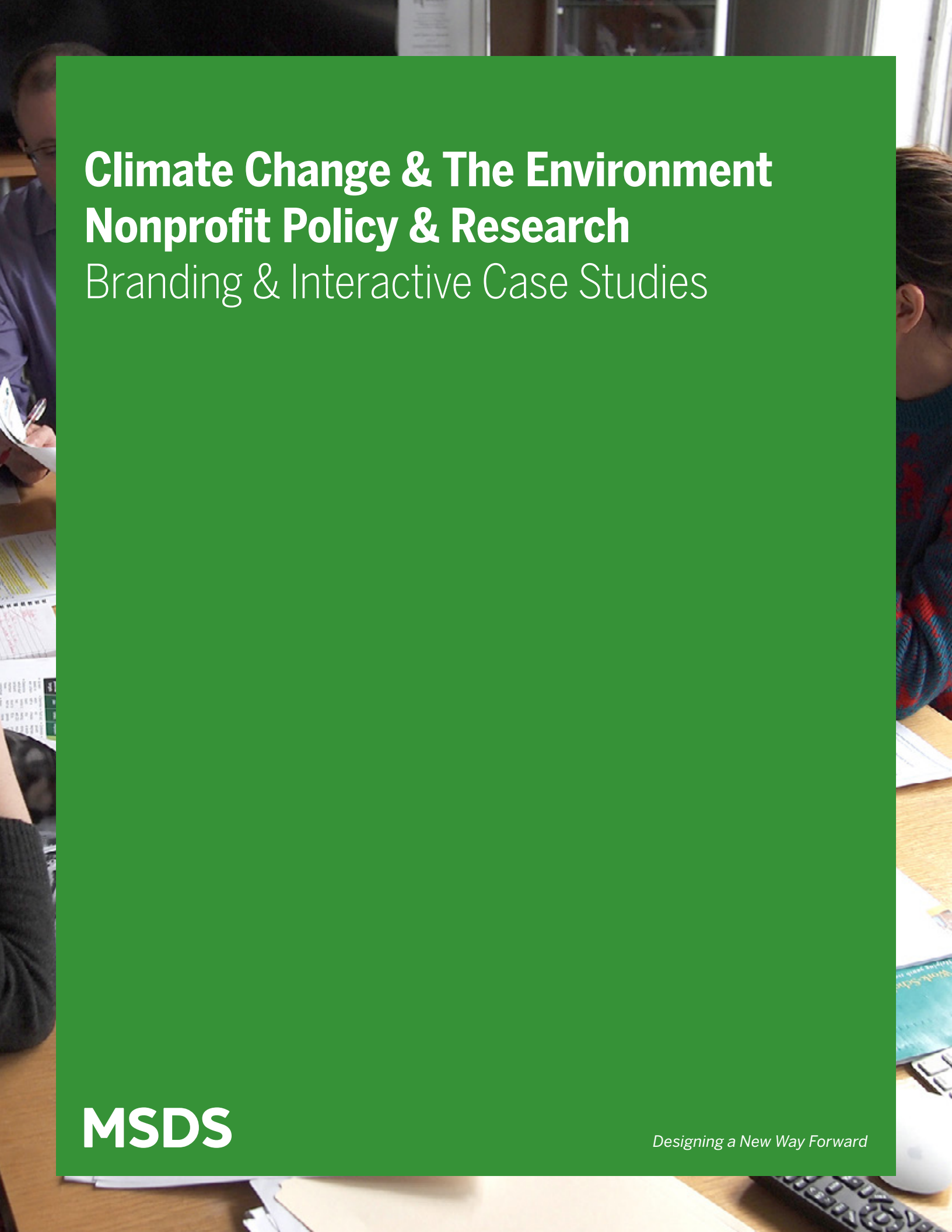


Climate Change & The Environment
Nonprofit Policy & Research
Branding & Interactive Case Studies

MSDS

Designing a New Way Forward



Yale Environmental Performance Index

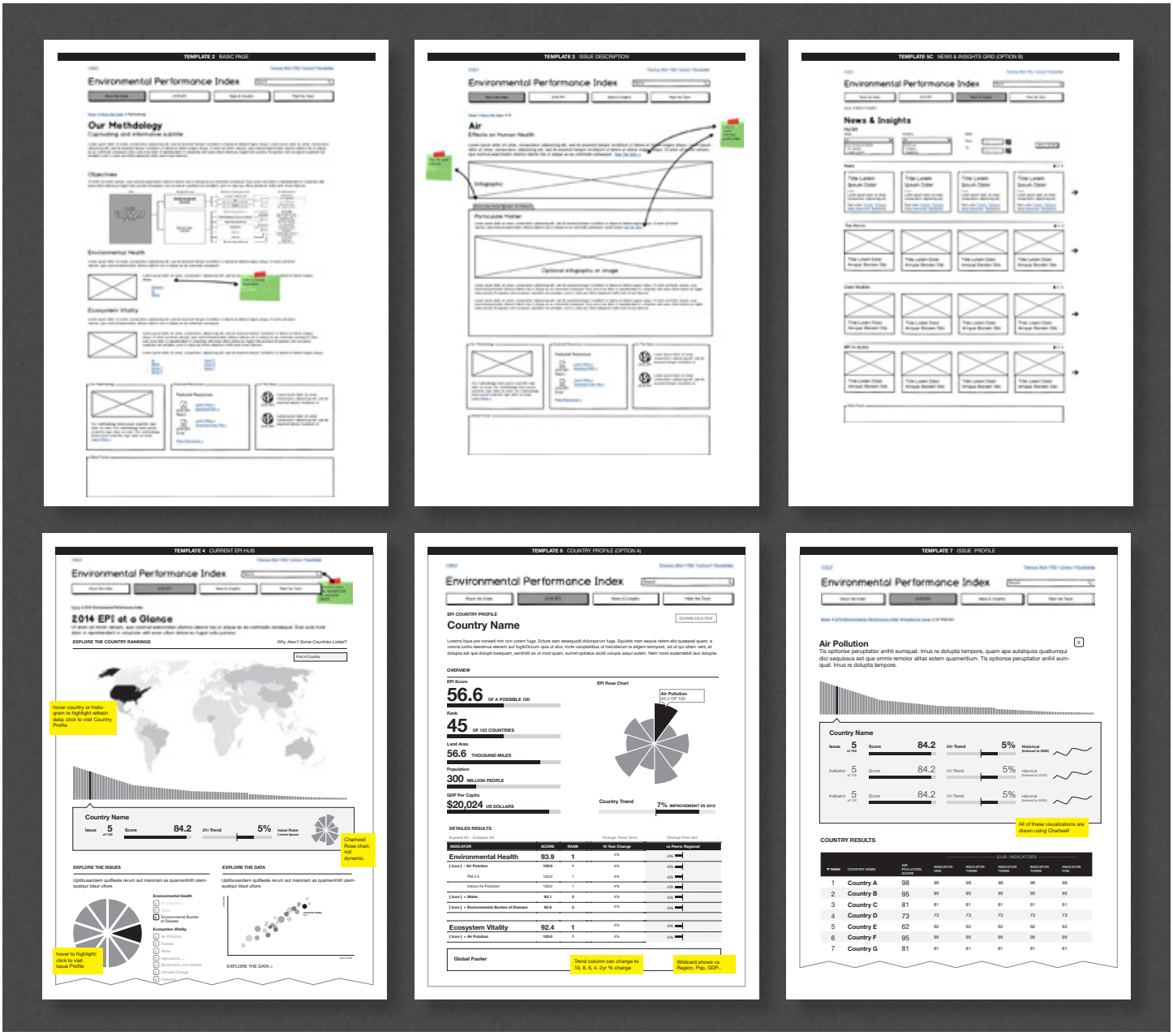
Transforming Data into a Powerful Tool for Action

Tracking data for 178 countries across 9 environmental issues and 20 key indicators, the Environmental Performance Index is the standard-bearer for measuring global environmental performance. Looking to take a quantum leap forward in the EPI's 15th year, Yale approached MSDS to help develop a new strategy and user experience that would transform their respected research into a more widely accessible, objective environmental performance scorecard. Beyond creating a data-rich website and toolset for research experts, Yale sought to connect with key audiences in business, government, media and the public—helping to inform and educate on the implications of their global environmental performance research.



