

Ridgeburn Landscapes

Measurement month: 2026-10 - Generated: 2026-11-01

FOUNDATIONS

68/100

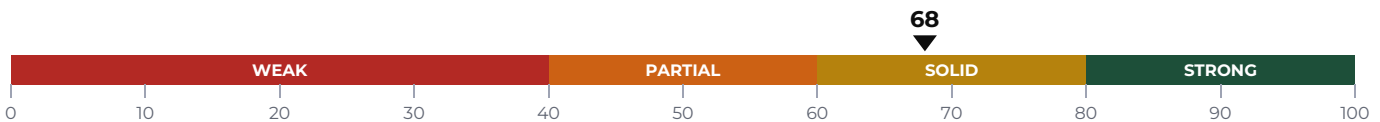
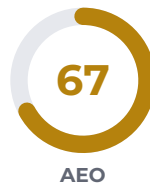
RATING: SOLID

PERFORMANCE

64/100

RATING: COMPETITIVE

FOUNDATIONS



PERFORMANCE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Foundations 68/100 - the fixable work on the website and its presence. Performance 64/100 - what is happening in the market today.
- AI names this business in 19.2% of the 2,112 buyer answers analyzed; 66% of the answers that named it actively recommended it.
- Biggest opportunity: Add proven content signals - quotes, statistics, sources - to your weakest high-value pages (14.2 pts of the score at stake). The full ranked plan is inside.

BACKGROUND

Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO is the practice of improving a website to increase the website's visibility through traditional search engines (e.g., Google). It still matters in an AI world for two reasons: buyers continue to use conventional search, and AI uses web search to find websites to cite or mention in its responses. However, the initial list of websites found by the web search is narrowed further before AI provides its response to the user, which is why the other two scores exist. The aspects of a website that are critical to SEO are:

- The automated system used by search engines to pull information from websites (called a crawler) is able to access your website
- The website pages should load quickly, because crawlers give up on slow pages
- Clear titles and headings on every page, saying plainly what that page is about, so a search engine can tell which question it answers
- A separate page for each thing you offer, covering its subject in full - depth on one topic beats a single page mentioning many in passing
- Internal links connecting your own pages, which is how you signal which of them matter most and how deeper pages get found at all [1]
- Other websites mentioning or linking your website [2]

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO). Where SEO competes for a position in a list of links, AEO competes to be the cited source in the AI response. AEO is particularly important for businesses who strive to be seen as knowledge experts. For a website to have good AEO, AI must be able to access the website and find the answer quickly. AI preferentially selects answers from websites that were recently updated to prevent sharing outdated information. The aspects of a website that are critical to AEO are:

- AI crawlers are allowed to access the site, both in its rules file and at the security layer in front of it - many sites block them there without realizing it [3]
- Headings phrased as the questions buyers ask, so the answer can be lifted directly from the page
- Refreshing pages regularly and including visible dates on the page [4]
- The underlying website code is easy for AI to read, with the words already present rather than added afterward by the browser

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). Being mentioned in the AI response. GEO is particularly important for businesses with products and services that could be recommended to a buyer using AI. The aspects of a website critical to GEO are:

- Statistics, with a named source [5]
- Quotations from named people [5]
- Citations to credible sources [5]
- The content is labeled in a way that matches the language used in a buyer's question
- Being among the first sources AI retrieves for a question, which moved citation rank far more than any wording change tested [6]
- Mentions of a website's product or service by a third-party source. AI answers lean heavily on independent pages: across large-scale tracking, only a small fraction of the sources behind an answer are the business's own site [7] [8]
- For a business serving a local area, ranking on Google carries over less than you would expect - in local service categories the sites AI cites and the sites Google ranks barely overlap, which is why these are scored separately [8]

ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

This analysis asks the AI assistants real buyers use - ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, and Claude - the questions your customers actually ask, and measures whether this business appears in the answers. Every client is measured on all four platforms at the same depth, whether their buyers are consumers or other businesses.

Every audit uses the same fixed design: a panel of 176 buyer questions custom-built for your services and area, each asked three times on each of the four platforms - 2,112 AI answers per audit - plus 24 brand-recognition checks per platform, where the same 12 questions are asked once with web search and once from the assistant's memory. Research has shown that the same question posed to the same AI can return different answers, which is why every question is repeated. For a business serving a specific area, the questions carry that location (e.g., Please help me find a low-cost plumber in Minneapolis, MN).

Scoring: each pillar - SEO, AEO, GEO - is scored out of 100 and splits into Foundations (the work on the website and its presence that the business controls) and Performance (what is actually happening in the market), each shown out of 100.

