Request for Proposal

GEM Navigation Bot

September 8, 2025

STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW)

BACKGROUND

The Southeast Michigan Grants Coalition/Detroit Regional Partnership seeks a qualified vendor to develop, implement, and maintain a smart, AI-powered chatbot—the GEM Bot— to support stakeholder engagement with the advanced mobility ecosystem. The bot will live on the GEM website at www.gemdetroitregion.com and serve a wide audience of suppliers, innovators, property owners, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and individuals seeking opportunities, events, resources, and partnerships within the advance mobility ecosystem.

About the Global Epicenter of Mobility (GEM)

Led by the DRP, GEM is designed to help build a prosperous 21st-century mobility sector. With $52.2 million in grant funds from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, GEM is helping the Detroit region develop cutting-edge technology, create new quality jobs and careers, and prepare new sites for business.

GEM's vision is to accelerate economic growth by building on the region's unrivaled mobility assets. It aims to create a smart and secure advanced mobility industry, beginning with the transition to next-generation electric, autonomous, and fully connected vehicles. While grounded in automotive, GEM's work stretches into other industries as advanced mobility technology evolves to move people and goods in new ways.

GEM Central is one of the six projects funded through the GEM initiative. GEM Central operates four distinctive pillars of work: 1) the development of data and insights to frame future mobility growth opportunities for the Detroit Region; 2) strengthen the connective tissue and collaboration of mobility stakeholders through strategic convening; 3) advance awareness of our region's position as the global epicenter of mobility through unique and effective storytelling; and 4) expand the circle communities and individuals engaged and benefiting from the region's changing and expanding mobility ecosystem.

I. SCOPE OF WORK & DELIVERABLES

1. Project Objectives

This project is designed to support a stronger and more connected regional infrastructure for the GEM and the broader advanced mobility ecosystem. The GEM Bot aims to reduce friction for those entering the ecosystem by helping users—such as suppliers, founders, nonprofit partners, property owners, and individuals—find relevant opportunities, resources, and connections.

By embedding a smart, AI-enabled chatbot into the GEM website, this tool will serve as an always-on entry point to the ecosystem, guiding users toward GEM-aligned

assets and partnerships. In addition to improving access and transparency, GEM Bot will help the Detroit Regional Partnership and coalition partners better understand stakeholder needs and identify areas for ecosystem coordination, investment, or where outreach may be strengthened.

Specific project objectives include:

- Improve user access to GEM-aligned resources, opportunities, and events.

- Guide diverse stakeholders—such as businesses, suppliers, property owners, and individuals—through the advanced mobility ecosystem.

- Surface trends in user engagement to identify ecosystem gaps and potential areas for strategic investment or outreach.

- Establish a low-barrier, AI-assisted entry point to the ecosystem that complments human engagement.

- Test the use of a scalable chatbot solution as part of a broader regional infrastructure.

2. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The selected vendor will provide the following deliverables:

- A functioning GEM chatbot that can be embedded onto the GEM website.

- A content ingestion and governance framework (with DRP/GEM collaboration).

- A content curation strategy, including updates and partner-sourced materials.

- A process for mapping frequently asked questions (FAQ) to specific responses.

- A user data policy and privacy-forward design aligned with legal standards.

- Backend analytics dashboard for DRP/GEM to track and categorize engagement by topic and user type.

- Basic training and documentation for DRP/GEM staff on bot content management.

- Support for the design, testing, refinement, and public launch of the bot.

3. CHATBOT CAPABILITIES

The chatbot must support the following features or address the following considerations:

- Embed onto https://gemdetroitregion.com, either via external hosting or plugin, with vendor-specified preference. Must work within GEM's managed WordPress environment (non-headless). All solutions are subject to the GEM web management team approval.

- Allow DRP/GEM to control the source materials used to answer questions. The vendor must describe trade-offs between an open-source scraping model and a closed, curated content model.

- Enable content moderation and approval process to maintain answer quality and accuracy. Vendors must describe how frequently content should be reviewed or refreshed.

- Support mapping of specific responses to frequently asked questions. Vendor must describe how FAQ mapping is implemented, managed, and refined over time.

- Include mechanisms to evolve or retrain the chatbot to improve accuracy. Vendor must describe how the bot learns or evolves, and how DRP/GEM can manage that process.

- Allow for responses tailored to a specific geography (e.g., Southeast Michigan). Vendor must describe how regional filtering or localization is achieved.

- Complement rather than replace human engagement. Vendors should describe how the bot supports relationship-building.

- Option to collect voluntary user identifiers (e.g., name, email, organization) in a privacy-forward way, with clear opt-in and consent language.

- Ensure compliance with privacy regulations and ethical data use practices.

- Enable DRP/GEM to track and categorize user interactions by type of question, keyword, or user segment.

4. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Estimated project length: 16 months

Phase	Timeline (Estimated)
Vendor selection	October 1, 2025

Phase	Timeline (Estimated)
Discovery + kickoff	Month 1
Bot prototype development	Months 1–2
Testing + refinement	Month 3
Public launch	Month 4
Post-launch refinement	Month 5
Post-launch support	12 months

5. STAFFING + RESOURCES

- Vendor will lead technical development and implementation.
- DRP/GEM staff will provide:
    - Curated initial content and FAQs.
    - Feedback during testing and refinement.
    - Final approval for launch.

6. BUDGET

Estimated range: up to $30,000
Includes development, testing, staff training, and one year of post-launch support.

II. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Interested vendors must submit a complete proposal addressing the specifications outlined in this Scope of Work. Proposals should be concise, well-organized, and demonstrate the vendor's ability to deliver on the chatbot objectives within the constraints of the GEM initiative and DRP's managed WordPress environment.

Proposals must include the following:

- Project Understanding
  A summary of your understanding of the GEM initiative, the role of the chatbot in the broader advanced mobility ecosystem, and how your solution addresses the key goals and constraints outlined in this document.

- Technical Approach and Capabilities
  A detailed description of your chatbot solution, including:

  - o Proposed hosting and integration model (embedded, plug-in, or external hosting with embed).

  - o Compatibility with WordPress and non-headless environments.

  - o Approach to FAQ mapping, content moderation, and response curation.

  - o Privacy-forward data collection, usage, and security measures.

  - o Accessibility features and compliance with relevant standards.

  - o How your solution addresses user categorization, learning/iteration, and regional geographic constraints.

- Work Plan and Timeline
  A proposed work plan that includes key phases, deliverables, timelines, and milestones for implementation, testing, and training.

- Team and Experience
  Descriptions of the team members involved in the project and examples of prior work or deployments of similar chatbot tools, particularly in nonprofit, government, or economic development contexts.

- Budget
  A proposed budget that clearly outlines total cost and any cost breakdowns by phase, including ongoing maintenance or support fees.

- Ongoing Support and Maintenance Plan
  Recommendations for answer review frequency, ongoing training and updates, DRP/GEM staff responsibilities, and long-term support needs.

III. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. Each criterion will be scored on a scale of **1 to 5**, with **5** indicating the highest alignment with GEM goals and the most comprehensive, feasible, and cost-effective approach.

Criteria	Description	Weight	Score (1–5)	Weighted Score
Project Understanding	Demonstrates clear understanding of the GEM initiative, ecosystem goals, and chatbot objectives	20%		

Criteria	Description	Weight	Score (1–5)	Weighted Score
Technical Approach	Effectiveness, feasibility, and innovation of proposed chatbot solution, including integration and hosting	25%		
Work Plan and Timeline	Clear, achievable timeline with milestones and deliverables	15%		
Team and Experience	Relevant experience with similar chatbot deployments, particularly in economic development contexts	15%		
Budget and Cost Reasonableness	Clarity, competitiveness, and value of the proposed budget	15%		
Ongoing Support & Maintenance	Plan for sustainability, training, and ongoing updates	10%		

Total Possible Weighted Score: 100

Scoring Scale

- **5 – Excellent**: Exceeds requirements; outstanding response
- **4 – Good**: Fully meets requirements with minor gaps
- **3 – Satisfactory**: Meets basic requirements
- **2 – Limited**: Meets some requirements; notable weaknesses
- **1 – Poor**: Fails to meet most requirements

IV. Terms and Conditions

1. This contract is funded through a federal grant and is subject to all applicable requirements under 2 CFR 200. All submitted deliverables will become the property of the Southeast Michigan Grants Coalition. Vendors must be in good standing and not listed under suspension or debarment on SAM.gov.

2. Liability and Indemnification

The vendor/developer shall be fully responsible for ensuring the chatbot is developed and integrated in a manner that does not compromise the security, functionality, or performance of the host website.

If the chatbot causes any disruption to the host website's operation, performance degradation, data breach, or security vulnerability, the vendor/developer shall promptly correct the issue at no additional cost to the client.

The vendor/developer agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the client, its officers, employees, and affiliates from all claims, liabilities, damages, or expenses (including reasonable attorney's fees) arising from:

- Security breaches, data loss, or unauthorized access linked to the chatbot implementation;
- Code conflicts or interference with existing website elements caused by the chatbot;
- Violations of privacy laws or data handling regulations due to chatbot functionality or storage practices.

3. Notice of Contractual Requirements

Final terms related to liability; insurance coverage and data protection will be included in the formal contract. Vendors should be prepared to provide proof of insurance and agree to standard indemnification and security compliance provisions.

V. Timeline

- Issuance of RFP: September 8, 2025
- Q&A Period Ends: September 16, 2025
- Proposal Submission Deadline: September 23, 2025 (by 5:00 PM EDT)
- Vendor Selection: October 1, 2025
- Project Start: October 13, 2025
- Program Completion: February 2027

VI. Contact Information

Submit proposals and inquiries to:
Jeannine Gant, Mobility Engagement Officer
Email: jeannine.gant@detroitregionalpartnership.com