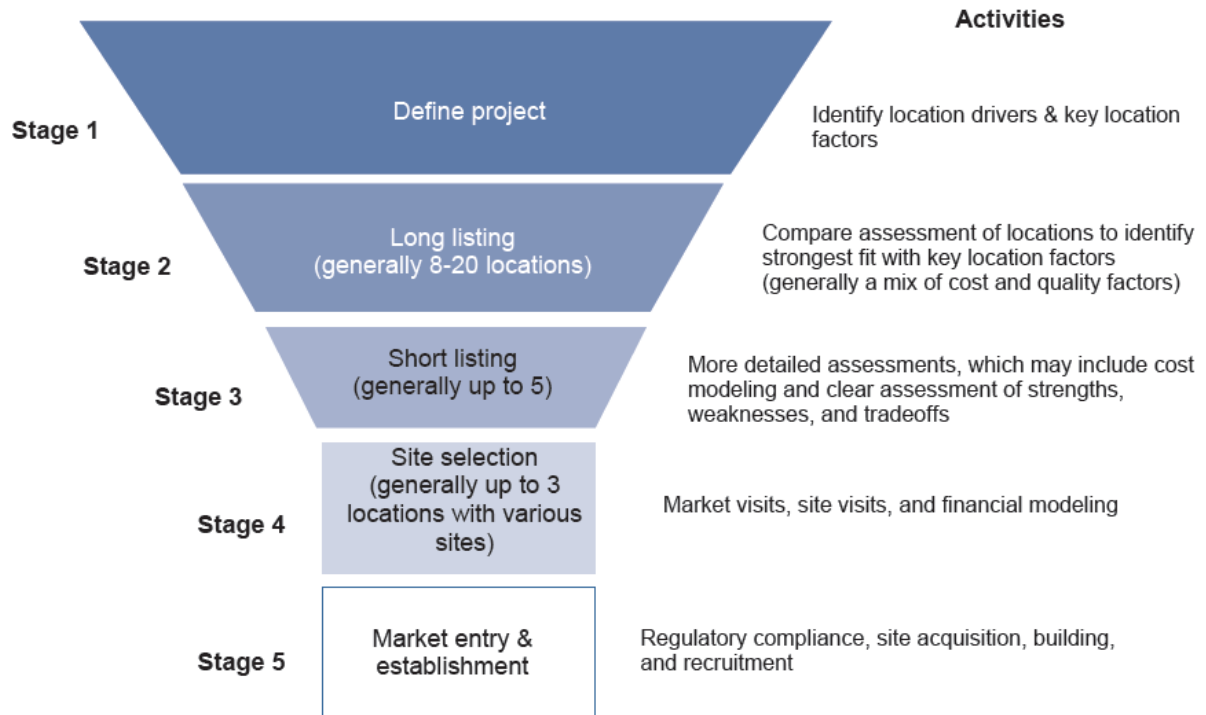


Web site hints and tips

The investor's process for selecting an FDI project location



This year's IPA Performance Review focused on the information provided to investors during Stage 2 of the site selection process, in which investors compile a "long list" of potential locations to research in further detail.

At the long-listing stage of an investment project, high-level comparisons of locations are made in order to exclude sub-optimal locations and identify those locations with the strongest potential. At this stage, investors or their advisors will conduct research in-house using various databases and the Internet, which means the information provided through IPA Web sites is critical.

MIGA's approach to best-practice Web site development and maintenance is derived from a variety of studies in usability analysis. MIGA has adapted assessment areas that can be applied across all business sectors to the investment promotion context.

Below are recommendations and suggestions on how to improve overall Web site presentation for the purposes of foreign direct investment promotion.

Box - Characteristics of best-practice Web sites

Information architecture

Quick downloads. Acceptable Web site download times are getting shorter, as users have faster connections. Investors or their agents will not wait for slow downloads before moving on to the next Web site.

Guaranteed uptime. Web site owners (IPAs) can and should demand 100 percent uptime from their Internet service providers.

Worldwide accessibility. IPAs should test their sites on different Internet browsers and different platforms. They should invite users to contact them if they have trouble viewing pages.

Hierarchical organization of information. Information should be grouped according to key location factors or business interests, such as economic overview, priority sectors, operating costs and infrastructure availability.

Finding home. Navigational bars on each Web page should allow users to click back to familiar territory. For example: home, about us, contact us, or site map.

