

Ways to save on digital infrastructure, for nonprofits

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About Me



I'm Aaron Yeager (he/him), [a freelance business consultant](#) and activist. Some highlights about me...

- Natural born writer
 - Aunt graduated from Iowa Writer's Workshop, grandfather did copywriting for Firestone, and grandmother taught English
 - Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Ohio University
- [Worked in Digital Marketing Operations](#) for nine years, at companies in New York City, like JPMorgan Chase & Co.
- Own my own business, helping companies and nonprofits with grantwriting, business filings, web design, [and more](#)
 - Have raised more than \$236,000, for various organizations, with a 67 percent grant application success rate
- [Ardent activist](#), advocating for racial justice, mental health awareness, and housing rights, especially from an economically restorative lens

Activism

Led a rent strike, while living in Harlem, in 2019.

- Cooking gas went out in May of that year
- Landlord kept promising to turn it back on, but didn't 🙄
- Started a tenants' association with my neighbors, won against the landlord in court, and **saved each participant more than \$20,000**
- Because of it...
 - The *New York Daily News* [did an article on us](#) (see left)
 - One neighbor was actually able to move to Hawaii



Activism (cont.)



- [Through a nonprofit I cofounded](#), I helped raise more than \$30,000 for the family of Jayland Walker, who was a Black man brutally killed by the Akron Police last year.
- Pictured left to right is myself; Jayland's cousin, Pastor Robert DeJournett; Jayland's sister, Jada Walker; and Steve Arrington, Executive Director of [Akron AIDS Collaborative](#), at the [Bayard Rustin LGBTQ+ Resource Center](#), in July of 2022.

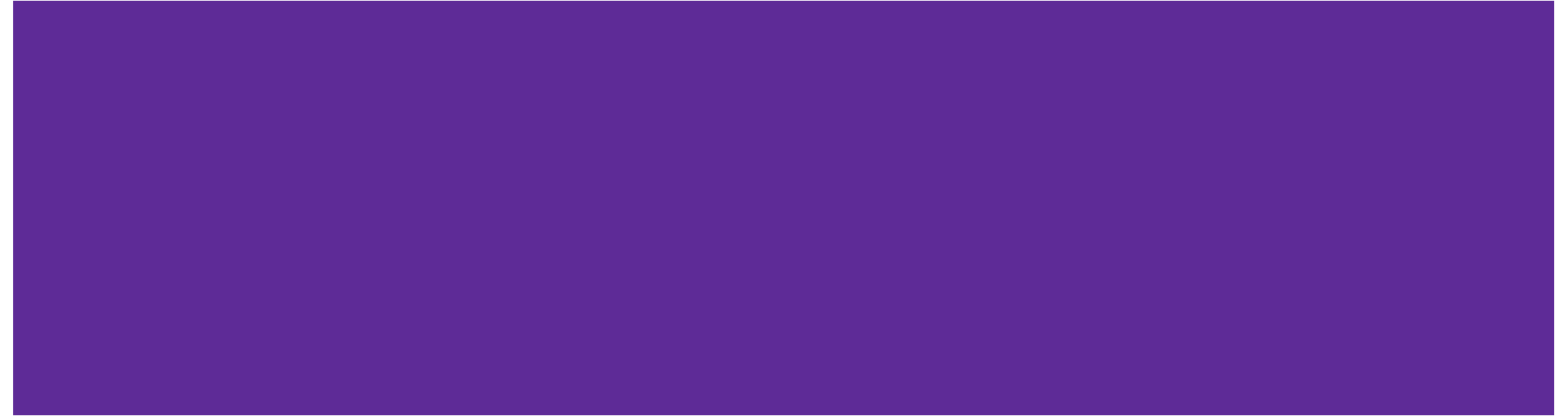
Activism (cont. cont.)



Worked as Director of Operations for [Akron AIDS Collaborative](#), an organization that serves Black LGBTQ+ youth, in 2021 and 2022.

- Last year, they opened [a Black-led, Afrocentric LGBTQ+ center](#) — **one of only two in the nation** — in Akron
- For 23 years, their average budget was \$1,000 a year — last year, I helped them bring in nearly \$400,000

Building a website

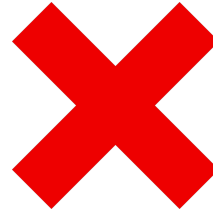


Two paths...