A few of the questions this audit asked:

- "What does a full landscape design and installation cost for a half-acre lot in Boise?"
- "Best landscaping companies near Meridian for paver patios - who should I get quotes from?"
- "Compare hiring a design-build landscaper vs a lawn care company for a backyard remodel"
- "Who can install a smart irrigation system in the Treasure Valley this spring?"
- "Find a landscaper in Boise that offers commercial grounds maintenance contracts and get me their contact details"

Once changes are implemented to your website, you should expect your AI visibility to start to improve in a couple of weeks, with the full impact of the changes occurring around three months after the changes have been made. For this reason, running the analysis once a month can provide valuable insight into the current status of the improvement and monitors any improvements your competitors have made.

PLATFORM COMPARISON

Mention rate is the percentage of AI answers that included the name of the business that was analyzed. 95% confidence interval (CI) is a statistical measure that shows if we ran this same analysis infinite times, the percentage of AI answers that included the name of the business would likely fall within the range listed. Citation rate is the share of AI answers that included a link to the website itself. Citations have the additional benefit that the link to your website is included in the AI answer.

PLATFORM	MENTION RATE	95% CI	CITATION RATE	AI RESPONSES ANALYZED
ChatGPT	24.4%	20% - 29.4%	9.7%	528
Gemini	16.1%	12.3% - 20.7%	5.9%	528
Perplexity	22.0%	17.8% - 26.8%	12.5%	528
Claude	14.2%	10.6% - 18.7%	4.4%	528

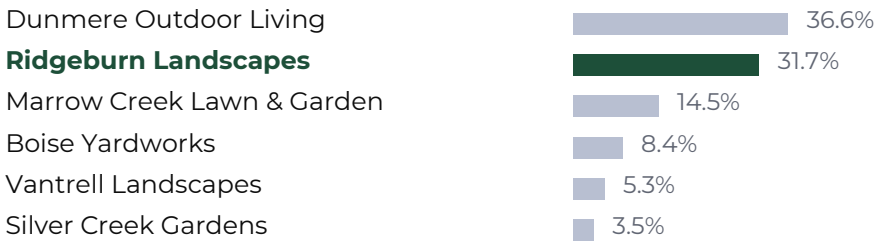
RESULTS WHEN AI USES WEB SEARCH CAPABILITY VS TRAINED MEMORY

AI can answer in two ways: by running a live web search or by using the information the model was trained on during its development. Answers produced from memory reflect what the model absorbed months earlier and shift only when the vendor (OpenAI, Google, Perplexity, Anthropic) decides to retrain the model. For this reason, any changes made to websites now may not show up in memory for weeks to months. In contrast, changes made to websites now may show up instantly in responses that use web search.

PLATFORM	USED WEB SEARCH	USED MEMORY	MENTION RATE WITH WEB SEARCH	MENTION RATE FROM MEMORY
ChatGPT	344	184	27.3%	19%
Gemini	296	232	20.9%	9.9%
Perplexity	528	0	22%	-
Claude	218	310	23.9%	7.4%

COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS - AEO

How often each business is named in answers to the educational questions in the panel - the how-it-works and what-should-I-know questions where being named means being treated as the source of expert knowledge. The percentage shown is each business's share of all the mentions counted across 576 analyzed answers. The competitors are whichever businesses AI named alongside yours; the list is discovered from the answers, not supplied in advance.



COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS - GEO

How often each business is named in answers to the recommendation questions - the questions where a buyer is asking who to hire. The percentage shown is each business's share of all the mentions counted across 1536 analyzed answers.



Where each business appears when it is named

For every recommendation answer that named a business, the column shows where it came in the answer: 1 means it was the first business listed, whether the answer used a numbered list, bullets, a table or headings. A business named only in the text around a list is counted after the last entry. Where an answer has no list at all, the order in which the businesses were first mentioned is used.

BUSINESS	MENTIONS	1	2	3	4	5+
Ridgeburn Landscapes	322	96	88	58	44	36
Dunmere Outdoor Living	378	152	102	64	38	22
Marrow Creek Lawn & Garden	186	68	52	34	20	12
Boise Yardworks	128	44	36	26	14	8
Vantrell Landscapes	104	34	28	20	14	8
Silver Creek Gardens	82	22	20	18	14	8
Table Rock Turf Co	56	10	14	12	12	8
Quarry Bench Irrigation & Lawn	34	4	8	8	8	6

DOES AI KNOW THIS BUSINESS AT ALL?

Everywhere else in this report, questions that contain the business name are excluded - AI repeats a name it is handed, so those answers measure the wording of the question rather than the standing of the business. This section is the one place those questions are useful, with one rule: repeating the name does not count. Each answer was read to decide whether the assistant actually described this business, described some other business with a similar name, or admitted it had no record of it. Only the first counts as knowing the business.

