
FROM THE MEHRUTHERM BLOG · WEBSITES

How a Washington Town Can Get a New Website (Often Without a Formal Bid)

Many small Washington towns assume a new website means a long bidding process. For website and professional services, that is usually not the case.

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Many small-town clerks and councils put off replacing an outdated website because they assume it requires a long, formal bidding process.

For website and other professional services, that is usually not the case.

Knowing the difference can save your town months of delay.

BEFORE WE START

This is general guidance, not legal advice. Always confirm the details against your own town's purchasing policy, and run anything you are unsure about past your attorney. Rules and thresholds vary.

Website Work Is Usually a Professional Service

Washington's competitive bidding rules are written primarily for public works, such as construction and infrastructure projects.

Website design, software, and similar professional services generally fall outside those mandatory bidding requirements. In practice, that often means a town can hire a provider directly under its own purchasing policy, without a sealed-bid process. The distinction is roughly this: building a road is a public work with strict bidding rules, while hiring expertise to design and build a website is a professional service with more flexibility.

The Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) is the reference Washington local governments rely on for questions like this, and it is a good place to confirm how the rules apply to your situation.

What This Means in Practice

You Likely Have More Flexibility Than You Think

You may be able to choose a provider based on fit, experience, and references rather than the lowest sealed bid. For a website, that matters: the cheapest bid often becomes the most expensive project once you count the rework.

Your Own Policy Still Governs

Most towns have a purchasing policy with dollar thresholds and a few required steps. Follow it. If your policy is silent or out of date, that is worth addressing regardless.

Document Your Decision

Even without a formal bid, keep a simple record of why you chose the provider you did. It keeps the process clean and easy to defend.

A Practical Path for a Small Town

1. Confirm with your clerk or attorney how your purchasing policy treats professional services.
2. Talk to a few providers and ask to see real work for towns your size.
3. Request a clear written scope and quote, so the council knows exactly what it is approving.
4. Approve it the way your policy requires, and keep the paperwork on file.

TIP

Worried about the budget? You may not have to pay for all of it yourselves. Grants can cover a meaningful share of town technology upgrades. See [funding the work with grants](#).

We Do This Work, and We Are Local

We built and now look after the technology for the Town of Creston, right here in Lincoln County, so we understand how small-town budgets, councils, and staff actually operate.

If your town is stuck with a website that is hard to update or no longer meets today's accessibility expectations, we are glad to walk you through your options.

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Wondering where to start? Get in touch and we will help you map out a simple, defensible path to a better town website.

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