



Optimizing User Experience

WITH SEO AND INTERFACE DESIGN

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Introduction

The Client

Idaho International Dance Festival is a time-honored tradition in southeastern Idaho. The event has taken place for over 30 years, and features both local dance groups and dance teams from around the world. Dancers from over 70 countries have participated in the festival over the course of its history, and the organization intends to continue this tradition for years to come.

The festival traditionally takes place each July in Rexburg, Idaho, and includes a weeklong series of events with the community, including concerts, parades, and a gala performance held at BYU-Idaho. This event allows international performers and the local community to join together as they teach, entertain, and inspire one another through music and dance.

The Background

In 2019 the organization rebranded itself to Idaho International Dance Festival, after years of using the name Idaho Summerfest. Their goal in rebranding was to return to the roots of the festival and better represent the event in an all-encompassing way.

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic halted all plans for the festival. It restricted international travel and large gatherings, preventing any possibility of the festival happening that year. The organization has been actively coordinating with the city of Rexburg and with

international dance teams in preparation of when they can safely hold the festival.

The current plan is to return to the festival in 2022. This gives the festival just over a year to refine plans and create an effective publicity strategy for the festival. Given the complex situation the festival is facing, many elements of this publicity campaign can't be executed until more plans are confirmed for 2022. However, a key tool that must be in place before any campaign can begin is an effective website.

The Problem

When the event was branded as Idaho Summerfest, its website was filled with content about the festival. However, it faced several critical issues.

- It's visual design conflicted with existing branding for the festival, creating cognitive dissonance and confusion among website visitors interested in the festival.
- The website had a lot of content, but it was poorly structured and hard to navigate, leading people to miss out on important information because they didn't know where to find it
- The website functioned well on a computer, but wasn't designed or optimized for mobile usage. Over half of all web browsing takes place on mobile devices, and users generally navigate away from content that isn't optimized for mobile usage.

When the rebranding effort took place, a new domain name was purchased and a new site was put in place. Before the site design could progress, the festival plans were cancelled and the site was brought to a halt. This led to several issues:

- It was left with a generic template in place, which was an adequate design but didn't reflect the spirit of the festival.
- This template also populated each page with extensive code which displayed incorrectly, leaving the site feeling unfinished and unprofessional.

These issues with the current website inhibit people from learning about the festival. Having a non-functioning website also leads to a drop in search engine results, creating a downward spiral where it becomes harder and harder for users to find the site.

The Situation

Strengths

They have a lot of existing content that users will be looking for. They can pull from material from past years, including images and blog posts, to populate their current site.

Weaknesses

The site is poorly designed, confusing to navigate, and missing critical content. This is leading to a fall in search rankings and frustrates users.

Opportunities

Setting up a polished website will allow for a better user experience and increase awareness of the festival to those using traditional search engines.

Threats

There are normally few guarantees that optimizing a website will translate over to higher conversion rates. This situation adds an additional level of potential threat if the festival is set back another year, making it hard to measure success of growth due to the website.

The Goal

Build a website that is optimized to the needs of the organization and its users, so it can serve as an invaluable tool in allowing for the successful return of the Idaho International Dance Festival.

The Objectives

a. Improve user experience on the website in 2 ways

1. Improve the visual design, layout, and flow of content for better navigation
2. Optimize the website for fast loading, mobile usage, and ease of access

b. Use SEO to increase user engagement in 2 ways

1. Improve SEO practices throughout the site to lead to better rankings
2. Implement easy-to-use tools for measuring growth resulting from SEO

Strategy

Objective a. Improve user experience on the website

This involves four main strategies, including:

- 1. An appealing website design**
- 2. Optimizing for fast load times and for mobile experience**
- 3. Provide easier navigation tools**
- 4. Simplifying user experience when volunteering or subscribing to emails**

Objective b. Use SEO to increase user engagement in 2 ways

This involves three additional strategies, including:

- 5. Rank higher on search results**
- 6. Improve image optimization for search results**
- 7. Plan regular, relevant blog content**

Each of the tactics behind these strategies are outlined below

1. Appealing website design

a. Research similar websites

A key part of the research phase of developing an appealing website was reverse engineering existing websites for similar organizations. This involved looking for the elements they shared in common, and analyzing the placement of these common elements.