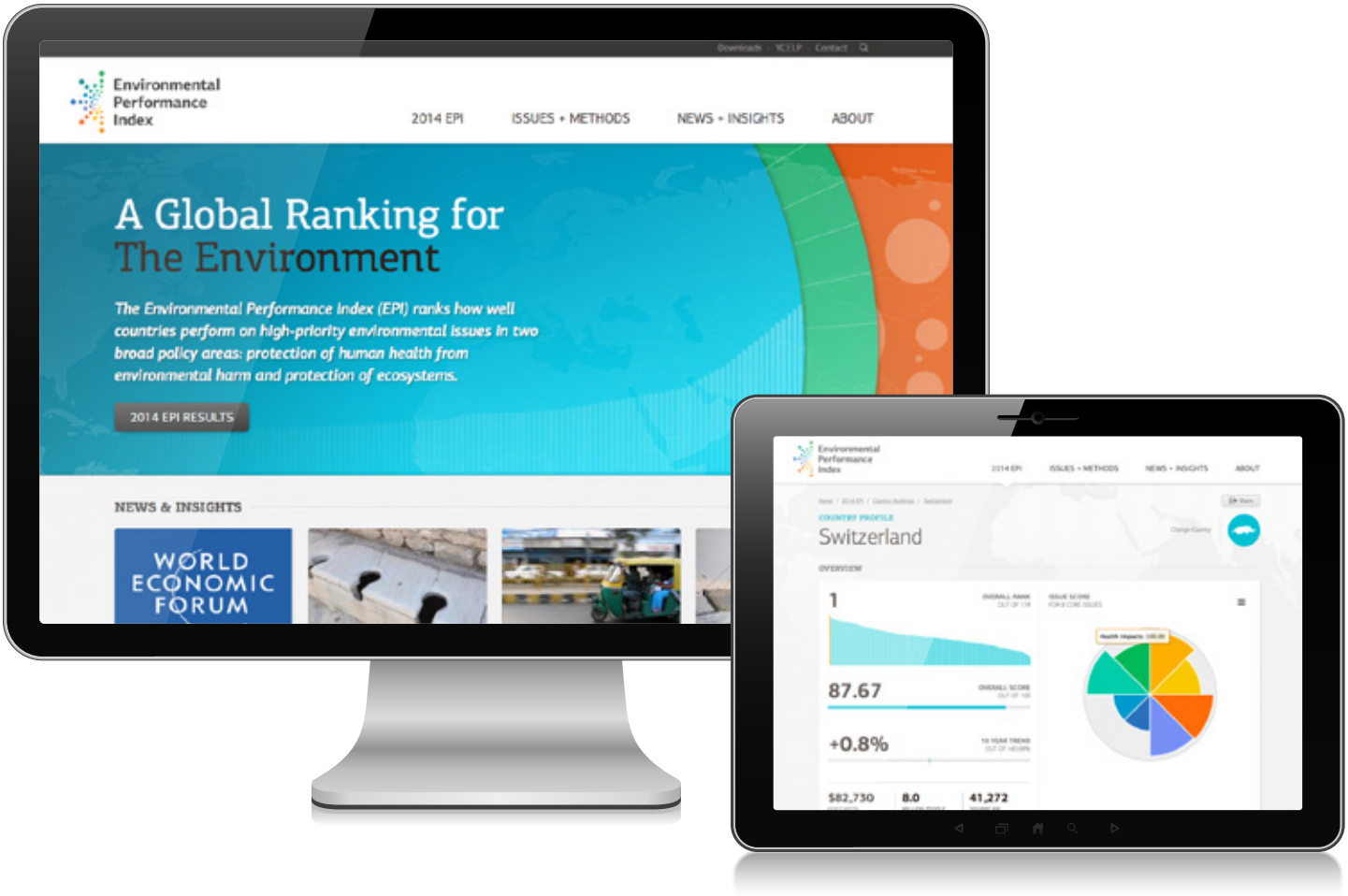
Yale EPI: Before Redesign

The existing EPI website suffered from a confusing site experience, with essential content buried deep, difficult to find. Its cluttered, washed-out design failed to give life to EPI research, and the site's data visualizations fell short of communicating both the nuanced details and big-picture dynamics. The result was a website that failed to live up to the importance and potential impact of Yale's research.



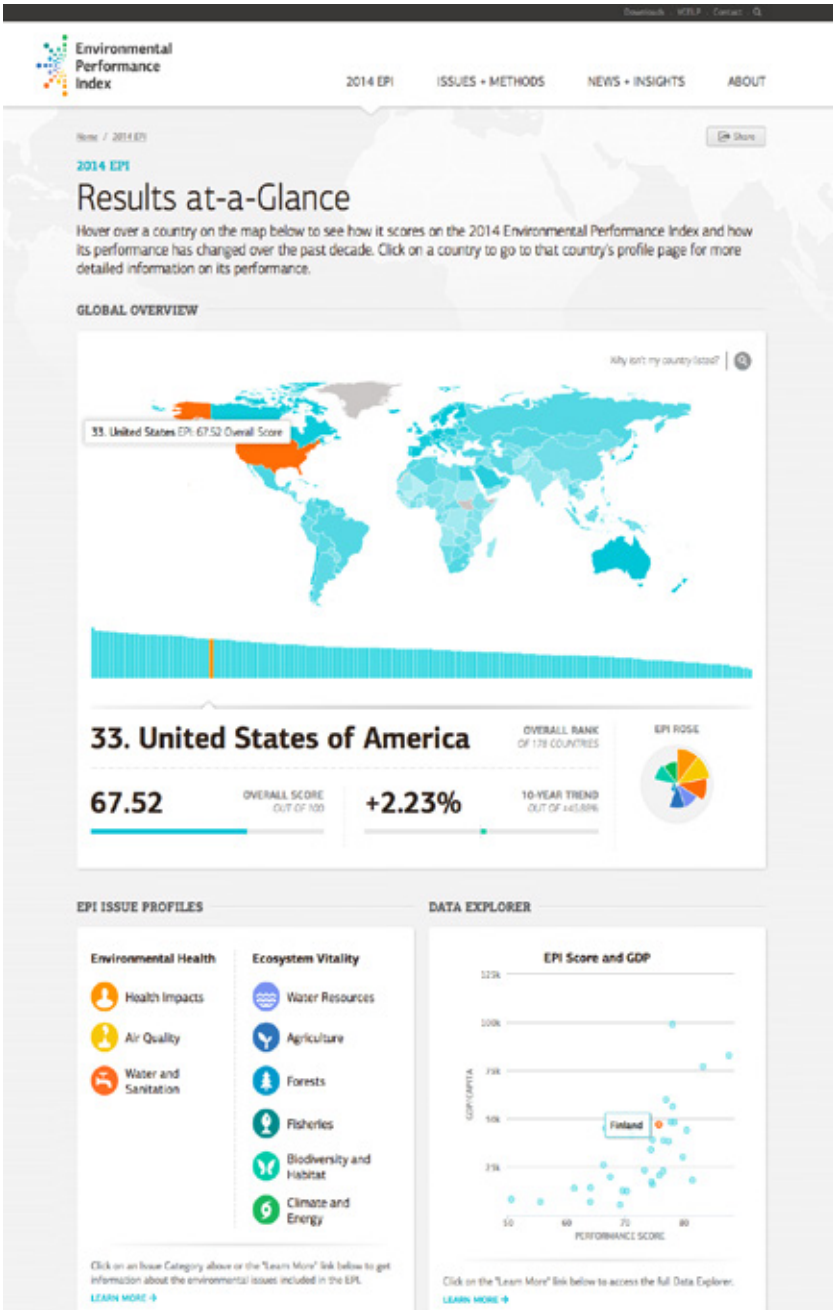
Interactive Strategy & UX Design

Data-heavy projects like the EPI present a challenge to not just share the information, but to also deliver an experience that intuitively guides audiences as they explore issues, and analyze and interpret the numbers. We collaborated with Yale to architect a user-centric structure that provides audiences with multiple entry points into EPI data. Dynamic data visualizations throughout elevate the top-level takeaways, while detailed data and tools encourage further exploration. The result is a balanced experience that engages and objectively delivers the facts so audiences can draw their own conclusions.

