4 QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK WHEN UPDATING YOUR GOVERNMENT WEBSITE

A quality government website is invaluable in ensuring residents find pertinent and timely information. In a shift to **digital government**, you may be assessing the purpose of your website. Auditing your website includes assessing essential needs like framework, speed, budget, and accessibility. Whether you're just starting, going with a partner or building a website on your own, ensure its set up to work for you and your residents. The below questions are essential to aligning your digital government efforts with your website user needs:

1 ARE WE ENCOURAGING RESIDENT SELF-SERVICE?

It's not enough to simply provide a well-designed website. We live in a digital age where finding information is just a click or voice command away. Nearly 70% of people prefer using a website to answer their questions on their own instead of a phone call, social media or live chat.

Creating a self-service website should include a straightforward navigation, an easy-to-use search bar, and accurate search results. In fact, 80% of visitors will leave your website if they cannot find relevant information. This leads to increased calls, emails or visits to your office staff and detracts from time spent on other priorities. Ensure your website can serve your residents when, where and how they need it.

2 DOES OUR SITE ALIGN WITH THE RESIDENT JOURNEY?

A good website design takes a human-centered approach – why are your residents on your website? Digital agency, Clockwork, describes this approach as Experience Design – focusing on people's end-to-end experience, including the interactions on your website. When you know and listen to your website visitors, you can align expectations with layout.

Studies have shown that with even the strongest content strategy and intuitive navigation bar, 47% website visitors still go directly to the search bar. Why? Those visitors come to your site with a specific purpose. Government websites are content-rich because they serve the varied needs of its constituents. Incorporating search ensures that visitors can get directly to the information based on needs or preference. When you understand your visitors' needs, intents and friction points on your website, you can deliver an exceptional digital experience they want and expect.

3 DOES OUR WEBSITE SERVE AS A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION CHANNEL?

Having a website with pertinent content that aligns with your visitors' needs is just the beginning. Once you understand how to best serve your site visitors, how do you continue to adapt to their needs? The best websites serve as an open line of communication.

When Larimer County residents were needing information on the COVID-19 pandemic, the web team ensured content was created and searchable. A government website search bar is a free-form field where your constituents are talking directly to you, telling you exactly what they want in *their own words*. This data can be used to discover what is important to your residents and fill any content gaps on your website.

Content should be timely, accurate and relevant. When constituents are unable to find relevant details on something like polling locations or permit forms (or worse, no info!) it can create a lack of trust and transparency. Use your website to listen, learn and evolve to your residents needs.

4 ARE WE OPTIMIZING EMPLOYEE TIME?

Your residents benefit from the work government marketers, communicators and web professionals put into making your website useful and accessible around the clock. But is your website working with or against your staff?

Digital solutions that lack functionality and automation create manual, mundane processes, decrease productivity and delay the content loop to your residents. Look for tools and features that intersect the visitors' journey and their behaviors with your employee roles and needs. For example, intelligent search that uses machine learning and automation can deliver behavioral insights and analytics to quickly make informed decisions about your website. This saves employee time and allows focus on higher priority items while still serving residents the information they need.

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