
Getting Started on Your Website

We're sure you're excited to get your website up and running. This guide will help you through the process of what you will need to do to be ready. Below is a checklist you can refer to as you move along. The rest of this guide will explain what you need in order to accomplish each of these tasks.

Website Setup Checklist

• Gather and write your content

- Do a content inventory

- Write (or rewrite) your content to be [web friendly](#) [1]

- Gather images and graphics

- Gather any files (such as PDFs) you need to make available

- Take advantage of Drupal's content features

• Determine your main menu structure

• Determine your Homepage content

• Pick a Theme

• Attend Training

• Put your content on your website!

You'll notice that the LAST thing on your checklist is to add your content to the website. We don't want to put the cart before the horse - the best way to make sure your information is easy to find and understand on your website is to get your content written and organized first, before building out web pages. Creating a number of "Under construction" pages won't help you OR your site visitors.

Ready? Let's get started!

1 Gather and write your content

Content first. This is one of our favorite phrases. While we can provide you with some fantastic technology and offer usability advice for your website, your website will be nothing if it doesn't offer your users useful content.

This is possibly the most important step, and it's a task that rests squarely with your agency. You are the Subject Matter Experts of your agency, and you'll need to put together a team (even if it's just a team of one) to decide what information should be on your website, and how it should be written.

?But I already have a website FULL of content.?

Maybe you're not building a website from scratch. Maybe you're just migrating an existing website over to the Drupal Platform. Your job is over, right? The content is already written, right?

Wrong.

Think of this website migration as if you are moving into a new house. The new house is pretty. It's clean. It doesn't have squirrels living in the attic. You're so excited to move, and as you pack, you're starting to realize that you probably don't really want to bring everything from the old house. Do you really need that broken toaster? What about that chair with the broken armrest and musty, outdated fabric? It's time to take inventory, and make a trip (or three) to the dump.

In the same way, a lot of the content on your current website is most likely old. Outdated. Maybe just disorganized after years of changes and different people adding information to it. It's gotten bloated over time. So this is the perfect opportunity to take a **content inventory** and decide what stays, what goes, and **what should be rewritten**.

Inventory your Content

A [content inventory](#) [2] is a great way to get a sense of what you have, and what you need. It's a listing of everything on your site - yes, everything. This is a manual process, in which you build a list of web pages and the status of those pages by looking at each page on your site and taking notes about them.

If you don't currently have a website, the content inventory will be a list of the materials you plan on including on your website.

Either way, you may find it easiest to put this in a [spreadsheet](#) [2], with the following headings:

Level	Page Name	Link (URL)	Content Type	Owner / Author	Keep? (Y/N)	Notes
Page ID or Navigation level (1st level, 2nd level, etc.). How deep is this in the site?	Title of page	URL of page	Is this an article, a PDF, link to an image, a calendar, etc.?	Who wrote it or who maintains it?	Is it still relevant? Should you move it to the new site?	This is a good place to note whether you need to rewrite it, etc.

Using an existing Site Map will give you a good head start on putting together this inventory, but you will probably find that your site links to pages that aren't in your Site Map. You'll only find them and understand them by clicking through each web page.

As you're digging through your site, be honest with yourself about its content. If you have analytics data, now is the time to dig through it to see if you can identify pages that get very few visits, and decide how to handle those pages - if it's important information, should it be placed more prominently on the new site? Or can you remove it altogether? Also, make notes about what should be rewritten for clarity and readability. Read the [How to Read Your Google Analytics](#) [3] web guide for more info.

Rewrite Your Content So People Will Read It

Now that you know what you're working with, you've hopefully identified a lot of information that would benefit from a rewrite. On the web, less is more. Your readers don't read web pages as much as they skim them, so get to the point and make your pages easy to scan. Here are some tips for writing your content:

- Break documents into separate topics
- Use bullet lists whenever possible
- Use short paragraphs.
- Use short sentences.
- Break up sections with subheadings
- Don't assume your readers know about the subject or have read related pages on your site. Clearly explain things so each page can stand on its own.
- Never use "click here" as a link ? link language should describe what your reader will get if they click the link.
- Write clearly. Provide information that is concise and factual.
- Use plain language - avoid jargon; use the active voice, "you" and other pronouns.

For more tips on writing for the web, visit our state guidelines on [Editorial Content](#) [4].

Gather images and graphics

You can use images to set the tone of your website, and give your site its own personality. As you gather your graphics, make sure they're an appropriate size and style for your site. Some things to consider:

- **Image size** - large graphics should be no more than 620px wide and 400px tall. You can also use the graphics tools in Drupal to resize images even smaller as needed, but the largest image versions still shouldn't be any larger than what you will use on the pages.
- **Graphics style** - Illustrations should be clean and crisp. Icons are encouraged, but stay away from clip-art style graphics. And while they may seem fun, animated graphics will distract your audience from the real content of your page, so avoid them. This includes animated gifs and Flash animation.
- **Photo style** - Photographs should be of good quality, and portray your agency and the state of Georgia in a positive light. Use professional photography when possible, and when using photographs of people, be sure you have permission to use their picture on the website.