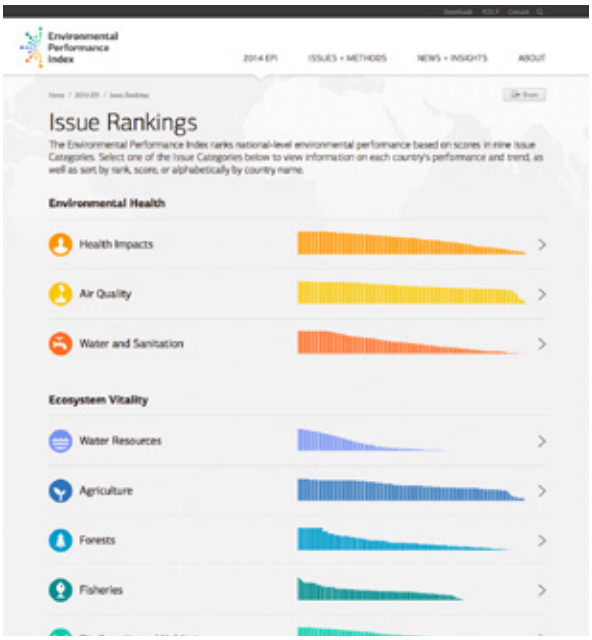


Branding & Interactive Design

With our site strategy in place, our team began designing visual branding and an look-and-feel for the online experience. The new EPI logo, a complementing system of colors and typography, and a suite of custom-illustrated iconography support the data-heavy content in Yale's index—establishing a visual foundation for the EPI brand that is functional, appropriate, and inviting. Next, we got to work collaborating with Yale on the new EPI website—designing a user experience that would reinforce the credibility and objectivity of Yale's research, while making its data-heavy insights easy-to-understand and more engaging. Site design is built on a range of clean, structured page grids, with layouts that support Yale's content—emphasizing clarity and visual impact to make the EPI's data-heavy content more accessible to a wider audience beyond policy and research experts.



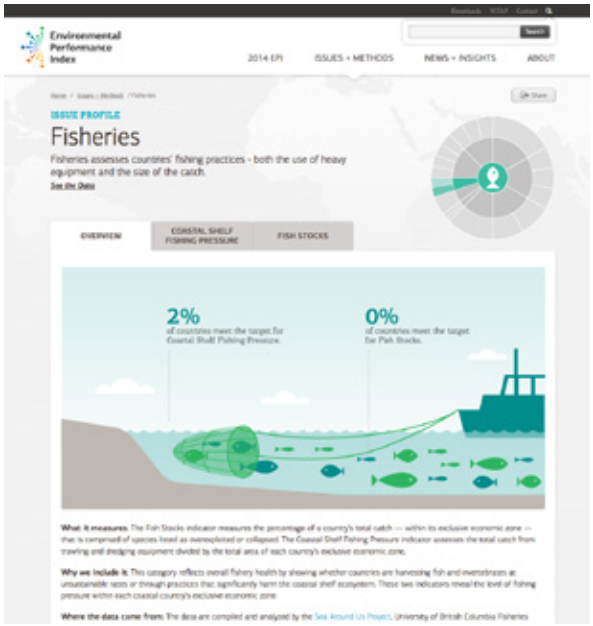


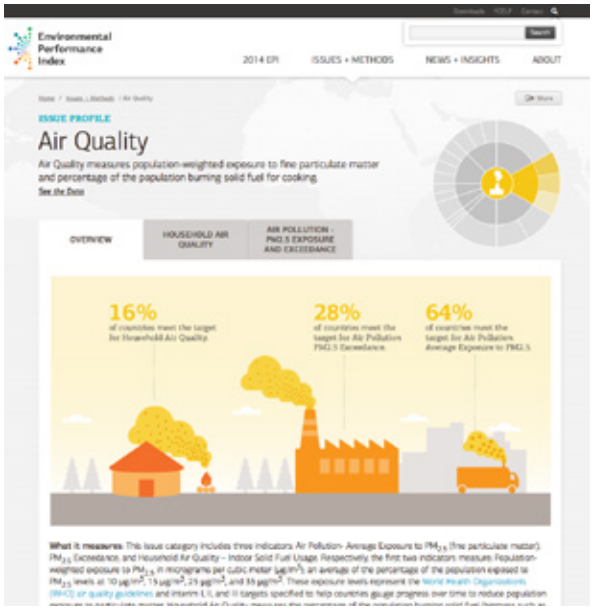


Web Development

While visually, the EPI elevates Yale's research and helps reach a wide audience, its software is developed to work with Yale's technology and operations. A Drupal CMS draws on data developed by Yale's statisticians in "R"—integrating it into the system to drive the user experience; with interactive data visualization and tools that help users access, compare, and analyze data sets. On the back-end, custom publishing workflows and powerful tools make it easy for Yale's team to manage the EPI—and a flexible, scalable architecture supports the EPI's biannual releases and ongoing site additions in-between.