68.8%

KNOWS THE BUSINESS WHEN ASKED (96 ANSWERS READ)

Each answer is also split by how the assistant produced it. A MEMORY answer is what the model learned in training, so it only changes when the vendor releases a newly trained model. A WEB SEARCH answer is what the assistant found live, which the business shapes through its web presence. A business that is found by search but not known from memory exists on the web but has not yet reached the models' training data; that is the usual path in, and the next model generation tends to close the gap if the web presence holds.

PLATFORM	HOW ANSWERED	ANSWERS	KNOWS IT	WRONG BUSINESS	NO RECORD	RECOGNITION
ChatGPT	web search	12	11	0	1	91.7%
	memory	12	6	2	4	50%
Gemini	web search	12	10	1	1	83.3%
	memory	12	4	1	7	33.3%
Perplexity	web search	24	21	1	2	87.5%
Claude	web search	12	9	1	2	75%
	memory	12	5	0	7	41.7%

Handed its name, the assistants recognize this business in 68.8% of answers. The record exists; the work elsewhere in this report is about being brought up unprompted for buying questions.

SENTIMENT OF AI RESPONSES

Being named is not the same as being recommended. Every answer that mentioned this business was classified by how it was framed: recommended (put forward as a good choice), neutral (listed or described without endorsement), or cautioned (mentioned with a caveat, limitation, or warning). A high mention rate paired with mostly neutral framing means AI knows the business exists but is not yet advocating for it.



ANSWER CONSISTENCY BY QUESTION THEME

AI does not always answer the same question the same way, so each question is asked more than once. This table groups those repeats by theme. Observing which types of questions lead to consistent mentions by AI compared to others can provide insight into which pages of a website may need more work than others.

THEME	UNIQUE QUESTIONS	CHATGPT			GEMINI			PERPLEXITY			CLAUDE		
		E	S	N	E	S	N	E	S	N	E	S	N
Landscape design - comparison questions	12	4	5	3	2	5	5	4	4	4	1	4	7
Irrigation systems - ready-to-hire questions	12	3	6	3	1	4	7	4	3	5	2	2	8
Commercial grounds maintenance - buying questions	12	3	4	5	2	3	7	2	5	5	1	2	9
Paver patios and hardscaping - ready-to-hire questions	12	5	3	4	3	5	4	2	6	4	2	4	6
Lawn care programs - do-it-for-me questions	12	2	5	5	1	2	9	3	3	6	1	3	8
Tree and shrub care - learning questions	12	1	4	7	1	3	8	2	2	8	0	3	9

E = named every time - S = named some of the time - N = never named

SCORE BREAKDOWNS

Each pillar carries two scores out of 100. The Performance Score is related to how well the business showed up in the AI responses from our simulated buyer questions. The Foundations Score is related to the aspects of a website or mentions by other websites that determine whether or not a company is likely to be cited or mentioned by AI. In other words, Foundations move first and Performance follows. Every factor below is based on what our research has identified as critical to exemplary SEO, AEO, and GEO, and a sub-score is provided for each.

The 6 themes here cover 72 of the 176 buyer questions in the panel.

FOUNDATIONS SCORE

Crawler access	Search engines and AI are allowed to read the site, and a sitemap tells them where all the pages are. Nothing else can work if this fails.	27.2 / 32
On-page fundamentals	Every page has a clear title, a short summary for search results, one main heading, a preferred web address, descriptive text on images, and a layout that works on a phone.	30.4 / 36
Page speed	How quickly the site loads for someone on a phone. Confirmed as a ranking signal but a weak tie-breaker, so it carries fewer points than the factors with larger measured effects.	9.6 / 16
Internal linking	How well the most important pages are linked to from the rest of the site. Controlled split tests found that adding internal links raised traffic to the linked pages by roughly 5-7% - a real effect you control entirely, but a modest one, so it carries fewer points than the factors with larger measured effects.	9.6 / 16

PERFORMANCE SCORE

Google top-10 rate	Ranked on the first page of Google for 38.9% of the 90 buying-intent questions checked on Google - the commercial, comparison, ready-to-hire and branded questions in the panel. Full marks at 50%.	62.2 / 80
Google top-3 rate	Reached the top three results for 16.7% of those same questions. Full marks at 25%.	13.4 / 20

FOUNDATIONS SCORE

AI crawler access	AI is allowed to read the site. We check the site's own rules file, then visit the way AI would, to confirm nothing silently turns it away. A page that is never fetched can never be named.	31 / 31
Server-side rendering	Whether the words are already in the page when it is delivered, rather than being assembled afterwards inside the browser. In a study of roughly a billion AI crawler requests, the major AI crawlers never ran the browser code at all, so anything assembled that way is invisible to them.	13.8 / 23
Structured data	Labels built into the page that state the facts plainly - what is offered, prices, hours, ratings. Still worth having for identity and for Google rich results, but a controlled study of 1,885 pages that added it found almost no change in AI citations, so it carries fewer points than other factors.	5.4 / 9
Question-shaped headings	Headings written the way buyers actually ask, so AI can lift a clean answer straight from the page.	4.5 / 15

