visual branding.

- Improve visual hierarchy to make clear pathway to key CTAs
- Add additional wireframes for key templates where needed
- Design interactive elements/components
- Add motion system and interactive behaviours to create a more dynamic experience
- Redesign site search and filter interface
- Develop mobile friendly design and behaviorOptional display modes (e.g., light, dark, and/or customized)

Temporary Design Structures

- Introduce an approach to integrate Digital Festival more thoroughly into the main website which allows users to view videos, buy books, and learn more about

presenters directly within a branded environment, rather than relying on links and pass keys to external platforms like YouTube.

- Establish a paid access process for digital events where required.
- Ensure multimedia sources remain accessible without affecting overall performance across devices.
- Ability to create interactive maps with landmarks for festival venues and event locations.
- Ability to create a structured and sortable “Reading List” for each year’s Festival books.

3. Project Governance & Compliance

Accessibility

- WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility compliance
- Semantic HTML structure and ARIA implementation
- Keyboard navigation support
- Alternative text for images and removal of text-based images
- Understandable information for inputs, errors, and unfamiliar abbreviations
- Reprogram interactive elements (e.g., accordions and carousels) to support assistive technology interaction.
- Descriptive labels, links, and buttons
- Appropriate page-specific anchors
- Colour contrast compliance, potentially including multiple display modes

Legal / Compliance

- Support the implementation of appropriate privacy, cookie, and data-collection practices for the website and its third-party services.
- Review data collection, storage, retention, and consent practices for forms, analytics, cookies, and third-party integrations
- Review the technical security and privacy implications of third-party plugins, APIs, analytics tools, and embedded services

VWF will retain full ownership and control of the website and its associated assets. The selected vendor should provide all source files, code, documentation, credentials, and necessary account access after development so that VWF can maintain the website independently.

Milestones

Work is expected to begin upon execution of a contract with the successful vendor, with a formal handover occurring **on or before a hard deadline of August 1, 2027**. The following represents the anticipated project schedule, with midpoint progressions having some room for negotiation:

Milestone	Target Due Date
Project Kickoff	October 27, 2026
Information Architecture and Technical Plan	November 19, 2026
UX Design and Wireframes	December 17, 2026
Visual Design	February 5, 2027
Website Development and Integration	March 19, 2027
Content Migration	April 16, 2027
Accessibility and Performance Test	May 4, 2027
Staff Training	May 14, 2027
Website Go-live	May 25, 2027
Website Handover Meeting	June 1, 2027
Launch support (maintenance phase)	May 25, 2027 - July 21, 2027

Technical and Creative Requirements

Proposals must demonstrate the ability to meet the technical requirements outlined in this RFP, including WordPress development, accessibility compliance, and CMS flexibility. To be specific, the following factors will carry significant weight in the evaluation process:

- **WordPress development expertise** - Demonstrate strong WordPress development expertise, including custom architecture, structured content management, third-party platform integrations, responsive design, accessibility improvement, and SEO practices.

- **Web Development Approach** - Clarity, efficiency, and innovation in website build and development strategy and use of technology.
- **Brand integration** - The vendor must work with the VWF's current visual guide to create a cohesive, visually compelling website.
- **User experience** - The site must be intuitive and easy to navigate for a broad audience, including first-time visitors, long-time attendees, volunteers, and community partners.
- **Voice and tone** - Content developed by the vendor should reflect and celebrate VWF's established editorial tone (provocative, inspired, timely, and welcoming).
- **Understanding of arts ecosystems** - Vendors with experience working with arts, cultural, nonprofit, or event-based organizations, or with a strong understanding of VWF's values, programming, and diverse audiences will be considered a strong asset.
- **Technical capability** - The vendor should deliver a secure, future proof platform that supports appropriate security controls for the website.
- **Accessibility expertise** - Experience in developing accessible websites with WCAG 2.2 Level AA standards.

Budget

The expected total budget is **\$20,000 to \$30,000**, with some negotiation available for the appropriate vendor. This does not include the maintenance phase budget.

Evaluation of Proposals

VWF aims to complete its evaluation by **October 15**. During the process, VWF may conduct and interview key personnel proposed for the project. VWF reserves the right to



request additional information or clarification from any firm/person submitting a proposal. Selection will be based on the best overall value and fit for VWF, not solely on the lowest proposal cost.

How to Apply

Please send proposals by October 7, 2026, to Wenrui Liu, Website Project Manager at wliu@writersfest.bc.ca, with a copy to Joyce Wan, Marketing & Digital Production Manager at jwan@writersfest.bc.ca.

Requests for additional information should be coordinated through the contacts above.