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Request for Proposals

Build a digital collaboration and project tracking software system that allows users to curate/suggest community resources to project teams working on a novel new concept.

August 19th, 2016

The Oklahoma Innovation Institute (OII) is requesting proposals from qualified vendors to develop a mobile and web-based collaboration, technology commercialization and curated resource network. Proposals are due by 12:00 p.m. central daylight time on Tuesday, September 6th, 2016.

Background

OII's technology acceleration program is a combination of digital communication tools and support services to help researchers and entrepreneurs quickly bring high-tech products to market. The program will help to establish an asset map for early-stage concepts and start-up companies while connecting them to a network of community resources, through curated connections, to accelerate the commercialization process. The digital platform will stimulate research collaborations, uncover innovations available for commercial transfer and unlock the potential of Oklahoma's research labs to entrepreneurs and the private sector.

The vendor selected to develop this system must have a strong background in the skills needed to execute on the project with the ability to demonstrate experience doing so with a high level of execution.

Desired Skills

In order to execute on the proposed project, the development team must be able to:

- Demonstrate experience in and have the ability to create strong wireframes and high fidelity designs using Sketch or Adobe products.
- Build a responsive web application on the latest web technology (Ember, NodeJS, etc.)
- Strong experience in iOS, Android and Windows mobile development preferably with experience using Xamarin development tools.
- Proven ability to build a scalable application programming interface (API) to support quickly accelerating growth over the next 5 years.
- Build a scalable database architecture using Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services or equivalent.
- Must demonstrate strong track record for on-time, on-budget performance and high customer satisfaction.
- Must have a strong background in technology-based startups or academic research.

Project Description

Overview

Executing on building a useful collaboration and technology commercialization platform to support Oll's technology acceleration program is highly dependent upon an engaging user experience. In order to achieve the necessary level of utilization, Oll is looking for a software design and development team to successfully build a web and mobile platform with high-level notification systems that optimize utilization. A focus on user experience and user engagement with demonstrable experience in previous projects is a requirement.

Users

The technology acceleration platform will mainly target entrepreneurs and academic researchers with additional user roles for community curators. The basic function of the system for researchers and entrepreneurs is built around the ability for users to create a new project on the system, add users to the project or join other project teams, communicate with project team members and receive relevant resources pushed to the project team from community curators. Community curators will specifically assist in suggesting relevant content to the project teams and should have the ability to add five types of resources: people, organizations, equipment, facilities and funding opportunities.

Projects

Users must be able to create a new project for a current research project, a startup concept, an existing startup or a technology-based business. The following are required elements of every project that the platform must support:

- Create a project name
- Add a profile image (logo or product picture),
- Set a project status (idea, concept validation, market validation, prototype, launched).
- Change project status over time
- Display external links (to website or research studies)
- Add and/or remove project team members
- Allow project owner to establish user roles for the project team
- Display project team members and their roles
- Establish a project feed that displays all active projects to community members

Resources

Resources are the critical elements that most early stage concepts need to accelerate growth. Resources can be facilities, people, organizations, equipment, or funding. The ability to create resources on the system is a critical feature. Details for each type of resource that will need to be developed include:

Facilities

- Location
- Point of Contact
- Summary (text field)

People

- Name
- Profile Image
- Contact Info (email, phone)
- Skills
- Headline
- Summary (text field)
- Available for contact (Yes or No?)

Organizations

- Name
- Point of contact
- Summary (text field)
- Link to system user

Equipment

- Name
- Point of contact
- Summary of equipment (text field)
- Skills required (text field)

Funding

- Title of funding
- Amount
- Requirements (text field)
- Summary (text field)

Intellectual Property

- Summary
- Owner
- Field (Medical, energy, etc)
- Patent # (provisional, application, granted)

Curator Actions

The key engagement function of the platform is allowing community members to suggest or recommend connections to resources or other users. The key requirements for the curation platform include:

- Allowing a user to recommend a resource to a project team
- Allowing a user to recommend another user to a project team
- Feedback (interested/not interested) based on all suggested connections
- Messaging between users and project teams
- Analytics/scores for successful connections (interested or not)

Importing Data

One important element of the technology acceleration platform is the population of existing resources from existing sources. As a minimum requirements, the platform will need to be able to import lists of prospective users to auto-create user accounts/resource profiles for them and be able to match them to existing users if they already exist on the system.

