



**presented by Chicago Architecture
Foundation**

**RFP for [Website Design and Development
of DiscoverDesign.org]**



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1. Introduction

The Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) is soliciting proposals for the re-design of our digital learning platform, DiscoverDesign.org. The partner chosen will be responsible for executing all services related to developing the website in a new system, leading the design/UX process, working with our team to build a Content Management System, advising on content structure, implementing a badging system for learning, and providing solutions for competition management.

The culmination of the services requested as part of this RFP will be the launch of the minimum viable product (MVP) of DiscoverDesign.org in early August 2016, to be managed and extended by an in-house team moving forward. All requirements in this document are subject to change.

2. About the Organization

The Chicago Architecture Foundation inspires people to discover why design matters. Through a wide variety of programs, exhibitions, architecture tours, lectures, youth education, and a retail shop, CAF puts design at the forefront of our educational purpose.

CAF is the leading organization devoted to celebrating and promoting Chicago as a center of architectural innovation. As Chicago's forum for the exchange of ideas on urban design, CAF inspires people to participate in the building of vibrant communities and to demand the highest standard in urban design. CAF awakens young people to achieve their potential through the discovery of architecture, engineering, and design.

Some key CAF metrics:

- Our annual audience attendance (tours, programs, exhibitions) is 518,000 people.
- In 2012, US News & World Report rated us the “#1 Thing to Do in Chicago”.
- We offer more than 85 architecture tours of the city of Chicago.
- Our team is comprised of approximately 65 staff members and more than 2000 volunteers.
- We are supported by approximately 9800 members and donors.
- 130,000+ people follow CAF on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms.
- In 2015, our institutional website—architecture.org—received over 1,000,000 total visits after its relaunch.

CAF's architecture tours, especially the Chicago Architecture Foundation River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady, are our most well-known offerings and draw a large annual audience and was most recently awarded #1 thing to do on TripAdvisor. Other notable CAF initiatives and programs include:

- Architecture.org – CAF's main web presence.
- **Open House Chicago (OHC):** A free, weekend-long public festival that offers behind-the-scenes access to 150 buildings across Chicago and attracted 55,000 participants in 2013. (www.openhousechicago.org)
- **Chicago Model (permanent public exhibition):** A 320-sq-ft city model in the atrium of our space—the only accurate and up-to-date three-dimensional portrait of Chicago's downtown.
- **DiscoverDesign.org:** An award-winning online teen architecture curriculum tool that engages and educates students about the design process.
- **Retail Shop:** Our Michigan Avenue storefront space that offers books, gift items, toys, home décor items and other design-related products.

3. About the Project



3.1 Background

As part of a new five-year strategic plan developed in 2012, CAF established an institutional goal focused on “Making a Digital Leap Forward”. A major initiative under that goal was to create a comprehensive strategy for CAF’s approach to public-facing digital engagement.

This user research-based strategy, known as the “Digital Master Plan” (DMP), was completed in January 2014 and defines guiding principles and a framework for developing a coordinated “ecosystem” of CAF digital experiences for our audiences over the next several years. Using the DMP as a guideline, CAF re-launched architecture.org in 2015 as the first marquee project supporting that work. The re-design of the DiscoverDesign.org website will be the second and equally ambitious project supporting the DMP and serving as an extension for CAF’s emerging digital ecosystem and the online learning ecosystem at-large.

DiscoverDesign.org is CAF’s national platform for engaging teens, teachers, and architects who volunteer as online mentors for project-based learning through design challenges focused on architecture and design professions. CAF launched the beta version of DiscoverDesign.org in January 2010 and pilot tested the site over two semesters with 20 high school classrooms across the country. In 2011, informed by feedback from these pilot testers, CAF implemented a visual redesign and feature optimization of the site. It launched publicly in January 2012. The site is also the platform for CAF’s national high school architecture competition, which draws hundreds of submissions from students across the US each year.

