

### THE PROBLEM

The Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Small Business is seeking to create a new online presence that allows for small businesses in Boston to acquire the information to start a business and obtain the correct permits, licenses, and other vital information to operate.

- Every industry within Boston has a separate set of complex regulations that businesses need to adhere to operate within the city.
- The current website is inaccessible to new business owners and fails to provide a concise guide to starting a business within the city.

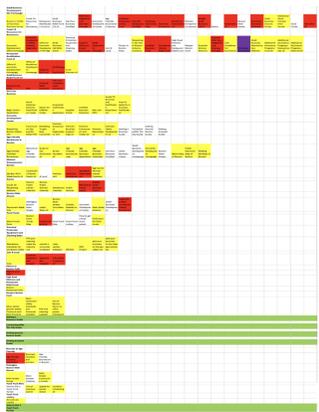
### BACKGROUND

#### Importance:

- A clear website helps cut down on direct support the office needs to give for routine information
- Level the playing field by allowing equal access to information in a clear guide

#### Goals:

- To increase clarity and efficacy of small business guides on the office's website
- To drive traffic to the office's website
- To expand tools and resources for struggling small businesses after the COVID-19 pandemic



**Figure 1. Mapping of Original Site**

In this map, each cell represents a link from the previous page. Yellow cells denote external pages; red cells denote terminal pages; green cells represent terminal pages that have high-quality information.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Literature and Resources Review

We began this process by conducting a thorough literature and resource review of the necessary steps it takes to open a business in the city of Boston, and the resources that exist for small business owners, not only through this process but also in regard to how to succeed once a business has begun, and how to survive in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

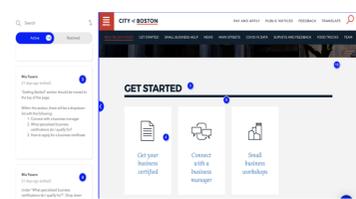
#### User Experience Redesign



**Figure 2. Idealized User Navigation Flow**

The above image is the idealized navigation model that we created for the website. We designed the navigation to be very linear, with a very limited number of paths and destinations, and very few destinations have more than one path to get there. Furthermore, each level – from left to right – represents one click, and so any destination is only three or fewer clicks away from the homepage (the large blue origin at the left of the diagram). We designed this intentionally to foster equitably accessible information and minimal user navigation confusion.

#### MarkUp and Content Update



**Figure 3. Markup Page Commenting** This image is a screen capture from the Markup interface we used to write new and updated content for the site. In this image four recommendation locations are pinpointed on the page, and the comments that explain each of the recommendations are located in the floating sidebar on the left-hand side of the screen.

#### Small Business Consultation Focus Group

After conducting our background research and producing the recommendations and changes that we made for the website using the tools discussed above, we conducted a small focus group of small business owners. This focus group had a dual purpose: for the focus group members to conduct a brief audit of the site for us to check our work and to make sure that we had accounted for any alterations that the site needed to fulfill our project goals, and for the group to assess the recommendations we had made and the tools with which we were making them.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK AND SITE MAINTENANCE

#### 1. Analytics tracking and audience assessment

We recommend utilizing Google Analytics or a similar analytics platform to define which pages receive the most hits to divert attention to popular pages that receive attention.

#### 2. Semi-annual audit of web pages

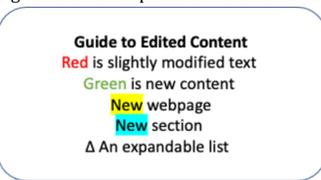
In order to maintain a current and accurate website, it is important that the office conducts an audit of the website through an internal review process. An internal review process allows for upkeep of the website to ensure that it is a reliable method to advertise upcoming programs and announcements and offers information about COVID-19 relief programs in a timely manner.

#### 3. Develop a plan for reaching more small business owners through public outreach

The website provides information that increases equity for small business owners and the next step is to communicate these changes by advertising the website itself. Our last recommendation proposes avenues to drive awareness to the website itself. It is the most potentially costly of the recommendations and requires a thoughtful plan on the areas and populations where additional outreach is necessary.

### IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

We ensured that Isabel Garcia, the Fellow working with the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Small Businesses, would be able to implement the recommendations that we made after we left the project in her hands. To accomplish this, we created a series of tools that correspond with one another and in total create an instructional guide for the implementation of our recommendations. This instructional guide was shared with the Office both in our final report and in a Google Folder as original files.



Furthermore, in order to ensure full comfort in the hand-off between our group and the office, we also held a series of virtual working sessions in order to address any areas that lacked clarity or created confusion for Isabel in the implementation of our recommendations.

**Figure 4. Implementation Guide Legend** This image is the legend that accompanied our implementation guides delivered to the Office to delineate between content that was slightly modified or completely new, as well as new recommended pages, sections, and expandable lists or menus.