



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Request for Proposal

Mental Health Commission of Canada New Corporate Website – UX Design & Accessibility Compliance



Ce document est disponible en français



The views represented herein solely represent the views of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Production of this material is made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.

Introduction

The Commission is seeking a digital agency to design and develop a *new corporate website*, incorporating a fully modern UX, WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility, and a unified design system aligned with the Commission's Brand Guide.

The new website must address and correct all accessibility, UX, and consistency issues identified in the Commission–CIAO Accessibility & UX Project Reports.

This project will use the findings and recommendations of the Accessibility & UX Project (Dec 2025–Feb 2026) as the foundation for:

- Full WCAG 2.2 AA compliance
- A unified UX and design system
- Consistent visual style aligned with the Commission's Brand Guide
- Modernized information architecture and improved usability compliance.
- A scalable, maintainable website that supports the Commission's national mandate.

The selected vendor will design, develop, validate, and document a new website that is fully accessible, meeting or exceeding WCAG 2.1 Level AA and applicable AODA requirements.

The work will be informed by findings from the existing UX and accessibility audits and will also address any additional usability, accessibility, technical, or business requirements identified during discovery, design, and implementation.

About the Commission

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a pan-Canadian health organization dedicated to improving mental health outcomes for everyone living in Canada.

As an independent, not-for-profit with charitable status, the Commission collaborates with leading experts and organizations nationally and internationally, including with people with lived and living experience, to develop national guidelines, standards and strategies, promote innovation and best practices, reduce stigma, increase mental health literacy, develop and deliver training through our Opening Minds division and support all levels of government to improve mental health outcomes for everyone living in Canada. The Commission leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of people in Canada. Through its unique mandate from the Government of Canada, the Commission supports federal, provincial, and territorial governments as well as organizations in the implementation of sound public policy.

Project Background

In 2025–2026, the Commission completed an in-depth audit of its corporate website, including:

- Accessibility Audit
- UX Evaluation

We are seeking:

- A new design, built with accessibility requirements baked in
- A consistent component library for all templates
- Predictable interactions across navigation, forms, cards, and filters
- Clear, accessible content structure, including headings, labels, lists, and alt text
- Ongoing documentation and improved internal capacity to maintain accessible content
- A stable, user-friendly translation system that enables our team to maintain both English and French content with confidence and consistency (WPML).

Target Audiences

The new Commission website must be designed to meet the needs of diverse national audiences, including:

- Government policy makers
- Health and Mental Health system influencers and decision makers
- Mental Health ecosystem partners
- Health-care administrators, professionals and practitioners
- Researchers and academics
- Employers and HR professionals
- People with lived and living experience
- General public, who are seeking mental health information

This site must support users with varying levels of digital literacy, accessibility needs, and device types.

Objectives

The vendor will be responsible for delivering a new Commission website that meets the following objectives:

- Accessibility requirements for: WCAG 2.2 AA Compliance
- Develop a UX-friendly, comprehensive, and accessible design system

The new website must provide:

- Predictable interactions
- Reduced cognitive load
- Clear navigation and filtering
- Consistent behaviours throughout
- Accessible forms and dynamic content
- Responsive layouts suitable for all devices

All design outputs must align with:

- The Commission Brand Guidelines (colours, typography, tone)
- UX design
- Accessibility best practices
- Clean and well-documented code
- Reusable page templates
- A long-term, accessible content workflow

Scope of Work

Discovery

- Review of all accessibility & UX report findings.
- Confirm user needs, content types, and workflow requirements.

UX & IA Restructuring

- Improve information architecture for clarity and searchability.
- Create wireframes for all key templates.
- Standardize interactions across components based on UX findings.

User-Interface Design

- Professional website design that captures the brand and voice of the Commission
- Website design using the Commission's brand colours and fonts
- User-interface (UI) should be accessibility compliant
- Use the Commission's branding fonts
- Template accuracy in typography & spacing
- Buttons, links, forms, cards, navigation, and filters must be created using the Commission's brand colours
- Apply accessibility recommendations to the design
- State on UI events on menu and buttons (hover, focus, active, disabled)

Website Development

- Built using WordPress CMS
- Reusable WordPress templates
- Use a theme with Page builder (Elementor Pro)
- Backend Improvements
 - Content Translation Functionality
 - Search Functionality & Tagging System Improvements
 - Hosting Environment & Cleanup
 - Archiving Legacy Content
- Implement accessibility compliance in the templates
- Ensure all elements meet WCAG 2.2 AA (heading hierarchy and aria tags)
- Integrate accessible media patterns (open captions, transcripts, controls)

Testing & Validation

- Automated WCAG scanning
- Manual expert testing
- Assistive technology testing
- UX testing against design system standards

Content Migration Scope: Content migration does not include content rewriting, editorial review, or information architecture redesign, unless explicitly stated elsewhere in this RFP.