In 2013, with funding from the Chicago Community Trust and Hive Learning Networks in Chicago, CAF initiated a badging project as the third phase of feature expansion. By instituting a badging system, CAF was able to actualize our goals to help teens recognize learning pathways, recognize competencies important to design professions and develop key skill sets involved in solving architectural design challenges. The website currently has nearly 7,000+ registered users from around the world and continues to experience 56,000+ visits each year. Funding for the 2016 re-design is awarded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Hive Chicago Learning Network, a MacArthur Foundation initiative.

The DiscoverDesign.org website is a crucial component to the success of our organization. The domain name alone is a significant asset and offers untapped potential for reaching global learners interested in architecture and design. We expect this project to transform the site from a static online curriculum tool to CAF’s central online learning management system that is designed to evolve with the needs of our audiences.

3.2 Overall Goals for the New DiscoverDesign.org

- Clearly align with CAF’s brand, mission and value proposition as an extension of CAF.
- Grow our reach among key target audiences of Teachers, Students, and Mentors interested in the Architecture and Design fields by providing discreet but connected experiences for each.
- Inspire our target users to discover why design matters through rich, engaging digital content and participatory online experiences
- Establish CAF as a leader in teaching resources for architecture and design education, with a special focus on Chicago. This includes CAF-authored contents such as:
 - Expanded teacher resources and downloadable curricula



- Flexible design thinking toolkits adaptable to multiple disciplines and ages
- Access to 3D and 2D design tools and software
- Deliver an optimized experience on a range of devices
- Be an example of excellent contemporary design, as a demonstration of our mission

Internal, Operations-Focused Goals

- Revolutionize CAF's management of digital learning content and program delivery
- Serve as the "hub" that clearly connects DiscoverDesign's digital ecosystem with other emergent learning networks and platforms (i.e. LRNG and Cities of Learning)
- Enable accurate, detailed tracking and measurement of site performance within DiscoverDesign.org.
- Be modular. Allow us to incorporate new features into the site without extensive customization.
- Be a progressive platform that inherently promotes and supports integration with other tools and software through APIs and open development standards.

3.3 Measures of Success (to be assessed by an independent evaluator in Q4 2016)

- Non-paid, organic search traffic to the site will increase by 25% percent.
- Increase in new users measured by:
 - 50% increase in new registered users
 - 50% increase in non-classroom users
 - 25% increase in users with minimal design experience
- Establish a baseline and analyze trends to help the field of connected learning collect authentic user data.
- Measured engagement as evidenced through the DiscoverDesign badging system and framework
- Evidence of progression through learning pathways afforded by DiscoverDesign challenges and opportunities
- Shared traffic with architecture.org will be quantifiable and benchmarked
- Number of steps or man-hours required to make regular content updates to the site will decrease.
- A featurization plan for testing and implementing feature updates at least quarterly. These features include:
 - Collaborative Challenges: A participatory hands-on makerspace where users can collaborate with others on design challenges
 - Enhanced User Profiles
 - Mentor profiles and an expanded network of professional mentors
 - Play-based design tools and games for beginners to experiment with design concepts
 - Social features for youth to showcase their work and exchange their ideas with other users
- A/B testing will be easy to implement on a consistent basis.

3.4 CAF Website Family

In addition to the DiscoverDesign.org, CAF currently manages an extended family of web properties. Each of these properties were developed to support specific initiatives or functions independent of DiscoverDesign.org. These extra web properties are not in scope of this project. However, their existence influences user experience planning and content strategy and may require minimal levels of integration with the core DiscoverDesign.org website. They include:

Architecture.org



OpenHouseChicago.org

Association of Architecture Organizations – aaonetwork.org

4. Audiences

4.1 Current Overall CAF Audience Profile

DiscoverDesign serves a smaller but far-reaching segment of CAF's target audience interested in Design Education. This audience is further broken down into the following three categories:

- Students (89%)
- Teachers (8%)
- Mentors (3%)

4.2 Current DiscoverDesign Web Audience Profiles

Using new media skills, high school students **create** their own unique solutions to design challenges students **think critically** to solve problems learn to constructively critique the work of other students. They **communicate** their ideas to peers, teachers, and architecture and design professionals. This digital tool allows students to **collaborate** with peers and teachers on design projects anywhere, anytime.

