

**.gov Reform Initiative**

**Department of Education Web Improvement Plan**

Working Draft as of 10/11/2011

## Background

In the [August 12, 2011 Agency Instructions for Completing Web Inventories and Web Improvement Plans](#), Agency CIOs were asked to work with their Agency Web Manager and Office of Public Affairs to submit an Interim Progress Report on their efforts to streamline Agency-managed .gov domains (due September 6, 2011) and to begin development of an Agency-wide Web Improvement Plan.

“By October 11, Agencies shall develop a Web Improvement Plan that communicates their **strategy for managing web resources more efficiently, improving online content, and enhancing the customer experience of Agency websites.**” This comprehensive plan will “address the broader objectives of **streamlining content, infrastructure, and ultimately improving customer service.**”

The purpose of this Web Improvement Plan is to identify the strategy, actions, measurements, and timelines that the Agency is using to streamline website infrastructure, improve web content, and enhance the customer experience with Executive Branch websites.

Agencies are being asked to create a Web Improvement Plan that will be developed iteratively over the next few months. In this plan, Agencies will describe Agency-wide efforts to effectively manage publicly accessible websites in the .gov domain. Only agencies in the Executive Branch are required to submit a Web Improvement Plan. The initial plan for the Department of Education, due to OMB by October 11, 2011, is in the following section.

## **Step 1: Current State of Agency-wide Web Improvement Efforts**

Over the past few months, Agencies have been reviewing their .gov domains, web operations, and other web-related efforts in response to OMB .gov Reform data collection efforts (individual domain inventories, web governance survey, interim progress reports, etc.). The following describes the state of current web improvement efforts at the Department of Education.

### **1) Does your Agency currently have an Agency-wide web strategy?**

No.

### **2) How does your agency currently ensure that Agency-wide web resources are managed efficiently (e.g. governance, technology/infrastructure, hosting, staffing, operations, etc.)?**

There are processes in place to ensure that Departmental resources are used for appropriate web projects and to monitor the performance of these individual projects.

The Enterprise Architecture Review Board (EARB) is responsible for reviewing and approving/disapproving requests related to the development and management of websites, including new hardware and software, software upgrades, and placement of the website in the infrastructure, along with the review of firewall port openings, if applicable. The size and scope of the website will determine the level of detail required by the EARB.

Websites that cross a critical dollar threshold report performance monthly (to include EVM metrics) using the OMB Exhibit 300 document.

### **3) How does your Agency currently ensure that website content is readily accessible, updated, accurate, and routinely improved?**

Individual website business owners for the approximately 80 ED sites are responsible for ensuring that the content they post is accurate, complies with all Federal and ED requirements, and is properly maintained. For small sites, the business owners may handle this task directly or hand it off to the contractors who maintain the site for them. For large sites, such as the main ED.gov site, this task may be further split among the many content owners who contribute to the site.

The ED.gov Management and Publishing Policies (<http://www2.ed.gov/internal/wwwstds.html>) lay out the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in supporting the main ED.gov site and specify the content management responsibilities associated with each role. The individual content owners choose how to best handle these responsibilities, with some setting up formal approval processes or quarterly content reviews, and others relying on more informal procedures.

#### **4) How does your Agency currently ensure that websites are meeting user expectations and needs and that the customer experience with websites is continually enhanced?**

The major sites, such as [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov), and [ies.ed.gov](http://ies.ed.gov), use standard web analytics such as Google Analytics, Web Trends, or Urchin to provide information on usage and inform decisions on site improvements. They also use a number of different methods for direct feedback from customers, such as surveys, contact forms, focus groups, and social media contacts.

Site owners have been using this data to make incremental improvements to sites. For example, the Office of Communications and Outreach (OCO) used this data to determine likely top tasks and provided links to associated task pages near the top of every page. OCO then continued to monitor the data to improve the task list, refine the linking language, and provide better information on the individual task pages.

OCO also provides support for smaller sites by helping them set up individual profiles in the ED.gov Google Analytics or Urchin systems and by providing guidance on how to use the tools, and what to do with the information.

Based on its performance data, Federal Student Aid has determined that the best way to address the current issues users have with its sites for students is to overhaul the entire portfolio. The Integrated Student View project, which guides this reorganization and consolidation will continue for the next few years.