This analysis included sketching wireframes of these site layouts in order to look for patterns in how these sites were laid out.

Below is a list of the main sites used for research:

- <https://www.jacobspillow.org/>
- <https://americandancefestival.org/>
- <https://www.festivaldance.org/>
- <https://www.dancefestopia.com/>
- <https://www.laidf.org/>
- <https://seattleidf.org/>
- <https://www.sfhiphopdancefest.com/>

b. Develop a style guide

A style guide is a critical tool in the development of an effective website. One issue on the previous site was lack of a cohesive appearance.

Developing a condensed style guide allowed for a clear visual identity to emerge that was consistent with the existing branding for the organization. It also created a way to simplify and expedite the process of designing and coding the website itself.



Heading One

Hero New Light 60pt

Heading Two

Hero New SemiBold 48pt

Heading Three

Hero New ExtraBold 36pt

Heading Four

Hero New SemiBold 24pt

Body copy text

Hero New Light 20pt

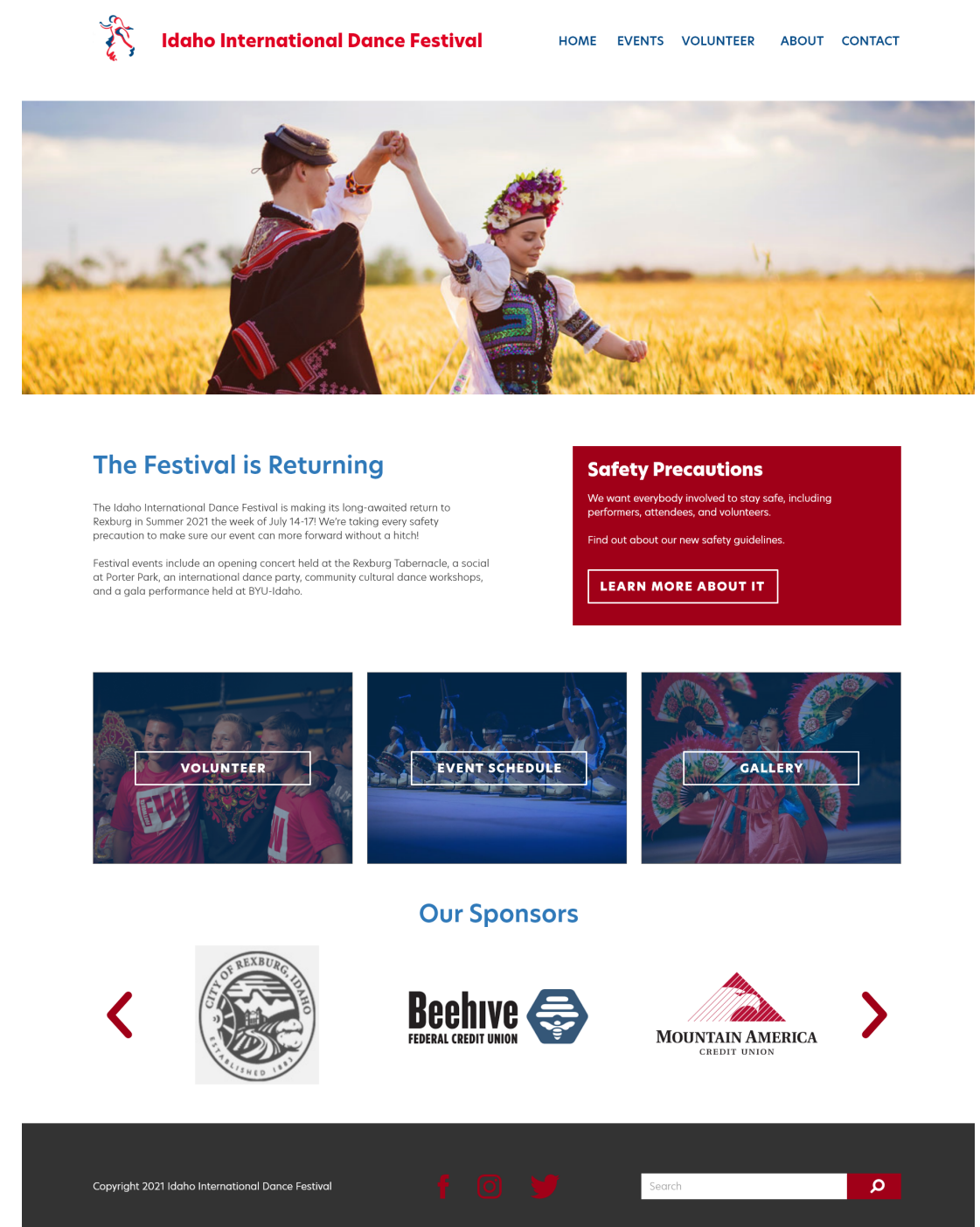
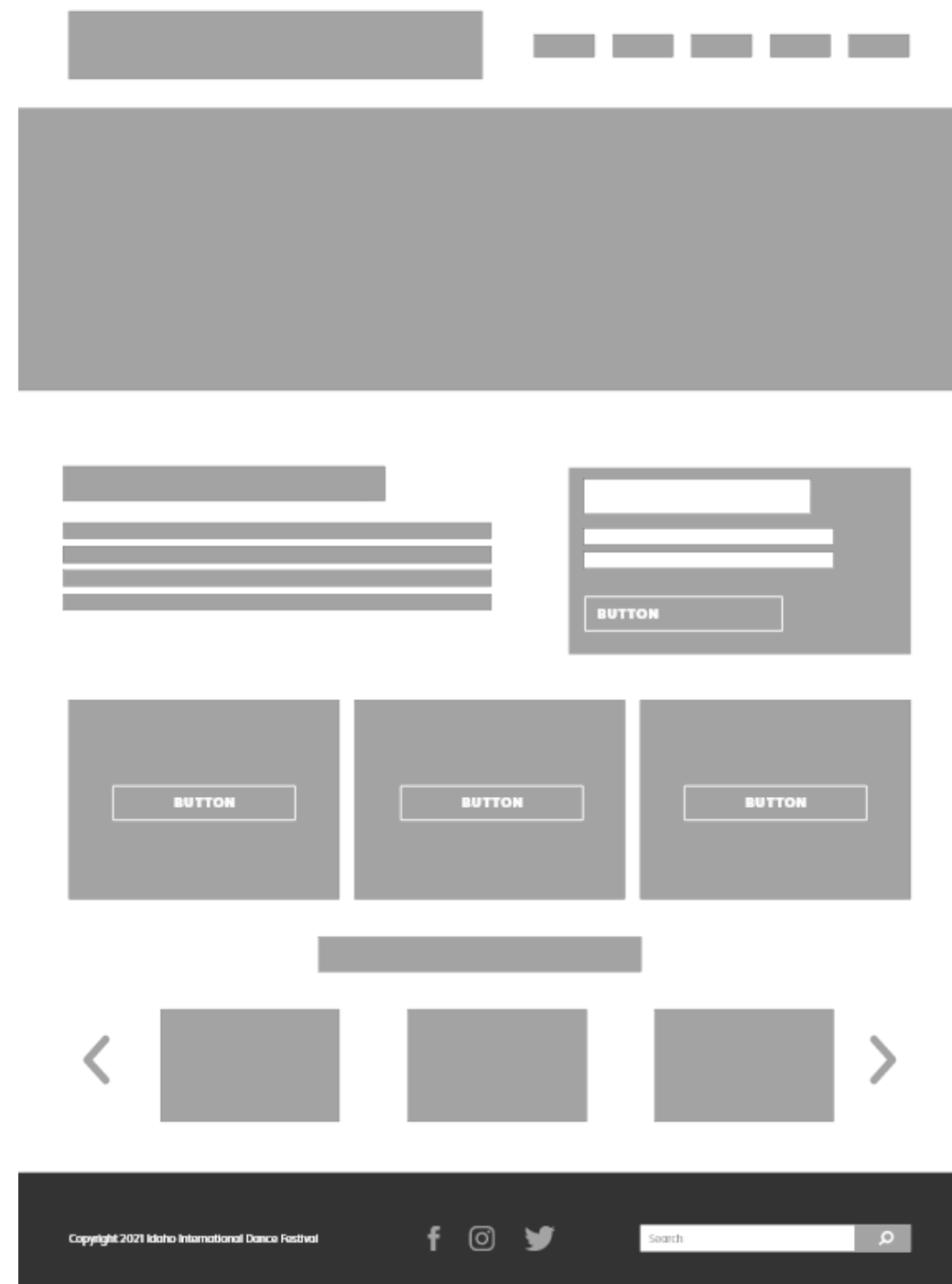
Button Styles



c. Create a website design mockup

Before building a website, creating a clear plan of the layout and design makes the process so much more effective. The process included referring back to the initial wireframe sketches from the research phase to create a digital wireframe of the layout. This was followed by adding design elements based on the decisions made in the style guide.