Although students make up the majority of users, preliminary user research conducted by CAF has shown that Teachers are the driving force for increased student engagement. Competitions also serve as a tool for increasing engagement. Teachers are the brokers between a student's experience in the classroom and what lies beyond an in-school setting. In pilot testing of DiscoverDesign and other web-based initiatives undertaken by the Education Department, teachers have shown great use and appreciation for online tools that allow for in-the-moment feedback and differentiated learning approaches for the needs of 21st Century Learners. Students are able to get feedback from their teacher, interact closely with architecture and design professionals serving as online mentors, and provide peer reviews for other youth across the country solving similar design problems.

Mentors are the third user group in the DiscoverDesign ecosystem and are defined as professionals in the architecture + design fields with an interest in mentoring the next generation of their respected fields. Mentors partner with teachers to supplement concepts explored in the classroom by commenting on student work and participating as jury members for annual competitions. Currently CAF, in partnership with ACE Mentor Program of America are developing a Mentor Toolkit to be accessible via DiscoverDesign. This toolkit will further enable design professionals to engage in effective online mentorship models with users on DiscoverDesign.

4.3 Audience Insights

Through qualitative, observational research conducted during the DMP project, we identified more in-depth patterns of user insights and motivations. These insights were then formed into four major Guiding Principles that will serve as filters for our content and as potential "hooks" for engaging our audiences. Our research showed us that our audiences want the following from our offerings:

- **Humanize Architecture:** Introduce the broader world of architecture in more personal and relevant ways.
- **Orient and Direct Me:** Be the guiding authority for tourists and Chicagoans alike to explore and discover Chicago through new experiences.
- **Refresh My View of _____:** Continuously update and refresh people's perspective on Chicago or the built environment of their own environment and help them shape their own stories to share.



- **Be a Forum for Civic Issues:** Initiative conversation around Chicago's most relevant civic issues, and draw connections to local, regional and global issues.

5. Project Scope and Deliverables

The scope for this redesign is to re-develop the entire DiscoverDesign.org web experience in four main components:

1. Design & Brand
2. Content Strategy & Organization
3. Content Management Technology
4. User Types and Profiles
5. Badging Framework for User Engagement

These components need not dictate the sequencing of the work or the project development process, but they serve as clear areas where we are seeking outside expertise.

5.1 Special Scope Considerations

For Discovery (applies to all components)

The re-development of DiscoverDesign.org will be the second significant digital project undertaken after the creation of architecture.org and the Digital Master Plan. Furthermore, existing user research and subsequent wireframes were developed in 2015 in partnership with a local User Experience firm. Much of this internal discovery, user research and strategic planning legwork conducted during the DMP process allows us to start the website project from a more informed place. The aforementioned guiding principles and the supporting findings will shape much of the user experience planning. CAF will provide the selected partner with all available information gathered during the prior project. Although discovery pertaining specifically to website structure, content organization and functionality will be necessary, we expect that the proposed approach will acknowledge the foundational work already completed.

5.2 Design & Brand

CAF's mission is rooted in the concept of good design. Our ability to use DiscoverDesign.org to represent this ideal is crucial, and strengthens the proliferation of our brand. The design of the website must deliver on what our users expect from us, which is that we are an ambassador of design through both offerings and practice. It must differentiate us as a leader and showcase the quality of our offerings.

