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Guidance Framework for Intentional Design and Development

I. Why a Core Framework Matters

1. From Intuition to Intention

Raw talent takes a designer only so far. Beyond intuition lies craft-the ability to explain, defend, and replicate success. Without a process, great work cannot be repeated, and mistakes cannot be learned from. A personal framework transforms creativity from accident to method.

2. The Value of Structure

A structured process provides:

- **Intentionality** - Every choice is linked to a goal or insight.
- **Consistency** - Quality becomes predictable.
- **Defensibility** - Decisions can be explained and justified.
- **Scalability** - Collaboration and delegation become easier.
- **Reflection** - Each project generates learning data for the next.

3. Professional Credibility

Clients trust clarity. When they can see *how* you think - not just *what* you make - you move from vendor to partner. Standards compliance (AODA/WCAG), transparent documentation, and iterative learning all signal maturity and reliability.

II. The Philosophy of Intentional Design & Development

1. **Purpose First** - Every design decision must serve a user or business goal.
2. **Simplicity Over Decoration** - Remove what doesn't add meaning or usability.
3. **Structure Before Style** - Organize information and flow before color and texture.
4. **Accessibility is Foundational** - Inclusive design is not optional; it's ethical.
5. **Consistency Creates Credibility** - Cohesion builds trust and comprehension.
6. **Measure Everything** - What isn't measured cannot be improved.
7. **Iterate Intelligently** - Launch, learn, and evolve with each cycle.
8. **Document Decisions** - Reflection transforms experience into expertise.

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III. The Comprehensive Workflow

Stage	Goal	Core Actions	Key Outputs
1. Discovery & Definition	Understand context, purpose, and users before design.	□ Conduct stakeholder interviews □ Define objectives, constraints, and success metrics □ Identify target users and accessibility needs □ Benchmark competitors and references □ Establish scope, timeline, and deliverables	□ Project Brief □ User Personas □ Accessibility Commitment □ Success Metrics □ Scope Document
2. Research & Information Architecture	Create logical, intuitive content structures.	□ Build sitemap/navigation □ Define content hierarchy □ Draft wireframes □ Map user journeys □ Validate information hierarchy with users	□ Sitemap □ Wireframes □ Content Map □ User Journey Maps
3. Design & Prototyping	Translate logic into a coherent, testable experience.	□ Establish visual identity and design system □ Define grids, typography, and spacing □ Ensure AODA/WCAG 2.2 compliance (contrast, keyboard, ARIA) □ Build interactive prototypes □ Gather early feedback	□ Design System □ High-Fidelity Prototype □ Accessibility Validation Report

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Stage	Goal	Core Actions	Key Outputs
4. Development & Implementation	Build scalable, performant, maintainable systems.	□ Select appropriate tech stack (React, Vue, Laravel, WP, etc.) □ Apply component-based, semantic architecture □ Follow coding standards □ Optimize performance □ Integrate analytics and version control	□ Code Repository □ Performance Audit □ Responsive Build □ Documentation
5. Testing & Validation	Ensure reliability, accessibility, and usability.	□ Automated and manual accessibility tests □ Cross-browser/device testing □ Performance audits (Lighthouse ≥ 90) □ User testing □ Bug tracking	□ Accessibility & Performance Reports □ Usability Findings □ QA Sign-off
6. Deployment & Monitoring	Deliver and sustain the product responsibly.	□ Configure CI/CD □ Validate SEO □ Deploy to staging → production □ Set up analytics and monitoring □ Provide maintenance guide	□ Live Deployment □ SEO & Analytics Setup □ Client Maintenance Guide
7. Reflection & Iteration	Learn, improve, and institutionalize insights.	□ Conduct project retrospective □ Capture lessons learned	□ Retrospective Notes □ Lessons Log

Stage	Goal	Core Actions	Key Outputs
		□ Update personal framework □ Write case study for portfolio	□ Updated Process

IV. Parallel Considerations: Web vs App

Web Projects	App Projects
SEO architecture (semantic HTML, metadata)	Platform targeting (native, hybrid, cross-platform)
CMS integration and content workflows	Navigation flow mapping (gestures, haptics)
Page-load optimization and caching	Offline caching & network fallback
Responsive & accessible layouts	Touch-target sizing, screen-reader navigation
Lighthouse, GTmetrix, W3C validation	App-store guidelines, crash analytics

