

Interactive Services Web Development Process

There are many factors and conditions that will impact the timeline and development process for a campaign website. This document is meant to be used as a general guideline and resource to assist Campaign Managers in understanding and leading sponsors through this process.

Preliminary Development

Timing: Website development time will vary greatly. In general, it is recommended to allow 12-16 weeks for a flat, static brochureware site, and 16-24 weeks for more engaging, robust sites that include the use of Flash, user interaction and any data collection. This is the timing required for actual website development, **not** including the bidding process or any other preliminary steps, so please plan accordingly.

Budgeting: The dollar amount to allocate for web development will likewise vary greatly depending on the size and scope of the product being developed, and the technologies utilized. It is best to consult with Interactive Services to determine appropriate figures. It is always recommended to leave a small percentage of the budget aside for unforeseen costs and updates.

Items to budget for include:

- a) Development
- b) Hosting (in the case that Ad Council hosts)
- c) Ongoing site maintenance and updates
- d) Usability testing

Roles: Interactive Services shall act as the lead point of contact with all development partners, coordinating with Campaign Management as point of contact with the client, and if applicable, volunteer agency.

- o **Kickoff:** A member of the Interactive Services team will be assigned to the campaign to be included as part of the team from the kickoff onward.
 - a. **Campaign kickoff:** As part of any initial campaign kickoff, a slide is to be included that provides an overview of the standard Ad Council priorities with regard to web development. Please see your IS contact to make sure this is included.
 - b. **Project kickoff:** The time to meet with the sponsor in order to establish the project scope, including goals and expectations. Also the time to determine any specific requirements, which might include:
 - Data collection
 - Integration with existing data
 - Expectation for ongoing maintenance

- Site hosting
 - COPPA and/or 508 compliancy requirements
 - CMS (Content Management System)
- c. During this initial phase, be sure to work with Interactive Services to:
- Establish keywords based on issue area
 - Identify website goals (What should the website be doing in the service of campaign goals?)
 - Request registration of possible domain names
- NOTES:**
- .com and .org must be available
 - Interactive Services advises against using any domain name which cannot be registered or purchased outright

- **Request for Proposal:** Following kickoff, Interactive Services will prepare a request for proposal (RFP) which outlines the scope and expectations for potential developers

Federal government campaigns require us to triple bid and while this is not a requirement of our private sponsors, it is preferred. If there is a specific web development firm, or the pro bono agency, that is well suited to the issue and is offering a pro bono rate, only then may we forego the process.

- **Sponsor review of RFP:** RFP sent to sponsor for input and final approval, then distributed by Interactive services to approximately 3-5 web developers who have been selected based on their experience.
- **Review of Proposals:** Developer proposals are reviewed jointly by interactive services and campaign management, with a recommendation to be made to the sponsor. If appropriate, interviews may be conducted with developers.
- **Project awarded to partner**
- **Contract:** Once all project deliverables are agreed upon, a contractual Scope of Work (SOW) will be prepared by the vendor and reviewed by Ad Council and the sponsor before sign-off. Items to note when reviewing:
 - Receipt of all source files
 - Inclusion of a web tracking mechanism (Google Analytics is preferred for non-government sites)
 - Any training or instruction necessary for maintaining the site (ex. CMS training)
 - SEO
 - 508 and COPPA compliancy, if applicable
 - Translation and bi-lingual coding, if applicable
 - Tracking of particular web metrics per established goals

Site Development

At a project's start, the developer should provide a timeline that identifies all key milestones. Namely, the key dates by which materials are due to the Ad Council, and the key dates by which combined AC/Sponsor feedback will be due to the developer. It is important to make sure this timeline includes realistic lengths of time for AC/sponsor review, understanding that if extra review time is required, the project end date will likewise be pushed out.

