

SOCIALECTRIC - FREE FRAMEWORK

The NGO Website Governance System

A step-by-step framework for international NGOs to build websites
that withstand donor scrutiny and institutional growth.

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INTRODUCTION

NGO websites fail when they're treated as marketing projects.

Your website serves donors, beneficiaries, partners, media, regulators, and board members – each with different needs. Most web agencies don't understand this complexity.

They build something that looks modern but crumbles under scrutiny.

This system gives you a clear framework for building and maintaining a website that supports your mission at every stage – not just at launch.

THE FRAMEWORK

Four Pillars of Website Governance

Every NGO website that withstands scrutiny is built on these foundations.

01

CREDIBILITY

Your website must demonstrate legitimacy to donors, regulators, media, and the public – not just look professional.

02

GOVERNANCE

Content structure, approval workflows, and compliance frameworks that survive leadership changes and audits.

03

ACCESSIBILITY

WCAG compliance isn't optional for organisations serving vulnerable populations. Every page, every component.

04

INDEPENDENCE

Your team must be able to update content, launch campaigns, and respond to crises without developer dependency.

WHY NGO WEBSITES ARE DIFFERENT

Six audiences. One website.

Standard web practices only account for one. Yours must serve all six simultaneously.

DONORS

Transparency, impact evidence, financial accountability, and trust signals that withstand due diligence.

BENEFICIARIES

Programme clarity, service access, language accessibility, and cultural sensitivity.

PARTNERS

Credibility signals, collaboration evidence, and institutional stability markers.

MEDIA

Press resources, spokesperson access, fact-checkable claims, and downloadable assets.

REGULATORS

Compliance documentation, governance structure, and financial disclosures.

BOARD & LEADERSHIP

Strategic alignment, risk visibility, and organisational narrative consistency.

WEBSITE HEALTH INDICATORS

Signs your website is a liability

If three or more apply, your website is actively undermining your mission.

- Your communications team can't update content without a developer
- Lighthouse accessibility score is below 90
- Your blog or news section hasn't been updated in 3+ months
- Programme information is outdated or inconsistent across pages
- You can't launch a campaign landing page in under 48 hours
- Board members or major donors have commented on the website negatively
- You've rebuilt the site in the last 3 years and it already feels outdated
- Your site doesn't clearly communicate governance or financial transparency

These aren't design problems. They're systems and governance problems that happen to manifest through a website.

THE SYSTEM

The Website Governance Framework

Five layers that separate institutional websites from marketing websites.

01 Stakeholder Architecture

Map every audience, their needs, and their journey. Build navigation and content hierarchy around stakeholder groups, not internal org structure.

02 Content Governance

Define who can publish what, approval workflows, update schedules, and archival policies. Your CMS should enforce these rules, not just store content.

03 Accessibility Infrastructure

WCAG compliance built into every component, not retrofitted. Screen reader testing, keyboard navigation, and multilingual support.

04 Performance & Credibility

Lighthouse scores above 90 across all metrics. Fast load times build trust. Slow, broken sites signal institutional weakness to sophisticated audiences.

05 Operational Independence

Your team publishes without developer dependency. Campaign pages, donation flows, programme updates – all within your team's capability.

RUN A LIGHTHOUSE AUDIT
Check performance, accessibility, SEO, and best practices. Anything below 90 needs attention.

AUDIT YOUR STAKEHOLDER JOURNEYS

Visit your site as a donor, a journalist, a beneficiary. Can each find what they need in under 3 clicks?

CHECK CONTENT FRESHNESS

Is your latest news from 6 months ago? Are programme pages accurate? Stale content signals institutional neglect.

Quick Website Wins

Start with these improvements before considering a full rebuild.

TEST EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE
Can your comms team publish a blog post without help? If not, your platform is failing you.

REVIEW ACCESSIBILITY BASICS

Tab through your site with a keyboard. Use a screen reader. Check colour contrast. These aren't edge cases for NGOs.

DOCUMENT WHAT'S BROKEN

Create a list of what doesn't work, what's outdated, and what your team can't do independently. This becomes your brief.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Build for resilience. Not just launch.

Use this infrastructure checklist for your website platform.

- A CMS that mirrors your organisational structure, not a blog template
- Reusable, accessible components tested for screen readers and mobile
- Page templates your communications team can deploy independently
- Clean content governance – who publishes what, when, and with whose approval
- Performance monitoring that catches degradation before donors notice
- A system that survives leadership transitions without needing a rebuild

I recommend Webflow with the Lumos framework to achieve this – ensuring accessibility, performance, and editorial safety across every page your team creates.

THE ROADMAP

The 90-Day Governance Plan

Follow this structure to strengthen your website with focus and accountability.

**MONTH 1**

Diagnose

Outcome: Clarity on what's broken and why.

- Audit stakeholder journeys
- Run Lighthouse across all pages
- Map content ownership gaps
- Identify accessibility failures
- Document governance gaps

MONTH 2

Strengthen

Outcome: Core improvements live.

- Fix critical accessibility issues
- Restructure navigation
- Implement content governance
- Rebuild key landing pages
- Train team on CMS workflows

MONTH 3

Sustain

Outcome: Operational independence.

- Launch campaign templates
- Establish update schedules
- Set performance baselines
- Create governance documentation
- Build repeatable workflows

WHAT HOLDS NGOS BACK

Common Blockers

Most NGO communications teams get stuck because of these systemic issues.

The solution isn't another rebuild. It's an ongoing partnership with someone who understands institutional complexity.



DEVELOPER DEPENDENCY

Every change requires a ticket, a budget line, and a 2-week wait. Your team loses momentum and campaigns launch late.

PLATFORM LIMITATIONS

WordPress plugins break, templates constrain, and security updates consume time that should go toward your mission.

NO GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Anyone can publish anything. Content drifts, pages contradict each other, and the site slowly becomes a liability.

REBUILD FATIGUE

You've rebuilt every 2-3 years and each time it takes 6 months and costs more than budgeted. The cycle feels inevitable.

NEXT STEPS

I can help you

Follow this structure to strengthen your website with focus and accountability.

UNLIMITED DESIGN AND WEBFLOW SUBSCRIPTION

Monthly Partnership

Your dedicated Webflow design and development partner. Unlimited requests. No hiring. No proposals.

Pause or cancel anytime.

WEBSITE PROJECTS

Blueprint Audit

Structured diagnostic for organisations with exceptional complexity. Stakeholder mapping, technical audit, and a board-ready strategic roadmap

***Ready to build a website that
matches your mission?***

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