

What a Great NGO Website Looks Like

A practical guide for international NGOs who need websites that earn donor trust, empower small teams, and communicate mission in three seconds flat.

Built from patterns across 100+ website projects and refined through direct work with international NGOs including the WHO Foundation

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER

The 3-Second Test

Your homepage has three seconds to tell someone what you do, who you serve, and why it matters. Donors, journalists, and grant reviewers decide in that window whether to stay or leave.

The test: Show your homepage to someone who knows nothing about you. After three seconds, ask what you do. If they can't answer, your above-the-fold needs work

WHAT GREAT LOOKS LIKE:

- ❖ Headline names the problem you solve or population you serve
- ❖ One supporting sentence explaining how
- ❖ One primary call to action above the fold
- ❖ Real photography, consistent brand, clean layout
- ❖ No sliders, carousels, or auto-playing video

WHAT WE USUALLY SEE:

- ☒ Vague headline like 'Making a difference'
- ☒ Three or four buttons competing for attention
- ☒ Rotating carousel – five messages, none land
- ☒ Stock photography that signals 'we don't invest'

REUSABLE, NOT REDUNDANT

Build with Components, Not Pages

Designing page-by-page creates inconsistency and developer dependency. A component library gives your team reusable, accessible blocks they assemble into any page confidently.

HERO SECTION

Clear headline, supporting text, single CTA.
Configurable for homepage, campaigns, and programme pages.

CONTENT BLOCK

Text and image side-by-side. Reversible layout.
Handles long-form programme descriptions.

CARD GRID

Programmes, team, resources, news — same component, different content.

STATISTICS ROW

Impact numbers displayed prominently. Donors scan for these.

CALL TO ACTION

Donation, contact, newsletter. One component, styled consistently, used everywhere.

FOOTER

Contact, sitemap, regulatory info, social proof. Donors and regulators check this.

EVERY SECTION WORKS

Anatomy of a Great NGO Homepage

Each section has a job. This isn't a design template – it's a functional blueprint.

NAVIGATION

5-7 items max. Donate button distinct. No mega-menus unless 50+ pages.

HERO

Specific headline, one CTA, real photography. Most important 600px on your site.

CREDIBILITY BAR

Partner logos, accreditation badges, or a key statistic. Quiet, understated.

STAKEHOLDER ROUTING

Cards that route donors, beneficiaries, media, partners to their destination in 1-2 clicks.

IMPACT NUMBERS

3-4 headline stats: people served, programmes active, countries, funds deployed.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Card grid from CMS. Current and active programmes, not historical.

SOCIAL PROOF

Testimonial from donor, partner, or beneficiary. Attributed, accessible.

CTA

Repeat the primary action from the hero. Consistency reinforces the message.

FOOTER

Charity number, address, policies, annual report, social. Donors check this.

INCLUSIVE BY DEFAULT

Accessibility Is Not Optional

For organisations serving vulnerable populations, WCAG 2.1 AA compliance is a requirement, not a nice-to-have. Build it into components from day one – not as a post-launch audit.

**KEYBOARD
NAVIGATION**

Every menu, form, accordion, and button reachable without a mouse.

**SCREEN READER
SUPPORT**

Proper heading hierarchy, meaningful link text, ARIA labels where needed.

COLOUR CONTRAST

4.5:1 minimum ratio. No information conveyed by colour alone.

ALT TEXT

Every image has meaningful alt text. Decorative images marked as decorative.

FORM ACCESSIBILITY

Labels on every field, clear error messages, logical tab order.

TOUCH TARGETS

44x44px minimum on mobile. No pinch-zooming required.

When accessibility is built into your component library, every new page is automatically accessible. Your team doesn't need to think about it.

Consistent brand across
every page

Clear visual hierarchy

Clean typography and
generous whitespace

Credible, Not Flashy

“This is a serious, well-run organisation.”

Fast load times (under 2.5
seconds)

Professional photography of
real work

Subtle, purposeful motion

ROUTE EVERYONE EFFICIENTLY

Six Audiences, One Website

Standard navigation serves one audience. Yours must route all six efficiently – each arriving with different intent, each needing three clicks or fewer to their destination

01 Donors

Confidence funds are well-managed. Route to: impact, financials, governance, donate.

02 Beneficiaries

Access to services. Route to: programmes, resources, contact, FAQs

03 Partners

Credibility and alignment. Route to: about, programmes, annual reports

04 Media

Facts, fast. Route to: press section, leadership bios, key statistics

05 Regulators

Compliance evidence. Route to: governance, policies, financial reports, board info.

06 Board Members

Confidence the org is represented well. Route to: updates, impact data, brand.

FUNDER-READY ALWAYS

Transparency and Governance Built In

Sophisticated funders inspect your site before the first meeting. They check your About page, financials, board listing, and programme details.

- Board of directors with names, roles, and bios
- aAnnual reports and financials easily downloadable
- Programme descriptions with measurable outcomes
- Privacy and cookie policies that are current
- Contact info with a real address, not just a form
- News section updated within the last 60 days
- Leadership team with professional photos and bios
- Partnership and funder logos with attribution

Content governance means knowing who publishes what, who approves it, and how often it gets reviewed. Without this, content drifts and the site becomes a liability.