We seek a partner who can deliver the following:

- Demonstrate the ability to articulate the design problem posed by this project and inherently understand the existing value CAF provides and its potential in the market.
- Building upon the DMP and market research findings, conduct discovery work with stakeholders to develop a needs-driven assessment of the ideal DiscoverDesign.org user experience.
- Offer the latest thinking in digital design standards, especially related to responsive design.
- Produce a thorough, intuitive information architecture structure that lays the groundwork for visual design and front-end/back-end development through detailed userflows, sitemaps, and wireframes.
- Produce a minimum of three (3) stunning visual design concept options for our team to respond to that live up to our mission, delight our users, and adhere to CAF's overall brand standards.
- Produce and document a visual design system that is flexible enough for our staff to evolve and extend as content, template and brand needs change.



- Have an established, documentable, well-proven design process that is progressive and easy for our internal stakeholders to participate in.

5.3 Content Strategy & Organization

The DMP project revealed that CAF has a unique opportunity to engage our audiences by expanding the common definition and experience of architecture and design. The guiding principles serve as filters for how our content can be positioned to support this opportunity, and our team will be engaging internally in content strategy work leading up to and during this project. We anticipate that the selected partner will leverage this work and consult on the structure and role of digital content for the new website. The re-design of DiscoverDesign.org will make the most use of content for learning and engagement as possible.

Currently, content on Discover Design exists in the following categories:

- Design Challenges:
- Case Studies and Big Ideas
- Blog Posts
- Student Gallery (user-generated)
- Inspiration Gallery
- Badges
- User-Generated Content (Comments, Design Challenge responses and related media)

We seek a partner to deliver the following:

- Collaborate with the project team and other content influencers at CAF to translate in-progress and existing content strategy work into a tangible website content structure and plan.
- Work with CAF team to identify highest-value digital content for primary target audiences.
- Advise on strategies that employ relevant digital content to effectively drive participation through design challenges, teaching resources, and mentor toolkits.
- Develop recommendations that incorporate solid content marketing and SEO optimization practices.
- Assist in an inventory and audit of existing digital content.
- Develop a user experience that allows users to explore DiscoverDesign content and affordances in intuitive ways.
- Advise on a sustainable publishing process for the new website content structure.
- Work with project team to develop a content migration plan for existing content. (Any actual migration work proposed should be itemized in the budget so CAF can determine if it is more cost-effective to execute with internal resources.)

5.4 Content Management Technology

We seek a progressive, flexible content management solution that will power our new website, and also begin to serve as a central platform for future content development. Our funders and preliminary research favors an open source solution so as to take advantage of a larger community of contributors and support.

This CMS must offer the following general administrative features:

- Dynamically-driven content management. Ability to distribute common content across views or templates for efficient publishing. This includes contextual content based off a user's engagement with the platform (I.e. recommendations for badging opportunities and pathways)
- Easy content expiration/archiving capabilities



- Responsive design support
- Moderately robust workflow and user permissions options
- Full, transparent access to CSS and template design
- Search-friendly code and site architecture (page URLs, image optimization, etc.)
- Library of or community-contributed modules that can be added and easily configured
- Significant documentation for both developers and non-technical users
- Open API for integration with other systems (i.e LRNG, Chicago City of Learning, etc...)

Examples of other features/functionality requirements we anticipate (final list will be developed during requirements gathering):

- Geo-located and geo-displayed content
- Participation tools (commenting, liking, social sharing)
- Blogging tools
- User-friendly event/tour calendar that can pull in data feeds from other systems
- Content tagging/taxonomy
- "Suggested" content
- Robust internal site search

Although CAF has a dedicated web team, our selected partner for this project will be the primary front-end and back-end developer of the new DiscoverDesign.org website. Once the platform has been selected, the CAF Web team will assist with this project where needed. It is expected that the selected partner will work closely with the in-house development team during the project to ensure they have intimate knowledge and access to the site code at the conclusion of the project. This internal resource will serve as the primary developer for the website for all extensions beyond the MVP launch.

