

Request for Quotes

Ongoing Web Development & Technical Support Retainer

Issued by: Explore Asheville

Website: ExploreAsheville.com

RFQ issue date: October 8, 2026

Questions due: October 22, 2026

Questions answered: October 29, 2026

Quotes due: November 6, 2026

Anticipated selection: December 1, 2026

Submit quotes to: ewhite@exploreasheville.com

1. Purpose

Explore Asheville is seeking a qualified web development partner for an ongoing monthly retainer to maintain, secure, and enhance our decoupled website. The selected vendor will provide continuous engineering support across our Drupal backend, Next.js frontend, hosting/CDN infrastructure, security patching and performance workstreams.

This is not a one-time build or migration engagement. We are establishing a long-term, predictable support relationship with defined service levels, transparent reporting, and a single accountable technical partner.

Explore Asheville has a front-end developer on staff and hopes to work collaboratively with the selected team across requirements gathering, roadmap and prioritization, implementation, and deployment. We value an open, transparent partnership, and we'd like visibility into the team's ticketing or project-management system along with opportunities to communicate directly with the developers doing the work. Ideally, project and account management would be led by people with hands-on experience in Drupal, Next.js, and the relevant hosting platforms, so that planning, estimation, and troubleshooting conversations can draw on a shared understanding of our stack.

2. About the Organization

Explore Asheville is the destination marketing organization (DMO) for Asheville and Buncombe County, North Carolina. ExploreAsheville.com is our primary digital property, serving leisure travelers, meeting/event planners, media, travel professionals, partner businesses and residents. The site must perform reliably for human visitors and be fully readable by AI/LLM crawlers, which are an increasingly important traffic and discovery channel for us.

3. Current Technical Architecture

This section describes the environment at a high level so respondents can gauge fit.

- **Architecture:** decoupled / headless — a Drupal 11 content management backend and a Next.js 16 frontend.
 - **Hosting / infrastructure:** client-owned Pantheon (Drupal), Vercel (Next.js) and Cloudflare (WAF).
 - **Content delivery:** content is delivered to the frontend over GraphQL; a Solr-backed search layer powers listing grids and site search.
 - **Content modeling:** component-based page building using Drupal Paragraphs.
 - **Custom code:** a set of custom Drupal modules and frontend components supports business and event listing synchronization, search, cookie consent, and other site-specific behavior.
 - **Key integrations:** Simpleview CRM/Miles Federator for business profile listings, Cruncho/Yodel for event management, TripAdvisor for partner business listing reviews, DemandScience (Bound360) for content personalization, Mindtrip for AI enhanced trip planning chat tool, Osano for consent management, Google Tag Manager / GA4 for tagging and analytics.
 - **Quality/CI:** component library and visual-regression testing (Storybook / Chromatic); GitHub for version control.
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4. Scope of Services (Retainer)

The retainer covers recurring and on-demand engineering across the categories below. We expect a blend of scheduled maintenance, proactive monitoring, and prioritized enhancement work each month.

4.1 Drupal Backend Maintenance

- **Drupal core security and version maintenance** to keep the backend on a supported, secure release
- **Contrib module updates** (security + maintenance)
- **Custom module** maintenance and enhancement
- **PHP version compatibility maintenance**, including resolving deprecation issues
- **Config management discipline**, safe deployment workflow across Pantheon dev/test/live

4.2 Next.js Frontend Maintenance

- **Next.js security and version maintenance** to keep the frontend on a supported, secure release
- **Dependency updates** (pnpm), with regression testing via Storybook/Chromatic
- **Maintenance of ISR** + on-demand revalidation reliability
- **Component (paragraph) work** — see 4.5
- **Vercel build/deploy configuration**, environment variable management

4.3 Platform / Hosting / DevOps

- **Pantheon** (Drupal): environment management, deploys, performance config, backups/restore
- **Vercel** (Next.js): builds, deploy hooks, env config, edge configuration, speed insights
- **Cloudflare** (WAF): cache rules, WAF tuning, DNS coordination, page rules, bot management as it relates to legitimate LLM crawler access vs. abusive traffic
- **CI/CD maintenance** (GitHub workflows, Chromatic), branch/PR review process

4.4 Security

- **Monthly patch cadence** across Drupal core, contrib, custom modules, PHP, and Next.js/npm dependencies with CVE applicability assessment (architecture-specific triage before patching)
- **Regression testing** on every security deploy
- **WAF/Cloudflare rule maintenance** and incident response