1. Pay a web designer to build your website, and host it on a cheap platform.



- Looks professional, which will appeal to funders
- Saves you a lot of time



- Could cost anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars

If you go with Path #1, I recommend...

[Namecheap](#) for domain and web hosting, and WordPress for the website itself (costs ~\$75/year).

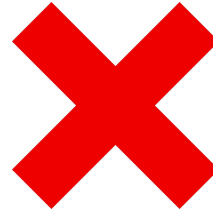
- Very cheap and reliable hosting
- Difficult to setup, but that's why you're paying someone

Two paths... (cont.)

2. Build your website yourself, and host it on a more expensive platform, that's easier to use.



- Saves hundreds, if not thousands of dollars



- Might look unprofessional, at least at first

If you go with Path #2, I recommend...

Squarespace for the domain and website (\$192/year).

- Easy to use, looks professional, and is reliable
- Better than Wix and other competitors

Best practices for domains

1. Choose something short, memorable, and easy to type — it doesn't have to be the full name of your nonprofit!
 - a. For example, the website for a nonprofit I cofounded, Stow Collaboration for Change, is sc4c.org.
2. Make sure your domain is a .org!
 - a. You can also buy the .com version, and redirect it to the .org, in case people mistakenly type in the .com version.

Branding

- Make sure you use the same colors and fonts throughout your website, and write down the hex codes for your brand colors
 - To take it one step further, document all of these things in a branding guide/cheat sheet!

Pages to include on your site

1. [Home page](#)
 - a. Make this simple and clean.
2. [Blog](#)
 - a. Every website should have one — it's great for SEO, and social media marketing. Also, [consider adapting your annual report to a blog post](#), to make it easier to read!
3. [About Us](#)
 - a. Put profiles of your team members, as well as your mission statement, and an overview of your programming.
 - b. If someone still has no idea what you do, after reading this page, you have a problem (yes, this does happen).
 - c. PLEASE add staff members' email addresses and phone numbers to this page — it helps more than you'd think!
4. [Contact Us](#)
 - a. Again, the simpler the better — if you'd just prefer that people email you, you can make this a “mailto:” link (e.g., <mailto:email@website.org>).
 - b. Make sure you add a “tel:” link for your phone number (e.g., <tel:3302353439> — you can even ask people to text your org, using an “sms:” link, and it'll automatically open their texting app! 📱 (e.g., <sms:3302353439>))
5. [DONATIONS!](#)
 - a. Make sure this is prominent in your website's navigation — you can even change the background of the link, if possible, to make it stand out.

Other things to keep in mind

1. Make sure your website complies with [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) standards](#).
 - a. For example, use black text on a white background.
 - i. I recently learned this, which surprised me, as a dark mode fan!
2. Do as much SEO as you can.
 - a. Make sure every page and post has a meta title, meta description, keywords, and social sharing image, at a minimum.
 - i. And make sure your social sharing images are the correct size! I recommend using Facebook's 1,200 x 630 pixel recommendation.
 - b. Add alt text and titles for images!
3. Last, but not least...
 - a. MAKE LINKS TO EXTERNAL WEBSITES, EMAIL ADDRESSES, AND PDFs OPEN IN A NEW WINDOW!!!

Building digital infrastructure



Digital freebies and discounts

1. If you haven't taken advantage of [free Google Workspace](#), please do! It's amazing!
 - a. You can also get free premium versions of [Slack](#) and [Canva](#), and [\\$10,000 worth of Google Ads, each month!](#)
2. To get all of these, [sign up on TechSoup](#), and validate your 501(c)(3) status.
 - a. The process takes about two weeks.
 - i. Oddly enough, you need to take a picture of the original copy of your 501(c)(3) determination letter — if you don't have that, you may have to request a Letter of Affirmation from the IRS, to validate.
3. Also, [register as a tax-exempt organization on Amazon](#), and you won't have to pay sales tax!

