

Request for Proposals Website Design & Development

Center for Curatorial Leadership
<https://www.curatorialleadership.org/>

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1. Overview

The Center for Curatorial Leadership (CCL) is a professional development and museum services nonprofit organization located in New York City.

Recently described by *The New York Times* as the “leading institute for training curators and defining their role in museums,” CCL’s mission is to equip curators with the tools to assume and succeed in art museum leadership roles in the rapidly evolving cultural climate of the 21st century. We believe that curators who not only take charge of the art in their care, but who are also equipped with the training to be moral and equity-based leaders, will be well-positioned to anticipate and address the issues and opportunities facing museums today.

We are approaching experienced agencies to build a **new organizational website** that highlights our programs, partners, and network; communicates our impact; better engages our alumni (with each other and with CCL); encourages donations; and improves data capture. The new backend should be simple to navigate and update, and the new site should be able to grow with the organization, easily integrating new programs and initiatives as needed.

Additionally, we would like to **refresh and extend our brand identity**, highlighting CCL’s upcoming 20th Anniversary in 2027-2028.

2. Organization Background

Founded in 2007 by philanthropist Agnes Gund and curator Elizabeth Easton, the Center for Curatorial Leadership trains curators to become visionary leaders of art museums.

The first independent organization dedicated to training curators to assume leadership positions and the only program of its kind, CCL has become indispensable to the museum field over the past eighteen years by:

- Identifying, educating, and empowering diverse talent,
- Investing in leadership development, and
- Strengthening cultural institutions nationwide.

CCL's innovative and original model encompasses rigorous coursework in leadership and strategic management, mentorships with top museum directors, and professional networks for support and growth. With our graduates now at the helm of major art institutions worldwide, CCL is helping to build the next generation of museum leaders, ones who combine art historical knowledge and intellectual rigor with administrative, managerial, and strategic expertise. These new leaders are redefining values and ways of working to create more equitable institutions that are responsive to the needs of the people on their staffs and in their communities.

Our values:

- **Moral Leadership**, established by professional practice, personal growth, and informed response to changing conditions, is the foundation of CCL's enterprise.
- **Equity** is the principle that guides CCL decision-making.
- **Intellectual rigor** underpins CCL's instruction and commitment to continuing education and professional growth.
- **Representation** of a wide spectrum of perspectives and art historical expertise strengthens CCL's programmatic infrastructure.
- Our **Network of Support** catalyzes exponential impact, both for CCL Alumni and for the art museum field.

3. Key Audiences

We believe the main audiences of our site may include:

- **Alumni** of our programs – to access Fellowspace, update their bios and recent advancements, network with other program alumni.
- **Potential applicants** to our programs – to explore programs, alumni, and our application process.
- **Partners & Mentors** including museum directors, trustees, etc – to learn more about CCL and our programs and alumni, and confirm proper recognition.
- **Funders and Donors** – to understand our work and impact, confirm credit lines and recognition, and make online gifts.
- **Head-hunters** and others involved in active searches – to identify alumni that may be suited to open positions (by area of specialty, advancements, etc).
- **Competitors** – to learn more CCL's programs and model.
- **Other visitors** – to explore CCL's publications, learn more about CCL and our work, or, for reasons we haven't discovered yet!

4. Core Objectives:

The current website was built in 2014 and is now over ten years old. Even with a major code update in 2025 the website is unreliable. Our main objective is to launch a new website as soon as possible to ease the burden on our staff and improve user experience.

What's working:

- Given the age of the site, the design still feels remarkably current and is visually aligned with the professionalism and seriousness of our organization.
- We have a strong brand identity across the website, and there is a clear visual hierarchy (guided by color palette) across our different programs.
- The prominent presence of our participants and alumni on the site is effective.

What's not working:

- The technical limitations and complicated architecture of the current Django site make updating content and adding new functionalities to the website very difficult for staff.
- Staff often needs to develop workarounds for missing functionalities (i.e. external forms).
- The current site was developed to be written content-heavy (i.e. the blog-style "News" pages) and lacks the tools for data visualization and storytelling.
 - Participant pages need richer, searchable metadata (i.e. field(s) of study, organization(s), career advancement(s), etc).
 - There is no functionality to display mentors beyond the Fellowship program.
 - Similarly, we have no ability to show the institutions/organizations we serve, the global reach of our programs, or our growing alumni network.
- Our applications (including recommendation letters and reviewer scoring) are built into the current site, and lack automation.
- Fellowspace (the members site for CCL program alumni) was originally designed in 2014 as a message board/blog/job board but is now outdated and underused, essentially only functioning as a downloadable resource library for program documents and materials.