HONEST SELF-ASSESSMENT

Score Your Website

Score 1 point for each statement that is true today.

Be honest – this is for your team.

12-15

Strong foundation. Focus on iteration and evolution.

8-11

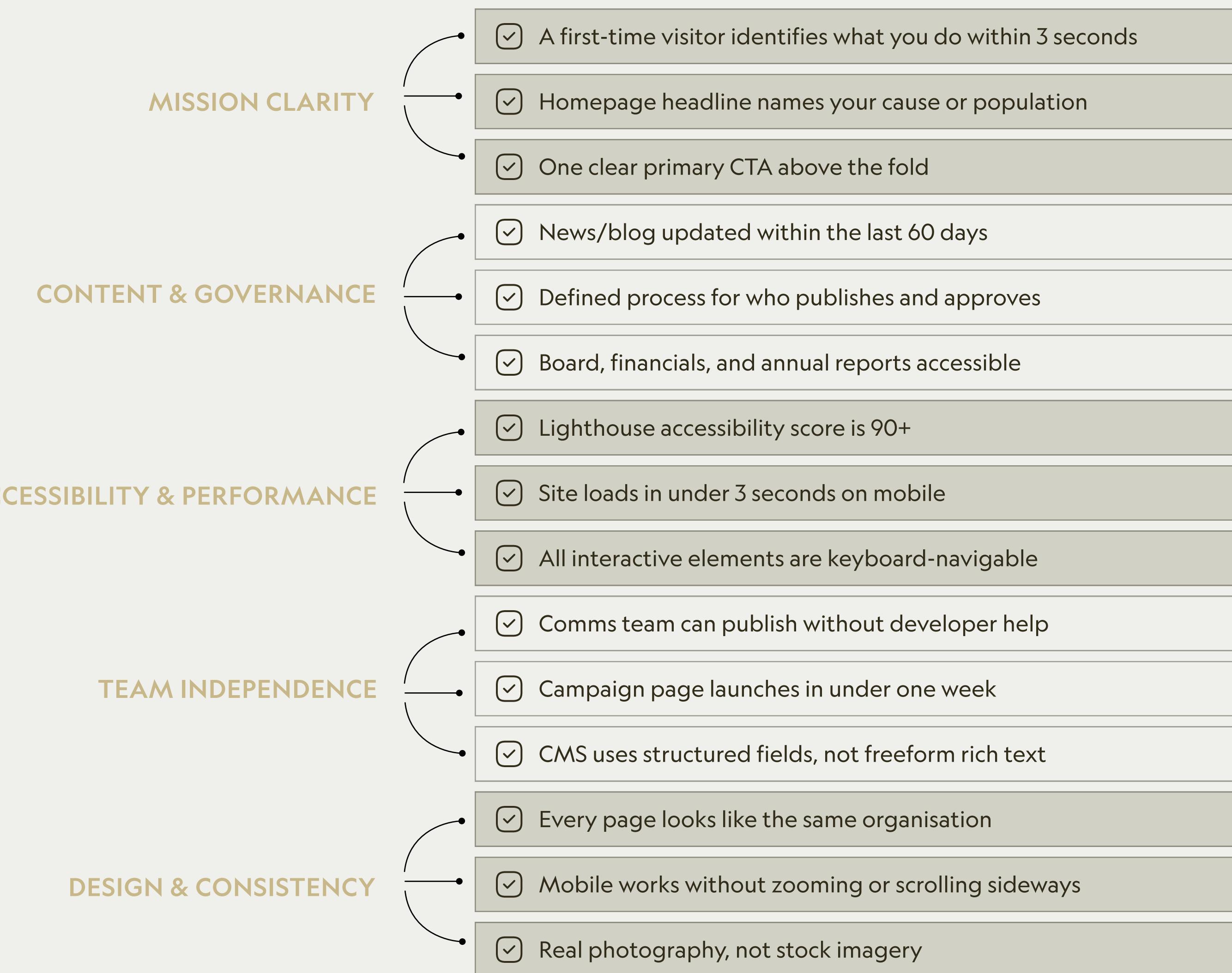
Meaningful gaps. Targeted improvements will have outsized impact

4-7

Significant issues affecting credibility. Prioritise the 90-Day Plan.

0-3

Your website is a liability. A structured rebuild should be a priority.



THE OUTCOMES THAT MATTER

What Great Looks Like

NGOs with governance-first, component-built websites all share these outcomes:

CAMPAIGNS LAUNCH IN DAYS

Comms teams create landing pages and donation flows independently.

DONORS ARRIVE TRUSTING YOU

Transparency, performance, and accessibility build confidence before the first conversation.

BOARD SHARES WITH PRIDE

Leadership references the website in funder meetings.

SCRUTINY BECOMES OPPORTUNITY

Journalists, regulators, and donors find credibility – not cracks.

THE REBUILD CYCLE ENDS

Component-first foundations evolve instead of becoming obsolete.

