THE mySociety CALL FOR PROPOSALS: THE WINNER AND RUNNERS UP

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mySociety is pleased to announce the winner of our 2006 call for proposals, plus our thoughts on the best runners up, and various other lessons.

Winner

Our winner, and the next major site we are planning to build is the Freedom of Information Filer and Archive; a searchable, readable, googlable user-created archive of FOI requests and their responses. Think of a combined TheyWorkForYou and WriteToThem.com for FOI requests and their responses, and you'll have our vision.

This idea was actually submitted twice, once by Phil Rodgers and once by Francis Irving (a mySociety coder).

We believe the idea is especially powerful in a form extended somewhat beyond that submitted. We think that the best way to build a top quality archive is to simultaneously build the best possible "File an FOI request" tool, and then publish both the requests and the responses made through it in the archive. From the private desire to easily file FOI requests we hope that we can generate the public benefit of an easy to use archive.

We asked our community of users and friends to list their top three projects, and the FOIFA was named more often than any other single project as the winner: 9 out of a total of 22 people who left a comment expressing their preferences. The core team, core volunteers and trustees agreed with the users, and so we have a winner.

Logistics

mySociety will start building the system in early 2007. We will try to fund it in two ways. First, we will approach donors, most probably foundations, to see if they are interested in supporting it. Secondly, we will see if we can set aside some surplus from contract work, such as branded versions of the other sites. And lastly, we'll work with any volunteers who are willing to dig in.

Our initial estimate is that the site will take 120 full time developer days to design, build and launch to beta, for a total cost of about £25,000 including servers, management time, gathering of contact details, buying of sweets, motivational calendars and so on. The cost of running it thereafter are hard to gauge at this point, and will depend on usage patterns and the final spec we settle on.

In the run up to building and launching it we'll gladly talk to anyone who wants to be involved, including public sector agencies who we hope might use this system to publish responses to requests made via other channels.

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