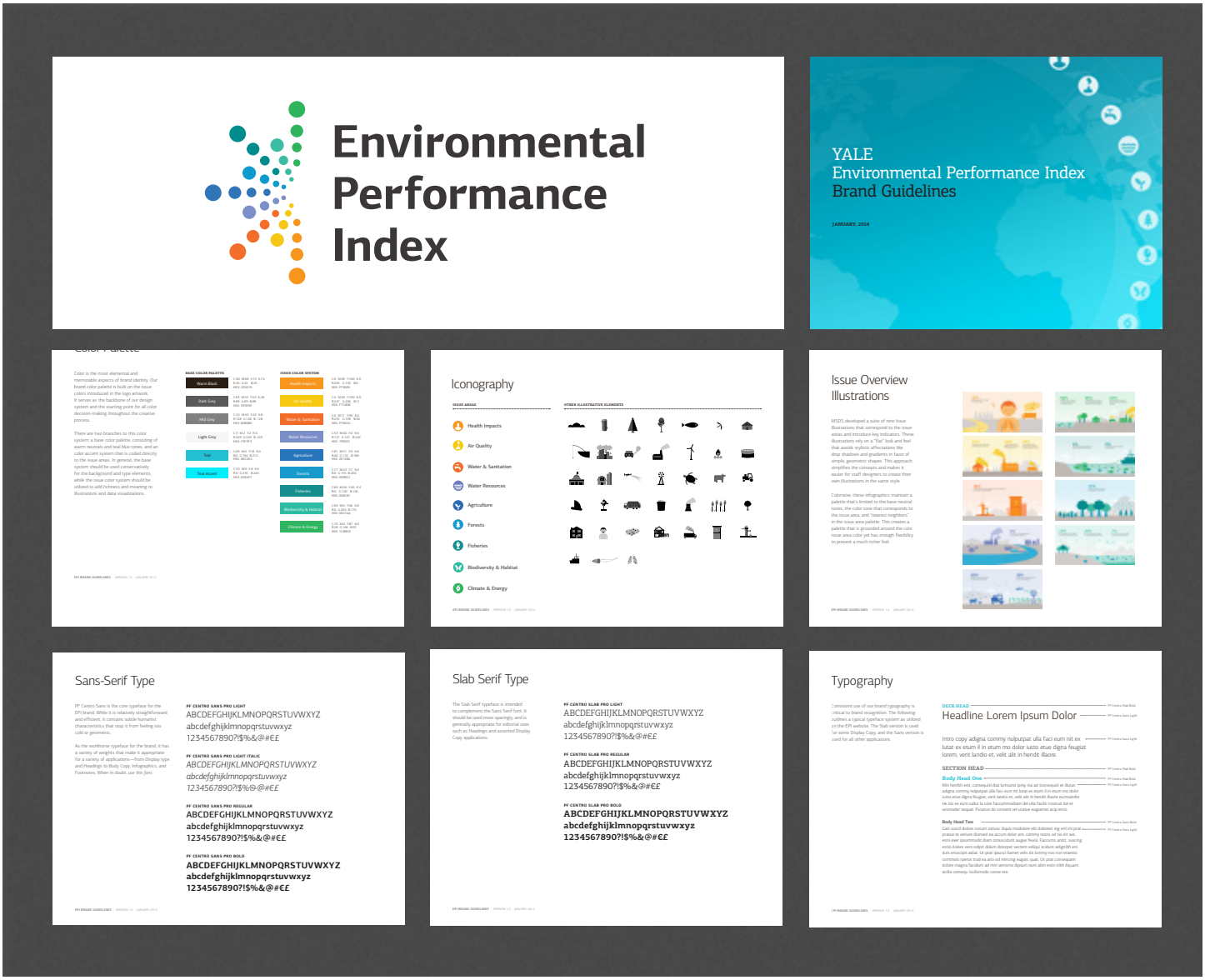






Infographic Design

Engaging and educating a broader audience of interested people in business, media, and the general public is an essential part of Yale's strategy to increase the EPI's impact. We partnered with them to take previously analytical content and transform it into a highly informative narrative of infographics that help educate on the EPI's methodology and key environmental issues. The result turned what was previously a more academic exercise catered to experts into an online experience that clearly speaks to the critical issues, while providing memorable takeaways and a greater appreciation of what's at stake.



Our Client's Take

"We engaged MSDS with the enormous undertaking of developing a new website for the Environmental Performance Index. Their work has been successful for several reasons: The new EPI website is beautiful, which keeps our users focused and engaged; it's also highly usable, with tools that give users unprecedented access to EPI data. Most important, the infrastructure they built provides a scalable foundation, we hope, for the next 15 years. MSDS brought the EPI to life exactly as we had hoped; we couldn't be happier with the result."

Josh Galperin, Associate Director, Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy



The Acadia Center

Renewing the Brand of a Respected Leader

With all the recent international attention given to climate change, it's easy to overlook those who have been working for years to advance policies and practices in regional government and industry that will lead to a sustainable future. For more than 25 years, Environment Northeast had been just such a leader—producing respected research and working with stakeholders across the public and private sectors to implement market-based solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Looking to write a new chapter in their history, Environment Northeast turned to MSDS to rename, rebrand, and relaunch the organization.



Environment Northeast: Before Rebranding

Environment Northeast's logo and website was failing to live up to the quality of the organization's research and reputation, signalling an outdated organization of limited means rather than a well-funded, respected regional leader. ENE's logo had the look of clip art and gave the misleading impression of an organization working in transportation. Equally as harmful to the brand was a content-heavy website that lacked the diversity of page templates to support ENE's depth of content, and numerous text-only pages that made engaging with research a chore.