It is the shared responsibility of IS and CM to keep all parties on task in order to adhere to the timeline as closely as possible. *That said, timelines are fluid documents; it is to be expected that dates will shift.*

AC/Sponsor Review: Our developers are, in effect, working for at minimum 2 clients, the Ad Council and our sponsor. It is standard practice for the Ad Council to conduct a preliminary review of any materials before sharing with a sponsor. Unless material is well off the mark, it should move onto the sponsor in order to provide all feedback and request changes in a single round.

The Development Process may vary somewhat from vendor to vendor, and from project to project, but all website development generally proceeds as outlined below.

Note: Development is very linear; each phase depends on completion of the previous one. Additional time and expenses are incurred when it becomes necessary to re-visit a prior phase.

At the start of a project, the developer should provide a timeline that identifies all project milestones. Namely key dates by which materials are due from the vendor, and the key dates by which AC/Sponsor feedback will be due. It is to be expected that timelines will

Discovery

Depending on the size and scope of a project, this phase may include:

- For larger projects, additional exploration may still be required to fully define the scope
- Identify and prioritize content to be included
- Define and agree upon all required functionality (ex. do certain pages require a printable version?)

Information Architecture (IA)

This term refers to the **sitemap** and **wireframes**, which are the blueprints of a website; they dictate how content will be organized. For smaller, simpler sites, a sitemap is often omitted.

When reviewing wireframes, it's important to be sure that all required content and functionality has been accounted for. **Note:** IA documents should not be confused with designs. They are schematics, used to illustrate relative content placement and how website real estate will be apportioned.

- Approval of sitemap, if applicable
- Approval of wireframes
- Give sponsor one round of revisions and then ask for final approval. Final approval often comes on the condition that final revisions are made.

Design & Copy

Typically, design comps are initially presented for the home page only. 2-3 different design directions are presented. There may be one clear choice, or based on feedback, a hybrid may result. If it's deemed necessary to conduct concept testing in order to inform decisions, this is the most appropriate point at which to do so.

With approval of the homepage design, level site pages will then be comped and presented for feedback and approval. 2-3 rounds of design revisions is fairly standard.

Copywriting usually takes place in tandem with designs. When developing and reviewing copy it is important to understand which headers or other copy will be rendered as graphics. It is more difficult – *and more costly* – to make changes to these after they have gone into production.

This is also the time to make sure site keywords are used on the homepage and throughout the site for Search Engine Optimization (**SEO**) purposes. Also make sure these keywords are presented on the site in text format, not image.

- Approval of a design direction
- Approval of all static design comps
- Copywriting
- Copy approval
- Handoff of any assets such as PDF downloads, PSA materials, etc. to the developer (note that these assets themselves must be made 508 compliant if applicable)

Production

Only once the previous phases are complete can the production of graphic assets and coding of a website begin. For the developer, this phase typically requires the most time.

Note: At this point in the process, changes to site structure, design or functionality as defined and agreed to in the discovery phase, will require additional time and budget. **Minor** copy changes are the one exception.

- Site beta review

Quality Assurance (QA) & Launch

Once programming is complete, the last stage is a quality assurance check – this includes cross browser compatibility and thorough site testing to ensure that everything functions as expected. This is primarily the responsibility of the developer, however it is important to conduct a thorough review on our end as well.

- Final site review and approval
- Coordination of site launch (Please allow anywhere from 1-2 weeks for final site launch depending on whether Ad Council- or sponsor-hosted)

Note: A soft launch of the site (weeks or a month before the campaign launch) is recommended. This way the site can be tested and issues not seen prior to launch can be addressed. This also gives the site time to be indexed on search engines and to establish itself online. Any exclusive PSAs can be included in the site after the campaign launch. Without promotion the site will be seen only by some.

Maintenance, tracking and monthly audits

Based on goals and objectives established during the kick-off and discovery phase of development, monthly website metrics will be recorded to monitor site performance.

Either monthly or quarterly website audits will be conducted between Interactive Services and Campaign Management to review site performance and discuss the need for any updates or enhancements.

- Schedule recurring website audits

Usability Testing

Post launch usability testing can help to measure the website performance and guide optimization decisions along with analytics.