

Case Study



A New York state of mind.

Blue State Digital and The City of New York team up to deliver cost-effective and informative online resources fit for New Yorkers.

Industry
Government

Sites
[Growing Up NYC](#)
[Generation NYC](#)
[We Speak NYC](#)
[ACCESS NYC](#)

Challenge
Provide New York City residents with informative, easy-to-use online tools to increase awareness and education for government benefit programs

Solution
The City of New York, together with its agency of record, tapped WP Engine to help build three multilingual platforms designed to help New Yorkers find the right programs and services

Results
Significant increase in the number of New York City residents using online tools to see if they are eligible for government benefits

Blue State Digital is a purpose-driven, full-service digital agency that specializes in online fundraising, advocacy, social networking, and constituency development. As pioneers in the use of digital to open up the democratic process, Blue State Digital aims to create breakthrough digital experiences that create real impact for real people. Using data, design, and the right technology, they design meaningful and frictionless interactions that help motivate and empower users.



The challenge.

NYC Opportunity and Blue State Digital wanted to conquer a city-wide problem plaguing many New Yorkers: city residents have difficulty discovering which government benefit programs they qualify for and which social services are right for them. New York City residents needed online resources that were informative, accessible and easy-to-use and Blue State Digital needed to build cost-effective public tools that were capable of scaling and being maintained on an ongoing basis.



The strategy.

In order to create a simplified, pleasant user-experience based on the existing 340 unique nyc.gov websites, Blue State Digital led extensive user-centered design processes resulting in three platforms: Growing Up NYC, ACCESS NYC, and We Speak NYC (a new platform evolved from its previous identity, We Are New York). These tools highlight the benefits they're providing rather than forcing the user to navigate a constellation of city agency websites.

As part of the agile process for Growing Up NYC, Blue State Digital tested designs with city residents as the project was being developed. Blue State Digital staff went where the target users were — libraries — and recruited testers on the spot to try out

“The fact that we could keep both a staging and a production environment going simultaneously let us test out different improvements with the client and then promote them easily. The support chat integrated into the WP Engine console made it easy for our devs to get support with both trivial and complex setup, installation and configuration tasks.”

Sam Zimmerman,
VP of Global Project Management,
Blue State Digital

prototypes with the latest iterations of copy and design. Volunteers could respond to how the tools felt and behaved. Members from design, UX, tech, and product (from both the city and Blue State Digital) were present for this testing so the full team could observe, learn firsthand and iterate quickly using the information gleaned.



The solution.

Blue State Digital and NYC Opportunity built three multilingual platforms, Growing Up NYC, ACCESS NYC, and We Speak NYC, designed to help New Yorkers more easily find the right programs and services for them — on any device. Growing Up NYC provides a single digital portal for parents and caregivers to discover and learn more about events and resources provided by multiple NYC agencies. A sister site, Generation NYC, delivers similar resources directly to young adults.

ACCESS NYC functions as a public online screening platform in which residents answer a brief set of questions to discover whether they're eligible for food, money, housing, or work benefit programs and provides a personalized set of services based on the results. We Speak NYC serves as an online learning platform where New Yorkers of all backgrounds can learn and practice English for free via Emmy-Award winning videos coordinated with online courses. All three platforms are accessible, secure, and easy-to-use — both for city residents and for the government workers who will maintain them for years to come. Their work included:

- A user-centered and agile design process with extensive testing, including onsite trials at the New York Public Library to make sure the platforms were straightforward, easy to use, and relevant to the target audience
- Leveraging the [NYC Digital Playbook](#) that outlines the City of New York's intentions for how residents experience city services
- Replatforming of ACCESS NYC and Growing Up NYC onto WP Engine with additional applications served from AWS — the first time the city has used cloud hosting. This required working with the city's strict technical requirements on everything from setup, to security, to new maintenance protocols
- Implementation of a sophisticated rules engine and a user-friendly admin interface that enables the city to more easily update the screening tool for ACCESS NYC based on criteria that tend to change frequently
- A multilingual solution for up to 10 languages, including Urdu and Arabic, to accommodate the millions of non-english speaking New Yorkers

To accomplish such an enormous task, Blue State Digital harnessed the capabilities of WP Engine's digital experience platform. “WP Engine's hosting and deployment tools were straightforward enough that we could just worry about building the site itself with less concerns about infrastructure setup, scaling etc,” Zimmerman said.



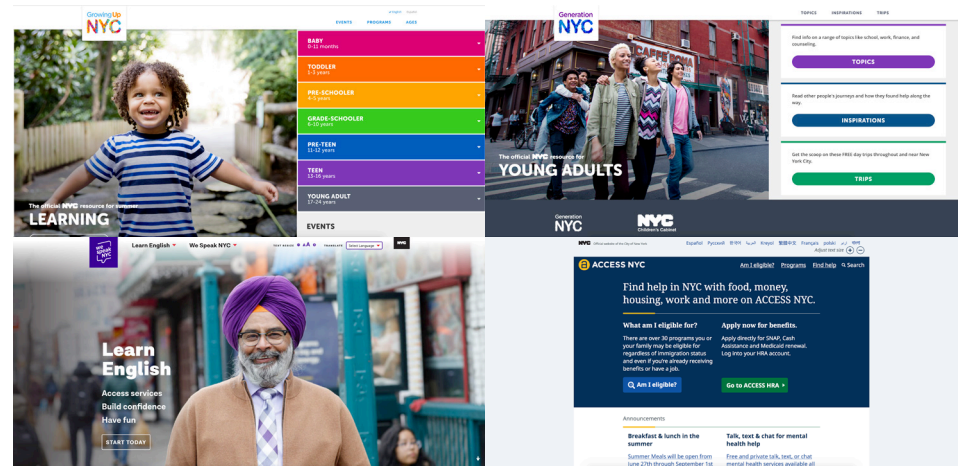
The results.

ACCESS NYC and Growing Up NYC have received a seal of approval from New Yorkers; residents are able to easily find resources for the programs, services, and benefits

Case Study

they need. These platforms were designed to accommodate future integrations and enhancements, and replatforming these services to AWS will save the city money in the long run by lowering external costs and internal maintenance resources.

Since the launch of the ACCESS NYC redesign, the total number of New Yorkers completing the eligibility screening process per month has increased more than 70%, from 5,000 to 8,600 on average, and the rate of completion has increased from 44% to 67%.



Additionally, these platforms have won two awards. ACCESS NYC won “Best Application Serving The Public” at The New York Digital Government Summit, and Growing Up NYC won “Best External Application” at The NYC Technology Forum.

Although Blue State Digital has only just recently released the first iteration of We Speak NYC, the new platform is a dramatic departure from its former iteration. Through a user-centric process, the website has modernized from both a functionality and aesthetic perspective. Today, the site serves as an approachable and fun resource for New Yorkers who want to learn English, with sophisticated learning tools scheduled to launch later in 2018.

About WP Engine.

WP Engine is the world’s leading WordPress digital experience platform that gives companies of all sizes the agility, performance, intelligence, and integrations they need to drive their business forward faster. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas, and has offices in San Francisco, California; San Antonio, Texas; London, England; Limerick, Ireland, and Brisbane, Australia.