

# weaving a less-tangled web

## KEY POINTS FOR BUILDING YOUR WEBSITE

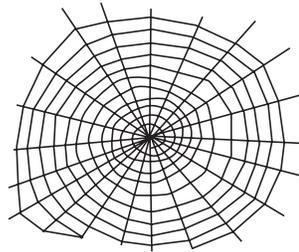
### 1 getting started

#### WHY DO YOU WANT A WEBSITE?

It may seem like an obvious question, but it's central to the site design process. What are people going to get from your website that they can't or haven't from your printed materials? What is the goal of your site? Do you want to educate people about your cause, encourage donations, provide a resource library, or increase foot traffic to your agency? Your answer will help you determine the structure and content of your site.

#### KNOW YOUR USER

What do you already know about your audience and who else would you like to attract? What is the occupation, socio-economic status, internet connection speed and level of technological experience of your expected typical user?



#### GO SURFING

Spend some time viewing other sites, especially those of your competitors or similar agencies. How do others serve your target audience and how can you make your site stand out? While you surf, notice how sites are structured and what works best. Make specific notes about what you like or don't like about particular websites—color, layout, navigation, graphics—to discuss with your web designer.

### 2 planning your structure

Many people think that they should start by designing their site's home page and the rest will fall into place. This is a huge mistake—your design should come after you've outlined the structure and content of your site. To develop a clear site structure:

#### DEFINE YOUR CONTENT

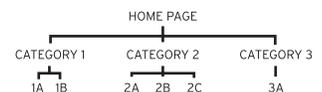
Clearly define what information (text, articles, photographs, maps, graphics) and features (searchable databases, downloadable files, e-commerce) are needed on your site. Allow enough time to be as thorough as possible or you may discover that the site doesn't support your needs and requires a costly and time-consuming redesign.

#### SITE MAP

Organize your content by creating a site map (outline). This shows the title of each page and under which category it falls. Organize your site into a reasonable number of categories to keep navigation easy for your visitors—you may find that your entire site can be divided into categories as simple as *about us*, *programs*, *services* and *contact us*.

#### FLOW CHART

Once you have agreed upon a site map, define your site further through a flow chart. This is a diagram similar to the site map which shows all navigation between pages and gives short descriptions of the content of each page.



### 3 time to design

Once the structure has been established and approved, the design process can begin. The web designer should initially present one to three different design concepts. The final design should be consistent with your other marketing materials, and the layout, type sizes, fonts and graphic style of the site should also be consistent from page to page.

### 4 troubleshooting

Don't expect your site to work perfectly the moment it goes live. Your site visitors will have different connection speeds, browsers and types of computers, and it may take a while to ensure that it work for nearly everyone. Leave adequate time for troubleshooting and beta testing, or your site will turn away more visitors than it welcomes.

### 5 maintenance

Once your site is up, your work is not done. Beyond regularly checking to see if your site is functioning properly and if any links to other sites are broken, you need to make sure that your content is up to date. If you don't have the staff time to devote to regular updates, stick with the basics that won't go out of date quickly.