Project Plan for: Updating an existing or creating a new website

Project description

This project is to review your current website and how it is managed, and then explore how you want to improve its appearance, functionality, and content management. It could also address search engine optimization (SEO) strategies to improve the discoverability of your organization's website. You will familiarize yourself with different content management system (CMS) options and vendors, and choose one to implement your website with you.

This project is NOT about developing a new logo, a rebranding campaign for your organization, social media content, or creating a comprehensive Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Why take this on / what impact to expect:

If you complete this project, you can expect some or all of the following benefits to your staff and organization:

- Create or improve your organization's external web presence
- Gain a better understanding of your different audiences and how to reach them
- Have a website that staff within your organization can maintain
- Get your website seen by more people
- Gain understanding of Google Analytics so that you know where your website traffic is coming from and what content users are engaging with, allowing you to make more informed decisions about your web content

Estimated project timeframe: 3-8 weeks

Project deliverables

At the end of this project, you will have:

- A new or updated website that better aligns with your organizational goals
- A website that your staff can maintain with a Content Management System (CMS)
- A "mobile-friendly" or "responsive" website that displays properly on phones, tablets, and computers
- Training for staff on using the CMS to maintain your website

Project milestones & who leads:

The major steps involved in executing this project and who leads them are below. Keep in mind there may be more sub-tasks than what's noted here, but these are the major steps:

Milestone	Who leads?

1) Assess current state
a) If you have a website, ask key stakeholders what works well and what does not
b) If you *don't* have a website in place, understand what your current needs and pain points are, and how a new website may help you address them
c) Use this free tool to assess your website: *TechSoup Website Wellness Assessment*
d) CONSIDER: What role does your website play in your overall communications strategy?
  i) How central is it to other aspects of your strategy such as program delivery?
  ii) How consistent is the look, feel, and messaging across the website and other parts of your communications strategy? (e.g., Do you use the same fonts, colors, taglines, logos, etc. across your web, social media, and print properties?)
e) Can you add and edit website content on your own, or do you contract this out?
  i) If internal, are you reliant on one person, or can multiple people add/edit content?
  ii) Overall, is the process for updating content easy or difficult to learn?
	Your org

iii) Are you afraid of "breaking" the website every time you make a change?
f) How well structured is your site? How easy is it to use/navigate?
    i) If somebody were to draw a map or outline of your site, would they be able to easily place each page within a larger framework?
    ii) How easy is it to get back to the home page of the site when you're on a sub-page?
    iii) Do the menus and top-level navigation stay the same across the site?
g) Who in your organization is happy with the website? Who isn't? Why or why not?
h) How old is the design on your website? How does it compare to current web trends? In other words, when you compare the way your site looks to other sites across the internet, what sort of impression does it give? Does it appear clearly outdated?
i) Have you tested how your website looks across a large variety of web browsers (Edge, Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari, etc.)?
j) How does your website look on a computer vs. on a mobile phone or tablet? (In other words, is your website mobile-friendly and responsive to different devices?)
k) Can visitors share content from the website with the click of button (for instance, through a "Facebook share" button)?
l) Can visitors donate online via a credit card?	

2) Create requirements/define your needs a) Based on the above, create a list of "must-haves" & "nice-to-haves" of what you need in a new website. i.e., *What must the website do, for who, where, and how?* b) Identify some websites that you like and that have features you want c) Understand what resources you have available for this project, including people, funding, and time – including for ongoing maintenance	Your org
3) Explore options a) Using the requirements above, evaluate potential CMS and web site vendors that offer what you need – use the list below as a starting place b) View examples of websites they've created to understand their work/portfolio c) Consider what training/documentation/support is available for each solution	Your org
4) Choose vendor/solution, sign agreement, review work, and train a) Select a vendor to perform the website work and establish a contract b) Ensure all elements of the solution you need are discussed and agreed upon c) Agree on milestones for development to ensure project is on track d) Designate staff to work with the vendor as needed, i.e., to provide the content/ elements they need to build or update your website e) Check in with the vendor at defined milestones to ensure project is on track f) Review completed website and resolve issues with vendor as needed g) Set up a training plan for staff to ensure they can use and maintain the site h) Consider your approach for ongoing support on the solution, and to manage ongoing content updates	Your org and/or solution vendor

Estimated project budget:

If you follow the approach outlined in this project plan template, we estimate the project budget to be as shown below. Please keep in mind this is only an estimate and final cost will vary based on your choice of solutions/vendors, hardware, etc.

Description	Est. budget
Website design or refresh (not including database integrations or branding work)	$3,000 - $6,000
Annual CMS/website hosting fees (depending on host and features)	$0 - $240
TOTAL	

Potential solution providers/vendors for this project:

While the Nonprofit Support Program does not endorse the vendors/providers below, our work in the community indicates that many of your peers have used the vendors below for similar projects. It's essential that you research and fully evaluate solutions and vendors against your specific project requirements to ensure a good fit. Additional vendors can be found in the New

England Nonprofit Consultant Directory. *We've recommended additional resources under "Learn more before you decide," below.*

- Influential Designs
- Triple Frog
- CoLab
- Walden Pond Design

Consider utilizing a Catchafire volunteer to help with select elements of your project implementation. More information about available Catchafire technology projects can be found here.

Learn more before you decide:

To learn more about how to evaluate these solutions/vendors before you continue, consider the following resources:

- Five Must-Haves for a Nonprofit Website
- 10 Things to Consider When Planning a Website Design (or Re-design)
- How to Systemize Improvement for your Nonprofit Website
- 5 Common Mistakes in Website RFPs

Related considerations:

While you're working on this project, it is a good time to also consider the following:

Do you need a comprehensive Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system that integrates with your website? That's a more complex project. Use the articles below to learn more.

- 5 key differentiators to look for in your nonprofit CRM
- Which CRM software is best for your nonprofit?
- CRM integration for nonprofits