V. Industry Benchmarks & Standards

Domain	Standards to Apply
Accessibility	AODA / WCAG 2.2 AA + mobile WCAG guidelines
Usability	□ Nielsen-Norman 10 Heuristics □ Jakob's Law □ Fitts' Law □ Hick's Law
Design Systems	□ Material Design □ Human Interface Guidelines

Domain	Standards to Apply
	□ Gestalt Principles
Performance	□ Lighthouse ≥ 90 □ PageSpeed □ Core Web Vitals
Development	□ W3C compliance □ Semantic HTML □ Clean, modular code □ Git versioning
Documentation	□ Versioned changelogs □ Readme □ Client handover □ Reflection journal

VI. Continuous Learning Loop

1. **Observe** - Gather data from analytics, feedback, and performance.
2. **Reflect** - Analyze what succeeded and failed.
3. **Refine** - Update processes and patterns.
4. **Reapply** - Implement insights in the next project.
5. **Record** - Maintain a *Design Logbook* for cumulative learning.

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The Intentional Design & Development Workbook

(To be printed or used interactively per project)

Section 1 - Project Foundation

- **Project Name / Client / Date**
- **Purpose** - Why does this project exist?
- **Success Metrics (KPIs):** ☐ Conversion ☐ Accessibility ☐ Engagement ☐ Other _____
- **Users & Personas:** Who are they? Needs? Accessibility considerations?
- **Scope & Constraints:** Deliverables · Timeline · Budget · Dependencies

Section 2 - Research & Discovery Checklist

Task	Done (✓/✗)	Key Notes
Stakeholder interviews completed		
Competitor analysis (≥ 3 examples)		
Accessibility baseline review		
Benchmarks & mood board created		
Success metrics defined		

Section 3 - Information Architecture & Content

☐ Sitemap finalized ☐ User flows mapped ☐ Wireframes approved
☐ Content hierarchy validated ☐ Information labeling follows WCAG semantics

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Section 4 - Design & Prototype Review

Item	Status	Notes
Typography & color palette rationale documented		
Component library / design system established		
Contrast & font-size checks (AODA/WCAG 2.2)		
Prototype tested for usability (3-5 users)		
Responsive layouts verified		

Section 5 - Development Checklist

☐ Tech stack chosen: _____ (why?)
☐ Version control initialized (Git repo URL _____)
☐ Semantic HTML + ARIA roles
☐ Cross-browser/device tests
☐ Performance optimized (Lighthouse score ____/100)
☐ Accessibility audit (WAVE/Axe tools used ____)
☐ Security review (input validation / HTTPS)

Section 6 - Testing & Validation

Category	Tool / Method	Result	Notes
Accessibility	Axe / WAVE / manual	Pass/Fail	
Usability	User tests	Key findings	
Performance	Lighthouse / GTmetrix	Score ____	
Browser / Device coverage	list	Complete ☐	

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Section 7 - Deployment & Client Handover

☐ SEO validated ☐ Analytics configured ☐ CI/CD pipeline setup
☐ Production deploy completed ☐ Maintenance guide shared with client
☐ Version log archived (date _____)

Section 8 - Reflection & Learning

Project Retrospective

- What went well? _____
- What did not go well? _____
- What did I learn about design / development? _____
- What will I change next time? _____
- Next iteration ideas / case study notes _____

Section 9 - Special Add-Ons

For Web:
☐ SEO metadata & sitemap.xml ☐ CMS integration ☐ PageSpeed ≥ 90

For Apps:
☐ State management strategy _____ ☐ Offline support (Y/N) _____
☐ App Store compliance reviewed

Section 10 - Reflection Prompt Bank

- How did I balance form and function?
- Did accessibility inform design decisions or follow them?
- What evidence supports each major choice?
- Where did intuition serve me well, and where did it mislead me?
- What pattern of mistakes or strengths is emerging across projects?

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Section 11 - Self-Evaluation Rubric (1 - 5 scale)

Criterion	Score	Comments
Research Depth		
Accessibility Compliance		
Design Cohesion		
Code Quality / Performance		
Client Documentation		
Reflection & Learning		

Final Note: Great design isn’t about tools or trends-it’s about thoughtfulness, ethics, and evolution. Your process is your craft. Build it with care, question it often, and let it evolve with every project.