

Creating a Site Outage Response Plan

TOOLKIT NAME

Digital Strategy

DEVELOPED BY

Network Fundraising Services

This guide provides network members with recommendations to develop an effective site outage response plan. Creating a response plan ensures team members know their roles and responsibilities to minimize disruptions to your organization's platforms.

Key elements that you may want to incorporate in your response plan include how to identify an outage, roles and responsibilities, communication plans, immediate actions, and more. These recommendations are just a start of what you might include your response plan. Adjust based on your organization's platforms and needs.

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CREATING A SITE OUTAGE RESPONSE PLAN—*continued*

DEFINE PLATFORMS & FUNCTIONS

Although it may seem straightforward, it's crucial to begin by defining your platforms and their functions. This ensures that any new employee who joins your organization will have all the necessary information needed to assist with resolving an outage.

- Identify the platforms that your website is managed within and the functions of each platform
- You may have one platform for your content and one for activities (donation form, email sign up, etc.)
- Identify any third-party services that support your platforms
- Identify external websites connected to your website

IDENTIFY AN OUTAGE

There are three types of outages – Unplanned, Planned and Third-Party. Outline how an outage will be identified. Determine a plan for each type of outage.

- If you have a monitoring system in place, include thorough directions on this process. How often is it checked? What is the duration? What is the alert frequency? Who is alerted?
- If a Planned Outage occurs regularly include the details of where this information comes from and the additional steps.

ESTABLISH A RESPONSE TEAM

To ensure that your response plan moves quickly and efficiently, all team members must know and understand their role. Creating a Response Team to handle outages is critical. All team members involved should be listed, their role, their contact information.

The Response Team will manage the outage, recovery, and communication with internal and external stakeholders. Create a contact list including their role in the outage, primary and secondary phone numbers and email addresses. Create an email list for your Response Team to communicate with each other quickly and efficiently.

Below are a few questions to consider when creating your Response Team:

- Who is the primary liaison for your tech providers?
- Who is the backup liaison for your tech providers?
- Who is responsible for moving over your backup website?
- Who is communicating with your executive team?
- Who is communicating with your Notification list?
- Who is responsible for website management, email marketing, digital paid media, digital third-party platforms, direct mail, social media, etc.?
- Who is responsible for public relations?
- Who is alerting your call center and donor services team?
- Who is responsible for Philanthropy Operations implications?

CREATING A SITE OUTAGE RESPONSE PLAN—*continued*

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN

Having a clear communication plan will ensure that issues are resolved quickly and efficiently. Below are a few things to consider in your communication plan:

- Identify the process of flow of who needs to be communicated to during an outage. This could depend on the scale of the outage.
- The flow could depend on the time of year. During the holiday season, it is critical to ensure donations can continue to come in through your site. This would be a high priority to backup.
- The flow could also depend on the type of outage or the platform the outage is on. Planned Outages might have a simpler flow than an Unplanned Outage.

NOTIFICATION LIST

Create a contact list of team members that need to be informed if the site is down for 30 minutes or more, but don't have a role in the outage response. Ensure that you list primary and secondary phone numbers and email addresses. Below are some examples of leadership roles that might be on your Notification List:

- Member of Executive Team
- Communications/Public Relations
- IT
- Receptionist/Call Center/Donor Services
- Philanthropy Operations
- Advocacy

PARTNER SUPPORT CONTACTS

Create a list of your primary tech support contacts for all of your partners and platforms. Below are some examples that might be on your Partner Support Contacts:

- Online Donation Form Platform
- Website Manager
- Website Designer

Name	Email Address (primary/ secondary)	Phone Number (primary/ secondary)	Department

CREATING A SITE OUTAGE RESPONSE PLAN—*continued*

ENABLE BACKUP PLANS

It is critical to have backup plans in place to easily enable when a site outage occurs to avoid lost revenue. Here are a few backup solutions you might consider putting in place for your Site Outage Plan:

- **Backup Site:** If your website hosted at your main domain is down, have a backup site in place and direct your DNS to this site
- **Backup Donation Pages:** If your donation page is down, have a backup donation form and direct your donation buttons to the alternative form
- **Phone Donations:** Prepare a script and paper forms to take donations over the phone
- **Social Fundraising:** Use social platforms to share updates and encourage donations through backup channels

OUTLINE THE RESPONSE PROCEDURES

What is the procedure if your home page is down? What is the procedure if your donation page is down? How do you confirm the outage? Who do you call?

Your Response Plan should have thorough, step by step procedures for each of these scenarios. This plan should also include how to identify, report and troubleshoot the outage. It should include how to enable your back up securely.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

As outages occur, new team members join or platforms evolve, your organization will be able to continuously improve your Site Outage Response Plan. Below are a few strategies to ensure your plan is up-to-date:

- **Test the Plan:** Make sure you've tested the steps of this plan from start to finish. You might find new ways to make enhancements.
- **Review Regularly and Update as Needed:** The Response Team should review the plan regularly to update any changes to team members, platforms, partners, or procedures.
- **Conduct Post-Outage Reviews:** After an outage, ensure that you are conducting a review and documenting learnings. Gather feedback on what worked well and what still needs updating.

CREATE A FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) LIST

Are you looking for a quick answer on your Response Plan procedures? Keep a running list of your site outage FAQs for quick reference. Below are examples that might be on your list:

- How are outages identified and validated?
- Who is on the Response Team?
- Who is responsible to first validate a site outage/issue is occurring?
- Who is responsible for contacting the IT team for support?