Acadia Center

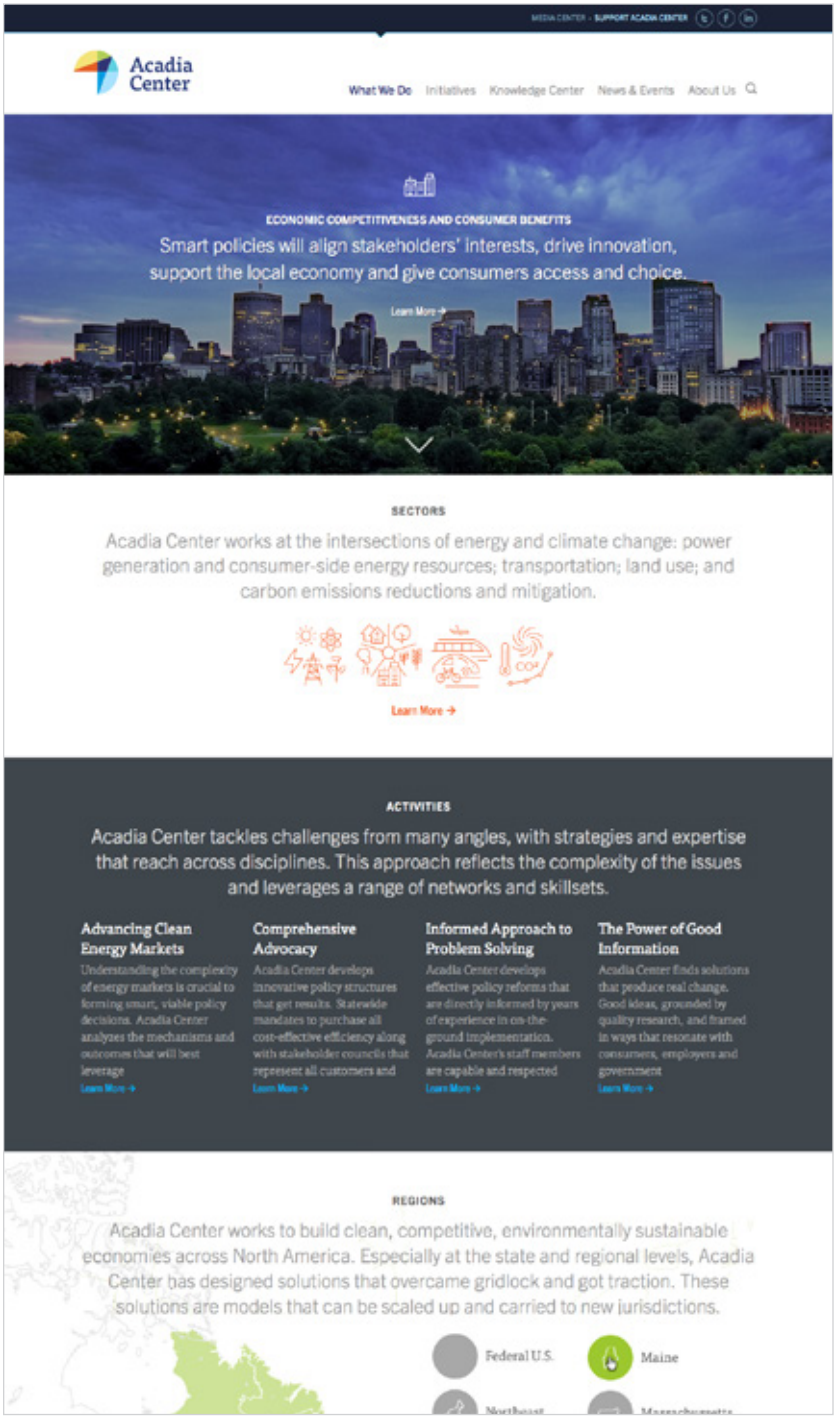
Renaming & Logo Design

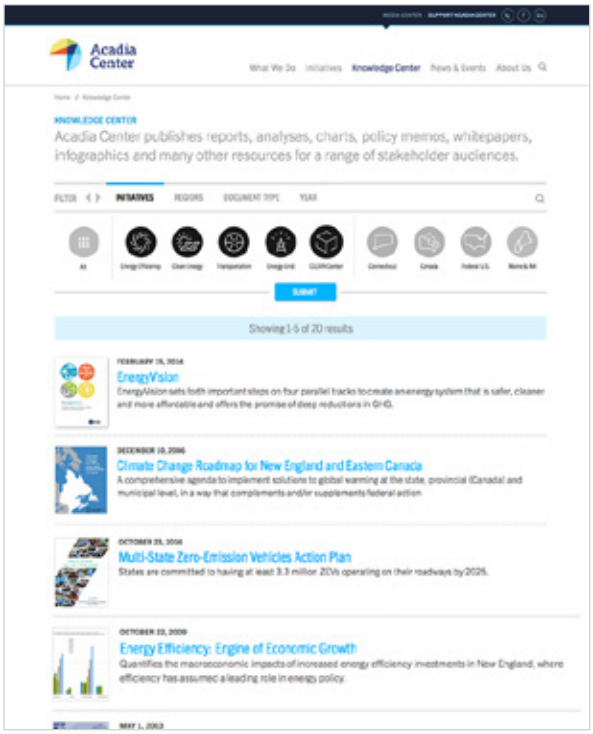
With 25 years of brand equity, renaming Environment Northeast was no small decision. However, their name gave the impression of an environmental organization with limited range, when ENE targeted scalable, sustainable economies to mitigate climate change. After much name exploration, "Acadia Center" was chosen—representing the organization's status as a hub of research; creating a more expansive and memorable brand name, and honoring of the organization's northeastern roots. Also important to ENE's team was that the new visual identity maintain some continuity with the organization's current "compass" logo. MSDS's design team reinterpreted the mark, moving away from its previous literal representation to create a vibrant icon that points northeast—the same direction as the Gartner magic quadrant, well known in business as the position of optimal success.

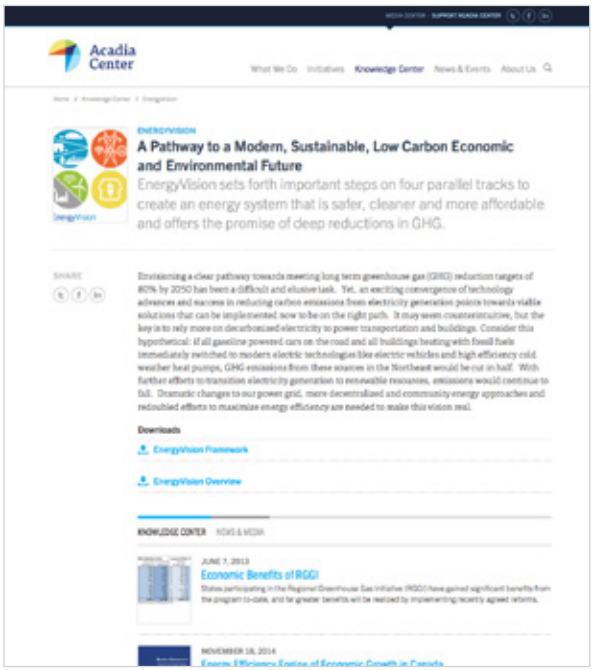


Website Design & Development

With Acadia Center's visual branding in place, we collaborated on content strategy, user experience design, and a site design that would present the organization's history and mission, its key issue areas and regions, and its initiatives and research with compelling clarity. As with all content-heavy websites, a key point of emphasis was balancing visual impact and the need to tell Acadia Center's story—while placing focus where it matters most—on the organization's insights and impact. We developed a responsive system of structured page grids that make longer reads a pleasure; while applying best practices in editorial design to elevate top-level takeaways for audiences looking for a quicker read on Acadia's efforts.







Website Design & Development

New content strategy and user experience design organize research geographically and by issue, while providing greater context into the organization's mission, methods, and regional issues. Visual design emphasizes a clean, gridded layout with clear hierarchy and typographic detail that makes Acadia's content easy for audiences to access and just as enjoyable to read.



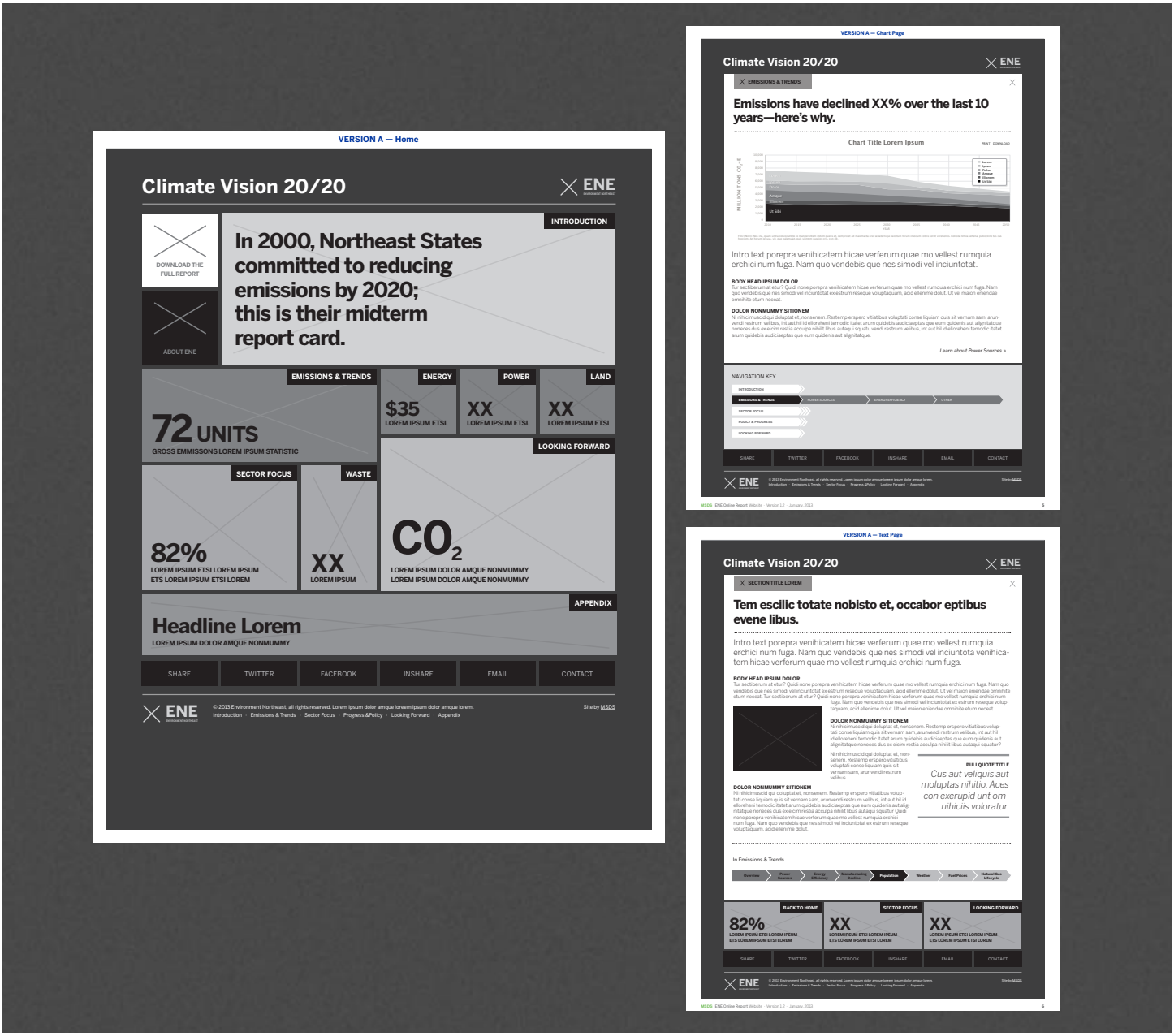
Climate Vision 2020 Interactive Policy Report

A New Narrative in Energy & Emissions Research

In 2001, eight northeastern states agreed to address the rising threats of climate change by adopting a series of emissions reduction targets. With more than a decade of data and research in the books, Acadia Center, a leading energy and climate policy research nonprofit, asked MSDS to help them transform their standard approach to large PDF reports and design a new narrative that would reach a wider audience of leaders in business, policy, and foundations. Together, we created a new kind of interactive report that helps Acadia get the point across—delivering a focused distillation of the organization's detailed research that's rich with data visualization and key takeaways.