Required Assets

Documentation

Key design documents to help visualize the development should be produced at the beginning of the project to make sure that any miscommunications on requirements are caught early in the design and development process. These documents are the first deliverables and should be developed in collaboration with the OII leadership team including a sitemap for user navigation, an entity-relationship diagram, and wireframes of each screen.

Database

The database will be critical for storing user, resource and project details as well as user authentication and other core security functions. It is essential that the database be built to current standards to allow for scalability and security. The first deployment should include the basic functions, but be built with additional functionality in mind. The second stage will be to leverage direct integration into existing university systems to auto-populate research profiles and recently published literature to expand the community asset map. As the platform grows, more data will be manually input as well as auto-populated into the system based on expanded system integration with regional members. Additionally, automated grant identification and early stage seed capital will be explored to identify potential funding opportunities.

Mobile Application

The mobile application is a critical part of the proposed platform. The difficulty identified with similar systems is the requirement for the user to clearly understand their immediate need and actively search for a solution without adequately understanding the intricacies of the need. The mobile application removes the active query requirement of most web portal system and replaces it with passively curated suggestions. This will require an extensive knowledge of notification systems, specifically push/mobile notification.

In addition to curated content, the platform will also include direct queries to allow platform users to quickly identify collaborators, researchers, resources or funding opportunities through their own search. The search feature will allow users of the platform to quickly identify known needs and create an entry point for new user acquisition. New user acquisition will be a key to building an active digital community. The last element of the user platform is communication. A key to the system is the ability to respond to suggested connections as well as directly message within the system. Experience in mobile messaging and communication is a requirement.

Analytics

Understanding utilization and engagement with the platform will be critical to success. The OII

platform will provide a high-level analytics dashboard to system administrators to help them gauge the effectiveness of the system. The platform will also be set up to gather system-wide information that can be used internally to establish projected ROI for post-pilot platform implementation. The metrics of focus for the pilot are: number of collaborations created, number of active projects, number of positive and negative curations, number of grant applications from project teams, number of technology transfer opportunities created, and number of new companies launched.

Response Requirements

The response to this proposal should include a two-phase approach with budget and timeline for executing each. The first phase of the project should include a responsive web-only version of the software platform and the second phase should detail the cost to expand the platform to iOS and Android platforms.

Response Content

Responses to this proposal shall include the follow elements:

- Conceptualization of the technology acceleration platform
- A description of the respondent’s capabilities and experiences in developing and implementing similar products and platforms.
- Budget for building, testing and launching both phases of the platform.
- Development timeline with key milestone dates for both phases.

Response Delivery

All responses must:

- Be submitted in writing in PDF format, with a limit of 3 single-spaced paged.
- Signed by the vendor’s management with authority to commit vendor to the terms in the submitted proposal.
- Include name and contact details for the person with whom OII will communicate and send questions and
- Delivered by email to: chase@oii.org (and copied to george@oii.org as a backup)

Selection Criteria

Judging

Responses will be evaluated on the applicant’s demonstrated understanding of the project, their ability to execute on the proposal based on demonstrated experience, development timeline and the cost of the proposal.

Decision

The Oklahoma Innovation Institute expects to make an award to a single winning respondent, however it reserves the option to request that two or more respondents re-submit a joint proposal when OII determines that such a joint proposal takes advantage of complementary strengths in each of the proposals and provides the highest likelihood of success and highest value. A final decision will be made within one week of the deadline for receiving proposals.