Payments and bookkeeping

1. [I recommend Square](#) for taking donations, and other forms of payments.
 - a. Make sure to get your free card reader! It's helpful for collecting donations at fundraising events, where people may not carry cash.
 - b. [It also has payroll](#), which is \$6 a month per contractor (costs more if they're full-time employees).
 - c. You can do [SMS and email marketing](#), as well.
 - i. I highly recommend SMS as your primary form of marketing — nobody reads their emails, but some of us — 😊 — read our texts.
2. I highly, highly recommend [Hurdlr, for bookkeeping](#). It's extremely easy to use, especially compared to QuickBooks.
 - a. It's also free, if you log transactions manually.
 - b. It auto-generates your tax form, if you pay to use the premium version for one month (\$10).
 - c. You can also add transactions in bulk, and link your account to Square, if you pay for premium.

Email, telephone, and fax

1. If you're *just* starting up as a nonprofit, I recommend creating a general Gmail account for it, until you can get professional email addresses.
 - a. For example: stowcollab@gmail.com.
 - b. You can also forward professional email addresses to personal ones, if you don't have Google Workspace yet.
 - i. For example, if you email aaron@sc4c.org, it forwards to aaron@aaronyeager.com (we're cheap).
2. [You can use Google Voice](#) through that general email account, as a free business phone number.
 - a. Make sure you get a memorable phone number, with your city's area code!
3. If you need a fax number, there are websites that allow you to fax and receive documents, right to your email, such as [SRFax.com](https://www.srfax.com), and [eFax.com](https://www.efax.com).
 - a. The IRS only corresponds via snail mail and fax, so this comes in handy.
 - b. I used to sign up for a free trial on eFax, make a fax, then cancel the trial a month later 😞

GuideStar

- [GuideStar](#) is a database of U.S.-based nonprofits.
- Funders often reference it when deciding who to award grants to.
- Therefore, it'd behoove you to fill out your nonprofit's profile on there.

However...

It's difficult to claim your profile.

- First, you have to be listed in the IRS' own database of nonprofits, Publication 78.
- Second, you have to provide proof that you manage the nonprofit — that means documents such as an EIN Assignment Letter or a Letter of Affirmation.
 - If you don't have either, don't worry — you just need to call the IRS, and ask them to mail you one of them.

GuideStar (cont.)

Once you claim your profile, try to flesh it out at least to the point where you earn a Silver Badge of Transparency.

- This takes an hour, max — you just copy and paste info from your website, such as your mission statement, an overview of your services, etc.

Google Workspace

1. Create a standard email signature for your organization — preferably with your GuideStar badge on it!
 - a. Also, please include your pronouns!
 - b. Make sure any images are linked to their respective websites.
 - c. As an example, here's the signature I use for Akron AIDS Collaborative:

Aaron Yeager (he/him)

Consultant

[Akron AIDS Collaborative](#)

652 W. Exchange St.

Akron, OH 44302

(330) 235-3439



Google Workspace (cont.)

2. I typically create an “admin@nonprofit.org” account, and a “development@nonprofit.org” account, with “grants,” “donations,” and “sponsorships” as aliases.
 - a. You can go into Gmail’s settings, and auto-forward emails that go to those accounts, so that your management is able to see what’s going on.
 - b. So, for example, let’s say I applied for a grant from the Akron Community Foundation — I’d register in their website using “grants@nonprofit.org,” and then any communications auto-forward to me, the Executive Director, and the Director of Operations, automatically.

Documents

Organization is key, even for a small nonprofit! You need to keep track of, and reuse, a lot of documents.

- a. I recommend creating a shared Google Drive, then housing documents in a logical folder structure — e.g., “Administration,” “Personnel,” “Legal,” “Finance”
 - i. Make sure you control which folders are shared with whom, though!
- b. Create bylaws, ASAP!
 - i. I suggest using Google Docs, since it keeps a version history, and allows for collaboration.
- c. Use a unified naming structure for documents.
 - i. For example, something like: “SC4C — Invoice — January 12, 2022 — Grantham Lawn Care and Design LLC — \$309.58.pdf”

Meetings

1. Use Google Meet, instead of Zoom! It's included with Google Workspace, and it doesn't have a time limit on meetings, though you can't record them unless you upgrade.
2. Make sure you have a monthly, recurring board meeting on the calendar — sounds basic, but you'd be surprised.
 - a. I suggest using Google Docs for your meeting minutes! That way, you can share your screen during meetings, edit the document in real time, and invite others to edit and make comments as needed.

Questions?

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Thank you!