Freshness signals	Dates showing the content is current. In experiments that changed nothing but the date, a page moved by as many as 95 positions in the ranking AI uses to choose what to cite, and AI-cited pages average about a year newer than what Google ranks for the same questions - recency matters more to AI than it does to classic search.	11.4 / 19
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llms.txt	A short file that lists the pages you most want AI to read, in the same spirit as a sitemap. It takes minutes to publish and nothing to maintain, and it puts a curated reading list in place for AI systems as they begin to look for it - low-cost groundwork, weighted to match.	0.9 / 3
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PERFORMANCE SCORE

Citation rate	AI answers included a link to the website 8.1% of the time. Full marks at 20%.	28.7 / 71
Expert standing	On the educational questions, this business held 31.7% of expert mentions against 36.6% for Dunmere Outdoor Living. Matching the leader earns full marks.	25.2 / 29

GEO	foundations 60 / 100	performance 61 / 100
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FOUNDATIONS SCORE

Content signals	Specific figures, quotes from named people, and links to credible sources within the content - the material AI prefers to quote. Worth doing, but weighted below the factors with larger measured effects: the measured gains apply to a page AI has already picked up, and a separate benchmark found some of these tactics can lower a page rather than raise it.	19.2 / 32
Off-site corroboration	Whether the website is connected to its independent profiles - Google Business Profile, review platforms, social pages - by linking to them. A claimed, linked profile is the corroboration AI can verify fastest. Audit note: 3 platforms connected from the site: Google Business Profile, Facebook, Houzz. NOT LINKED FROM THE SITE: Yelp profile supplied at intake.	19.2 / 32
Web mentions	Third-party pages that name the business - directories, review platforms, local press, community posts - measured by searching Google for the business by name and counting the independent sites that come back. Across 75,000 brands, mentions elsewhere on the web tracked AI visibility about three times more closely than links to the site did. Audit note: 4 independent sites naming the business in the top Google results for its own name (2 searches, 20 results checked; 0 from the business itself, excluded): yelp.com, houzz.com, angi.com, idahostatesman.com.	21.6 / 36

PERFORMANCE SCORE

AI mention rate	The business was named in 21% of the AI answers to recommendation questions - the ones where a buyer is asking who to hire. Full marks at 50%.	19.7 / 47
Competitive standing	This business held 25% of all provider mentions against 29.3% for Dunmere Outdoor Living. Matching the leader earns full marks.	22.1 / 26

List position	When AI listed providers, this business appeared first 96 times and in the top three in 75% of its mentions. First place earns full credit, later places progressively less.	14 / 20
Sentiment of mentions	Of the answers that named the business, 65.9% actively recommended it rather than simply listing it or adding a caveat.	4.6 / 7

RESEARCH-BACKED ACTION PLAN (START WITH THESE THREE)

16 actions address every factor that fell short of full marks (SEO 5, AEO 6, GEO 5). Each item's pts figure is the score points that work can realistically recover - taken from the score breakdown and weighted by how strong the evidence behind the tactic is - and the plan is ordered by that number.

1. Add proven content signals - quotes, statistics, sources - to your weakest high-value pages GEO 14.2 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Adding quotations, specific figures and citations to credible sources measurably increased how often content was used in AI answers. Quotation addition produced the largest gain in the peer-reviewed GEO study, with statistics and cited sources close behind ([5]). Being checkable matters too: in one audit only about half of generated sentences were fully supported by the sources cited alongside them ([9]), so content that genuinely stands up is what sets you apart.

ACTION STEPS

1. Choose the pages covering the subjects where you most want to be found.
2. Add specific numbers in place of vague claims. 'We reduced their processing time by 43%' rather than 'we improved efficiency'. Name where each figure comes from.
3. Add a quotation from a named person - a client, a member of your team with their job title, or a recognized expert. Quotations produced the single largest measured gain.
4. Link out to credible sources backing your claims: industry research, official statistics, standards bodies. Linking out does not hurt you.
5. Make sure every claim can be checked. Content that cites sources which do not support it is a known weakness of AI answers, and being genuinely verifiable is what sets you apart.
6. Remove any keyword stuffing - the same search phrase repeated unnaturally often. This measurably works against you.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Read the page and ask whether a stranger could verify every factual claim. Anything they could not check should be given a source or removed.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

4-8 weeks

2. Become the cited source, not just a mention AEO 10.4 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Being named is good; being linked is better, because a link sends a visitor. Links are given to pages that state something specific and worth pointing at, and adding quotations and statistics produced the largest measured gains in the peer-reviewed GEO study ([5]).

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify the facts only you can provide - your own data, your pricing, your process, results you

have achieved.

