# Developing a Concept and Plan


## DO YOUR RESEARCH!

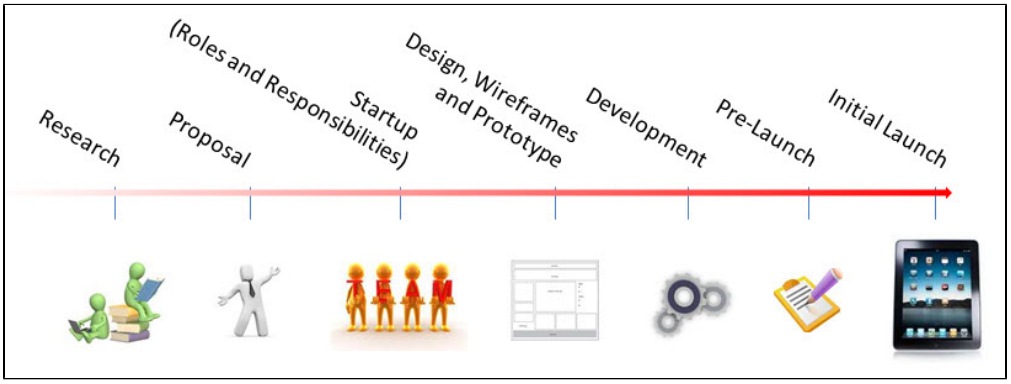
**Before submitting a proposal to PBS, it is critical that you thoroughly research what you want to accomplish with your app.** Often, people get excited about developing an app with really no clear idea of what the app will actually *do*. We cannot express how incredibly important it is that you come into the app process with comprehensive knowledge of *what you want your app to do, what you want users to gain from it, and how you plan to maintain it* once it is in the marketplace. When you have determined those essential elements you can begin to design a concept and a plan around them.

This section guides you through the preliminary steps you need to complete before proposing an app to PBS. Please read through it carefully and refer to our **recommendations page** for helpful hints to get you started.

As you develop your concept and plan, be mindful of all **requirements**. An app will most likely not be greenlit by PBS if it does not meet the established requirements.

## Development process

There are seven critical phases during the app development process. Below is a graphic highlighting those phases followed by brief descriptions of each phase.




| Phase | Description |
|---|---|
| **1: Research** | The research phase is possibly the most important phase in the proposal process. During the research phase, goals are determined, a concept is created, and a development plan is established. Use this phase to determine if a native app or a mobile website is the right platform for you. |
| **2: Proposal** | Presenting your project plan and all required elements to PBS happens during the proposal phase. PBS provides a form designed to gather the information necessary to consider your app. Simply fill out the form and submit it so PBS can begin the review process. |
| **3: Startup (Roles and Responsibilities)** | Once PBS greenlights your app, it's time to assemble a team. Think about what roles will be assigned to each team member and the responsibilities that come with each role. |
| **4: Design, Wireframes and Prototype** | To have a clear idea of what your final app should look like, a prototype must be developed. This phase is dedicated to the creation of your app mockup. |
| **5: Development** | Once there is a clear understanding of the look, feel and functionality of your app, it's time to develop! The amount of work you have done in the previous phases determines how quickly this phase can go. Thorough preparation typically leads to faster development. |
| **6: Pre-Launch** | The pre-launch is an opportunity to go over your checklist, test your app and make sure it's ready for release. |
| **7: Initial Launch** | This is the culmination of the previous 6 phases. Your app goes live in the iTunes store and users start lining up! |

See additional recommendations from PBS.

## Establish a timeline

One of the most important factors at the beginning of the app development process is your **launch date**. The launch date dictates the flow of everything that happens going forward. Be sure to examine all requirements and features of your app when determining a launch date and PBS will investigate available resources and work with you to achieve your goal.

## Determine your goals

Identify the goals you want to accomplish with your mobile app and think about the metrics associated with each goal to help develop a plan going forward. PBS uses this information to:

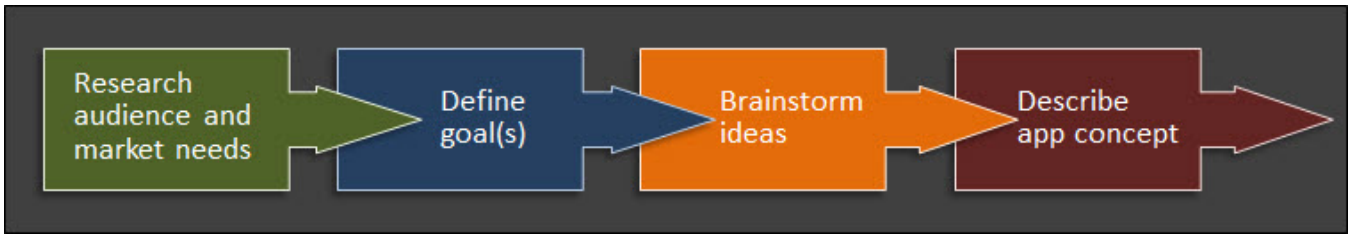
- evaluate how to prioritize app submissions
- keep the focus on app features and content that serve the goals
- evaluate performance of live apps

Below are some goals which your app can serve:

| Goal | Metrics |
|---|---|
| Audience Growth | Forecasted Audience Size (e.g., expected downloads or monthly visits)<br>Engagement Indicators (i.e., expected avg. sessions per month, avg. time spent per session, etc.)<br>Reach to New / Under-Served Audiences (i.e., what % of the audience do you expect to be new or under-served?) |
| Revenue Generation | Expected Net Revenues<br>(Be sure to deduct fees and commissions to the platform owner, e.g., Apple, or to sponsorship sales before calculating net revenues) |
| Innovation | This is a qualitative metric. Innovation can be technological or originality of content/feature set, but it must be innovative in the context of all things mobile, not just public media. The bar for meeting this goal is high. |
| Serving member stations | Daily tasks such as browsing TV schedules or looking for local events can be more easily accessible and convenient for local station members. |

See additional recommendations from PBS.