A mockup was created for the site's landing page, was taken to the communication director for feedback, and revised further. Upon approval, this design was then used in developing mockups of most remaining pages of the website.

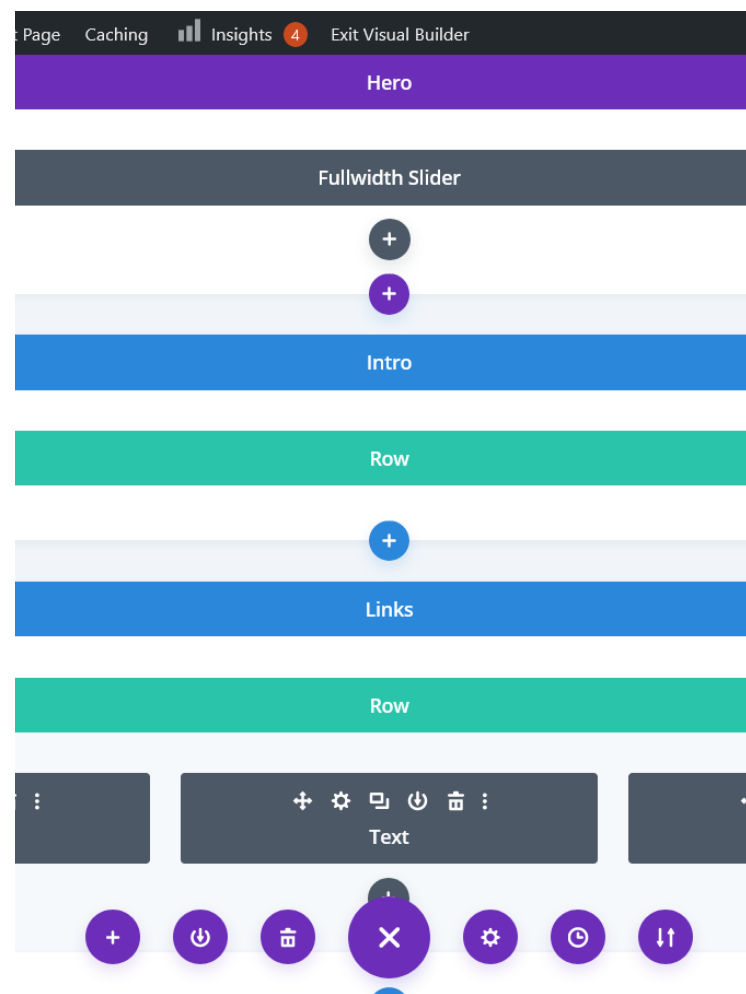


2. Optimize load time

a. Use Wordpress + Divi for best performance

The festival has been using Wordpress as the software for their site since they made the switch, which is ideal for web developers working on projects that many people may get involved in at some point. It is already mobile optimized and allows for extensive customization.

Divi, a highly customizable custom Wordpress theme, was installed on the site. This provides an ideal framework for building a website which is optimized for fast loading, good SEO, and easy navigation for the user.



b. Add custom CSS to site

In order to set apart this design from others without getting bogged down by the code-heavy drag-and-drop website design tools, custom CSS was used. This allowed for total control over the final design with few lines of code, allowing for faster load speed.