We seek a partner to deliver the following:

- Work with the CAF team to develop a comprehensive set of functional requirements based on existing and additional user research and internal discovery.
- Advise on and select an appropriate content management technology solution and hosting solution.
- Install and configure selected CMS solution on a CAF-appointed server.
- Develop front-end and back-end code within the selected solution that successfully executes on the approved visual design and information architecture created as part of the project.
- Set up development, staging and production environments and connect to a CAF-managed GIT repository for version control and access.
- Practice agile development methodologies as appropriate to ensure features and functionalities are vetted throughout the project.
- Incorporate user feedback and review into the development process.
- Research, analyze and develop current and potential points of integration between DiscoverDesign.org and CAF's other services and web properties
- Execute quality assurance testing and user testing prior to launch of the MVP, including cross-browser testing.

5.5 User Types and Profiles

Each user on DiscoverDesign should fall into one of three discreet user roles on the site. We seek a partner who can develop with these three main user roles in mind. Below are some intended uses for each user on the site:



- Students should be able to:
 - Keep a portfolio of their work
 - Engage in a learning pathway through badges associated with user-generated media
- Teachers should be able to
 - Look up students associated with their account
 - Give in-the-moment feedback
 - Find mentors by related interest or locality
 - Contribute content to be crafted into Design Challenges
- Mentors should be able to
 - Find classrooms in need of a Mentor
 - Provide meaningful feedback to students
 - Contribute content to be featured on the site's blog

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of features, but only serves to show that each user may have drastically different but related roles.

5.6 Badging Framework for User Engagement

Digital badges are increasingly being used in informal learning environments to recognize learning and achievements earned outside of school, and to link those experiences in “learning pathways” that are aligned to academic and career opportunities.

In 2015, CAF implemented a system of digital badges on DiscoverDesign to meet several user needs:

- Increase student retention and motivate students to “level up” to deeper learning experiences in Discover Design.
- Recognize achievement and support students as they pursue individual interests and specialized skills within the community.
- Increase participation and engagement of students and mentors in the online community.

CAF developed a comprehensive plan to implement digital badges to support and recognize student learning within the Discover Design program. This badge framework is meant to motivate students to participate in the community, pursue their interests, and “level” up to deeper learning experiences in Discover Design. Badges also help teachers and mentors in Discover Design to assess student growth and skill development holistically. Finally, badges are a critical link between in-school achievement, out-of-school interest-driven learning, and peer social networks.

This framework operates at multiple levels:

- **Statuses** within the system represent students’ overall level of mastery of the design process and their experience thus far. Statuses reward completing increasingly complex projects and visualize a learning pathway of deepening skillsets.
- **Skill badges** are awarded for exemplary achievement in a technical area and encourage students to specialize in and pursue areas of interest.
- The **Community Rating** is a qualitative measure of the student’s value to the community that encourages peer feedback and high quality participation.



Taken together, these measures encourage deeper student engagement over time and within projects. This framework supports students as they discover and develop individual interests and skills and asks that they continuously reflect on their learning and connect it to opportunities inside and outside of this community of practice. These metrics also make clear the criteria for success and help mentors holistically assess student development.

Please note: the design process badges on DiscoverDesign produced detailed wireframes and hourly breakdowns of design and development needs for implementation of the current badge system. This aspect of development will be heavily based on that documentation. Existing documentation for the Open Badge Infrastructure (see <https://wiki.mozilla.org/Badges> for more info) will also be referenced in the scope of this project.

6. Project Budget, Timeline, Expectations

6.1 Projected Budget:

\$150,000 - \$175,000

Timeline: Expected launch date of early August 2016.

6.2 General deliverables and support services required of the partner during the project:

- In-person kickoff meeting with core project team
- Project timeline and detailed project plan
- One main liaison/project manager assigned to the project for the duration
 - Sufficient advanced notice if project manager changes
- Weekly project progress check-ins with CAF project manager
- Weekly, itemized updates on budget status
- In-person presentations of site architecture, design concepts and other key deliverables
- Use of web-accessible feedback and bug tracking system for managing requests during development and testing
- Use of centralized web-accessible project management tool for team collaboration and communication (CAF can provide if necessary)
- Documentation and training around core administrative functions and content management.

