Build your Brand with a Nonprofit Branding Guide

Getting started: Here are some basic components to consider including when you're getting a brand guide started. More elements—for example, your brand's typography or your brand strategy (communications goals and audiences, brand positioning, and brand personality)—can be added and expanded for your organization depending on your needs. Make sure you stay on track with a personalized checklist.

Logo

- ☐ Formats for digital and print
- ☐ Color variations (grayscale, knockout, full-color)
- ☐ Minimum size, clear space
- ☐ Do's and Don'ts

Colors

- ☐ Primary and secondary colors
- ☐ Color values for web and print (at a minimum, include hex values and CMYK values)
- ☐ Rules for color use, hierarchy, accessible color combinations

Messaging

- ☐ Mission and vision statements
- ☐ About us/origin story
- ☐ Name and tagline
- ☐ Elevator pitch
- ☐ Stories/testimonials

Visuals

- ☐ Branded photo treatments
- ☐ Graphic devices like icons or illustrations
- ☐ Stock or other photo resources that are approved and on brand
- ☐ Guidelines for using images/video

Updating your assets

Next step: Conduct an audit of all your internal and external materials to ensure they use your logo, colors, messaging, and visual guidelines correctly. Here's an initial checklist:

- ☐ Website
- ☐ Donation Form
- ☐ Google Business Account
- ☐ Social Media Accounts
- ☐ Email Signatures
- ☐ Email Templates
- ☐ Letter Templates
- ☐ Deck/powerpoint Templates

Resources to get you started!

Building your brand guide:

- ☐ Canva for nonprofits — Free design tool made with nonprofits in mind: create high-impact social media graphics and marketing materials
- ☐ Frontify — Online, easy to use brand management platform (tool to create a brand guide), free for the most basic level

Selecting and using color:

- ☐ Color by Fardos — Chrome browser extension that allows you to pick colors from websites, save colors & gradients, and more
- ☐ Coolors — Tool that allows you to generate color palettes and be inspired by color palettes that are trending
- ☐ Use all five — Shows how ADA compliant colors are in relation to each other and allows you to find similar colors that work better

Messaging and writing tools:

- ☐ Hemingway editor — Tool that evaluates passages of text and identifies reading level, and then suggests ways to simplify anything that's overly complex
- ☐ Baynard guidelines — Free UX research and tools, including helpful information on text readability and accessibility

Image use and visual storytelling:

- ☐ Stock photo and video resources — Blog from Big Duck discussing ethical representation in brands, including a list of stock photo and video resources that are ethically sourced, inclusive, and with a wide range of identities

Additional articles and resources on brand guides and brand:

- ☐ Unlocking Brand Solutions for Nonprofit Organizations [Big Duck + Frontify case study]
- ☐ Should we digitize our brand guide? [Big Duck podcast]
- ☐ Three Ways to Start Democratizing your Brand [Big Duck blog]