

This resource is intended as a starting point when considering a website build – either a redesign or if this is the first website for your museum.

The main project stages recommended for website builds are outlined, from the perspective of the museum, and we look at some technical tips and the key things to consider in the process.

Further recommended reading and resources are linked throughout the document.

If you have any questions or would like a one to one conversation with our Digital Engagement Officer about a website project then [please get in touch via our enquiry form](#).

Project stages to consider for a new website

A website is not a one-off project. To stay relevant for your audiences and be present in Google search will require ongoing content, measurement and improvement. The below process supports this work and should help build good foundations to expand on over time.

1) Scoping - internal steps

- Map the website requirements
- Estimate and set the budget and timeline
- Create a brief or *Requests for Proposal* (RFP) to circulate

We go through the above scoping steps in greater detail in this resource.

The following steps 2) and 3) are a wider topic on recruiting external contractors. We are happy to talk further and [provide guidance for this type of contracting so do get in touch](#).

2) Recruiting specialists - external steps

- Accept proposals from candidates following the call out with the brief
- Shortlist and talk to the most suitable candidates
- Contract a website build individual or team

3) The build - with the recruited website team (this process will be determined in collaboration with you by the contracted team)

Top tips: Your website will be one of the first experiences for prospective visitors. It is important that your website is built with a defined structure, content development, clear goals and audiences at the heart of the build. We highly advise recruiting professional development support, secure and allocate a healthy budget, create a brief to receive proposals to ensure you maximise your investment to build a responsive and relevant website.

Scoping Internally

1) Map the website requirements

Identify the main purposes of your website.

What actions do you want people to take when visiting your site? ([these are also known as goals](#))

Examples to think through: it to provide visitor information? for income generation e.g. sales for ticketing, events or online shop? Fundraising? Recruiting? Request information? Digital marketing goals - sign-up for a newsletter, follow on social media? Access collections information?

Get others in your organisation involved in this mapping - ask volunteers, trustees, those who are in the front of house - run some ideas past them and create a discussion.

Some ideas for how you could start this mapping process

If you have an existing museum website	If this will be your first museum website
Do you have a Google Analytics account ? You can log in and see more about your website audiences including: page views, age ranges, gender, devices, location.	Think about your museum audiences - what might they be looking for on your website? What will be key pages for this information?
The online tool Hotjar can provide further insights, including a heatmap, to see the most used areas of your website.	Look at other museum websites and see what menu headings and pages they have - what do you think is a priority? what works well?
What new infrastructure are you looking to include? Tickets? Donations? Pages about the collection? Blog? Newsletter sign up? Online shop?	Map out some ideas for some of the pages and think about what your website users would want to experience. Do you want specific functionality like tickets? Online shop?

If mapping remotely: you could use [Zoom video conferencing whiteboard function](#) when you screen share and then save these digital notes. Or [map in Miro which has a post it note board](#) and lots of great templates to use.

If mapping in person: post it notes are a great way to pen and move ideas around.

2) Estimate and set the budget

There is no definitive guide to pricing - it will depend on many factors including: what your requirements are, the size of your organisation, if you require rebranding, the type of website you are looking to build.

It is a worthwhile investment to build a responsive site that can adapt and grow for years. It is recommended to receive proposals based on your website brief and you can then compare costs.

£ Tips: it is not about the cheapest but the proposal that looks to deliver against your requirements. It is sensible to get a quote for the project as a whole rather than 'per hour'.

To have an ongoing relationship with your website developer is very beneficial and will keep the unforeseen costs down in the long term. Request details for maintenance and ongoing costs in the brief.

Thinking about a time frame

Be realistic - the project will progress in stages

Possible stages to consider in this time frame:

internal brief creation > deadline for proposal submissions > expected turnaround for decisions and contracting > anticipated start date and completion dates (within this is the development, content creation, uploading and testing)

Some starter questions to ask when considering timings:

1. Who at the museum will be working on content for the new website? New page information, copy, images - will you want to commission new promotional images? Who will be trained on content upload and support this ahead of the website launch?
2. Do you have an important event / milestone in the near future in which ideally you would like the website to be ready by? (and are there elements you need to have in place for this milestone - timed tickets? Online shop?)
3. Have you sought (or do you intend to seek) external funding for this website build and will there be payment schedules that you will need to adhere to?
4. Be clear in the brief if there are any 'hard deadlines' for your organisation that this work might have to adhere to.

Suggestions for what to include in a website brief

- An introduction to your organisation
- The context for building a new website (and details about your current site if you have one)
- Information about your audiences (key visitor data if you have it and online audience data e.g. from Google Analytics if you have a current website or social media insights?)
- The identified requirements for the website (Ticketing? Donate function? Include the main pages you have mapped)
- Branding - Do you have an up to date logo, colour palette, brand guidelines which will carry across to the new site? Or will you want these to be designed? (in which case you will want to stipulate this as part of the work and increase your budget). Will you require the web developer to provide or assist with the hosting services?
- To be a responsive (mobile-friendly) website.
- Accessibility - to be compliant with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) and to support in the creation of an accessibility statement situated somewhere prominent. For further reading the [Digital Culture Network have created a resource on making your content accessible.](#)
- Account permissions - your organisation (a key individual or more) will require administration access to the website, set up to [Google Analytics](#) and [Google Tag Manager](#) and we recommend that the account should be in the name and email of an identified person at the organisation (not your web developer).
- Outline the budget, deadline for proposals and a contact email for queries and to submit.

Technicalities: Domain name e.g. ourmuseum.com

If you have an existing museum website

Do you own the current domain name? (i.e. link for your website)? If yes:

- Who purchased it?
- Where from - an internet domain registrar (e.g. Domain.com or Go Daddy)? or through the website builder you might currently use? (e.g. Squarespace)?
- Check and note when will you need to renew this. (Reminders should get sent to the email the domain name was set up with).

These questions will be asked by the website build team and they will require editing access to this account to transfer the domain.

If this will be your first museum website

This is an important part of your brand. You will need to decide on the URL website link and purchase it (this could be something you do with the support of a developer).

Tips: keep it short and have it related to your name for search engine optimisation e.g. [locationmuseum.org.uk](#). For further reading about choosing a domain name read this [article published Sept 2020 on Website Set Up](#)

South West Museum Development
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery
Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RL

0117 922 4653

www.southwestmuseums.org.uk

[@swmuseums](https://twitter.com/swmuseums)



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