Other expectations of the partner to be outlined in final contract scope of work.

6.3 Expectations the partner can have of CAF during the project:

- One main CAF liaison/project manager assigned to the project for the duration
- An in-house, back-end developer who will serve as a *secondary* development resource on the project. Level and nature of contribution of this resource will be negotiated as part of the contract with the selected partner.
- Communication with CAF's IT department regarding infrastructure inquiries as appropriate
- Coordination of any required meetings or interviews with internal and external stakeholders
- Coordinated communication with other CAF system/website vendors as appropriate, including but not limited to:
 - Taoti Creative: Current design and development partner for DiscoverDesign.org
 - Internal constituent management team (focused on Tessitura)
 - CAF Marketing and Education Departments
- Administrative and financial management of a mutually selected hosting environment



- Full read-only access to DiscoverDesign's Google Analytics reporting (dating back to 2010)
- Curated access to existing user experience research and survey data
- Prompt response to inquiries
- Enthusiasm for the project!

6.4 RFP Process Schedule

Release RFP	January 29, 2016
Inquiries on RFP due	February 5, 2016
CAF responds to inquiries	February 10, 2016
RFP responses due	February 12, 2016
Finalists notified, presentations scheduled	February 17, 2016
Finalist in-person presentations	February 22 - 24, 2016
CAF to notify final selected partner	February 26, 2016

(See appendix for proposed project schedule.)

7. Submission Requirements

Proposals are due to CAF by 5pm (CST) on February 12, 2016. Proposals must be submitted via architecture.org/ddsubmission. Inquires of any kinds may be sent via email to Edgar Quintanilla, Manager of DiscoverDesign.org at equintanilla@architecture.org. CAF will not accept hard copies.

Proposals should include the following sections:

1. Organizational Overview
 - a. Provide a summary of the firm's background and its competencies.
 - b. Provide a guide to firm's approach to projects of this nature.
 - c. Provide resumes or CVs for project team.
 - d. Provide contractor information of outside contractors if firm anticipates needing to hire.
2. Project Understanding/Scope
 - a. Provide a summary of your understanding of our project need, examples of potential approaches.
 - b. Provide a detailed scope of services.
 - c. Provide a detailed timeline with milestones, incorporating the anticipated schedule included in this RFP.
 - d. Provide a proposed detailed budget and fee schedule. (Itemize budget for specific services such as: discovery/planning, research, content strategy, information architecture, visual design, development, CMS implementation, content migration, dev ops, QA testing, documentation, training)
3. Portfolio
 - a. Provide four (4) examples of similar work (work range should include similar project need, organization type, audience type, etc.).
 - b. Provide three (3) professional references.
4. Homepage Mockups

Provide up to three (3) rough DiscoverDesign.org homepage mock-ups that showcases:

 - a. Featured student work



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- b. Competitions and upcoming opportunities
- c. Badging

From January 29 to February 5, 2016, questions may be submitted in writing to Edgar Quintanilla, Manager of DiscoverDesign.org via email equintanilla@architecture.org. All inquiries will be answered by February 10, 2016. Correspondence will be kept confidential.

By February 17, a group of finalists will be selected to present their proposal in-person to a committee at our offices. Dates/times will be arranged based on a mutually agreeable schedule between February 22-24, 2016.

8. Selection Criteria

CAF will notify firm to be hired by February 26, 2016. CAF will make its decision based on proposal contents, portfolio and reference interviews. CAF will be evaluating candidates using the following criteria:

- Firm qualifications and prior experience
- Portfolio of similar past work
- Understanding of the unique project need as demonstrated through summary and suggested approaches
- Budget and fees
- Schedule and firm's ability to compete project on time (August 2016)
- Quality of in-person presentation of proposal and project approach
- Emphasis on any percentage of the project budget allocated as donated services

9. Contact Information

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