

Government Considerations for Public – Facing Websites

Thanks to the private sector, citizens will no longer tolerate a poor digital experience when interacting with government agencies and resources. To evaluate public web presence, there are a few factors that government agencies should consider to better serve their citizens.

1. **Communication Plan** – Any public-facing website should be informational and a key resource for sharing important updates. Plan for the types of messages that you will share, the frequency of communication and the medium most likely to yield engagement. Utilize a variety of communication channels to provide the most accurate and timely resources and updates. More agencies are now designating a role to keep community information current and up to date.
2. **Content Strategy** – Along with your communication plan, you'll need a content strategy to stay on top of pertinent information and make sure that it is aligned with citizen needs. Use a variety of formats to keep readers informed, such as newsletters, blogs, event calendars and social media. Content should be fresh, relevant and engaging. Use a lot of visual imagery and leverage tools like infographics, videos and live streams.
3. **Information Architecture** – Building on your content strategy, ask yourself: how beneficial is this content if people can't find it? Public-facing websites should be easy to navigate and provide a pleasant interaction. The organization of website information must make it easy for people to find what they need. Create a content architecture that enhances the user experience.
4. **Understand Google Analytics** – Analytics is a way that we can know what citizens want and need. We can identify the resources that are most important to constituents by their level of engagement. Reviewing analytics will tell you how constituents find your site, where they spend the most time and when they are accessing certain resources. These insights are critical for designing public-facing websites that meet citizen needs.
5. **Search Optimization** – Understanding government organization is not always easy and it can be difficult to find exactly what you are looking for. It is important for agencies to be findable on various search engines. Many people will use google to get them to the right page on a government website. Search engine optimization will enhance key words in tags, descriptions and content to help citizens navigate your site.
6. **Digital Self-Service Options** – Recent consumer studies have shown that 6/10 people prefer a digital self-service tool rather than a call or chat. Applying this to the public sector, governments can greatly impact citizen engagement and improve civic participation by empowering citizens with options like payment systems, licensing applications and even password resets.
7. **Feedback** – Finally, government should seek to continuously improve the citizen experience by seeking feedback from relevant parties. Agencies should communicate with people often by collecting and addressing customer feedback. This feedback along with data analytics will help you to continuously improve your programs. Use social media and other third-party platforms to listen to customers and meet their needs.

Agency websites are an effective way to minimize the burden on citizens. Public-facing sites that are designed with a citizen – first approach can help governments earn trust and accomplish goals.