

5 Things to Consider

When Planning a Website Redesign





Introduction

Meeting the public's needs and expectations from government requires an effective website at the core of any digital strategy. The presence of a website is no longer a luxury, it is a demand. One that no government organization should take lightly.

A recent survey of government IT leaders conducted by Meritalk found that 91% of organizations have made it easier for the public to interact with government, 64% still struggle to keep pace with rising citizen service expectations.

Creating a redesigned digital experience may spark for a variety of reasons: the need for new technology, an effort to share information, or even a design refresh. But positioning a government website redesign for the greatest chance at success dictates planners take a more comprehensive approach to the role the website plays in digital strategy and consider how best to address the public's needs. The following guide outlines five key themes to consider to help put website redesign projects on the right track.

User Experience

Why it Matters

Planning a website redesign for a government organization surfaces many priorities from individual departments. Each elected official and stakeholder will have a unique vision for the new design as well as ideas for what information should be showcased on the homepage.



The pivotal shift to consider the user's needs should live at the forefront of any design strategy. It's important to consider why the website needs a redesign in the first place.

What can be done to make it easier for online visitors to find, understand, and use the information they need?

Shifting the focus to the user experience, and letting that guide design decisions moving forward, will help build internal alignment on the site's development and ultimately result in a site that benefits the public user.

What to Consider

Making user experience a priority requires understanding how the public uses an organization's website. Though following best practices is a start, gathering data allows a clearer blueprint for effectively meeting needs. Some areas of focus include:



How will you learn what residents' expectations are for your website?



How will you know you are placing the correct information on your homepage?








Is the information on your website easy for residents to find, understand and use?

Accessibility

Why it Matters

Being able to access information digitally is one of the core reasons that organizations have websites. Yet, providing easy-to-access information continues to present a stumbling block for government organizations at all levels.


Inaccessible web content means that people with disabilities are denied equal access to information. It excludes people just as much as steps at an entrance to a physical location. In 2022, the Department of Justice implemented new guidelines for federal, state, and local governments with the aim of ensuring web accessibility for people with disabilities. Title II of the ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all services, programs, and activities of state and local governments, including digital communications in a wide array of areas such as:


 Applying for an absentee ballot	 Paying tickets or fees	 Filing a police report	 Attending a virtual town meeting	 And more!
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Government websites and web services must comply with the accessibility standards known as WCAG 2.0 and adopt policies and procedures to maintain accessibility for all current and future content on their websites.

What to Consider

Website accessibility is the result of several factors, involving both the implemented technology and its use. Make sure that:

-  Content management systems enable editors to create accessible content.

-  Editors are educated on accessibility standards and responsibilities.

-  Graphic designers understand the accessibility guidelines for color and contrast.

Security

Why it Matters

Cybersecurity attacks grow and evolve daily. One popular form of attack, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), have grown in scale and frequency, overwhelming websites with traffic from multiple sources and rendering them inaccessible. Protecting protected user information and ensuring site uptime are key factors for building trust in a website on which the public can rely on.

What to Consider

Protecting websites from intrusion requires both secure technology building the website and in the website hosting. Ask the following when considering security issues:



How will the CMS software protect against security threats, like Cross-Site Scripting, Cross-Site Request Forgery and SQL inquiry injections?



How will the website be protected from DDoS attacks?



What is the physical security protocol of the website host?



Mobile

Why it Matters

Today, mobile-friendly websites are expected as the norm, not a convenience.



According to Pew Research, **91%** of Americans own some type of cellphone with **85%** of that group owning a smartphone with internet access.

Granicus benchmark studies further found that in 2021, over 33% of state and local website visitors visited through a mobile device. While mobile usage is still skewed to those under the age of 50, the gap is closing. Users across all age groups are using their phones to follow breaking news, share information and learn about community events.

What to Consider

Meeting the needs of mobile visitors requires thinking about what devices they're using, what information they need, and what tasks they're trying to perform. This can impact design and organization of website information in different ways:



Will the website be developed with Responsive Web Design (RWD) to ensure content dynamically resizes to suit all devices?



What ways can content development make it easier to access information on smaller screens?



How can website designers control how mobile content displays for users?



Looking Forward

Current technology provides the means for governments to meet the growing expectations of their constituents. By considering user needs and the ways that an organization can best meet them, the websites at the center of a digital experience can offer relevant, timely information and connect the public with the tools they need to complete tasks. In turn, a user-focused website built with human-centered design in mind can help build trust between the public and government.



Leveraging new ideas, with community as the primary source to guide decisions, can make it easier to embrace change and prepare an organization to enjoy a better, more effective website.

About Granicus

Granicus provides technology and services that empower government organizations to create seamless digital experiences for the people they serve. By offering the industry's leading cloud-based solutions for communications, government website design, meeting and agenda management software, records management, and digital services to over 500,000 government professionals, Granicus helps turn government missions into quantifiable realities. Granicus products connect more than 300 million people, creating a powerful network to enhance resident engagement. The **Granicus Experience Group (GXG)**, Granicus' in-house digital agency, a cross-functional team of strategists, analysts, communicators, and Granicus technology experts, leverages best-in-class human-centered practices and a design-thinking approach to help nonpartisan federal, state, and local government clients better connect with the people they serve. For more information, visit granicus.com.

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