2. Publish those on pages that state them plainly, in text, high on the page.
3. Give each a clear heading matching how someone would ask for it.
4. Make sure the page loads as plain text without needing a browser to assemble it, or it cannot be read.
5. Keep the figures current and dated, since AI prefers material it can tell is recent.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

The citation rate in this report tracks this directly. Watch it from audit to audit.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

8-12 weeks

3. Win top-10 rankings for the commercial panel queries

SEO 9.8 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Ranking well is not sufficient for AI visibility on its own, but ranking for the question is what puts a page into the set AI systems draw from ([7]). Necessary rather than sufficient: in a study of 112 startups, on-page optimization alone did not predict discovery ([10]).

ACTION STEPS

1. Look at the question themes in this report where you are not appearing.
2. For each, decide which single page on your site should answer it. If none does, that page needs to be created.
3. Make that page genuinely thorough - answer the question completely rather than teasing a phone call. Depth is what earns rankings.
4. Link to it from your strongest existing pages using words describing what it covers.
5. Cover the whole subject rather than one page per keyword variation. Search engines reward pages that answer the question fully.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Check Google Search Console under Performance every few weeks and watch the average position for those pages.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

2-6 weeks

CONCLUSION

This business is competitive but not yet leading. Across 2,112 AI answers to the questions Treasure Valley buyers actually ask, Ridgeburn Landscapes was named about one time in five, and on the recommendation questions - the ones where someone is choosing who to hire - it appears in 21% of answers, second only to Dunmere Outdoor Living. The position data is a genuine strength: when AI lists providers, Ridgeburn lands in the top three in 75% of its mentions, and its 96 first-place listings are second only to Dunmere's 152. AI systems that have found the business tend to like it: 66% of the answers that named it actively recommended it.

The gap is not visibility with AI systems that search - it is the record the business leaves for them to find. Handed the business name, the assistants recognized it in 85% of web-search answers but only 42% of memory answers, which means the business exists on the web but has barely reached the models. That

pattern almost always traces to thin third-party corroboration, and the audit confirms it: four independent sites name the business in Google top results, against a field leader with an established review footprint. The off-site work in the action plan - reviews, directories, one piece of local press - is what closes that gap.

On the site itself the foundations are better than the performance suggests. AI crawlers are fully allowed in, but almost none of the content is shaped the way AI lifts answers: two headings on the entire site are written as questions, service copy carries few concrete figures, and the sitemap tells crawlers the content is five months stale. These are writing and publishing tasks, not engineering projects, and they map directly to the citation rate, which at 8.1% is the weakest number in the report - and why the plan's top item is adding exactly those quotes, figures and sources.

Taken together: hold the recommendation-question position, close the memory gap with third-party mentions, and give AI something quotable and current to cite. The ranked plan below orders that work by the score points each item can realistically recover, and a follow-up audit - the day-90 re-audit in the two-audit package, or any later re-test - will show the movement question by question.

APPENDIX: FURTHER ACTIONS

These are the remaining items the audit identified, in the same order of priority and with the same detail as the three above. They are worth doing - they are simply not where to start. Work down this list once the first three are complete.

4. Build the off-site corroboration engine

GEO 6.1 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

AI cross-checks a business against independent sources before recommending it. Mentions of a business elsewhere on the web track AI visibility more closely than links to it do ([2]), and AI systems cite third-party pages far more often than a business's own ([7]). In a study of 112 startups, community presence predicted discovery where on-page optimization did not ([10]). What others say about you matters more than what you say about yourself.

ACTION STEPS

1. Check the audit note printed with this factor in the score breakdown first. If it lists profiles under "NOT LINKED FROM THE SITE", you already have those profiles - the website simply never points at them. Add each one as a link (a footer or contact page is fine) and the work for this item is largely done. If nothing is listed, start at step 2 and build the profiles first.
2. Claim and complete your Google Business Profile in full - hours, services, photographs, description.
3. Claim your profile on the main review platform for your industry: Yelp for local services, G2 or Capterra for software, Clutch for agencies, Trustpilot for retail.
4. Ask satisfied customers for reviews, steadily rather than in bursts, and reply to every one including the critical ones.
5. Answer real questions in places where your customers already gather - industry forums, relevant subreddits, LinkedIn.
6. Get listed in genuine industry directories and trade association member lists. Avoid paid link schemes, which are a different thing and carry risk.
7. Add links to all these profiles in your website's hidden business details, so the connection is explicit.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Search your business name and see what appears besides your own website. A first page containing only your own pages means this work has not been done. Also re-check the audit note

at your next audit: profiles you have linked should move out of the "not linked" list.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

1-3 months

5. Publish a fresh sitemap with accurate page-change dates

SEO 6 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Two small files control whether search engines can read your pages at all. A page search engines cannot reach cannot rank, and cannot be retrieved by the AI systems that read the same index ([11]) - and a page that is never retrieved can never be cited ([6]). The sitemap does double duty here, because it is also how you signal when a page last changed, and recency measurably affects what gets quoted ([4]).