c. Shrink images to decrease load time

The existing site hosted several thousand images from years of past festival events. Most of these images were at their original resolution (up to 6000px wide and 25mb). These significantly slowed down the loading speed of the site, so they were all resized to a web optimal size (800 - 1000px wide and 100-200kb), which would lead to faster loading without sacrificing quality.

```
#redbox h2 {
  color: white;
}

#redbox .et_pb_button {
  margin-top: 20px;
  font-size: .7em;
  font-weight: 700;
}

#redbox .et_pb_button::after {
  display: none;
}

.et_pb_button {
  text-transform: uppercase;
  letter-spacing: .25em;
  color: white;
}

.et_pb_button a {
  color: white;
}

.et_pb_button.nav_image, .et_pb_b
  color: white;
  padding: 80px 30px;
  text-align: center;
  background-color: rgba(4,74,135
}

.et_pb_section {
  padding: 0px 0px 30px;}

#top-menu a {
  color: #044A87;
  text-transform: uppercase;
  letter-spacing: .05em;
}

#top-menu .menu-item-has-children
  padding-right: 0px;
}

#top-menu a::after {
  display: none;
}

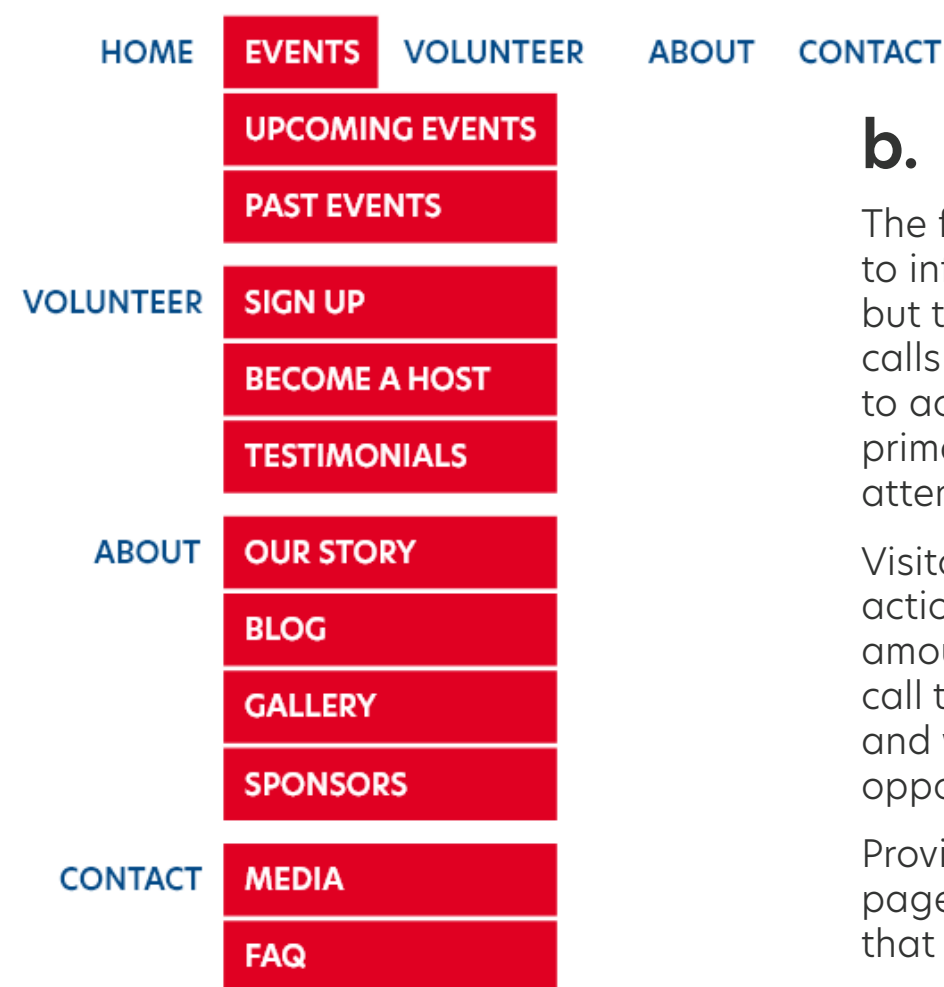
.et_pb_fullwidth_section .et_pb_s
  max-height: 500px;
  min-height: 200px;
  height: 100%;
```

3. Easier navigation tools

a. Organize a clear menu bar

If somebody arrives on a website and wants to learn more, but isn't shown where to go, they are likely to leave the website more quickly and go to other sources to find what they're looking for. This is why an easy navigation menu is crucial.

A list of all the main pages of the site was made, and these were organized into a clear menu, with sub-items under each main tab.



b. Buttons on pages

The festival website aims not only to inform people about its event, but to engage them with several calls to action. Among the calls to action the festival is giving, the primary ones are volunteering and attending.