4.5 Site Improvements & Page Components (Drupal Paragraphs)

- Build and enhance **paragraph-based page components** end-to-end: Drupal bundle + fields + GraphQL Compose exposure → GraphQL fragment → React organism + SCSS + Storybook story + revalidation wiring
- New content modeling to support roadmap features
- Accessibility (WCAG) for new/modified components

4.6 Monitoring & Error Log Management

- Drupal and Pantheon log monitoring
- Vercel log monitoring
- Cloudflare analytics review
- Proactive anomaly detection on listing grids / search (e.g., empty or degraded results)

4.7 Site Speed & Performance

- **Core Web Vitals** improvement (LCP/CLS/INP), measured and reported
- Solr query/index performance, cron batch tuning, ISR/CDN cache strategy
- Frontend bundle and rendering optimization

4.8 SEO / AEO & Structured Data

- **JSON-LD / Schema.org** strategy and implementation; complete builders across page types (Profile/LocalBusiness, Event, Article, and others)
- Fix known schema defects
- Sitemap and redirect management coordination across Drupal and Next.js

4.9 Roadmap / Project Support (as prioritized)

- Capacity within the retainer to advance new initiatives and a clearly defined structure within and outside of scope for development needs. Respondents should indicate appetite and approach for project work alongside retainer maintenance.

5. Quote Requirements

Please submit a quote containing:

1. **Firm overview** — size, structure, locations/time zones, years in business.
2. **Relevant experience** — 2+ case studies of comparable Drupal + Next.js decoupled builds in production, with links to live sites and measurable outcomes (e.g., Core Web Vitals before/after, organic traffic change, uptime).
3. **Technical capabilities** — describe hands-on experience with Pantheon, Vercel, and/or Cloudflare hosting, performance optimization, and technical SEO/AEO, including schema and structured data implementation.

4. **Team** — named individuals proposed for our account, roles, bios, and relevant certifications; coverage/backup plan; describe the makeup of your team, whether they are full-time staff, contractors or a mix of both; identify who will serve as our day-to-day point(s) of contact and confirm their technical background.
5. **Approach** — how you would onboard, audit, and stabilize within the first 30/60/90 days; how you prioritize maintenance vs. enhancement; your security patch cadence and emergency advisory handling; your QA and regression testing process; your philosophy on the use of AI in development; how knowledge is retained across staff so we are not single-person-dependent.
6. **Collaboration & transparency** — describe your primary communication channels; standing check-in cadence; ticketing system, reporting and monitoring tools, and project management system/tools; how you will work with our in-house developer across requirements, roadmap, prioritization, implementation, code review, and deploys.
7. **Service levels & operating expectations** — include response time, resolution targets by severity, coverage for production-down incidents, preferred deployment windows and rollback procedures.
8. **Pricing** — provide your monthly retainer fee and the hours or capacity it includes; rate card by role for work beyond the retainer; rollover policy for unused hours, if applicable; overage handling approval process for work exceeding monthly capacity; pass-through costs for any new third-party tooling/licensing Explore Asheville is expected to cover.
9. **References** — provide at least 3 client references with contact info for similar ongoing retainer engagements.
10. **Assumptions/exclusions** — anything you are explicitly not including.

6. Evaluation Criteria

Quotes will be evaluated on:

Criterion	Weight
Relevant decoupled Drupal + Next.js experience	25%
Technical depth across our full stack (incl. Pantheon/Vercel/Cloudflare, security, SEO/AEO)	25%
Service levels, responsiveness, and reliability	15%
Transparency, collaboration, and technically fluent management	10%
Pricing and value	10%
References	10%
Location – preference will be given to developers based in North Carolina	5%

We may shortlist for interviews and/or request a technical working session before award.

7. Terms & Conditions

- **IP & code ownership:** all code, configuration, and documentation produced is work-for-hire owned by Explore Asheville and maintained in our repositories.
 - **Access:** least-privilege, client-owned accounts; no shared credentials; documented offboarding/credential revocation on termination.
 - **Transition assistance** on exit (knowledge transfer, documentation handoff) is required.
 - This RFQ does not oblige Explore Asheville to award a contract and may be amended or withdrawn.
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8. Submission Instructions

- **Format:** PDF, emailed to ewhite@exploreasheville.com
 - **Subject line:** "RFQ Response — ExploreAsheville.com Web Development Retainer"
 - **Questions:** submit in writing to ewhite@exploreasheville.com by October 22, 2026; answers shared with all known respondents by October 29, 2026.
 - **Deadline:** quotes must be received by November 6, 2026 for consideration.
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End of RFQ.