

Redesigning Your Website: Lessons from the Field

Friday morning, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Websites are a common communications tool used by all NNIP partners. Partners rely on their websites to communicate their identity and services, democratize data, and disseminate products to serve their communities. Much has changed since NNIP was founded in 1996, including the technologies that power these websites.

Many websites now have relatively short shelf-lives and organizations can expect a website redesign every 3 to 5 years on average. Many NNIP partners have undergone a process of redesigning their websites in the past few years, including six during 2015 alone. Partners have faced issues including:

- Cost and how much to budget
- Whether to build in-house or hire a vendor
- Which website architecture to choose
- Which features to incorporate (such as interactive mapping, registration, open data portals)
- Extent of customization vs. a pre-packaged solution

The purpose of this session is to tap into the collective knowledge of NNIP partners to discuss the challenges of redesigning a website, as well as some of the lessons learned and success stories from the network.

Jeremy Pyne from Community Research Institute (CRI) in Grand Rapids will moderate the panel and the group discussion. He will introduce the topic and speak briefly about CRI's experience with website redesign.

Sharon Kandris from The Polis Center in Indianapolis will present on the evolution of the SAVI website. SAVI, a powerful tool designed to allow users to mine data and customize outputs, is taking a new approach: developing customized dashboards and tools tailored to particular audiences and use cases. Sharon will discuss the process of working with their audience and using an advisory committee to guide the process of building these customized tools. She will show SAVI's feedback process and how comments were incorporated into the tools.

John Cruz from Rise in St. Louis will talk about website redesign from the lens of a web consultant. Before joining Rise, John spent over ten years in the web design field in the United States and Canada. He will describe the types of mistakes that clients often make and offer guidance for organizations both large and small and with a variety of

cost constraints. John will use Rise's old and new websites to describe the process for their redesign and why it made sense for their organization.

After the formal presentations, Jeremy Pyne will lead a group discussion with the panelists and audience members.

Questions for Discussion:

- How do we best package the collective wisdom of the NNIP network to help partners as they need advice on website redesign?
- Are there external resources that we should compile for partners' reference?
- Are there any web platforms that could be re-used by other sites, or are the needs of each one too specific to the local context?
- For new NNIP cities, are the lessons any different for brand new sites?