Goals for the redesign:

- Simplify and clarify the website with up-to-date and future-forward design that clearly communicates impact through data, visuals, and storytelling. Our participants and alumni should be able to "see themselves" in our programs.
- Ensure the backend is intuitive for staff to use, with easy content management. We are open to staying with Django, migrating to another CMS platform like Wordpress, or using a no-code solution like Squarespace, but the platform must support flexible content types, allow staff with no coding experience to edit content, and be extensible to support integrations and Fellowspace functionality
- Streamline applications for staff, applicant, recommender, and reviewer experience. We are open to staying with a custom-built application or integrating with Submittable (or similar) as long as it meets our needs.
- Reimage Fellowspace as an engaging alumni platform, informed by alumni feedback and user research – what do our alumni want and need now?

Technical Requirements include:

- Design that is responsive across all screen sizes and browsers.
- Transfer of existing and archive content (approx 200-250 pages) onto the new site with redirects and refreshed design.
- Search functionality.
- User permissions.

- Integration with Mailchimp or Constant Contact for newsletter sign-up.
- Integration with DonorPerfect/paypal payment gateways for direct donations.
- Integration with Issuu for publications hosting.
- Integration with Google Analytics or similar analytics system.
- Deliver an accessible, secure, mobile-responsive website that complies with WCAG 2.2 AA standards.
- Optimize for SEO and integrate analytics, newsletter signup, and donation systems.

Content Migration and Strategy

The vendor will conduct a content audit to assess which of the 244 existing pages should be migrated, retired, or rewritten. The goal is to streamline navigation and consolidate the 24 page templates into a smaller, more flexible set of reusable layouts.

Brand Identity Refresh

While we are proud of our logo and primary purple palette, we invite agencies to explore refinements to our overall brand system — typography, secondary colors, graphic motifs, and visual hierarchy — to modernize and strengthen our identity. The goal is to preserve the brand's recognizable elegance and professionalism while refreshing its application across digital and print platforms.

CCL also has a 20th anniversary approaching in 2027-2028, and we would like to develop an extension of our brand identity (and a suite of collateral materials) for this special event in tandem with this website project.

5. Timeline, Milestones, Deliverables, and Budget

Ideally we will start the planning and discovery phase immediately with the goal of launching the new site ~9 months from kick-off, but the 2027 CCL Fellowship application cycle must be negotiated to ensure that there is no interruption to the application process for users. The 2027 cycle will go live by 5/1/2026 – and the final class will be selected by 10/31/2026. Given budgetary considerations, this project could be divided into several phases of work.

Phase 1 (2025-2026):

Planning & Discovery (4-6 weeks): Website and content audit, stakeholder meetings, initial ideation (features, functionalities, and content).

- Milestones: Discovery sign-off
- Deliverables: Discovery brief, project roadmap

Phase 1 Budget: \$15,000-\$20,000

Phase 2 (2026):

Wireframes (6-8 weeks): Visualization of the website's hierarchy, layout, and navigational structure. Multiple rounds of revision.

- Milestones: Executive review, Wireframes sign-off.
- Deliverables: Approved wireframes, final Design proposal, updated project scope/budget if required.

Design (8-12 weeks): Visual design concept (UX, brand identity) ideation and content planning. Multiple rounds of revision.

- Milestones: Executive review, Design sign-off.
- Deliverables: Approved final design.

Development, Testing, and Launch (8-12 weeks): Front end and back-end development, content entry and migration. Testing to ensure the functionality, performance, and usability of the website.

- Milestones: CMS training for staff, QA Site launch and testing, Executive review, Live site launch.
- Deliverables: Final, fully functional website that is ready for public access. CMS user guide if required. Website style library, updated Style guide for brand refresh.

Post Launch Support (20 weeks): Maintenance and resolution of any technical issues following launch. Optional ongoing retainer for updates, analytics, and security (annual estimate requested).

Phase 2 Budget: \$80,000-\$95,000

Phase 3 (TBD)

Brand Identity Extension: Development of extended brand system (logo lockups, secondary colors, typography, print and digital collateral), including 20th Anniversary identity.

- Milestones: Executive review, Sign-off, Website update.
- Deliverables: Brand toolkit. Printed collateral and templates (envelopes, mailing labels, stationary, letterhead, business cards, etc). Digital assets (icons, graphics).

Phase 3 Budget: \$20,000-\$30,000

6. Criteria for Submission and Evaluation

The proposal in response to this RFP should include:

- Agency introduction and team overview.
- Relevant experience with communications in our core issue areas, including arts and culture, museums, leadership development, and higher education.
- Approach to working with us as a small non-profit team (with no in-house graphic designer or web developer).
- Relevant work samples.
- Project Scope, proposed timeline, and budget estimate.
- Contact information for two references from similar engagements.

Evaluation of proposals will be made based on each agency's approach to and methodology for addressing the needs indicated in this RFP, experience and work samples, the estimated project budget, and references.

Following proposal submission and the initial review process, all RFP respondents will be notified of the outcome. Virtual presentations may be scheduled for selected finalists – not all submissions will warrant a presentation. Proposals must be received electronically by **Friday, November 21, 2025**.

Note: CCL will review proposals from established agencies, as well as joint proposals from separate consultants who have chosen to collaborate. If applying as a collaborating team, please specify who will be doing which pieces of work.

For more information or to submit a proposal, please contact:

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