



WORDPRESS

WordPress for Nonprofits Quick-Start Toolkit

A Resource Guide for
Building an Effective
Website at Minimal Costs

dot orgStrategy

WordPress Website Hosting

DreamHost

Rated as one of the top web hosting companies today, nonprofits can apply directly to DreamHost for free hosting worth upwards of \$120/yr.



SiteGround Managed WP Hosting

Although it doesn't offer a nonprofit discount, SiteGround's plans start at \$3.95/mo and offer free WordPress support, free SSL security, CloudFlare, and much more.



WordPress Nonprofit Themes

There are thousands and thousands of themes available for wordpress which provide design templates and extend functionality. While many of them are free, this is one area where we recommend spending a little bit of money to get a professional quality theme with ongoing customer support.

Here are our favorite themes to build nonprofit websites. They're all highly flexible and have great support from their authors, including regular functionality updates.

- **Enfold** – One of the most popular themes available, with a simple and powerful drag-and-drop builder. (dotOrg Strategy is built on Enfold, as are over 100,000 others). It's \$60 (lifetime) from ThemeForest
- **Kause** – Developed for nonprofits, as the name implies. \$64 (lifetime) from ThemeForest. *Note: this theme still functions very well, but seems to have stopped releasing new features.*
- **Divi from Elegant Themes** – Divi is more than just a theme, it's also a visual drag-and-drop pagebuilder, and a set of plugins with an entire ecosystem of support, tutorials, and extensions built around it. Elegant Themes reports that it has been purchased over 400,000 times. It's also much more expensive, at \$89/year or \$249 lifetime.

(Click on theme names to learn more about each.)

Plugins: Page Builders

Most paid themes today have drag-and-drop or other templated building systems. If you find a theme you love that doesn't have one (or want to stick with the one you have but make it easier to edit and update), there are several great plugins that make building pages incredibly easy.

- **SiteOrigin Page Builder** — The best free page-builder plugin (in our opinion). Paid addons are available (as “SiteOrigin Premium”) to extend functionality
- **Beaver Builder** — Another popular plugin, Beaver Builder Lite is free. Full versions cost \$99 and \$199.
- **Divi Builder** — From the same developers as the Divi theme, this page builder engine can work with any theme or website, and can even edit directly on the “front end” of your site (the final page your visitors see). Divi also lets you create templated elements that you can reuse throughout your site, and offers endless customizability. *(No free version available.)*
- **Visual Composer** — Claiming over 1.5 million users, Visual Composer has a large marketplace of addons created by their team and third-party developers, and comes as the included page builder for many popular themes. *(No free version available.)*

Plugins: Security

Just because you're a nonprofit, doesn't mean hackers will be deferential to your website. We've seen many great nonprofit sites hacked, defaced, and worse. Fortunately, there are free WordPress plugins to help protect you against attacks, and recover quickly if something does go wrong.

- **Sucuri** — Probably the most popular security system for WordPress, Sucuri will scan your site for potential vulnerabilities, get notified whenever someone tries to log in with the wrong password, and more.
- **Duplicator** — Things can and do go wrong. Whether your site gets hacked, your server goes down, a new update breaks an important feature, or someone on your team accidentally deleted your homepage...a good backup is an absolute must! There are plenty of options out there for backing up your site, and many hosting plans include periodic backups, but we love Duplicator for its ease of use and power. In a couple of clicks, you can create a complete backup of your website that you can restore in minutes, or move to a new host server without missing a beat!
- **Really Simple SSL** — These days, making sure that all traffic from your site to your visitor's computer is encrypted (and then decrypted in the browser) is a must. Especially if you have people entering sensitive information when donating, or getting in touch.
 - Secure Sockets Layer is the standard for providing that encryption security (addresses that use "https" instead of just "http"). You can get your security certificate from your hosting company, but to switch your site to automatically use https, no plugin we've found is as simple and effective as Really Simple SSL.

Note: Some hosting providers include extra security layers. [SiteGround](#), for example, will automatically lock out an IP address of anyone who tries to repeatedly access your admin area without proper credentials. They also provide free SSL certificates, while others charge as much as \$100/year.

Plugins: SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

There's no point in building a website if no one can find it, and that means it has to be optimized for Google and other search engines.

- **Yoast SEO** — This free plugin is incredibly useful in helping your website pages get found, and to control how they appear on Google, Facebook, Twitter and others. There are too many great features to list. Just install it and watch a few tutorial videos to get your site seen.
- **Simple 301 Redirect** — Whether you're moving to a new website, just moving a page or deleting one, a "301" redirect is an instruction to browsers and Google that's like a forwarding address for your mail. Without it, you get those infamous "404: Page not Found" errors. Your visitors don't like those, and neither does Google!

Plugins: Speed

Another factor in SEO and user experience as a whole, is how long it takes for your site to load. Attention spans are low, and Google knows it, so they give preference to fast-loading sites in search results. These plugins help make sure your page loads quickly:

- **JetPack Photon** — This free plugin from the makers of WordPress is full of features that expand functionality. Some are more useful than others. Photon helps your pages load faster—and takes the burden off of your server—by using a fast CDN (Content Distribution Network) to host and deliver your images to users.
- **WP Fastest Cache** — There are several popular caching and optimization plugins out there. They all work in similar ways to reduce the time that your server takes to render a page and send it to the site visitor. WPFC is our favorite for its features, ease of setup and performance.

Plugins: Social Sharing

A critical factor in increasing word of mouth is how and when you ask people to share your content, and how easy it is for them to do it. Here are our favorite plugins to extend social sharing functionality:

- **JetPack** — Another feature of this free plugin from the makers of WordPress, JetPack adds sharing buttons to blog posts and other areas, keeps count of how many times things were shared, and more.
- **AddThis** — One of the original sharing toolsets, AddThis created a plugin for WordPress that looks good and works well, with built-in analytics to track results.
- **Monarch** — Another plugin from the makers of Divi. Monarch integrates easily with your content and gives you multiple options of where and when those share requests appear — as popups, fly-ins, inside your blog posts, on the side of your window, over your images, etc.

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