

7 Steps for Preparing to Build Your Next Generation Municipal Web Site

1 :: Define Your Goals

Define measurable short- and long-term goals for your Web site. Integrating your municipality's brand development into the site's design and message can result in new business development and increased property values. Goals like: a decrease in the time spent by staff on FAQ calls, automated form processing to increase efficiency, increased awareness and attendance at municipal events and meetings can all be measured on- and off-line.

2 :: Make a Prioritized Wish List

Make a list of functions you want your municipal Web site to do for you and your community. Make categories of: Must Have, Would Like To Have, and Future Online Services—this will be very useful in determining your budget for each phase of development. Visit other municipal Web sites to determine your likes and dislikes, to consider new site organization and online services.

3 :: Set a Budget

Prepare a budget for each phase or at least phase one. Sharing your budget with your Web company prospects might not seem like a good idea at first, but it will help them structure the best solution for the money. It also provides a way to compare “apples to apples”. Web companies know they are competing for your contract and will try their best to give you the best value for the budget.

4 :: Make a Time Line for Completion

Setting deadlines is always the best way to keep a project moving forward. It may not be necessary or financially possible to launch your new Web site with all the bells and whistles within the first year, so your site may benefit from phased expansion, with target deadlines.

5 :: Create A Positioning Statement

Providing a short statement that outlines what makes your municipality unique from neighboring communities will help your Web company create a site that will distinguish your community from the “competition”. Competition? Yes, each municipality competes for business development and residents daily. Your Web site is a major source for information for prospective residents and business owners. Your Web site is a great platform to express your unique brand and to foster planned and controlled growth.

6 :: Review All Aspects of Your Municipal Communications

This is the best time to consider the state of all your municipal communications. Before you build what is most likely the most complex and expensive communication tool, you should consider whether you need to freshen-up your municipal logo/seal, or align all your printed communications AND Web site to a unified visual vocabulary that is consistent and brand-centric.

7 :: Prepare a Request For Proposal (RFP)

An RFP clearly outlines what information you need from prospective Web companies to make the best selection for your municipal Web development partnership. A framework for creating your own RFP can be downloaded at: www.orangepropeller.com/rfp