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Content Strategy & User Experience Design

Like many policy & research nonprofits, Acadia Center's typical reports had minimal attention paid to design, resulting in long-form PDFs that read more like Microsoft Word documents. After exploring several content structures to organize research into more focused, digestible pieces and make it more accessible, we developed a dashboard-driven homepage that segments Acadia's research by issue area and by state, providing users with multiple entry points based on area of interest. Research content is then presented with interactive data visualization and summaries
to complement ClimateVision's detailed findings.



Branding & Interactive Design

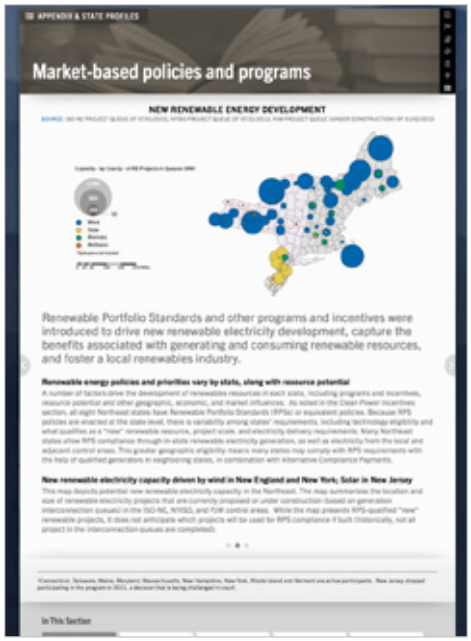
ClimateVision's new design establishes a color-coded system to organize content and orient users to where they are in the report at any time. Visual emphasis is placed on making Acadia's research report a compelling read, whether users prefer to jump around and explore a few key issues, or to read sections sequentially as they would in print. Key statistics stand out to provide audiences with multiple jumping-off points for exploration, while ClimateVision 2020's interactive data visualizations combine with key takeaways to help explain trends to experts and lay audiences alike. The result transforms Acadia's linear, text-heavy print report into a user experience that deepens audience engagement with Acadia's research—while reinforcing a more holistic understanding of the issues and opportunities.

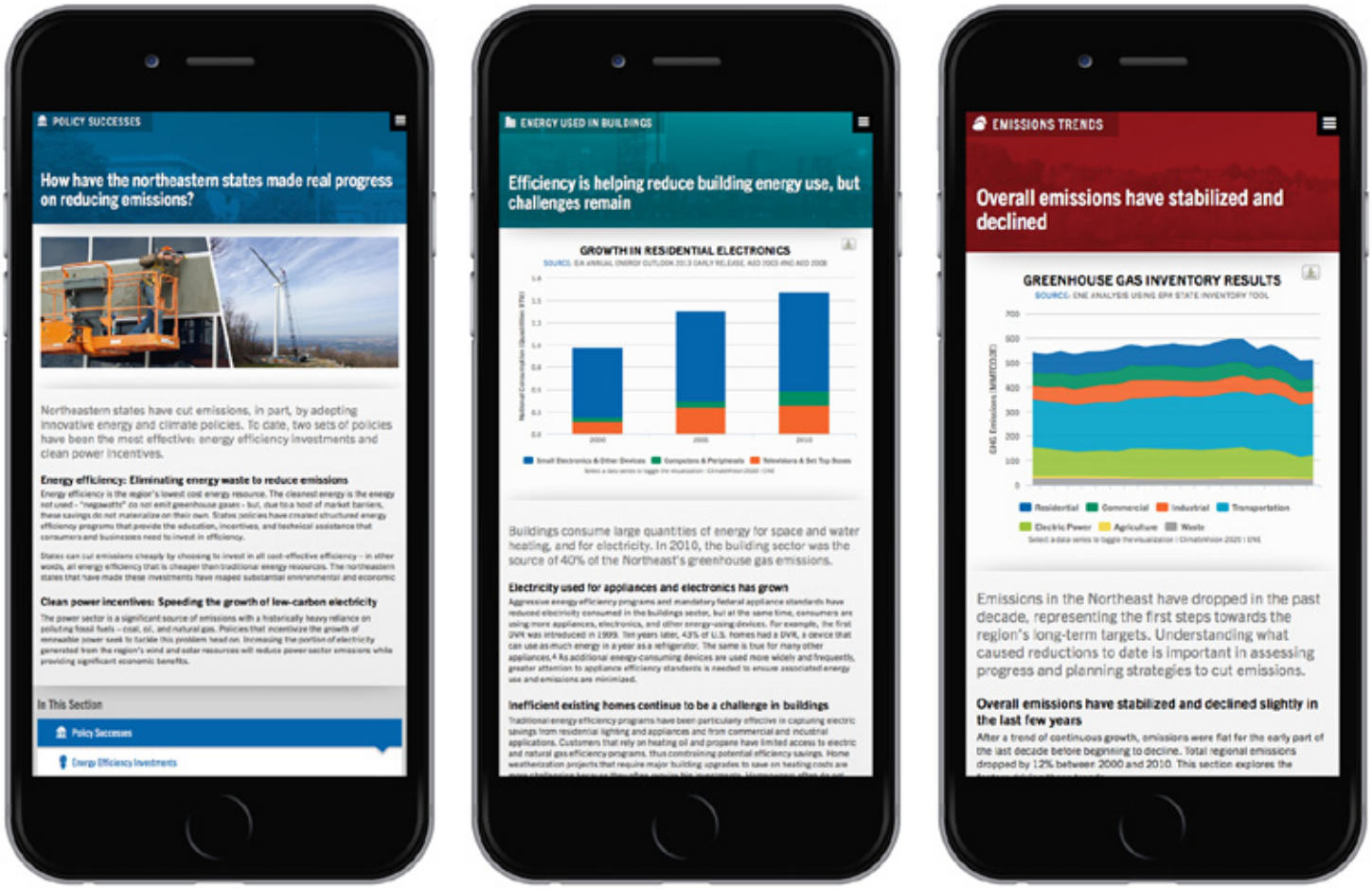

climatevision 2020
Acadia Center
ABOUT ACADIA CENTER
REPORT OVERVIEW
PROGRESS STATUS
All northeastern states have emissions reduction targets...
EMISSIONS TRENDS
12 %
LESS GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS WERE EMITTED IN THE NORTHEAST IN 2010 THAN 2000...
SECTOR SPOTLIGHTS
82 %
OF GHG EMISSIONS IN THE REGION COME FROM BUILDINGS AND TRANSPORTATION...
POLICY SUCCESSES
$183 BILLION
OF INCREASED ECONOMIC GROWTH WOULD RESULT IF ALL NEW ENGLAND STATES FULLY INVESTED IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY
LOOKING FORWARD
2020
WE NEED TO REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE 2020 CLIMATE COMMITMENTS
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS
APPENDIX & STATE PROFILES
DOWNLOAD
CONNECT
FOLLOW
CONTACT


climatevision 2020
Acadia Center
CLEANER FUELS
What impact have natural gas prices had on emissions?
2010 GHG REDUCTIONS ATTRIBUTABLE TO FUEL SWITCHING, EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLES
Natural gas has increasingly replaced coal and oil as the fuel used to generate electricity in the region, due primarily to lower natural gas prices. This fuel switching has had a significant impact on regional emissions.
Fuel switching to natural gas has had a major impact on reduced electric sector emissions
There is limited opportunity for more emissions savings from fuel conversion
NATURAL GAS AND FUGITIVE EMISSIONS
In This Section
Next Section
DOWNLOAD
CONNECT
FOLLOW
CONTACT


