

.gov Reform Initiative

General Services Administration 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 General Services Administration, 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 General Services Administration.

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

No.

GSA has a comprehensive web strategy for its two major web presences: for GSA.gov and for USA.gov. It is beginning the process of developing an agency-wide web strategy as a result of the .gov Reform Initiative, which will be a plan for further streamlining GSA's web presence. GSA.gov is the portal that hosts most of the public facing content that serves other government agencies and the public doing business with GSA; USA.gov is the public facing portal with government information and services to citizens. Many of the domains GSA owns are to support various inter-agency initiatives and communities of practice. GSA will explore ways to consolidate and streamline those domains and websites to gain more efficiencies and improve the customer experience.

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

GSA has not yet established an enterprise approach to web governance or to web management. Although there is a strong focus on operational efficiency of GSA.gov and USA.gov, GSA has not yet systematically addressed the issues of technology and infrastructure, hosting, staffing and operations across all the GSA .gov domains. Much of GSA's mission, in addition to fleet management, real property and acquisition management, is to support of government-wide services and initiatives that are developed in response to particular executive orders and direction. This has contributed to the large number of GSA domains that have been created to support these initiatives, and the variety of kinds of support provided to them.

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

GSA ensures that the website content for two of its key domains, GSA.gov and USA.gov is readily accessible, accurate, and routinely approved. For GSA.gov, the GSA Office of Communications Management applies stringent controls on the content, its quality, presentation and style. Most of GSA domains use performance measures and feedback mechanisms that provide guidance for assuring the content is useful, is being used, and is reaching the intended audiences.

A variety of tools are used to support the many GSA domains. Oracle is used to manage workload in two domains, several use customized COTS or internally developed content management system plus Percussion content management system and three instances of Drupal are used, plus seven domains use WebTrends and Google Analytics. This is not a comprehensive list, however; and GSA will update its knowledge base regarding tools, hosting sites, management support systems and the like going forward.

USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov are managed by the Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies. The content is managed by a team of content managers highly trained in web content management, writing for the web, plain language and other relevant disciplines. Content managers are assigned responsibility for different areas of the sites and are accountable for page content, quality, presentation, style, and adherence to the established web content strategy and social media strategy. Additionally, all content is reviewed by an editor for adherence to the established style guide and Section 508 compliance. Our websites are routinely tested for usability, functionality and accessibility. Content is updated daily, and the sites have an established cycle of functionality and design enhancement. USA.gov/GobiernoUSA.gov hosting was moved into the cloud in 2009, saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

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?

GSA ensures that its two major websites, GSA.gov and USA.gov are meeting expectations and needs and that the customer experience with those websites is continually enhanced.

Last year GSA.gov transformed its look and feel and functionality with a new content management system that enhanced the search capabilities and improved the user experience.

GSA's other domains use multiple feedback mechanisms to address the particular purposes of those domains and sites. GSA also routinely tests its websites to ensure compliance with Section 508 and access for people with disabilities. Our goal is to ensure that all of GSA domains are Section 508 compliant. GSA provides leadership and resources to other agencies in providing accessible content.

GSA is also taking a lead in testing usability of web sites not only in GSA but also for other agencies, through the First Friday Product Testing Program. The program trains web teams to test their websites with real users, identify the top usability problems, and identify quick fixes to improve the user experience. This affordable, practical program has been underway for just over a year, but has already helped GSA and over a dozen agencies to make incremental improvements to their websites.

For GSA.gov, USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov, web teams ensures that user expectations are met and continually enhanced through customer surveys and engagement, analysis of web metrics, frequent usability testing, and an established continuous website improvement cycle.

GSA.gov, USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov customers are surveyed on the websites using the ACSI survey to benchmark satisfaction on our sites against other government and commercial sites. We also survey the public to gauge the effectiveness of the Frequently asked questions in our online database, and the helpfulness of the information provided by the staff in our contact center. USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov added polls and user-generated comments to engage visitors and learn more about their opinions, preferences and trends. When a customer sends an email about the USA.gov or GobiernoUSA.gov websites, the messages are not only read, but acted upon and responded to in a short-time frame because we value direct communication with our audience. We also engage our audience through social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and the USA.gov Blog.

GSA.gov constantly monitors usage with WebTrends, Google search appliance logs, and data collection tools such as Crazy Egg. Likewise, USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov staff constantly monitor visitor traffic and use via various log analysis and data collection tools and analysis of the USASearch search logs to identify top search terms. We also monitor popular FAQ's and popular questions that come in to our contact center through phone calls, emails and chat to understand what information the public is currently seeking. We routinely update the homepage of both sites to prominently display these top requests, to make them easy to access.

GSA.gov, USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov are designed according to usability best practices, and are routinely tested to learn how people use our sites and specific steps that we can take to improve user experience. These domains and their sites have a continuous website improvement cycle where functional and design enhancements are released every 6 weeks at a minimum.

To further enhance the customer experience and become more efficient, GSA integrated four websites into USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov. The sites were rich in content, but lacked the strong brand recognition of USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov. The immediate result is that USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov benefited from this new rich content and because of the strong brand recognition, this content is being found and used by the public in ever increasing numbers.