## Identify a concept




As you begin to develop your concept, ask yourself the following questions to help you get started:

- *What key features and functionality do I want my app to have?*
- *How will my app serve audience needs?*

PBS has developed some recommendations to help you:

- **Create concepts that offer more than just entertainment.** The goal of the app concept and marketing message should be enrichment in addition to entertainment.
- **Keep it locally relevant.** Strive to find a local or geo-targeted angle to the extent feasible or relevant to the content.
- **Create an interactive experience.** Seek opportunities to allow users to collaborate, compete, share or have some form of social interaction around your content including the ability to contribute to it.
- **Make your app stand out from the rest.** Develop a unique angle. Look for features and functionalities that are natural offshoots of the content and what your audience might want to do with that content.
- **Maintain high quality.** Your audience expects the same high editorial standards you have on-air and online so be sure those standards carry over to your app.

See additional recommendations from PBS.

## Begin high level planning


Some elements that need to be considered in the planning phase include:

- intended platform type
- native app or mobile web app/site
- app updates
- functionality changes
- content refresh

⚠️ **When considering platforms, please think about whether a native app is necessary or if your audience could be better served with a Mobile Web application or site.**

ℹ️ Keep in mind that third parties have total control over native applications whereas PBS offers much greater control and flexibility with your Mobile Web site on pbs.org.

## Mobile App vs. Mobile Website

Deciding whether to create a mobile app or a mobile website is critical but it does not have to be difficult. Once you have defined the purpose of your application and prioritize all of your business and marketing considerations then you can determine the solution that will best address those needs now and into the future.  Review the table below for a comparison between mobile apps and mobile websites.

### Quick definitions:

A **Mobile App** is a software application that works on a specific mobile device's operating system and is downloaded to the device to perform a specific set of functions. Apps can be device-specific such as iPhone and iPad apps.

A **Mobile Website** is a website intended to be viewed using a mobile browser on the various display sizes of phones, tablets, and other mobile devices. Mobile websites are typically simplified versions of a standard website that provide a better mobile user experience through improved usability, faster page loads, and often reorganization of content to bring mobile-specific features to the forefront of the experience.

| | **Mobile App** | **Mobile Website** |
|---|---|---|
| **Portability** | Needs to be developed for each platform (iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Palm, etc.). | Common platform – some solutions enable you to develop once and run on all web-enabled mobile devices. |
| **Hyperlinks** | It is possible to link to an app but since most users will not have the app installed, the most effective way is to link to the download page for this app. It is possible to link from an app externally to other websites. | Possible to provide links to different pages on your mobile site and to link from your mobile site to other websites. |
| Development Skills | Specialized programming. | Design, development, and deployment of a mobile website is similar to a standard website. |
| Channel Controls | Apple, Google, RIM, Wireless Carriers. | PBS and stakeholders. |
| **Discoverability** | Most apps don't achieve critical success and fade into the world of anonymity. You will need a very well defined strategy to break into the top list for your category in order to make it.  Linking to your app from your website is recommended. | People can find your site by using any of the search engines and via links from other websites, blogs, Twitter and links embedded in emails. A good marketing strategy can definitely increase the number of visitors, especially if it is viral. |
| **Distribution & Market Size** | Apple App Store requires submission approval as well as an annual membership with an associated fee.  Requires users to download – huge barrier to entry.<br><br>Limited to the number of users on the released platform | Anyone on the web has access to your mobile site regardless of hardware or operating system. |
| **Usage of Device Capabilities** | Able to use all device capabilities (GPS, camera, voice, RFID, address book, calendar, etc.). | It is possible to use features like GPS, offline data storage, and video from within mobile websites using the latest mobile browsers which support HTML5. Access from the web to some native capabilities of mobile devices is still limited due to security and privacy concerns (e.g. access to address book or calendar). |
| **Supportability & Upgradeability** | Difficult to support and maintain after app is downloaded. Updates need to go through the entire app store approval process.<br><br>After new version of application is placed in the store, all existing users are required to download software updates.<br><br>When developing apps for multiple platforms, even a simple update may require significant development resources and time. | Easier to support and maintain as developer has complete access to the site. Involves the same steps required to update a traditional website.<br><br>No need to upgrade, all users see the latest version. |

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|---|---|---|
| **Entry Costs** | Some app stores charge extra fees for publishing or certifying your app. | None. |
| **Revenue Share** | Need to share sales revenue with the app stores. | All revenue is yours. |
| **User Experience** | Full control of User Interface.<br><br>Interface controls are more intuitive and operate without the same lag time of mobile websites, which transfer data back and forth between server and user. | Limited to the capabilities of HTML/CSS. User experience will largely depend on how the mobile website is designed. |
| **Performance** | Able to achieve high performance through app code that runs locally on the device. Can store resources locally and utilize the computing power and memory of the device to perform operations instantaneously. | Performance will largely depend on how the mobile website is designed. |
| **Offline Browsing** | Resources and data can be stored locally in a mobile app, and the user interface operates independently of web-delivered interface elements, so some or all of your app may be used when Internet or Wi-Fi is not available. | Because data can be stored on the mobile browser, it is possible that a user can interact with a mobile website with no network connectivity. |

See additional recommendations from PBS.