Accessible Page Templates: All active website pages will be rebuilt using new accessible page templates developed as part of this project. All content — text, images, forms, cards, and navigation — must meet WCAG 2.2 AA standards.

Backend Development Requirements: The current English and French websites operate on separate domains, but the translation workflow and content synchronization between the two are inconsistent.

1. Multilingual Functionality Enhancements

We require:

- **Improved bilingual content management**, ensuring that English and French versions of each page are accurately linked and managed within WordPress.
- **Accurate and reliable translation processes**, so that content is correctly rendered across both sites.
- **Streamlined workflows** to prevent outdated, missing, or mismatched translations across domains.

The goal is to establish a stable, user-friendly translation system that enables our team to maintain both English and French content with confidence and consistency.

2. Website Search Functionality & Tagging System Improvements

The existing site search does not return relevant or reliable results. We require:

- **An improved tagging and metadata structure** that aligns with WordPress best practices.
- **Enhanced search relevance**, enabling WordPress tags, categories, custom fields, and other metadata to be used as searchable keywords.

This update should significantly improve the visibility and discoverability of content across the site.

3. Hosting Environment Setup & Cleanup

Our current Pantheon hosting environment includes outdated directories and legacy files that remain from earlier versions of the website. Some of these files are still being indexed by Google and do not reflect the current structure or content of the site. To ensure the redesigned website is built on a clean, modern foundation, we require:

- A new, clean Pantheon hosting environment created under the same Pantheon account, but without carrying over any legacy directories or file-level remnants from the previous setup.
- Retention of the existing database, ensuring no loss of current content, taxonomies, users, or operational data. Only directory-level files and legacy assets will be excluded.
- Configuration of Pantheon's standard multi-environment workflow, including:
 - Environmental development (active development & feature work)
 - Staging environment (QA, testing, and approvals)
 - Production environment (live site)
 - A fully implemented CI/CD pipeline, supporting version control, controlled deployments, and modern development practices.
 - Search visibility cleanup, ensuring outdated file paths or legacy URLs from the old hosting environment are no longer indexed or associated with the new setup.

4. Archiving Legacy Content

Some existing website content is outdated but continues to generate meaningful traffic. Rather than removing or redirecting these pages, we require:

- A dedicated Archive section where all legacy content can be stored and accessed without appearing on the main navigation or current content structure.
- Retention of all existing URLs for archived content to ensure ongoing traffic, SEO value, and analytics tracking remain intact.
- Visibility only within the Archive, meaning archived pages are accessible and searchable within the Archive section but not shown on primary pages, navigation menus, or featured content areas.
- A clear, organized archive taxonomy or structure, ensuring the archived materials remain easy to browse or find if needed.

No loss of search traffic, ensuring that archived pages continue to appear in external search engines and retain their historical performance.

Analytics Integration: The vendor is responsible for integrating the Commission's existing Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager (GTM) accounts into the new website, ensuring continuity of tracking and data collection upon launch.

SEO Preservation and AEO Compliance: The vendor is responsible for ensuring that all existing on-page SEO elements are preserved and carried over to the new website. This includes, but is not limited to, meta titles, meta descriptions, heading structures, alt text, internal linking, and URL slugs. No existing SEO value may be lost as a result of the website migration.

The vendor must also design and develop the new website using current and evolving search best practices to improve visibility across both traditional search engines and emerging AI-driven search and answer platforms. The vendor is expected to assess, recommend, and implement improvements to site architecture, templates, content structures, and technical configuration where appropriate, in order to strengthen overall optimization and discoverability.

The solution must support the organization's long-term objectives related to search visibility, brand authority, and adaptability, and must allow future SEO or search-optimization enhancements to be implemented without requiring fundamental redevelopment of the site.

Governance & Feedback: The Commission's project team will conduct one formal review session per week. Feedback will be consolidated and delivered as a single unified response. Formal written sign-off is required before each phase proceeds. The vendor will maintain a change log tracking all approved revisions. The project team is led by Ian Peralta, Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist, as Website Manager.

Intellectual Property Upon full payment: All deliverables — including designs, source code, documentation, wireframes, and component libraries — become the sole property of the Commission. Vendors must disclose all open-source libraries, third-party components, and proprietary plugins used, and confirm that all applicable licenses will be transferred to the Commission upon project completion

Security, Privacy & Compliance: The website must comply with PIPEDA and applicable provincial privacy legislation. Requirements include:

- A compliant cookie consent mechanism
- Secure handling of all PII collected via forms or subscriptions
- Secure development practices (protection against SQL injection, XSS, unauthorized access)
- Privacy compliance review of all third-party tools and plugins

Vendor-provided documentation of security practices and known vulnerabilities.