Visitors will recognize a call to action and respond with a higher amount of commitment when this call to action is clearly presented, and when they're given an opportunity to engage.

Providing buttons through a web page provides a clear visual signal that a call to action is being made,

and it allows users to engage by clicking on the button and following through by filling out a form.

Buttons were placed on most pages of the website to provide a clear call to action to the users of each page. These buttons were usually red, because it calls more attention to itself.

c. Site map

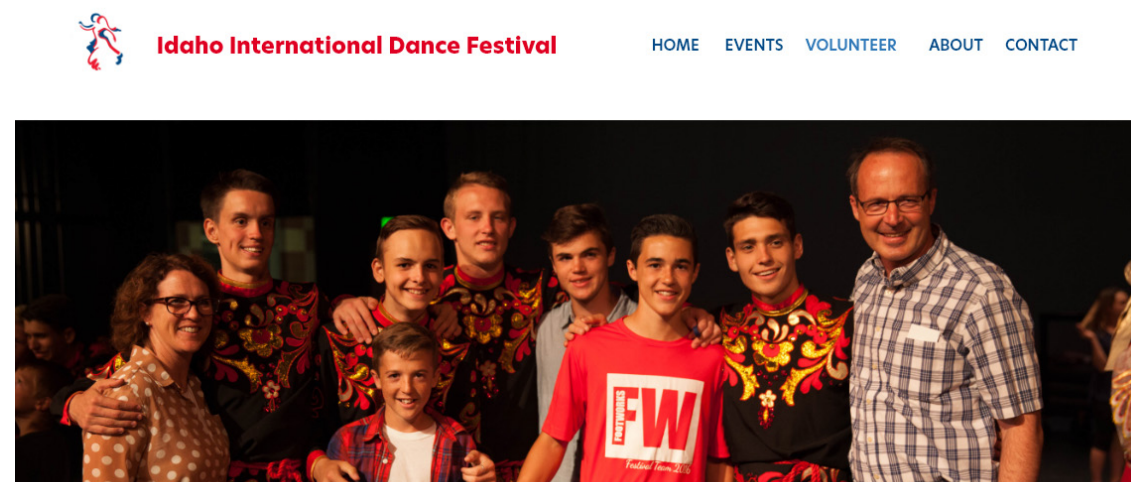
A site map was created which listed every page and subpage of the website, providing users with an easy to navigate directory of all the content found on the site.

4. Simplify the user experience

a. Well-organized volunteer webpage

The festival needs volunteers to succeed, so the website's volunteer page needed not only to be prominent, but easy to understand.

The page was designed with a clear breakdown of the three primary types of volunteers the festival was looking for.



Volunteer with Idaho International Dance Festival

The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!

Student Volunteers

BYU-Idaho students can be invaluable assets to the success of Idaho International Dance Festival. They can assist with contacting vendors, running booths,

Host Families

Host families are essential to the success of the festival! Families will take in several international performers and provide them with housing and meals for the week. They're given exclusive access to several festival events outside the general public.

Event Volunteers

Event volunteers of all ages can be hugely helpful in the Idaho International Dance Festival. They can assist with translation services, running booths,

b. Easy to use volunteer form

Lots of people want to volunteer but aren't sure how. Event organizers are busy enough that coordinating with countless volunteers can become a hassle.

A user friendly volunteer form makes it easy for people to sign up, and makes it easy for the event planners to organize the information quickly without losing track of their volunteers.

Start Volunteering Now

Contact Info

Name

Email

How are you interested in volunteering?

Student Volunteer Event Volunteer

Host Family Other

VOLUNTEER TODAY

5. Rank higher in searches

a. Research key words and search terms

Because no existing data on the websites traffic was accessible, new research needed to be conducted to see which search terms the festival should focus on ranking well in. This research involved looking at comparable dance festivals and comparable activities in southeast Idaho, and discovering what people searched for when searching for these things. Many key words like “culture” “international” “travel” “family-friendly” and “performances” were identified, as well as discovering the need to include geographic and seasonally relevant search terms like “Idaho” “Rexburg” “summer” and “July”.

b. Implement key words in titles, headings, meta data, URL slugs

The Wordpress plugin Yoast SEO allows for users to easily customize things like meta data, which is what search engines pull from to show search results. It also shows a rating of how effectively key words are used throughout the content of each web page. This plugin was used on each page to add relevant key words to the site’s content, including to headings, titles, and URLs.

