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Web Solutions

# Blueprint for Website Success

Designing Your Website RFP



# Results Direct | Blueprint for Website Success

## Your Website Redesign RFP in 6 Steps

Redesigning your website and **choosing the best CMS and partner** for your project can be daunting. This guide is a **tool to help you create an effective website redesign/CMS RFP** that sets you up for success.

Your website redesign RFP and process should advance your organization towards **achieving your desired outcomes**, helping you increase ROI, and **providing greater satisfaction** to your members/website users and staff.

**Results Direct recommends these steps** for crafting your RFP, focusing your list of potential partners, and selecting the best fit to ensure your success:

- Step 1:** Start with your Strategic Plan
- Step 2:** Focus on your Desired Outcomes
- Step 3:** Have Preliminary Conversations with Potential Partners
- Step 4:** Be Selective in Distributing your RFP
- Step 5:** Be Candid about your Budget
- Step 6:** Provide Time for a Quality Response

We'll explore each of these in greater detail, then provide recommendations for **What to Include (and not) in your RFP**.

### Step 1 : Start with your Strategic Plan

What's driving your organization forward? Ideally, it's a Strategic Plan that provides a vision for the future and the framework for guiding decisions at your association.

Your **Strategic Plan** might be broadly written or very focused and specific. Regardless of the approach, it provides the starting point and **lays the groundwork** for your website redesign and RFP.

Your website should **support the strategic vision** for your association, so your RFP should include a high-level overview of your Strategic Plan – and any other guiding documents that provide insight into the direction and drivers for your organization.

### Step 2 : Focus on your Desired Outcomes

**What does success look like** for your website redesign project? Defining goals and success measures should happen on the front end of your project – and these should be outlined in your RFP.

Whether you're leading a cross-functional website team or you're the sole website owner, **defining desired outcomes** is essential for identifying the best CMS and partner and keeping your project on track.

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**Questions to ask** your internal stakeholders before you put together your website RFP include:

- What does success look like?
- What are the 3 things that members want to come to our website to do?
- What are our success measures/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)?
- Where do we want to go and what's our timeframe for getting there?

Here are some **examples of website goals** and desired outcomes. These can be specific or broad:

- Increase young professional membership by \_\_%
- Grow event registrations by \_\_%
- Cross-promote professional development opportunities and publications
- Increase advertising and sponsorship revenue
- Decrease staff overhead for managing the website

Your desired **outcomes should be the driving factors** for your website project and RFP – **not a laundry list of CMS features** or “must-have’s.” Your goals should drive your project, and your website partner can help you to identify the best combination of strategy and technology to help you achieve those goals.

## Step 3 : Have Preliminary Conversations with Potential Partners

Once you've identified where you want to go, it's time to **start talking to potential website partners** – **before you distribute your RFP**. Plan to meet for 30-minute conversations with a selection of potential partners.

These preliminary conversations can help you to **explore different approaches, CMS options, and partner fit**. For the potential partners, it helps them to get to know your organization – including your culture – and shows that you're interested in a collaborative relationship.

Be prepared to **discuss your current website** and candidly answer questions like:

- What are your high-level website goals?
- What's working well and not with your current website?
- What do you wish you've been able to accomplish but haven't?
- What are you looking for in a website partner?

Based on these conversations, you should be able to **gather additional insight for your RFP** and see where there might be a good partner fit.

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## Step 4 : Be Selective in Distributing your RFP

When the time comes to distribute your RFP, **limit the number of firms you invite to bid** on your project. Ideally, this should be no more than **3-5 companies**. If you distribute your RFP more widely, you run the risk of potentially alienating partners and sending a message that your project is more price-driven than value- or partner-driven.

## Step 5 : Be Candid about your Budget

Companies preparing proposals and bidding on your website redesign really do **need to know your budget (or budget range)** for your project – so that they can put together their best recommendations and strategies for accomplishing – and, if necessary, prioritizing – your needs.

Benchmark data from ASAE puts the **cost of a full website redesign** – including replacing a CMS – at **3-5% of an association's annual operating budget**, with future annual costs of 2-3% for ongoing maintenance and enhancements. Organizations with smaller staffs spend proportionally higher percentages as the leadership typically adds more technology so that staff can be freed up to focus on the areas where they provide unique value.

## Step 6 : Provide Time for a Quality Response

Responding to a website RFP takes a considerable amount of time, as a thorough proposal response requires input from multiple individuals at a website firm. The turnaround time from distribution of a website RFP to proposal deadline should be **no less than 3 weeks**.

## What to Include (and not) in your RFP

Here are Results Direct's recommendations of **what to include** (and not) in your website RFP:

- Background of Organization –Size, type, purpose, members, key benefits/offerings, staffing
- Website Overview – Role of website, key audiences, web management, current challenges
- Project Goals – Strategic Plan, desired outcomes, partnership expectations
- Project Requirements – Website functionality, CMS system preferences, content migration, hosting/support needs
- Current Technology/Partners – CMS, AMS, 3<sup>rd</sup> party systems, planned changes
- Integration Requirements – Goals
- Project Budget
- Project Timeline – RFP issued, proposal deadline, demos, decision, kick-off, launch
- Proposal Requirements – Define format, content (**not** “Kitchen sink” CMS Feature Matrix/Checklist)
- RFP Contact
- Evaluation Criteria

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## Final Thoughts/Lesson Learned

A **successful website redesign** project and partnership should:

- Create a foundation to deliver valuable content and tools to your members
- Provide an agile platform for improving the experience over time
- Empower your team

## How Results Direct Can Help

**Results Direct has delivered results-driven website redesign, CMS, AMS/systems integration, and hosting/site management solutions for 100s of associations over the past 25 years.**

**We'd love to discuss your upcoming website redesign project:**



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