

Tips for Creating a Program-Specific Web Site

As access to computers has grown, so has Internet-based recruitment. Consequently, it's strongly recommended that your program have a Web presence.

Fortunately, these days you don't need a Web guru to build a site. There are many free or low-cost options for designing, maintaining, and hosting Web sites. Examples include job boards and vendors like Easy Street and Yahoo. Even if you're decidedly low tech, there are easy-to-use templates for building and updating your own site.

You might also recruit high school or college students to help. Contact for-profit firms—especially those in the high-tech sector or in Web design—to see if they might donate time and expertise to build a simple site.

Some general advice . . .

Keep it simple. Don't be distracted by sites with fancy graphics and animation: It's more important that visitors easily find the information they need. If you really want the bells and whistles, make sure they're compatible with the majority of your end user's Internet capabilities.

Design the site for your end user. If you are building a site solely for recruitment, gear it entirely to your applicants. If you are adding to an existing site and AmeriCorps is just a part of your program, make it very obvious to the applicant how to get to the recruitment-related information.

Keep your online content current by scheduling regular updates into your outreach plan. Along with position descriptions, you may also want to include a recruitment schedule, application materials and instructions, general requirements, and benefits (think both tangible and intangible).

Make sure your site is easy to navigate. Most visitors spend only 30 seconds on a page, so you'll lose them if they can't easily find what they need.

Be brief. Only include information that is necessary to your end user.

Remember that a picture is worth a thousand words. Use active photos of your members to capture what the member experience is all about. (Make sure you have photo releases on file of those pictured.)

Provide downloadable files in a universal format. For example, Adobe Acrobat is a popular and free program.

Use existing resources to put your Web content together. Chances are that your program already has most of the information you will want to include.