IF2- Investment Fund for the Future - Entry #121
2018-2019

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Title: **Website Accessibility Compliance Tool**

Project Lead Name: Janet Roy

Project Lead eMail Address: jroy@brockport.edu

Project Lead Department: Office of College Communications

Project Lead School/Division: College Communications

Total Amount Requested: $8,382.50

Name of Sponsor 1: David Mihalyov

Name of Sponsor 2: James Haynes

A. PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION & IMPACT

A-1. Description of the Initiative.

Colleges and universities are regulated by two federal anti-discrimination laws, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), as well as analogous state laws. The federal statutes are similar and in most cases interpreted as being interchangeable. The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights ("OCR"), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Justice ("DOJ"), enforces the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act, both of which prohibit colleges and universities from discriminating on the basis of disability in their programs or activities.

In June 2017, The College at Brockport received a letter from the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), informing us that the College was not in compliance with the above mentioned laws. In an effort to resolve the complaint, the Office of College Communications, along with several campus offices, spent the months of July to October 2017, mitigating issues, developing processes, and creating a Web Accessibility Policy. Each of these measures were taken to ensure compliance now and in the future.

Current statistics indicate that approximately 10% of all web users are persons with disabilities, many of whom are using assistive web technologies. Designing for accessibility makes web pages available to the growing number of users who surf the web with mobile phones, PDAs and automobile accessories, making your pages accessible to the widest possible audience. All "official" and "authorized" pages, including third-party sites, must be accessible. Official pages include the home page and all subsidiary pages related to the mission of the institution (i.e., the catalog, schedules, institutional policies, etc.). Authorized pages are those with the endorsement of a specific division, department or other unit that publishes and maintains them and are linked to the official campus pages.

To assist with our work, the Office of College Communications contracted with SiteImprove, a web audit software company. SiteImprove allows the Web Team to scan the entire website for compliance issues, scan PDF documents for accessibility problems (more than 4,500 reside on our website), find broken

links, and improve our search engine optimization. Without this type of ongoing review of web content, the College risks becoming non-compliant and vulnerable to legal action by users.

In October 2017, the College was notified that we had met the requirements sought by OCR to satisfy the complaint. However, there is much work yet to be done to achieve full compliance, and ongoing work to maintain it into the future. Use of a web audit tool, such as SiteImprove, is necessary moving forward, as much of the compliance work is not possible for a small team without automated assistance.

A-2. Impact Statement: What change will this project deliver in the short term? What are the expected longer-term impacts?

Initially subscribing to the service allowed us to quickly review and correct many errors across our 10,000+ page website. It would have taken many additional months for us to get through all of the site review manually. The situation would have been even worse with respect to PDF documents if we did not have access to site-wide scanning provided by Siteimprove.

In the long term, the College risks expensive legal action by users of the site or government agencies, if we do not continually review and correct ADA compliance issues. With rapid technology changes, contracting with a third-party vendor allows us to benefit from the latest tools to do the job. As compliance regulations are updated, a third party would be able to update software much more quickly than we would be able to develop solutions in house.

Beyond accessibility issues, the other functions provided by Siteimprove, especially link checking, SEO optimization, spell- and readability-checking, among others, will allow us to maintain the site at a much higher level of quality, consistency, and usability. This, of course, will have a great impact on how successful the site is for its main purpose of recruitment and retention, along with its other functions.

B. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

B-1. Outline the ways in which the proposed investment will contribute to the College Strategic Plan Goals, and if appropriate, their Measures of Success.

Goal #1: To be a great college at which to learn.

Goal #4: To be a great college at which to work

Persons with disabilities must have equal access and equal opportunity to information on the College website. Our website is a vital resource for the recruitment and retention of our students. It is also essential for faculty, staff, and the community to have access to resources on the College website.

Having a tool in place to check accessibility is the only way to ensure we meet the requirements established by the federal and state government. Failure to do so will result in a frustrating experience for the end user, failure to bring in diverse students, and the College will be subject to large fines.

Measure of success this supports:

Goal #1: To be a great place at which to learn

Measure #1: We will expand, develop and assess academic, co-curricular, and operational activities proven to elevate the ability of both graduate and undergraduate students to create their best Brockport experience and shape their futures as engaged citizens and alumni.

Measure #8: Our campus climate data will show continual improvement, and, based on assessment results, resources will be dedicated to addressing issues of diversity in the curriculum and in faculty/staff representation, as well as equity in student retention, completion, and opportunity. We will make demonstrated progress towards the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) goals outlined in the Strategic Plan for EDI.

Goal #4: To be a great college at which to work

Measure #2: Our campus climate data will show continual improvement, and, based on assessment results, resources will be dedicated to tackling long standing issues of equity and inclusion, particularly in relation to the recruitment of and institutional support for a diverse faculty and staff body. We will make demonstrated progress towards the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) goals outlined in the Strategic Plan for EDI.

C. SUSTAINABILITY

C-1. How will this initiative become self-sustaining beyond the initial funding period?
The Office of College Communications is evaluating other tools and resources that will help us meet this need in the future that aren't as costly. Having to meet the requirements is the condensed timeline given to us this year prevented us from doing an extensive search for other vendors/tools that would satisfy this need. We will need to continue to support this initiative every year. However, we are hopeful that we can support a more budget-friendly tool out of our budget moving forward.

D. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

D-1. Identify the specific activities to be funded from the Investment Fund. Provide an estimated timeline for implementation and for activities anticipated to be ongoing.
Siteimprove has already been funded by the Office of College Communications. We are looking for reimbursement of half of the annual cost - $8,382.50. This is an ongoing initiative that will support our accessibility issues for one year.

E. CONSULTATION

E-1. For requests involving technology. Has the Chief Information Officer (Bob Cushman or his designee) reviewed this proposal and verified potential costs as it relates to technology: Yes, proof on file.

E-2. For requests involving facilities. Has the Director of Facilities & Planning (John Osowski or his designee) reviewed this proposal and verified potential costs as it relates to facilities: Yes, proof on file.Not Applicable

E-3. The Project Lead has confirmed other required resources with the appropriate supervisor: Yes, proof on file.Not Applicable

F. BUDGET & OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

F-1. Itemized Budget (Excel format ONLY): [On file]

F-2. Total Amount Requested: $8,382.50

F-3. This proposal includes: Cost sharing. A faculty stipend.

F-4. Other funding sources* for this proposal? Not applicable.

F-5. Is the success of the project contingent on receipt of funds from any additional funding source(s)?
No

G. ASSESSMENT PLAN

G-1. How will you assess/measure the effectiveness of this initiative? Provide anticipated outcomes and specific measurements for success.
Siteimprove includes detailed and overview reporting of the site measured against many checkpoints in the areas of accessibility, broken links, SEO, spellcheck, reading level, and other measures. Dashboards and reporting shows numbers of pages with problems as well as counts of incidences of the problems. Timeline graphs show improvement in terms of these measures over time so it is easy to track progress over time as well as see how many problems are left at any given point.

H. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

H-1. Please provide any additional information to assist in the review of the proposal, including why the initiative cannot be funded from divisional resources.
Upload up to three supplemental files here (not required): [On file]

Signature of Project Lead: [on file]

Project Lead Email: jroy@brockport.edu

Signatures of sponsors are on file in the Administration and Finance Division.