ACTION STEPS

1. Open your browser and go to [yoursite.com/robots.txt](#). If you see a page saying 'not found', that is fine - it means nothing is being blocked.
2. If you do see a file, look for the words 'Disallow: /' on a line of its own. That single line blocks your whole site. If it is there, it needs to be removed.
3. Now go to [yoursite.com/sitemap.xml](#). You should see a list of your page addresses. If it is missing, you need to create one.
4. On WordPress, install Yoast SEO or Rank Math and the sitemap is created automatically. On Shopify, Squarespace and Wix it already exists at that address - nothing to do.
5. Tell Google about it: sign in to Google Search Console, choose Sitemaps in the left menu, type [sitemap.xml](#) and press Submit.
6. Check the dates in it: each page entry should carry the date the page truly last changed - the lastmod field. Most SEO plugins keep this current automatically; if every page shows the same old date, turn that setting on or ask your developer to fix the generator.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Return to [yoursite.com/sitemap.xml](#) and confirm you see your pages listed and that the dates beside recently edited pages are current. In Search Console, the sitemap should show as Success within a few days.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Days to 4 weeks

6. Deliver the words with the page

AEO 6 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Some websites send an almost empty page and then build the content inside the visitor's browser. People see it fine, but retrieval systems generally read the raw server response ([12]) rather than running that step, so to them the page looks blank.

ACTION STEPS

1. Open one of your important pages, right-click and choose 'View page source'. This shows what a machine receives.
2. Use Ctrl+F or Cmd+F to search that source for a distinctive sentence from the visible page.
3. If you find the sentence, you have no problem here and can stop.
4. If you do not find it, your content is being assembled in the browser and needs changing. This is a developer task, not a settings change.
5. Tell your developer: 'Our pages need to be server-side rendered or pre-rendered, because AI crawlers do not execute JavaScript.' That sentence is enough for them to know what to do.

6. If your site was built on WordPress, Shopify, Squarespace or Wix, this problem almost never applies - it mainly affects custom-built sites and web applications.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Repeat the page-source search after the change. Finding your visible sentence in the source means it is fixed.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Days to 4 weeks

7. Convert headings into questions with instant answers

AEO 2.8 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

AI lifts answers out of pages. A heading that matches the question being asked, with the answer immediately beneath it, is far easier to lift than the same information buried in a paragraph.

ACTION STEPS

1. Write down the ten questions customers actually ask you before buying. Use their words, not industry terms.
2. Find or create a page for each answer, then make that question the heading, worded exactly as a customer would say it.
3. Answer it in the first two or three sentences underneath, before any background or sales copy. Give the answer plainly and completely.
4. Add supporting detail after that for anyone who wants to read further.
5. Where a question has several parts, use a short bulleted list - these are easy to lift and often quoted directly.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Ask an AI assistant one of your questions and see whether it returns something resembling your answer. Repeat every few weeks, since answers change.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

4-8 weeks

8. Strengthen internal linking

SEO 2.6 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Links between your own pages tell search engines which of them matter most, and help both people and machines find pages buried deep in the site. In controlled split tests, adding internal links to a set of pages raised their organic traffic by roughly 5-7% against an untouched control group ([1]). It is a real effect and one you control entirely, but a modest one - link the pages that matter rather than every page you can.

ACTION STEPS

1. Decide which five to ten pages you most want customers to reach - usually your main services or products.
2. Go through your other pages, especially blog posts and articles, and add links pointing to those important pages wherever the subject comes up naturally.
3. Write the clickable words so they describe the destination. 'Our landscape design service' works; 'click here' does not.
4. Check that every important page can be reached from your home page in no more than three clicks. If something takes more, add a link from a page nearer the top.
5. Add a short 'related pages' list at the foot of your main articles pointing to your service pages.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Pick an important page and ask yourself how many other pages on your site link to it. If the answer is none or one, that is the gap this fixes.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

2-6 weeks

9. Move up the list when AI names providers

GEO 2.3 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

When AI answers a who-should-I-hire question it usually returns a short list, and readers weight the first names most. Position tracks which businesses AI reaches for first, and the signals it leads with are the ones it can verify quickly - reviews, complete profiles, and pages that answer the exact question.

ACTION STEPS

- 1. Check the position table in this report to see where your mentions land today.
- 2. Grow review volume and recency on Google Business Profile and your category platform - assistants routinely lead with the option carrying the strongest recent proof.
- 3. Complete every profile field AI can compare on - services, service area, hours, pricing signals, photographs.
- 4. Publish a page that answers the exact buyer question plainly, so the assistant can justify naming you first.
- 5. Watch at your next audit whether first- and second-place counts grow faster than total mentions.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

The position table in this report tracks it - watch the first-place and top-three counts from audit to audit.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

4-8 weeks

10. Fix on-page basics: meta description, H1, canonical tag, image alt text

SEO 2 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

These are the small labels that tell search engines and AI what a page is about. They are the basics that let a page be indexed and understood at all, and none of them are visible to a normal visitor, which is why they are so often left blank.

