

Website Development Planning



The first steps to developing (or redeveloping) a website are non-technical but can be the most difficult. Begin by considering the following questions. You don't need to spell out all of the answers, but just in considering them, you will refine your goals and better establish your content.

1. Why?

Why do you want a website? What are you trying to accomplish? Will the site be an online brochure for your department or program? Is it a digital library that gives easy access to public documents to visitors? Is it a blog or series of articles? A photo gallery? An "about us" site? Most likely it will be some combination thereof, but you should know ahead of time.

2. Who?

Who are your primary target audiences—who are you trying to reach? If you have more than one audience, what information or part of your site is going to target which group? Your answers to question 1 should directly address the needs of your audiences.

3. How?

Who is going to maintain the site? Will it be a group (collaborative) effort, or is there going to be a point person? What will the technical levels be of this person or team?

4. When?

Realistically, how often is your website going to be updated? What information will change on a timely basis? For the most part, a static

or stagnant site does not attract return visitors, so if you want people to come back to your site, what will draw them back?

5. Access

Is your entire site viewable by everyone, or do you want some parts protected? Who is your limited audience for the protected areas and how do you want those areas protected?

6. Interactivity

Do you want any sort of interactivity with your site? This can be in the shape of submittal forms, quizzes, contact/feedback forms, comments, edits or more. What information are you collecting and how are you going to use that information? Address security and privacy concerns.

7. Future

What do you want your website to be like five years from now? How will it be different? How will it be the same? How will it grow? Also, when do you want your new or redesigned website to go live? What time-frames do you anticipate? What features need to be available at launch and what can come online later?

Consider these questions and any more that may come to mind. This will give you a much better picture of what your website goals are and can then help the web developers tailor something to your needs. A complete and comprehensive plan will make for a better website and faster development.