

Building a Community Almanac RFP

The Orton Family Foundation

The Orton Family Foundation works to build more vibrant and sustainable communities. We promote more inclusive, collaborative and proactive decision-making based on shared values and vision. The Foundation assists small cities and towns in articulating, implementing and stewarding their heart and soul attributes so they can adapt to change while maintaining or enhancing the things they value most. We do this by providing guidance, tools, research, capital and other forms of support to citizen leadership and by working with peer organizations and other partners to advance the knowledge and practices of land use planning. For more information, visit www.orton.org.

As stories, pictures and videos emerge during communities' heart and soul articulation processes, and as technologies ever simplify the digital capture and depiction of such information on maps, the Foundation would like to offer the ability for its project communities and communities at large to utilize simple open source or Web 2.0 technology to build online, digital community almanacs. These community almanacs would be digital maps (perhaps GIS-derived, but not requiring active GIS to use) to (1) depict the community or county in which the project is located, (2) "easily" collect, display and manage community stories, pictures, graphics and videos through uploads by people in the community, and (3) make these stories and pictures readily accessible to all citizens through hotlinks on the map and/or other intuitive interface components.

Initially, community almanacs will be set up by the Foundation or others with requisite technical training, if necessary. After they are set up, the Almanacs will be viewed and populated by members of the public, with lightweight management by an authorized community member with minimal technical background.

As a prelude to this work, the Foundation has purchased the domain name www.communityalmanac.org. However, we do not necessarily require that all community almanacs be hosted on this site; it may be used simply for informational and education purposes.

Requirements:

1. We are searching for the kind of technology that is so easy to use that residents of communities will be able to update their almanacs after the Foundation is no longer actively involved (or build where the Foundation is not involved). Open source or freely available technology is preferred; however, proprietary software will be considered as long as other requirements herein are satisfied.
2. Once the community almanac technology is built (or assembled with a variety of open source technologies), it must be free to users, regardless of whether they are working with the Foundation. Documentation and any required tools must be provided that make it reasonably easy for anyone to set up a new community almanac for their community.

3. At a minimum, the almanac should accommodate written text, pictures, PowerPoint slides or gallery, digital audio stories, digital stories, and videos (although seamless embedding of YouTube is acceptable) generated on PCs or Macs.
4. The almanac, including the map and hot link icons, must be clear, pleasing and easy to use.
5. Clear, public-oriented instructions and documentation must be provided so that any community member can learn how to view and/or contribute content to the almanac. No special software (other than commonly available media viewers and web browsers) should be required to view content. Proposals should specify whether community members will need to install any special software on their computers to contribute content to the almanac.
6. The map should provide zoom and pan functions and utilize freely available base maps provided by Google, Yahoo, etc.
7. If possible, the almanac should allow for easy printing of all materials other than videos. A plan for how this online, digital almanac could be built so as to facilitate the production of a hard copy almanac as well would be a plus.
8. The almanac must have a documented security plan that provides reasonable protection against malicious users and assures the integrity of the information stored on/through the almanac.
9. The proposal must include a long-term maintenance and support plan or open-source administration plan. However, we anticipate that the technology will be simple enough that minimal support will be required. Proposals budgets should provide cost estimates for hosting services as a separate line. Limited, "google-style" advertising if required through use of free online services will be tolerated. Service provider for underlying software may provide access to others through software interface for purposes of promoting use of the tool.
10. To the extent feasible, this almanac should be functional to use with a pilot community or two by March 15, 2008. The Foundation is open to a phasing plan that allows for construction and piloting of basic functionality prior to completion of other more sophisticated components of tool.

Responses to this RFP will be evaluated on the basis of the effectiveness of the proposed solution, the experience of the respondent, the stability and longevity of the platform(s), and the proposed budget. Proposals that include different options for functionalities at different costs should clearly describe the benefits or limitations of each option in comparison to the others. Award of the RFP will be solely at the discretion of the Orton Family Foundation.

Please submit your proposals by January 1 to William Roper, President and CEO, The Orton Family Foundation, wroper@orton.org. If you have further questions, you can call William Roper at 802-388-6336.