

Residency Website Guidance

This document is a compilation of ideas and principles for strong website development that can support residency partnerships in garnering support, interest, awareness, and enrollment. As a first draft of a new document gleaned from a range of sources, we are sure that we have missed many good ideas! At the same time, given that our own website needs some retooling, we wanted to capture and share the ideas, even in these early stages, to support others in strengthening their sites. We welcome input on how to strengthen both the framing and the suggestions! As we strengthen our muscle in this area, we're also open to serving as thought partners with you on your site. Contact us at PreparedToTeach@bankstreet.edu.

As *Prepared To Teach* has explored strong residency websites and tips for website development, we surfaced four key principles that can guide programs' web presence decisions: Highlighting partnership values, telling stories, centering navigability, and focusing on keywords.

Partnership Values

- **Who you are matters!** Work with your partnership to identify shared language around your core values, your vision, and your commitments—and include this kind of language on your webpage.
- **Don't be afraid to be bold in highlighting your unique points.** Visitors to your site will want to understand how your values and commitments might align to their own goals.
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - What are major values and core principles that your partnership upholds?
 - What kinds experiences and skills can residents expect to gain—and how do those fit into future teachers' professional identities?
 - What words might describe your partnership's approaches to child and youth development, teacher preparation, relationship building, equity, community building, and the like?

Story Telling

- **Make it real.** Telling stories about your residency program can deepen site visitors' understanding of your work. Highlighting the experiences and voices of teacher candidates, mentors, and students helps your site come to life.
- **All photos are not created equal.** Using unique images and videos—not stock photos—to tell stories is a great way to engage site visitors and also increases rankings on search engines.
- **Story Starter Ideas:**
 - Quotes from residents, mentors, faculty, principals, students
 - Feedback data about the program, hiring statistics, impact on schools
 - Videos or photos showcasing resident, student, and mentor experiences
 - Highlights of recent events or exciting aspects of your program

Navigability

- **To find you is to know you.** Information about your residency program should be highlighted and easily accessible on your university, preparation program, and district partner websites.
- **See it from their perspective.** Casual traffic to the website exploring program options will not necessarily even know what a residency is or that one might exist at your program. Where will most newcomers enter your site, and what would they need to see to entice them to click into the residency pages?
- **Things to Consider:**
 - Including the residency page within the navigation bar
 - Having a clear hierarchy of site pages that makes it easy to navigate back from nested pages
 - Embedding links to the residency page within other pages
- **Information that should be easy to find:**
 - Structure of the program
 - Financial aid
 - Stipend or earnings possibilities (if applicable)
 - Application information
 - Placement sites
 - Time to completion
 - Program contact information (consider including the name and information of a specific person to contact)
- **Get them hooked by being helpful.** Including a well-written Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section can allow prospective students and families to get answers to questions that help them see themselves in your program. Poll faculty and current students about the kinds of things they think should be part of the FAQs, and avoid curt responses that don't represent the spirit of the program.
- **Keep mobile in mind.** Make sure your website displays and operates well on both desktop and mobile versions. Readers on a cellphone or other mobile device are likely to leave your site if the layout is confusing or unwieldy.
- **Test drive it.** Have current students, faculty in other programs, admissions staff, friends and relatives, and school-based partners click around your website and ask for feedback on how they experienced the site structure.

Keywords

- **Keywords are critical.** They are words or phrases that describe what your webpage is about. Intentionality in website language can help improve your Search Engine Optimization (SEO), the process of increasing website traffic through search results by making your content more likely to appear in searches on Google and other search engines.ⁱⁱ

- To start, brainstorm a few keywords (for example, “residency”) that anchor how you describe your residency program. Be sure these appear frequently throughout your website.
- Then brainstorm “long-tail keywords” (for example, “paid teacher residency”). These phrases have less search engine competition because fewer websites are using them, so you are more likely to appear when people use long-tail searches. Pepper your site with those phrases, too.
 - <https://answerthepublic.com/> can help you identify useful long-tail keywords based on words you input (you can conduct 3 explorations per day with the free version).
- **Where and how you share matters.** Informational flyers and social media posts about your residency program are crucial communication tools, but these formats may be less effective for SEO. Basic web text is the best way to get search engines' attention, but there are ways to optimize PDFs and social media posts for best SEO results such as using keywords in the PDF file name and body text, and keeping up an active social media presence.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Have photos do double duty.** Adding captions or text to photos that use keywords is a great Search Engine Optimization trick.^{iv}
- **Pro Tip: Take advantage of Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI).** LSI keywords are closely related to other keywords and can help search engines recognize that your page is relevant to people who are searching. For example, "teaching" is related to "degree," "program," "jobs," "paid," "residency," "education," and "certification." You can identify some LSI keywords by searching for your keyword then scrolling to the bottom of the search engine to see what other related searches they suggest.^v

ⁱ Shai Aharony, "Long Term Duplicate Image Experiment," *Reboot*, last modified June 9, 2020, <https://www.rebootonline.com/blog/long-term-duplicate-image-experiment/>

ⁱⁱ Moz. "What are Keywords?" Accessed July 1, 2021. <https://moz.com/learn/seo/what-are-keywords>

ⁱⁱⁱ Jon Clark, "13 Tips to Make Your PDFs SEO Friendly," *Search Engine Journal*, September 14, 2020,

<https://www.searchenginejournal.com/pdf-seo-best-practices/59975/#close> ; Neil Patel, "5 Things You Need To Know About Social Media & SEO", *NeilPatel*, Accessed July 1, 2021. <https://neilpatel.com/blog/social-media-and-seo/>

^{iv} Moz. "Alt Text." Accessed July 1, 2021. <https://moz.com/learn/seo/alt-text>

^v Backlinko. "LSI Keywords." Accessed July 1, 2021. <https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/lsi>