MAXIMIZING ENERGY PRODUCTIVITY
How can we continue to improve the region's energy use?
Improving the efficiency of our buildings, businesses, and transportation system means being able to do the same things using less energy and creating fewer emissions, all while saving money.
Energy efficiency efforts in the region must continue and expand
State and local transportation and land use policies must evolve to promote more efficient development
In This Section
Next Section


ENERGY USED IN BUILDINGS
Efficiency is helping reduce building energy use, but challenges remain
GROWTH IN RESIDENTIAL ELECTRONICS
Buildings consume large quantities of energy for space and water heating, and for electricity. In 2010, the building sector was the source of 40% of the Northeast's greenhouse gas emissions.
Electricity used for appliances and electronics has grown
Inefficient existing homes continue to be a challenge in the buildings sector
In This Section
Next Section


APPENDIX & STATE PROFILES
Market-based policies and programs
NEW RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
Renewable Portfolio Standards and other programs and incentives were introduced to drive new renewable electricity development, capture the benefits associated with generating and consuming renewable resources, and foster a local renewables industry.
Renewable energy policies and priorities vary by state, along with resource potential
New renewable electricity capacity driven by wind in New England and New York; Solar in New Jersey
In This Section



Our Client's Take

"MSDS is a great partner for many reasons, first of which is how collaborative they are in working with our team. I was immediately impressed by their ability to listen and make sure they understood our goals, and how we value using data to make our points. They did a great job making our content accessible to a wider audience, and challenged us to refine our messages, turning work that can often be highly technical and wonky into a highly effective narrative."

Dan Sosland, President & CEO



The Institute for Industrial Productivity

Sharing Best Practices for the Low Carbon Future

The Institute for Industrial Productivity is a unique nonprofit organization in the fight against global climate change—combining expertise across global policy, technical, and finance to help the world's most energy-intensive industries become more efficient and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. But shifting industrial behavior on a global scale is no simple undertaking. IIP engaged MSDS to help them quickly turn their new strategic plan into an integrated rebranding, suite of communications tools, and multiple websites that would help the nonprofit accelerate meaningful impact on climate change.

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Logo Design & Visual Branding

Guided by IIP's new strategic plan for the organization, we conducted branding workshops across 4 continents to develop a new logo and identity system that represents IIP's role as global convener of industry across the business and policy arenas. IIP's new branding appeals to a diverse audience of global business leaders & policymakers, while reinforcing IIP's leadership of global industry in meeting the challenges of climate change.



Communications Design

With a new visual identity system in place, we next developed an integrated suite of case studies, white papers, and presentation materials to support IIP's work with stakeholders across business, government, and the academic sector. The resulting communication tools and data visualization help make IIP's complex policy, technical, and financial content more accessible by providing greater context, color, structure, and clarity.

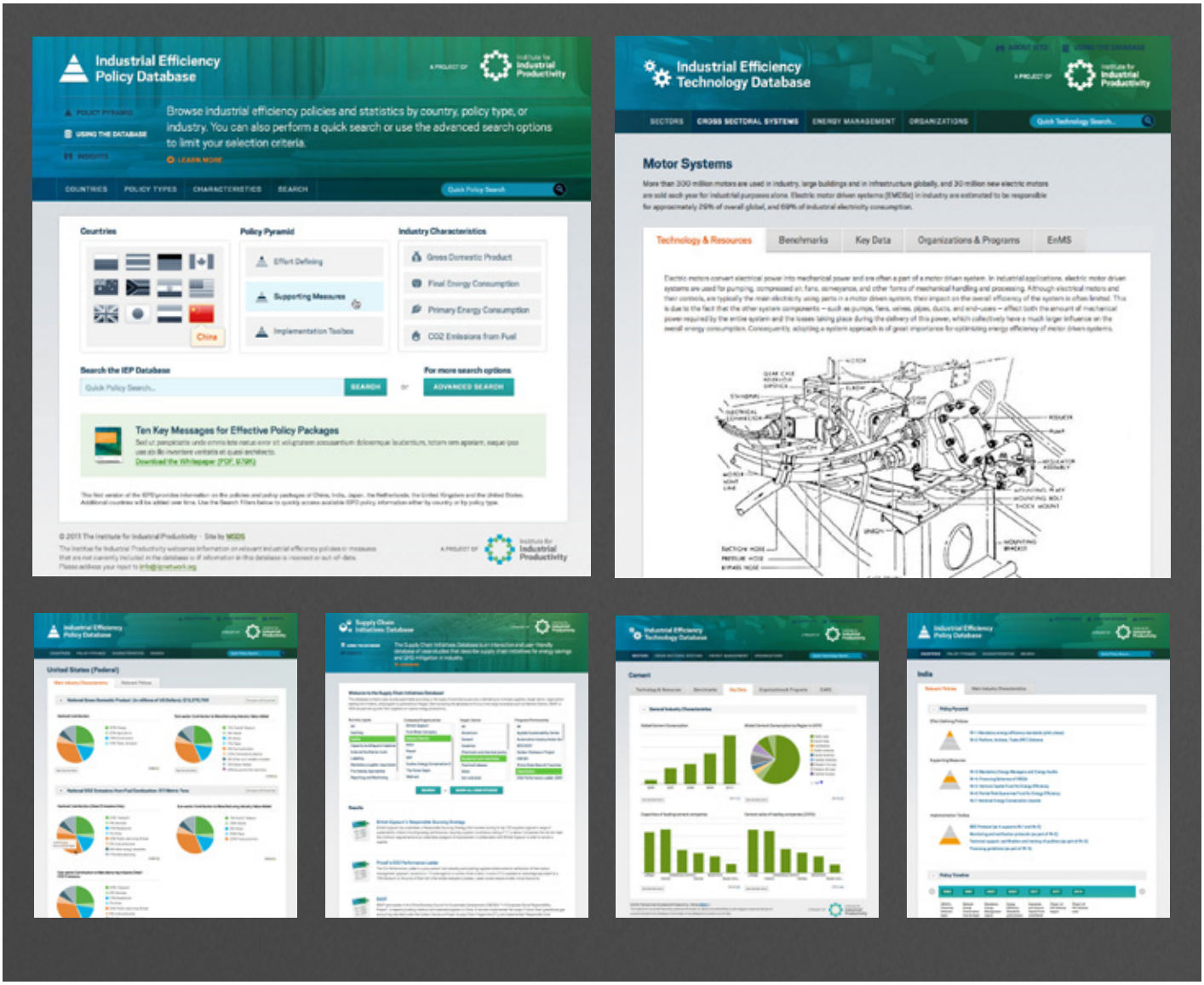






Website Design & Development

We then got to work on a major overhaul of IIP's website, creating a multilingual site in English and Mandarin that presents IIP's areas of expertise, key issues, and projects around the world. A resources center shares research, tools, best practices, and data sets; while project case study pages provide a detailed look at IIP's efforts in the field, by region. With IIP's organizational website in place, we then developed a suite of online database tools that provide experts with comprehensive access to information on industrial efficiency technology, policy, supply chain initiatives, financing, and programs.



Our Client's Take

"In redesigning IIP's brand and website, MSDS has delivered more than great design—they've had a significant impact across our global operations. Their team showed great skill in understanding complex policy and technology content, and equal expertise in communicating it effectively to key audiences in business and in government. They took time to understand our communications strategies and operational goals, then created the right solutions to help us realize them."

Jigar Shah, Executive Director



Electrification Coalition

Leading the Charge on Sustainable Transportation

The Electrification Coalition is a nonprofit policy and advocacy think tank, led by a group of influential leaders across business, technology, energy, and government united around a common goal—speeding America's transition away from petroleum-fueled transportation towards a national infrastructure built on clean, renewable, electrified vehicles. The Electrification Coalition turned to MSDS to help establish and manage their brand. Since 2009, we've partnered with the Electrification Coalition to develop branding and an integrated system of communications—from fundraising materials, policy reports, and a website that's helping create meaningful policy action on a national strategy for electrified transportation.



