



GUIDE FOR WEBSITES



ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

The Main Street Solution Center is a free access portal to resources for communities and organizations working to revitalize and strengthen their local economies. The Solution Center's curated resources are designed to help guide and inspire local leaders and advocates as they navigate the complexities of downtown and neighborhood business district revitalization and economic growth.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This Main Street Solution Center publication was underwritten by Michigan Main Street and Main Street Iowa. Their generous support demonstrates a shared vision and ongoing commitment to freely share knowledge, experience, tools, and best practices to fuel revitalization and economic growth in their own communities, and in locales spanning the nation.



ABOUT THE CREATORS

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Ben Muldrow is a partner at Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a consultancy renowned for its creative approach to economic development, branding, and marketing strategies for small towns and cities across the nation. He brings an innovative mindset and a deep understanding of the unique dynamics of community branding to each engagement, blending traditional community values with modern marketing techniques to help communities and districts unlock their potential.

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WEBSITE BEST PRACTICES

Designing and setting up a website for an organization involves several key steps to ensure it effectively represents the organization's mission and serves as a valuable resource for the community. Here's a guide to the process:

Define Objectives and Audience:

- Determine the primary purpose of your website (e.g., promoting local businesses, informing about events, attracting volunteers).
- Identify audience segments (e.g. local residents, business owners, tourists, potential investors) that will need to be captured to achieve primary goals for the website.

Choose a Domain Name and Hosting Service:

- Select a domain name that is easy to remember and reflects your organization's name.
- Choose a reliable hosting service that fits your budget and technical requirements.

Plan the Website Structure:

- Create a sitemap outlining the main sections and pages (e.g., About Us, Events, Business Directory, Contact).
- Consider user navigation and make it easy to find important information.

Design and Branding:

- Ensure the design aligns with your organization's branding (logos, color scheme).
- The website should be visually appealing, with a balance of text, images, and white space.

Content Development:

- Write clear, concise content that communicates your message and values.
- Include high-quality images of your district, events, and local businesses.
- Create a section for news, blogs, or articles to keep the content fresh and engaging.

Incorporate Essential Features:

- A responsive design that works on both desktop and mobile devices.
- Social media integration to connect with your online community.
- A calendar or section for events and activities.
- Contact forms for inquiries and newsletter sign-ups.
- SEO optimization to improve visibility in search engines.

Building the Website:

- You can use website builders like WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace, which offer user-friendly interfaces and customizable templates.
- Alternatively, hire a web developer if you need more customized solutions or lack the technical expertise.

Include Interactive Elements:

- Interactive maps of your district, business directories, and photo galleries.
- Features like forums or comment sections for community engagement.

Ensure Accessibility:

- Make sure your website is accessible to users with disabilities, following WCAG guidelines. ([visit w3.org](https://www.w3.org/))

Testing and Launching:

- Before launching, test the website for functionality, loading speed, and broken links.
- Gather feedback from a test group and make necessary adjustments.

Maintenance and Updates:

- Regularly update the site with new content, event information, and business listings.
- Perform routine maintenance to ensure the site remains secure and functional.

Promotion:

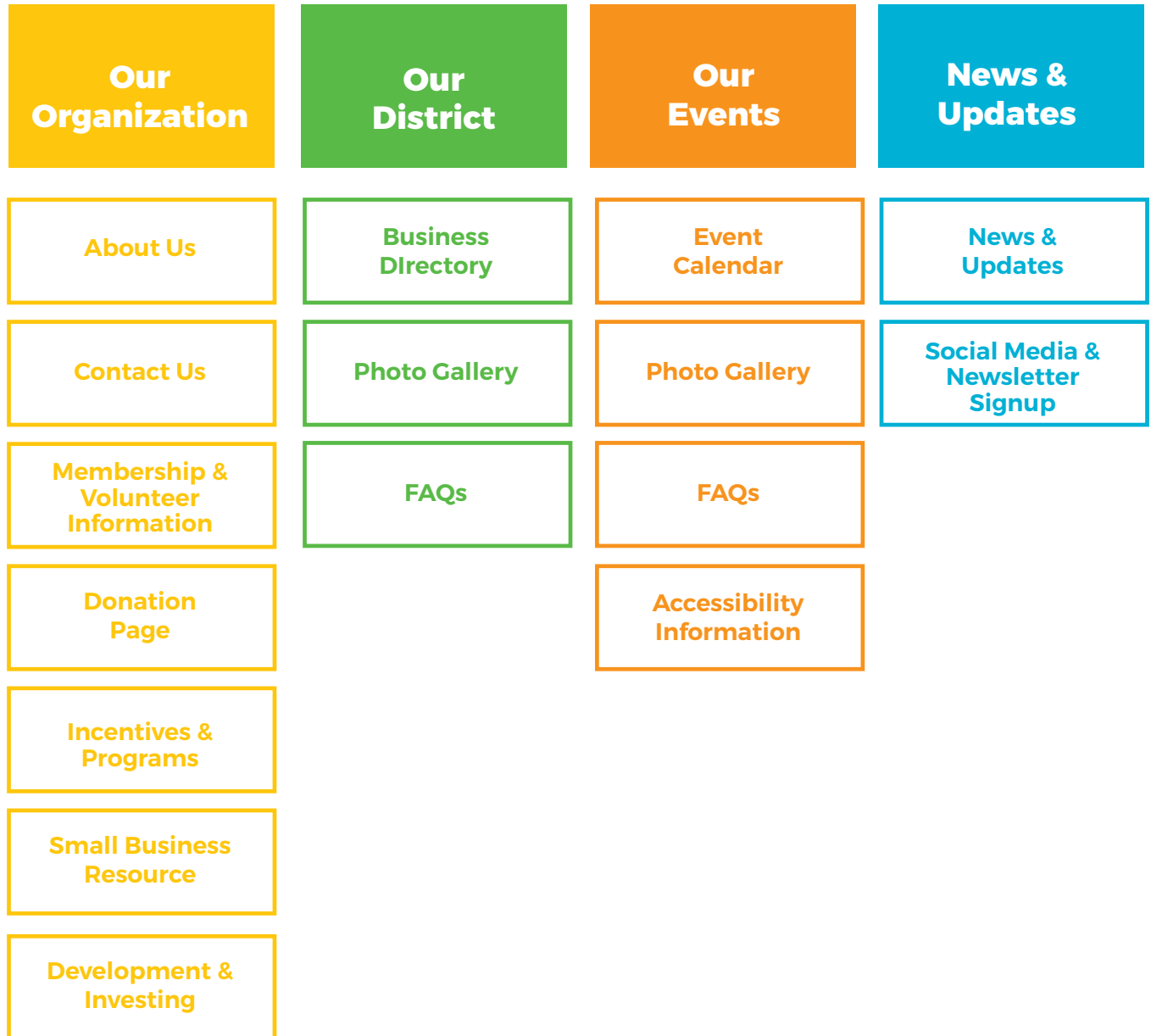
- Promote your website through social media, newsletters, and local media.
- Encourage local businesses and stakeholders to link to your site.

Remember, your website is often the first impression people have of your organization, so it's crucial to make it informative, user-friendly, and reflective of the community's spirit and values.



SAMPLE SITE MAP

District Homepage



WEB CONTENT FRAMEWORK

Your website should have several key pages to effectively communicate its mission, activities, and information to the public. Here are essential pages to include:

Home Page:

- A welcoming introduction to your organization and the district.
- High-impact visuals, such as a slideshow or video showcasing your district.
- Quick links or highlights of upcoming events, recent news, or key sections.

About Us:

- Information about the organization's history, mission, vision, and values.
- Details about the Main Street Four-Point Approach (if applicable).
- Information about the team, including board members, committee members and staff.

Events & Programs:

- Calendar of upcoming events, festivals, and programs.
- Photos and summaries of past events.
- Information on how to sponsor, participate in, or volunteer for events.

Business Directory:

- A comprehensive listing of local businesses, categorized for easy navigation.
- Interactive features like maps or filters for types of businesses.

News & Updates:

- Blog or news section with articles, updates, and announcements.
- Success stories or highlights of your organization's initiatives and district improvements.

Resources:

- Educational materials, guides, and tools for local businesses, property owners & developers.
- Links to external resources, such as small business support, historic preservation guidelines, or grant information.

Membership & Volunteer Information:

- Details on how to become a member or supporter of the organization.
- Information on volunteer opportunities and how to get involved.

Contact Us:

- Contact information including address, phone number, and email.
- An online contact form for inquiries.
- A map showing the location of the Main Street district and/or organization office.

Donation Page:

- Information on how to donate to the organization.
- Details about how donations are used and their impact.

Photo & Video Gallery:

- A gallery showcasing events, community projects, and the district's transformation.

FAQs:

- A section addressing common questions about the organization, district, and participation.

Accessibility Information:

- Information about the accessibility of the district and events.

Social Media & Newsletter Sign-Up:

- Links to social media profiles.
- A sign-up form for newsletters or updates.

Each page should be designed with user-friendly navigation and be regularly updated with current and relevant information. The website should serve as a comprehensive resource for anyone interested in the district, and your organization and its activities.

