**Website Session**

**9:00-9:40 – Overview and what we consider the essentials of a good website**

**Why does your website matter?**

* For many people it’s the first place they’ll go if they want to know more about your organization – it’s a key public face of your organization and people will make judgments about your organization based on your website
* People who want more information about your issues are likely to go there – you want them to be able to find what they came for
* It’s the network hub for your communications activities – Facebook, Twitter, Videos, photos… all show up there
* It’s a place, and these days it may be the only place, where you get a chance to show the totality of what you do – you get to create the story of your organization that you want people to know

**What are some of the make or break elements of a website *for your audiences*?**

* **Does it look good?** The first thing most people respond to whether they know it or not is the overall design, the images, the colors – whether or not people like the look has a huge impact on whether they stay on the site and whether or not they come back
* **Can people find what they want…and can they find it fast?** People love to find what they want without having to click at all, they’re fine with one click, and start to get very impatient with two clicks or more. Part of what this means is that you have to figure out what most people come to your site to find and make it easy for them to find it – the navigation needs to be clear and you don’t want people to have to dig for key information
* **Is the content written in a clear, concise, punchy way?** You want the information on the landing pages to be easy to understand and to make people want to read more. It needs to be interesting, and it should appeal to a broad audience. People who want more information will go deeper into the site.
* **Is it up to date and does it appear like an *active* site?** You pretty much can’t away with a site anymore that doesn’t have information that changes regularly, especially on the home page. There are clever ways to do this that that don’t take much time and we’ll talk about them later. That said, it’s better to have a static site if you can’t update it regularly – you really don’t want people to go to the site and find old, out of date information.

**What are some of the make or break elements *for your organization*?**

* **Ease of use** – how easy is it to add new material? You absolutely want to be able to add new material in-house. Ideally you want lots of people in your organization to add material, not just one or two people. For most of the groups we’ve been working with lately we find that ease of use trumps just about everything else from an organizational standpoint.
* **Capacity, capacity, capacity.** Design for what you’re sure you can do, not for what you wish you could do.
* **Think of your website both as a vehicle to broadcast information and to capture information about your audience.** Make sure it connects to your database and you get email addresses, etc.
* **Design it for the things websites do well, don’t expect it to do everything.** Try to make it as streamlined and simple as possible, don’t overload it. Stay away from the flashy stuff ; design it for what *you really need it to do*.

**Now we’re going to look at a few websites and talk about what we like and don’t like about them.**

Methodology: get a few comments from the group first, then we point out two or three things we like and two or three things we don’t like in the sites we show

We let people know our bottom line on the sites – overall do we think it’s successful or not

**IPS**

**Urban Habitat**

**AFSC (**if we have time)

**CCI**

**Website essentials -- Punchlines**

**Start by thinking about your goals, priorities, and audiences** – make sure your website reflects your thinking about all of these

**Design it for ease of use for the user:** Think through what people are most likely to want to find and make it really easy for them to find what they want

**Design it for ease of use for your organization** – figure out how many people you’d like to be able to update the website, and design for that

**The overall design and visual matters…, a lot** -- Does it pass the blink test? Do people see it and really like it?

**Keep it current, keep it lively** -- Use Facebook, Twitter, email sign-ups to build your social network and make it active with little effort on your part

**Writing Matters** – spend time on your content, keep it concise and punchy on the landing pages

**Use things in multiple ways** – it’s fine for things to appear in multiple places on the website, in fact it’s good

**Be realistic about your capacity** – design for what you can do, not for what you wish you could do

**9:40-10:10**

Each organization find another organization and look at each other’s website

Give each other feedback based on the website essentials and anything else you think is important

**10:10-10:30**

Report back on the website discussions with your partner groups

And/or ask if there are any brave souls who’d like to show their website to the whole group for comments