

THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

# Designing a Site that Closes Knowledge Gaps for Education Nonprofit

A national philanthropy dedicated to strengthening education leadership and enrichment for disadvantaged communities, The Wallace Foundation is a leader in research that helps improve education practices and outcomes. Unfortunately, their confusing, content-heavy website failed to engage audiences, undermining the foundation's efforts. Wallace asked Constructive to develop a digital strategy and create a resource-rich knowledge hub to strengthen the field and support their grantees.

Issue Area

Education & The Arts  
Foundations & Philanthropy

What We Did

Content  
Design  
Digital

## Research & Digital Strategy

### What do we need to learn first?

A culture of research and deliberate thinking is core throughout The Wallace Foundation. For their website, this meant putting significant effort into uncovering the insights needed to serve both the foundation's needs and those of a diverse audience of grantees, research experts, policymakers, the K-12 education field, and other NGOs. Alongside a detailed audit of Wallace's existing site and content, we engaged their experts to learn about strategic goals, pain points, editorial process, and publishing workflows. An in-depth analysis of other relevant sites followed, providing food for thought on potential features, functionality, and best practices.



Learned from real users  
Determine common user goals and frustrations associated with the old website.



Research into related websites  
to help inform strategic planning for functionality, content, and design.



## User Research & Testing

### What do educators really need?

While our research clarified Wallace's goals and our collective ideas on how to best achieve them, it was still important to make sure our assumptions aligned with the expectations of real users. We performed rigorous user research & testing—conducting surveys, interviews, card-sorting exercises, and user case tests that gave everyone perspective into how their audience felt Wallace's website would be most useful. We then used these insights to create detailed user personas and recommendations to drive the user experience design process.

User Case Testing

Quickly communicate research findings and serve as a guide for UI design

User Case Interviews

Find much value in exploring peripheral information and related reports

User Case Interviews

Very sensitive to labeling and naming, so to reflect their experience so clearly

User Case Interviews

Tried to click and read link, download a report, and find goal in a quick visit



## Before Redesign

### A website that was old before its time.

While only 3 years old, Wallace's website left the impression of one much older. Numerous usability and accessibility issues made finding content difficult. Visually, the site felt generic and was hard to read, undermining Wallace's leadership. And ineffective use of imagery failed to engage audiences or connect Wallace's work to the realities of education working in the field and to the importance of the issues they face.



## Content & Information Architecture

### How can best balance mission, issues, and resources?

A key lesson in restructuring Wallace's website was prioritizing quickly delivering valuable resources to experts while providing the content needed to educate newer audiences on the issues and the foundation's approach. First, our content strategy detailed site-wide recommendations, down to the page level, on how to improve content to align Wallace's and their audience's needs. We then designed and tested a system of over 25 page templates with the structure and functionality needed to support delivering Wallace's wide variety of content.



## Website Design

### How can best balance mission, issues, and resources?

With delivery of research reports, tools, and other content a priority, our design strategy prioritized making content readable, then presented it ways that make it more engaging to read. Clean layouts, minimalist interfaces, and a system of icons and labels provide a fast, structured experience. Editorial design techniques and typographic hierarchies create scannable pages that surface findings, insights, and top-level takeaways. And calls-to-action connect downloads of Wallace's research reports—a key measure of success.



*The Wallace Foundation's new website helps catalyze change in the K-12 education sector by making valuable research more accessible, surfacing key insights, and empowering teachers and school leaders.*



## Knowledge Center

### Can we make it even faster for experts to find resources?

With research and resources being the star of the show on The Wallace Foundation's website, a key focus of our digital strategy was to create an online knowledge center that allowed for keyword-general searches. Along with standard search, users can easily browse by any combination of category, sub-category, and content type—and further refine their search by publication date. We then collaborated with the Wallace's SharePoint development partner to make sure that the public-facing website would elegantly integrate with both the foundation's existing knowledge management system and CMS that would drive the user experience.

