

Website Guidelines

A guide to creating an engaging website that fosters the Soroptimist® brand, promotes the mission and markets your club.

Getting Started

Before developing a website, form a website committee and create a plan. A simple written plan should include the site's objective, target audiences, and an overview of what you want the site to achieve. Also, determine and include the following information for who will:

- Design/implement the site
- Manage the site
- Oversee the content and look of the site
- Be responsible for changes and updates

If no one in your club has website experience, hire a local web company to design an easy-to-update site in which your club could easily learn to make updates and changes. Or contact the graphic arts, communications, and/or web development department at a nearby college for assistance. But know that building a professional website doesn't have to take a lot of effort, time or money. Several website-building sites have made it easy for even first-timers to build a website. The best website builder for you depends on your particular needs. Some suggestions are below.

Website Building Tools

SIA no longer offers the website templates. The following is a list of website building sites that clubs and regions informed us they have used successfully to build their own websites. SIA does not endorse any particular tool.

- [SquareSpace](#)
- [GoDaddy](#)
- [ClubExpress](#)
- [Snap Pages](#)
- [Weebly](#)
- [Wix](#)
- [WordPress](#)

In addition, [TechSoup](#) is a nonprofit international network of non-governmental organizations that provides technical support and technological tools to other nonprofits. They can provide help with website development, web hosting and support with several other technology needs.

Website Host

Before designing begins, find a place to host the site. Take advantage of community websites that often list local volunteer organizations and provide them with free websites. Or contract with an Internet service provider (ISP) to host the website. Some web hosts offer free or discounted services to 501c3 organizations.

Domain Name

- Register a domain name with a name registration site found on the internet. Shop around for the best price.
- Use a domain name that ends in an *.org*, which is available for charitable organizations.
- Pick a URL that is relevant to your club, such as www.atlantasoroptimist.org or www.soroptimistnortheasternregion.org.
- Note that domain names have no spaces between words.

Building Stage

Keeping in mind that your club is part of a larger organization, your website should cultivate an identity in line with SIA with regard to both content and design. Here is the [design palette](#) SIA uses for Soroptimist.org. Also review SIA's Branding & Style Guide before building your website for more information on our visual identity and writing style. Your website should also adhere to SIA's bylaws and procedures, which address such issues as logo use, cross-solicitation, position statements, etc.

Homepage

The homepage is the point of entry and gives a first impression of your club. A visitor can determine within seconds whether the site offers useful information, the organization is reputable and worthwhile, and/or the site is worth a return visit. As the virtual face of the club, the homepage should:

- Prominently display the Soroptimist "S" logo at the top of the page.
- Contain SIA's mission statement: *A global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.*
- Include a navigation menu that lists the sections found throughout the site.
- Be appealing and inviting, and display photo(s) of the club in action.
- Clearly define your club and what it does.

Navigation

Organize pages so that visitors can easily browse through the different sections of your site. You can accomplish this with a clear navigation menu. The menu should appear and remain the same on all pages of the site, so visitors can click to any section at any time. Also provide a home button on all pages that enable visitors to return to the homepage.

Content

Writing for the web should be short and to the point because **it** is more difficult to read words on a screen than to read print materials. Include interesting and informative content that fosters an understanding of the organization to an outside audience. Write as if visitors have no idea what Soroptimist is or what we do. Avoid using acronyms (ex. SIA, LYDA, DIBI) or language that only members understand (ex. federation). You can always use text from Soroptimist.org for descriptions of our organization and programs. Consult the [Branding & Style Guide](#) for more information about writing for internal and external audiences.

- Organize information in different sections that can be accessed through the navigation menu.
- Make sure content is up to date.
- Sections on programs, membership and events should constitute the bulk of the site because this information serves all site visitors. This information should be accurate and consistent.
- Put information that would only interest members in a separate members-only area.
- Include a “Contact Us” section that provides site visitors with a way to get in touch for more information.

Design

The website design is just as important as its content. The overall look speaks volumes about the professionalism of your club. Most design principles used for printed materials do not apply to web pages because the eye views computer screens and paper differently.

- Make your website responsive. People will access your website using a wide variety of devices—from smartphones to desktop computers. It is important that your website displays and functions correctly on across devices and screen sizes.
- Develop for multiple browsers (i.e. Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox). Browsers do not render web pages in the same way. Before going live, be sure to check your website in multiple browsers to make sure everything appears correctly.
- Communicate the Soroptimist brand with colors, look and feel. The SIA logo should be visible on every page.
- Avoid a black background or a light one with a pattern. These backgrounds make reading text and printing pages from the site difficult. Opt for a white background or a solid, light-colored one.
- Use a sans serif font such as Calibri, Tahoma or Verdana (specifically created for the web) because they are easier to read on screen and already come on most computers.
- Organize text in small paragraphs or as bullets. Studies show that people read 25 percent slower on the web than they do print.
- Save photos and graphics as JPEGs (joint photographic experts group) or PNG (portable network graphic) file formats, which enable people to view high-quality images at minimal download time. A graphic or photo only needs to be 72 dpi (dots per inch) to display well on the web.
- Use only the special effects that enhance communication on the site. Flashing and flip-flopping graphics, sound and video capabilities, and other high-tech features, can either appear tacky or creative—depending on their context and use.