ACTION STEPS

- 1. List your ten most important pages - usually the home page, your main service or product pages, and your contact page.
- 2. Give each one a title of roughly 30 to 60 characters that plainly says what the page is, for example 'Landscape Design in Boise, ID'. In WordPress this is the SEO title field; in Shopify and Squarespace it is under page settings.
- 3. Write a short summary of about 70 to 160 characters for each page. This is the grey text people read under your link in search results.
- 4. Make sure each page has exactly one main heading at the top - the largest text on the page. Two competing main headings confuse both readers and machines.
- 5. Add a few words of description to every meaningful image, called alt text. Describe what is in the picture, as you would to someone over the phone.
- 6. Confirm the page works properly on a phone by opening it on your own phone and checking nothing is cut off.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Search Google for your exact page title in quotation marks. If the page appears with the title and summary you wrote, the labels are being read correctly.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

2-6 weeks

11. Close the gap to the most-named competitor

GEO 1.8 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

This measures how much of the discussion you own compared with the competitors AI names alongside you. Competitive adoption erodes individual gains ([6]), so assets nobody else can produce matter more than generic tactics.

ACTION STEPS

1. Look at the competitors listed in this report. These are who AI actually recommends, which may not be who you consider rivals.
2. Search for what those competitors have published that you have not - comparison pages, original data, detailed guides.
3. Publish honest comparison content covering your category, including where a competitor is the better fit. Even-handed comparisons are treated as reference material; sales copy is not.
4. Publish something only you can: a survey of your customers, results from your own work, a price guide for your market.
5. Get into the third-party sources where those competitors already appear - the same directories, review platforms and industry lists.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

The share-of-voice chart in this report tracks it. Watch whether your share grows as the competitor set stays similar between audits.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

1-3 months

12. Cut mobile load time

SEO 1.6 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Slow pages lose buyers before they read anything, and the systems that gather information for AI answers give up on pages that take too long to respond. Speed is documented as a ranking input ([11]), though a weak tie-breaker - and only real-visitor field data counts, because laboratory scores do not affect rankings. Three measurements make up the assessment: how quickly the main content appears (LCP), how quickly the page responds when someone taps or clicks (INP), and whether the layout jumps about while loading (CLS).

ACTION STEPS

1. Go to pagespeed.web.dev, enter your address and choose the Mobile tab. Note the section labeled 'Discover what your real users are experiencing' - that is the part that counts.
2. The single most common cause of slowness is oversized images. Before uploading any picture, resize it to no more than about 2000 pixels wide and save it as WebP if your tools allow.
3. On WordPress, install a caching plugin such as WP Rocket or LiteSpeed Cache. This alone often produces the largest single improvement.
4. If the report singles out INP, the problem is responsiveness rather than loading: the page is busy running scripts when someone taps it. The usual causes are chat widgets, pop-ups, cookie banners and analytics tags all starting at once - remove any you do not need, and ask whoever built the site

to load the rest after the page becomes usable.

5. Remove plugins, apps and tracking scripts you no longer use. Each one adds loading time on every page.
6. Ask your host whether they offer a content delivery network, often shortened to CDN. Most include one free, and turning it on is usually a single switch.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Re-run the PageSpeed test a week after the changes. Real-visitor data updates slowly, so give it time before judging.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

2-4 weeks

13. Out-publish the competitor AI treats as the expert

AEO 0.8 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

On educational questions AI treats one or two businesses as the reference and the rest as bystanders. Standing measures your share of those expert mentions against the current leader, and the gap closes by publishing the material assistants quote - definitive guides, original figures, plainly answered questions.

ACTION STEPS

1. Read the educational questions in this report where competitors were named and you were not.
2. For each theme, publish the definitive plain-language answer - complete enough that nothing else needs to be read.
3. Add original material only you can supply: your own figures, process detail, named results.
4. Keep those pages current and dated, since assistants prefer material they can tell is recent.
5. Re-check the expert-standing figure at each audit against the named leader.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

The Comparison to Competitors - AEO chart in this report shows your share against the leader.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

8-12 weeks

14. Complete your structured data markup

AEO 0.7 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Structured data is a hidden block of information stating your facts plainly - what you sell, what it costs, when you are open. Machine-readable facts remove the need for a system to infer them from prose, and it still earns its place for identity and for rich results in conventional search ([11]). Keep expectations modest though: a controlled study of 1,885 pages that added it found AI citations barely moved ([13]).