Tips for improvement

- How easy to navigate is your Web site? Does it have good functionality, meaning that all links operate and images appear in the appropriate way on the site?
- Does your Web site download quickly and have a home page that signposts commonly used topics of interest to investors with functioning graphics and images used consistently?
- Does your site have a web-friendly structure, e.g. by keeping page length to one screen, minimizing the need for scrolling? Is more detailed information provided in links or files?
- Is the ease of navigation of your Web site aided by a consistent and hierarchical architecture using major headings, navigation bars and site maps?
- Does it have header or side-bars that allow a user to quickly identify and access key points of interest?
- Have you reviewed your Web site to assess how easy it is for visitors to find useful and relevant key information as quickly as possible?
- Does it have a home page that allows users to see immediately where to find key pieces of information?
- Does it have a site map which can be used as a reference point and other options known as breadcrumbs or footprints can be used to help a user track their movement on a site so that they know exactly where they are and can easily return to the Home page? Both of these methods improve usability.
- Does it have a home page that signposts core information areas and all other pages follow the same basic format so that a user can quickly move throughout the site in a consistent way?
- Are pages generally a single screen frame thus avoiding the user's need to scroll excessively?
- Can key information be reached within three mouse clicks?
- Is text short and succinct and does it use clear headings so users know quickly to what the section relates?

Design

Ease of reading. Text should be written in common international business languages and presented in a format that can be scanned and is appropriate for the Web. Investors have much information to assimilate, so texts should be short.

Color. Colors should be used to enhance the legibility of the text but should not be overpowering. Contrasting colors pose competing demands on users, so neutral colors are usually safer in Web site design.

Graphics. Well-designed and carefully positioned graphic elements are inviting, but graphics should be small to speed downloads.

Navigational aids. Buttons and links should be well-designed and intuitive. Warn users of large file sizes and nonstandard formats (for example, when linking to the full text of investment laws or annual reports).

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Tips for improvement

- Does your Web site have a uniform visual look across all pages with consistent use of headers or side-bars?
- Does it use colors, style and imagery to reinforce the your IPA's branding?
- Have the use of fonts and background color been used to ensure reading ease?

Content

Investor focus. Ensure that information meets the needs of investors. The site should be client-focused and reflect knowledge of the end user's needs. Investors are interested primarily in business conditions and the operating environment in the location. Information about the organization or government should be confined to services offered to investors.

Summaries. Summarize the reasons why the location is suitable for investment.

Comparisons. Provide comparative data relating to key location factors to help companies evaluate locations.

Statistics. Marshal current statistics to support claims. Cite only reputable sources.

News. Sections devoted to news and events should be current and of specific interest to business investors. Avoid news geared to general users or tourists.

Testimonials and case studies. If a major global company has invested, this will be of interest to other investors, as it demonstrates that it is possible to conduct business there.

Downloadable fact sheets. Key information should be consolidated in convenient downloads, saving effort for the investor and reinforcing the IPA's role as information gatekeeper and promoter of the location.

Sector-specific information. Sections on specific priority sectors, industries, or business functions should accentuate market availability for potential investors. Information should be sufficient to inform the investor of the key capabilities and priority industries of the economy, with case studies or testimonials provided for individual sectors.

Contact information. List IPA contacts prominently. Name individuals with specific expertise and provide contact details for teams who work on particular sectors.

Tips for improvement

- Is the structure and content of your Web site really designed for your core investor audience?
- Is all content relevant to the key location factors (KLFs) that investors consider in their decision-making.
- Best practice Web sites provide focused information on their priority sectors.
- Best practice sites show credibility of information by using information and statistics from trusted sources to support claims.
- Best practice Web sites show their currency of information by ensuring content, especially news, is current with release date or publication date clearly marked.
- Best practice Web sites provide investors with file downloads of presentations and fact-sheets allowing them to print and read later.
- Best practice sites have information available in at least one major international business language, but will also ensure key information is available in the languages of targeted investors.

Promotional effectiveness

Finding the site. The IPA Web site must be easy to locate on major search engines (Google, Yahoo, Ask.com, etc.). It should be meta-tagged with these search engines and well linked to other sites so that the IPA's site has prominent positions in search results.

Anticipating investors' needs. Information should be tailored to investors' needs. The location should be presented to show that it fulfills the investor's requirements.

Government affiliation. Clearly identify the IPA's relationship with the government and its ministerial affiliation. Beyond that, minimize references to the government and to bureaucratic aspects of the IPA's responsibilities.

Tips for Improvement

- Clearly display corporate logos on the home page and use branding in a consistent manner.
- Provide an organizational chart or listing of key personnel and their roles, providing contact details for named individuals with particular responsibilities.
- List addresses and location maps and directions to their offices.
- Display links and affiliations with relevant organizations or public bodies.
- Provide client and investor focused information about the organization's corporate roles and information on how to access IPA support and services.
- Display information relevant to investors needs, directed primarily at the services they offer and in what ways the IPA can assist investors with their investment.
- Allow investors the opportunity to subscribe to online newsletters, updates and event registration.
- Ensure that the reasons and arguments for investing in their location are clearly stated and also themed throughout their Web site.
- Guarantee that the Web site is easily accessible through global search engines.

Quick checklist for your Web site

- Is all the information on your Web site up to date?
- Are all the contact details up to date so that an investor can reach the appropriate officer?
- Does the home page clearly indicate where information on key issues can be found?
- Are the details on key sectors and existing investors?
- Do you provide current, comparative data presenting your location in the best light?
- Have you presented in a clear, easy-to-read fashion key reasons why your location is an ideal location for investment for certain types of business?