Security/Privacy

Since anyone can access a website, leave off certain information to protect the members, club, region and organization as a whole.

- Personal information—such as home and business phone numbers, social security numbers and birth dates—should never go on a site for security reasons. Recent changes in the laws of the European Union

(known as GDPR), in many Canadian provinces and the state California, among others, require that anyone handling personally identifiable information related to residents of these areas must follow strict rules in how that data handled. While Soroptimist generally does not fit the legal definition in these laws as data handlers, it is best to avoid having or relaying this information via your website.

- While it may seem appropriate to list members' professions, places of business and email addresses to illustrate Soroptimist's diverse make-up of women, get each member's permission before adding this type of information. Please remember members, and members leaving your club, can withdraw this permission at any time, and your club is required to comply with that request immediately.
- Listing information in a secure password-protected members area also has risks. Your club is responsible for ensuring that password-secured members areas have the highest level of security and reside behind areas that are protected by firewalls. Just because information is in a password-protected section does not mean it cannot be compromised.
- Obtain written permission from non-members, such as *Live Your Dream Awards*® recipients, before adding their name, town, place of business or photograph. Also obtain written permission from the parents/guardians of a *Dream It, Be It*® participants. Media consent forms are available in the [Program Resources](#) section of Soroptimist's website. Please remember that non-members who have granted permission in the past can withdraw that permission at any time, and your club is required to comply with that request immediately.
- Information on the site needs copyright protection. It is not necessary to actually register a copyright. It suffices to note the creation date next to the © symbol or the word "copyright" somewhere on the homepage. Use the following statement for additional protection:

All materials posted on this site are subject to copyrights owned by Soroptimist International of _____ and/or other individuals or entities. Any reproduction or retransmission of all or part of any document found on this site is expressly prohibited, unless Soroptimist International of _____ or the copyright owner of the material has granted its prior written consent. Copyright 20XX—Soroptimist International of _____.

Links

At a minimum, clubs should link to the following websites:

- Soroptimist.org
- Region website
- Club's social media sites

Clubs may choose to link with the websites of community partners. However, when providing links, use caution. Links give the perception that Soroptimist or the club endorses the other entity's site. To protect from possible liabilities in associating with other sites, include the following disclaimer:

This website includes links providing direct access to other internet sites. However, Soroptimist takes no responsibility for the content or information contained on other sites, nor does it imply endorsement or approval of products or information offered.

Although it may be tempting to form a business relationship with corporations whereby they "advertise" on your club website and provide a percentage of revenue for all purchases made through that link, refrain from entering into such relationships. SIA and its U.S. clubs and regions are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations and as such, may be subject to unrelated business income tax (UBIT) for these types of arrangements.

It is important to contact SIA headquarters before entering into any business arrangements to make certain that the reporting and expense ramifications of accepting such revenue is understood. At a minimum, such portals might appear to be an endorsement by Soroptimist of the product or service, which may not be desirable.

Review

Once the design is complete, be sure to review the site to make sure everything is the way you would like it to be for launch. Ask several people to help.

- Open the website in all the internet browsers (i.e. Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox) to see if it appears properly.
- Try the website on various tablets and mobile devices to see if it is responsive.
- Make sure the content makes sense and there are no grammatical mistakes.
- Ensure photos load quickly and display correctly.

Go Live!

Publicize

Once complete, include a link to your website in all your publicity materials, as well as in the “About Us” sections on your social media pages. SIA headquarters would like to see it too! Share a link with Kamali Brooks from headquarters at kamali@soroptimist.org.

Does Building a Website Seem Overwhelming? Consider Social Media Instead

Building and maintaining a website can be a daunting task. Your club may consider building a page on Facebook or another social media platform that could take the place of a website. The goal is to free up members’ time to work on accomplishing our mission. It’s far easier and takes less time to design and maintain a social page that could be highly effective in serving as the club’s main communication vehicle.

Note that if your club decides to go this route, there are still security and privacy caveats that apply. Just like posting on a website, you still need permission to post information about members and non-nonmembers. This applies equally to social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc. See our [Social Media Kit](#) for more information on building and maintaining a presence social media.