6. Optimize images for search results

a. Descriptive image names

Image searches can be a huge source of traffic to any website, and can increase credibility for website rankings. Because images include no text, search engines rely on surrounding text to provide context clues. An effective way to quickly improve search rankings for images is to name each image file descriptively.



Georgian Dance Performers



Georgian Dancer Performing



Georgian Dancer Smiling



Georgian Dancer

b. Alt text

A second even more important way is by including alt text on each image, which provides a description to the web browser of the content. The images housed on the site weren’t named descriptively and included no alt text, so these descriptions were added to each image file on the site.

7. Plan relevant blog content

a. Plan 6 blog posts

To maintain or rise in search engine rankings, consistent new content is essential. Until the festival has solidified plans, a way to build engagement is through blog posts.

Using the key words that were researched, 6 potential blog post topics were selected that could drive interested traffic to the site:

- Summer activities in Rexburg
- History of performing arts in Idaho
- Photo opportunities for college students
- How to celebrate international holidays in Rexburg
- Learn about your family heritage in Idaho
- Family activities in southeast Idaho

This supplemental content isn't directly about the festival, but could

attract audiences who would be interested in the festival.

b. Plan a blog posting schedule

Consistent, regular posting is important to building credibility and climbing rankings on search engines. By posting once a month to begin with, they can begin measuring the effectiveness of these blog posts.

After seeing the response to these blog posts, they can craft additional blog posts centered around additional topics of relevance to their audience. Having a schedule for blog posts can also be incredibly helpful in maintaining traffic during off seasons.

Measurement + Maintenance

The website was integrated with Google Analytics, a tool that will enable the organization to receive detailed reports of website traffic and growth. This tool can be overwhelming and tracks more data than most organizations need in order to be successful, so they were given a checklist of things to check on their site each month.

Audience analysis:

Age
Gender
Interests
Location
Device

Acquisition:

Channel
Source
Landing Pages
Queries

Behavior:

Content traffic
Unique pageviews
Avg. time on page
Bounce rate

Appendix

The Budget

The site is built using free website development software. It's hosted on servers paid for by the Rexburg Chamber of Commerce, which covers the entire cost of the website.

There was no budget allotted to this project, but there were no costs associated with the website development beyond software subscriptions which were previously paid for. All plugins and web development tools used were completely free.

The Timeline

January - research / strategy

February - website design

March - SEO

April - Google Analytics training

The site is not yet live on the domain, besides the landing page. The festival organizers are planning to keep it offline until more plans are set in place for the 2022 festival.

However, these materials are set and ready to be implemented once the organizers make the decision. The communication director has also been trained on best practices for Google Analytics and Yoast SEO in order to maintain and measure site traffic.

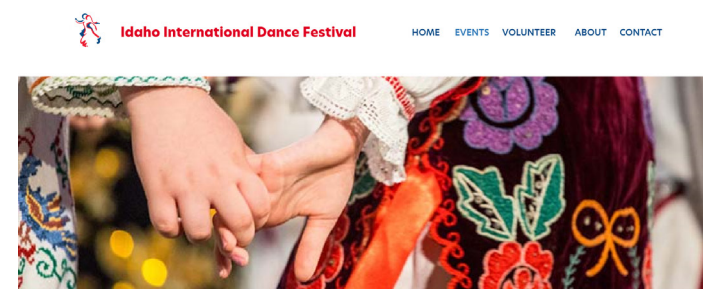
Additional Page Designs



Idaho International Dance Festival Schedule of Events

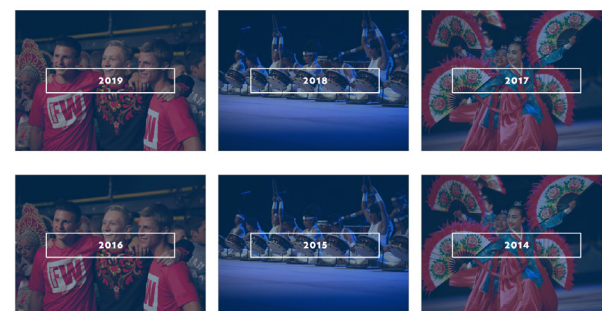
The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!