Out of Scope

- Content rewriting or copywriting
- PDF accessibility remediation (archived as-is)
- New media asset creation
- Ongoing post-launch content entry
- Third-party integrations not referenced in this RFP
- CRM setup or customization
- Independent identification or categorization of legacy content without Commission direction (the vendor will provide best-practice guidance only)
- Hosting costs (existing arrangement maintained unless otherwise proposed)
- Software licensing (e.g., Elementor Pro, WPML) unless included in the vendor's proposal
- Any content deletion not explicitly approved by the team.

Any work outside the agreed scope is subject to a separate change order process.

Deliverables

The vendor must deliver:

- Detailed project plan & timelines
- Complete information architecture and wireframes
- An accessibility compliant, UX friendly modern website design
- All interface visual designs are aligned with the Commission's branding
- Developed using WordPress CMS
- WCAG 2.2 AA validation package (automated & manual)
- Component documentation and content guidelines
- Staff training sessions & handover materials
- Launch support & stabilization window

Technical Support

The vendor must include a clearly defined period of post-launch technical support as part of the base project cost, beginning at final website launch. The vendor must specify the duration of this included support period in months and clearly describe the scope of services provided.

At minimum, the included post-launch technical support must cover:

- Resolution of bugs or defects related to the delivered solution

Fixes for technical issues affecting functionality, performance, or security. The vendor must also clearly describe:

- Support availability, including days afterhours of coverage
- Expected response times
- The method by which support will be provided (e.g., email, ticketing system)
- Any limitations or exclusions from the included support

In addition, the vendor must include clearly defined and separately priced options for ongoing technical support and maintenance following the end of the included post-launch support period. These options must, at minimum, describe:

- The support model (e.g., monthly, quarterly, annual, retainer, hourly)
- Services included, such as:
 - Software, CMS, and plug-in updates
 - Security monitoring and patching
 - Backup and recovery services
 - Performance monitoring and optimization
 - Bug fixes
- Service availability and response expectations
- Pricing structure

- Any assumptions or dependencies

Vendor Qualifications

Vendors must demonstrate:

- Proven experience delivering WCAG 2.x AA compliant websites
- Expertise in UX design and interaction standardization
- Experience with large content-driven or public sector organizations
- Strong WordPress development capability
- Experience conducting or implementing accessibility audits
- Capacity to deliver within a 4-month timeline

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

- Executive summary
- Proposed methodology
- Work plan with timeline
- Accessibility remediation plan
- UX & design system strategy
- Team bios and roles
- Budget breakdown
- Risk & mitigation strategies
- At least two comparable projects
- Vendors must provide two client references for comparable accessibility or UX-focused website projects, including contact information.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on:

- Quality and feasibility of the approach
- Strength of accessibility remediation strategy (aligned to audit)
- UX design system approach
- Technical quality and sustainability
- Team expertise and capacity
- Cost and overall value

Appendices (Available upon request)

- Appendix A — Summary of Audit Issues
- Appendix B — UX Findings (Figures 1–5)
- Colour system, buttons/links, filters, cards, references.

- Appendix C — Pages Evaluated (21 pages)
- Full list of audited pages.
- Appendix D — Backend Development Requirements

How to Submit a Proposal

The deadline for the submission of Proposals (“Submission Deadline”) and the general Timetable for the RFP Process (“Timetable”) are set out on the front page and below.

- RFP Issue Date: **April 29, 2026**
- Deadline for Questions: **May 6, 2026**
- Deadline for the Commission’s Answers: **May 13, 2026**
- Submission Deadline for Proposal and statement of potential conflicts of interest: **May 20, 2026**
- Notification of winning proposal: **June 1, 2026**

The Commission may, without liability or penalty and in its sole discretion, amend the above timetable.

Submit your proposals to [Ian Peralta](#), Digital Marketing & Communications Specialist – Marketing and Communications, and [Kati Oliver](#), Manager, Marketing and Communications. All interested parties can ask questions or seek clarification by sending an email to Ian Peralta.

Bidders are responsible for costs related to developing and submitting proposals, which will not be covered by the Commission. All bidders will be notified by email of the final selection decision.



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of Canada Commission de
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du Canada

Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2026

Suite 1210, 350 Albert Street

Ottawa, ON. K1R 1A4

Tel: 613.683.3755

Fax: 613.798.2989

 @MHCC_  /theMHCC

 /1MHCC  @theMHCC

 /Mental Health Commission of Canada

 /theMHCC