Visual Branding & Collateral

The Electrification Coalition's logo combines an E and C to create an interlocking wheel and plug, embodying the organization's focus on the intersection of the electric utility, automotive, and smart grid sectors. The Coalition's typographic system furthers the theme, using "Interstate," inspired by interstate highway signage; and a clean, robust type family that supports the nonprofit's content-heavy, data-rich research and communications. A series of case study templates and other materials round out the Coalition's core collateral, making it easy for the organization to quickly publish analysis for influential leaders in government and business.



Policy & Business Roadmaps

To help the Coalition generate traction around a paradigm shift like electrification of the national transportation grid, we partnered with their team of policy writers and research experts to make the case to audiences in the public and private sector with unique reports that are part policy recommendations, part business case. These roadmaps survey the technologies, presents analyses, prescribes the policy platform, and then presents it all in a compelling accessible package filled with data visualization and infographics to clarify complex concepts.



Business Development Brochure

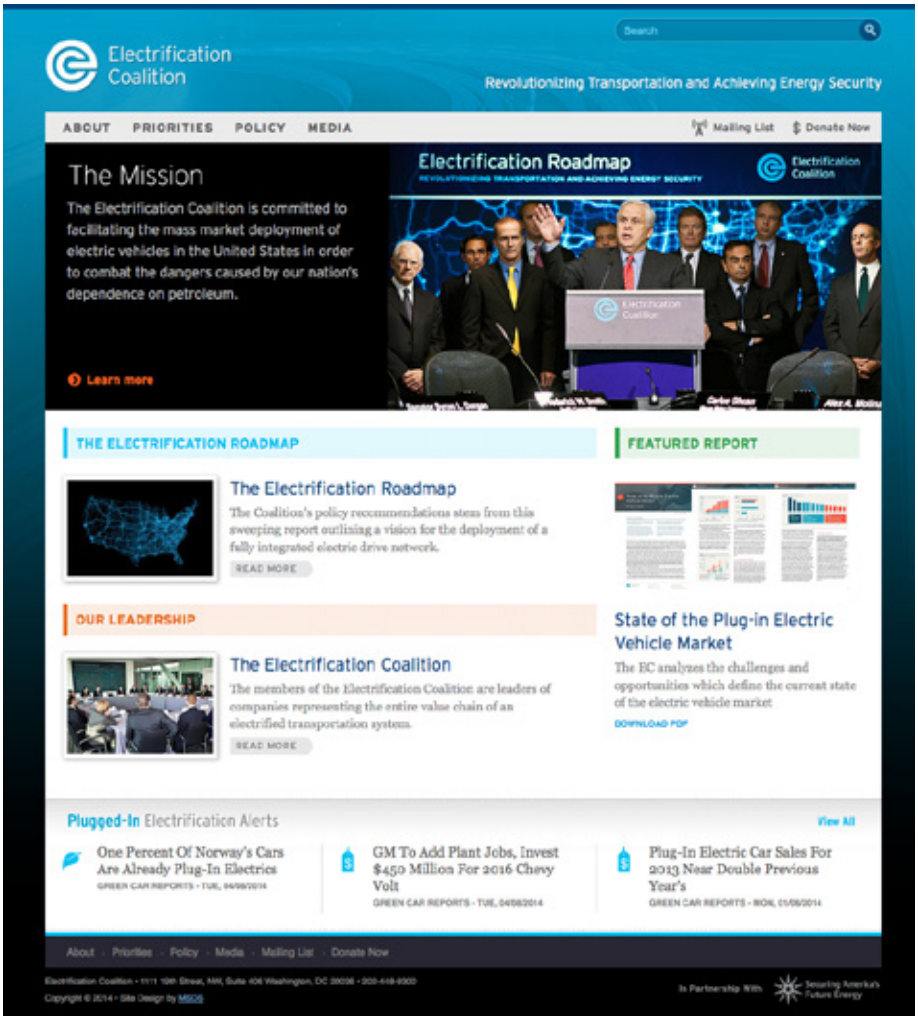
While the Electrification Coalition's Roadmaps are focused on providing a deep dive and well-researched data to connect with experts looking for detailed analysis, the Coalition also sought to provide a more straightforward narrative to better connect with key donors, partners, and others. We helped simplify their complex, but crucial mission into a succinct, fundraising development brochure that generates support by presenting the big picture and a call-to-action in language everyone can easily understand.

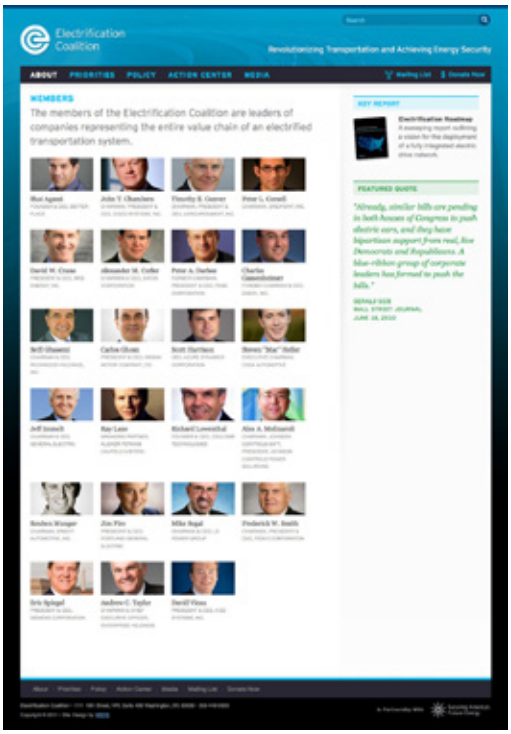


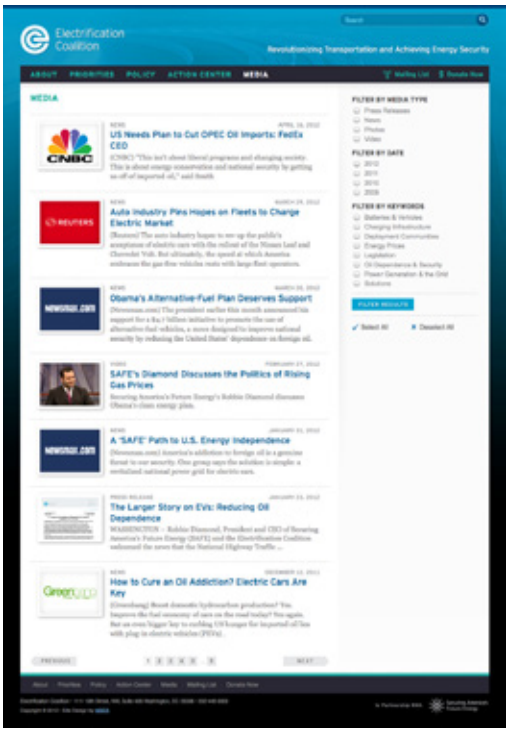
Website Design & Development

To give the Coalition a platform for sharing their research with the widest possible audience and provide a strongly branded presence that would speak well to the influential audiences with whom their leadership was connecting, we partnered to create a website that accomplishes both. The Coalition's new website leads clearly with its mission, issues, and key priorities to quickly establish who they are, what they do, and most important, why it matters.

In addition to supporting increased brand and issue awareness, the website's online research library makes it easy for audiences to go deeper and access Coalition research. Its Action Center maps public and private sector support initiatives for electrification across the nation, while an online media center provides updates, coverage, and video to help raise awareness of this climate, and national security imperative.







Our Client's Take

"MSDS is far more than just a great design team...they're creative partners with a knack for understanding complex content, and helping us communicate it simply and elegantly to multiple constituencies. When it comes to creating must-read, high-impact content and data visualization for policy-minded audiences in the clean energy sector, MSDS is the best in the business."

Sam Ori, Executive Vice President