



## REQUEST FOR GRAND RAPIDS EDA ACTION

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**AGENDA DATE:** March 14, 2024

**STATEMENT OF ISSUE:** Discuss GREDA website update

**PREPARED BY:** Rob Mattei, Executive Director

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### **BACKGROUND:**

A project to comprehensively update GREDA's website has been a carry-over task on the Work Plan for three years. The current website, which was designed and launched in 2011, utilizes an open-source content management system that requires staff resources to become proficient with it and make edits and updates to the site's content, which has fallen behind over the years.

Other deficiencies with the current site include:

- Current site isn't Search Engine Optimized
- Main landing page is extremely text heavy
- Current site has broken and/or expired links
- Current site isn't a responsive design, so it doesn't adjust to mobile device screen sizes
- Current site is very slow to load some pages
- No social media integration (this really hurts your search engine rankings)
- Site is hosted on an outdated platform which is a security risk as well as making it difficult to update and integrate 3rd party tools.

Prior to developing the site in 2011, GREDA considered their limited budget for marketing and considered a website as the most cost-effective/impactful approach. This was informed by a review of a periodically updated publication of *Winning Strategies in Economic Development Marketing, A View from Corporate America*, (2023 version attached). The publication is study is based upon a survey of corporate executives, and site advisors with location decision responsibilities about how they gather information about potential sites and what information is most important to them.

To initiate the process of updating/modernizing the site, staff has reviewed several EDO websites designed and managed by Golden Shovel Agency. We've met with Golden Shovel regarding our project and they have provided the attached proposal, which we'd like to discuss with the Board for input/reaction.

## BEST MARKETING TECHNIQUES FROM THE CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE

DCI asks respondents to gauge the effectiveness of 10 conventional marketing techniques used by economic development groups. Until 2020, respondents rated eight techniques (*advertising, direct mail, internet/website, media relations/publicity, hosting special events, planned visits to corporate executives, trade shows and telemarketing*). In 2020, again to reflect new trends and opportunities, DCI adapted this list and added *E-newsletters/E-marketing* and *social media*. Additionally, *telemarketing* was changed to *telephone outreach* and *direct mail* was changed to *physical mail*. Respondents were asked to rate each technique on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Chart C shows the percentage of respondents who provided a score of “4” or “5” on the rating scale for each technique.

For the fourth time, having an *internet/website* presence rates as the most-effective marketing technique, followed by *planned visits to corporate executives*. *Media relations/publicity* and *hosting special events* tied for third just as they did in 2017 and 2020.

Despite being on the list for the first time in 2020, *social media* was considered to be a highly effective marketing technique—and rising in importance—by 51 percent of respondents, a 5 percent increase over 2020 results.

The perceived value of having a well-designed internet/website presence is at the highest rate recorded with 76 percent of respondents seeing

CHART C: MOST-EFFECTIVE MARKETING TECHNIQUES  
(percentage rating 4 or 5 on a five-point scale)