ACTION STEPS

1. Decide which facts matter: your business name and contact details, your services or products with prices, your opening hours, and answers to common questions.
2. On WordPress, install Yoast SEO, Rank Math or Schema Pro and fill in the business details in the plugin settings - it writes the hidden block for you.
3. On Shopify most themes already include product details automatically; check under theme settings for a structured data or rich results option.
4. If you need to write it by hand, use Google's Structured Data Markup Helper to generate the code,

then ask your developer to place it in the page.

5. Make sure whatever you state in the hidden block matches what a visitor can see on the page. Claiming a price that differs from the visible one causes the labels to be ignored.
6. Include links to your profiles elsewhere on the web - your Google Business Profile, LinkedIn, and any review sites you appear on.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Paste the page address into Google's Rich Results Test at search.google.com/test/rich-results. It lists what it found and flags anything broken.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

2-6 weeks

15. Improve how AI describes the business

GEO 0.7 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

Being named is not the same as being recommended. AI may mention you while attaching a caveat, and those caveats come from what it has read about you: assistants summarize the sources they retrieve, so the evidence available about a business shapes how it is described.

ACTION STEPS

1. Find out what is being said: ask each AI assistant directly what the drawbacks or risks of working with your business are, and write down the answers.
2. Look for patterns - unclear pricing, uncertain scope, thin reviews, no visible results.
3. Answer each hesitation on your own site. If pricing is unclear, publish ranges. If scope is doubted, publish what is and is not included.
4. Publish named results - client outcomes, case studies with figures, testimonials with full names and companies.
5. Address any genuinely negative material rather than ignoring it. Reply to critical reviews plainly and factually.
6. Repeat the questions before your next audit to see whether the caveats change.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

The sentiment chart in this report shows the split between recommended, neutral and cautioned answers.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

1-3 months

16. Publish an llms.txt file

AEO 0.3 pts

WHY THIS MATTERS

A short file at your site's root listing the pages you most want AI to read. It takes minutes to create, and it is cheap hygiene rather than a lever: across 300,000 domains, publishing llms.txt showed no measurable relationship with citation frequency ([14]), which is why it carries so few points.

ACTION STEPS

1. Open a plain text editor - Notepad or TextEdit, not Word.
2. Write a heading line with your business name, then a one-line description of what you do.
3. List the addresses of your ten most important pages, one per line, each with a few words explaining what it covers.
4. Save the file with the exact name llms.txt.
5. Upload it to the top level of your website so it appears at yoursite.com/llms.txt. Your host's file

manager or your developer can place it.

HOW TO CHECK IT WORKED

Visit yoursite.com/lms.txt and confirm the file loads.

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Minutes to publish; no measurable effect on AI citations expected

APPENDIX: PAGE-BY-PAGE FINDINGS

The technical scores earlier in this report summarize the whole site. This appendix is the work order behind them: every page the audit read, every check that page did not pass, what is there now, and what should be. Work through it page by page. 12 pages audited on 2026-10-01; 5 passed every check; 10 findings across the rest.

Homepage2 Findings			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
question-style headings	HIGH	0 of 8 headings are written as questions	Rewrite the main service headings as the questions buyers ask, e.g. What does a full landscape design cost in Boise?
structured data (schema markup)	MEDIUM	Organization schema present; LocalBusiness block is missing address, hours and service area	Complete the LocalBusiness schema so AI can verify who and where the business is
/services2 Findings			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
search result summary (meta description)	MEDIUM	Missing - Google and AI compose their own summary	Write a 150-character summary naming the services and the service area
links to other pages on the site	MEDIUM	2 internal links point here; the money page is 3 clicks from the homepage	Link to this page from the homepage and every service article
/landscape-design2 Findings			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
question-style headings	HIGH	Headings are labels (Design, Install, Maintain) rather than questions	Add a short FAQ block answering cost, timeline and lot-size questions in plain language
image descriptions (alt text)	MEDIUM	14 of 22 project photos have no descriptive text	Describe each project photo - yard area, plantings, materials
/irrigation1 Finding			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
text readable without JavaScript	MEDIUM	Roughly 30% of the page text, including the zone pricing table, only appears after browser scripts run	Render the pricing table and captions server-side so AI crawlers can read them

/about1 Finding			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
main heading (H1)	MEDIUM	Two main headings compete on the page	Keep a single H1 naming the business and what it does
/contact1 Finding			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
structured data (schema markup)	MEDIUM	No LocalBusiness schema on the page that carries the address	Add the LocalBusiness block here with address, phone and hours
/blog/xeriscaping-vs-traditional-lawns-in-idaho1 Finding			
CHECK	SEVERITY	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
preferred page address (canonical)	MEDIUM	Canonical points at the staging domain	Point the canonical at the live page address

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Need help implementing these changes?

Our website design team can help. Send us a message at elevome.com