You may also be interested in our [state Graphics guidelines](#) [5] for a more in-depth look at appropriate graphic usage.

Gather any files (such as PDFs) you need to make available

A lot of the information you have ready to use is probably in a Word document, PowerPoint, or Adobe PDF. Whenever possible, this content should still be rewritten, and its content displayed directly on web pages rather than linking to these files. Your audience doesn't want to have to download a file in order to get what they're looking for on your website.

So after you've figured out which of your files should be put online as simple web pages, you will still have a list of files that need to be uploaded as they are. Whenever possible, you will want these to all be saved to PDF format before you upload them to the site. Not everyone has Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, or Excel on their computers, but the Adobe PDF format is readily supported.

If you don't have software on your computer to convert these files to the Adobe PDF format, you may want to look into Adobe's online [Create PDF service](#) [6].

For more tips on when to use a PDF, you may want to read our state guidelines on [Alternate File formats](#) [7].

Take advantage of Drupal's other content features

Don't forget! Along with offering the basics - pages of text, file uploads, and press releases - we also have content types that support things like **event listings**, **photo galleries**, **video** embedding, and **interactive forms**. Make a list of any of those features you will use, and gather any resources you will need to get started on them.

2 Determine your main menu structure

Now that you have your content, you will need to determine how to organize it all within your menu structure.

Your Main Menu is the navigation bar just below your agency name on every page of your site. It is designed to show **up to 7 top level menu items**, and when you hover your mouse over one of these items, that section's second level items will show. You can actually organize your site to use up to 4 levels of menu items, as in the example below:

About Us

Office Locations

Cobb County

Fulton County

Alpharetta

Atlanta

Board of Directors

News and Events

Programs and Services

Forms

Contact Us

But, as with your content, we recommend keeping the navigation as simple as possible. If you can get all your information across in just 2 or 3 levels of navigation, that's great!

You should also be sure to use **simple phrases for menu items** - 1 or 2 words - for menu items to allow for quick scanability.

Finally, keep in mind that your navigation menu is for linking to pages within your website. Don't plan on linking to an external website or PDF document from your navigation menu.

If you have just a few pages of content for your site, you will have a pretty easy time planning your menu structure. But if you have a larger site, you may want to look into an online tool such as [WebSort](#) [8] to help you and your group organize your content. You can also consult with your GeorgiaGov Interactive project manager for suggestions - that's what we're here for!

3 Determine your homepage content

The Drupal platform also offers a lot of different ways to display any content you want to feature on the homepage. Once you know what you need for your homepage, your GeorgiaGov representative can help you decide what functionality will best display that content.

Some items you may want to consider for your homepage include:

- Feature image - image with a link to another page (different sizes are available)
- Image Rotator - a simple carousel of images (different sizes are available)
- Latest News listing (press release list)
- List of Links to popular content
- Upcoming Events listing
- Social Media links
- Twitter feed

Now, before you get too excited and say, "I want all of them!" remember that **less is more**. Our analytics consistently show that 98% of users don't scroll down the page at all - so you'll be better off selecting the top 3 or 4 items that are most important to highlight on the homepage, rather than overwhelming users with a lot of links, buttons, and features they don't need.

4 Pick a theme

The GeorgiaGov Interactive team, in cooperation with the Governor's office, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, and our vendors have developed a series of website themes for you to choose from. These prebuilt themes meet the [state guidelines for color and design](#) [9], while allowing enough flexibility for your site to have its own personality.

We offer Patriotic, Friendly, Official, Environmental, GeorgiaGov, and Classic themes. For more about our platform themes and design process, read the [Choosing the Right Theme](#) [10] web guide and visit our [demo site](#) [11].

5 Attend a training session

By now you should have already worked with your GeorgiaGov Interactive account manager to schedule a training session for your primary content managers. At that session, you will get a great overview of all the key features of the platform, and learn how to add content, assign that content to menus, and adjust your homepage content.

Along with that overview, the instructor will want to make sure you are equipped to handle any specific content needs you may have, and this will be the time to ask. So before your training session, be sure to make a list of questions and specific things you want to learn.

If you want to familiarize yourself with the system prior to training, you can download the [Editor's Training Manual](#) [12] now.

6 Put your content on your website

It's finally here! You've attended training, and you have your login credentials for your site. It's the moment you've been waiting for - time to take all that content, your planned menu structure, your images, and your new knowledge and put it all on your website!

If you have a team of users who will be building out the site, you will want to coordinate your efforts and make sure you know who is responsible for each section and how you want to proceed. If it's just you - well, get to it!

When you're done, your GeorgiaGov Interactive project manager will review your site to make sure it is good to go, and you will coordinate with them on the best time to launch your website.

You've got a lot of work to do, so we won't keep you! Go on now, and get all your hard work out there on the web!

Source URL: <http://portal.georgia.gov/interactive/web-guide/getting-started-your-website>