Wednesday 14 July 2021	Thursday 15 July 2021	Friday 16 July 2021	Saturday 17 July 2021
<p>Opening Concert 7pm Rexburg</p> <p>American Footworks presents a spectacular opening concert. The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!</p>	<p>Opening Concert 7pm Rexburg</p> <p>American Footworks presents a spectacular opening concert. The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!</p> <p>Opening Concert 7pm Rexburg</p> <p>American Footworks presents a spectacular opening concert. The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!</p>	<p>Opening Concert 7pm Rexburg</p> <p>American Footworks presents a spectacular opening concert. The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!</p> <p>Festival events include an opening concert held at the Rexburg Tabernacle, a social at Porter Park, an international dance party, community cultural dance workshops, and a gala performance held at DNU Idaho.</p> <p>Opening Concert 7pm Rexburg</p> <p>American Footworks presents a spectacular opening concert. The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!</p>	<p>Opening Concert 7pm Rexburg</p> <p>American Footworks presents a spectacular opening concert. The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!</p>

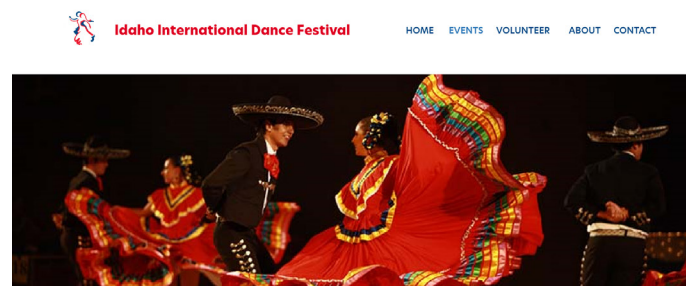


Idaho International Dance Festival Photo Gallery

The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!



View More >



The History Behind Idaho International Dance Festival

The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!

The 2021 Idaho International Dance Festival commences on July 14, launching a week of exciting events featuring dance troupes from six countries.

Dance groups from Colombia, Spain, Thailand, Georgia, France, and Paraguay will travel to Idaho for the summer event, staying with local host families during the weeklong event.



Festival events include an opening concert held at the Rexburg Tabernacle, a social at Porter Park, an international dance party, community cultural dance workshops, and a gala performance held at DNU Idaho. Plans for the 2020 festival were cancelled following the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the safety of the community and international travel.

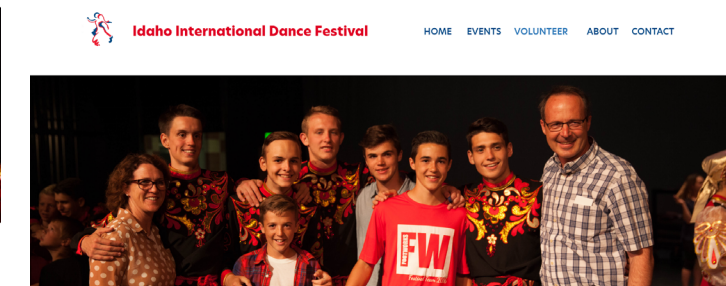
This year's festival will take additional precautions due to social distancing expectations, allowing a safe return of a time-honored event. These precautions include requiring masks from attendees, enforcing social distancing, and increasing sanitizing procedures.



The festival is run by a large team of volunteers each year, including event organizers, student interns, and host families. Event management are seeking additional volunteers to provide a safe experience by assisting with social distancing procedures.

The festival's return has been anxiously awaited by Rexburg communities members, and represents a return to the greater need to build lasting connections.

Idaho International Dance Festival is a weeklong event which takes place in Rexburg, Idaho each July. Dance troupes from over 70 countries have participated in the festival during its 30+ year history. International performers and local groups join together to entertain, inspire, and teach the community about exciting cultures around the world.



Volunteer with Idaho International Dance Festival

The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!

Student Volunteers



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Host Families



The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!

Event Volunteers



The Idaho International Dance Festival is making its long-awaited return to Rexburg in Summer 2021 the week of July 14-17! We're taking every safety precaution to make sure our event can move forward without a hitch!

Start Volunteering Now

Contact Info

Name

Email

How are you interested in volunteering?

Student Volunteer Event Volunteer

Host Family Other

VOLUNTEER TODAY