MISSION OVER MAINTENANCE

No plugin conflicts, no platform firefighting. It just works.

“

“Working with Eric on the re-platforming of our site has been an absolute joy. He has taken what we thought would be a complex process and made it easy, seamless and professional. Even when our brief was to "lift and shift" our site to Webflow, Eric found ways to enhance our donor experience and improve our SEO, all within budget. Our site has already had an uplift in organic traffic and our team is delighted with what we can offer our donors going forward.”

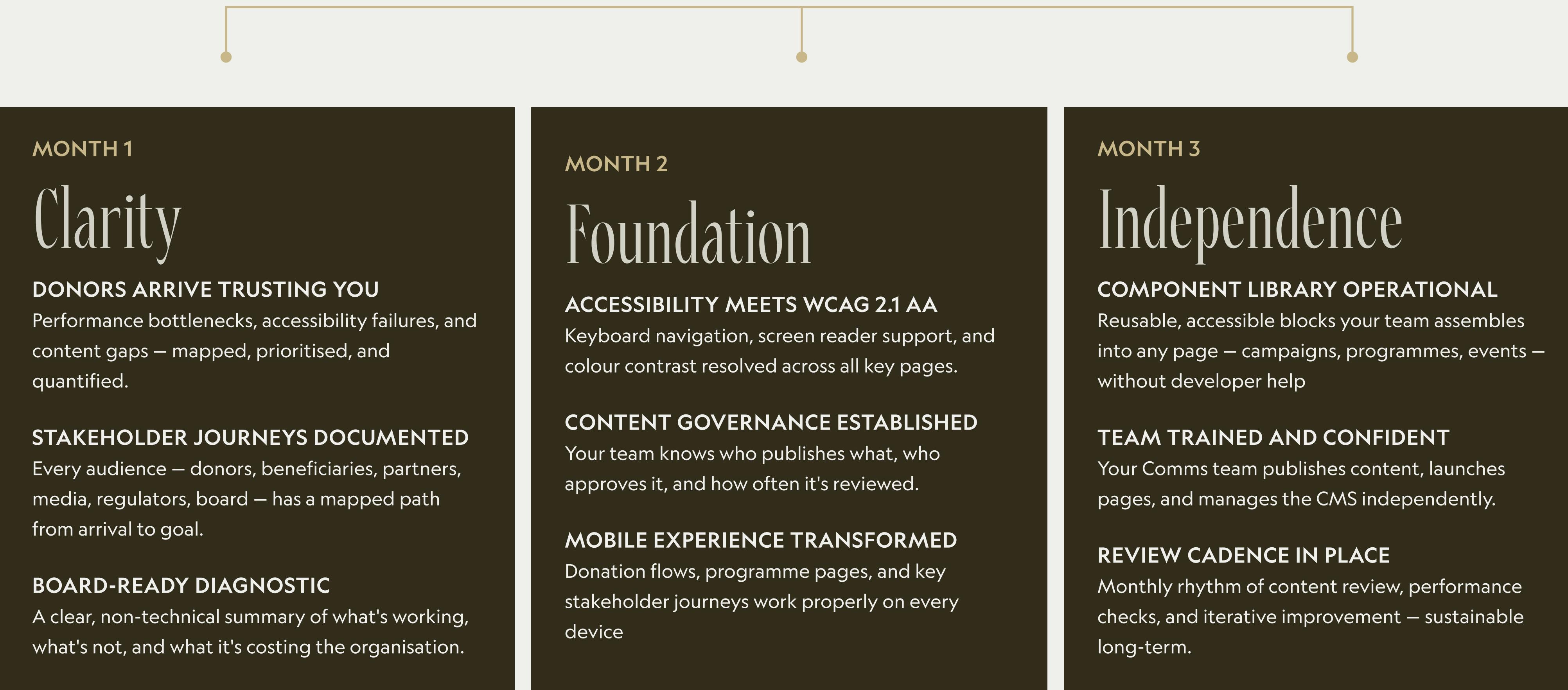


JC Garay
Head of Communication, WHO Foundation

A PREDICTABLE TRANSFORMATION

What Changes in 90 Days

Organisations that invest in their website infrastructure properly – not just a redesign – see a predictable sequence of outcomes. Here's what that looks like.



NEXT STEPS

Want to Talk About Your Website Infrastructure?

Socialectric works exclusively with established international NGOs – organisations where credibility is non-negotiable and the website serves multiple stakeholders simultaneously

UNLIMITED DESIGN AND WEBFLOW SUBSCRIPTION

Monthly Partnership

Unlimited Webflow design and development. Most organisations start here – the first months focus on building, then transitions to ongoing support.

WEBSITE PROJECTS

Blueprint Audit

A standalone diagnostic. Stakeholder conversations, technical audit, and a board-ready roadmap. You own the output regardless of what happens next.

**NOT SURE WHAT YOU NEED YET?
A 30-MINUTE CALL TO DISCUSS WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT'S
NOT, AND WHETHER SOCIALECTRIC IS THE RIGHT FIT**

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