

Public Domain Directory of Federal Web Sites Working Group Plan

Goal

U.S. Government websites will be the most citizen-centric and user friendly in the world.

Objectives

- Build on existing FirstGov.gov taxonomies to make it easy for visitors to federal websites to find federal government information services based on their needs, irrespective of their knowledge of the government's organizational structure.
- Improve public access to information on the Internet by establishing an official public domain directory of federal public websites and a strategy for maintaining it.

Work Plan Tasks and Outputs:

Task 1. Subject Taxonomy. Based on guidance issued by OMB, the subject taxonomy should build on the FirstGov.gov subject matter taxonomies (by topic, and by audience). To accomplish this, the group will:

- a. Validate FirstGov's current topics taxonomy against the Business Reference Model for Citizen Services, other taxonomies such as that used by the Federal Register, and with department and independent agency portals to see if they find themselves in this taxonomy.
- b. Work with departments/independent agencies to validate, improve and spread the taxonomy throughout government
- c. Work with information architects and librarians to standardize and improve the next level below the top-level topics on FirstGov's topics taxonomy.
- d. Determine ways to cascade the citizen-centric topics taxonomy used on FirstGov to and from agencies (e.g., require agencies to link back to FirstGov when they display information by one of FirstGov's top/second level topics or audiences (e.g., More Government Information for Parents; More Government Information on Travel, Recreation and Transportation: etc)

Outcomes:

- a. List existing subject matter (topics, audience) taxonomies in use by federal government departments and independent agencies from the home page of these organizations, assuming they serve as portals to their sub organizations.

- b. Recommend to FirstGov.gov existing top level information architecture/top level categories for immediate changes based on review of BRM/Citizen Services; department/independent agency portals, other taxonomies, and interviews with FirstGov team.
- c. Recommend improvements to second level of FirstGov taxonomy which standardizes across topics, and takes into account analysis of information architecture among department/independent agency portals.
- d. Recommend to ICGI any requirements or guidelines to agencies to help spread and use the government wide taxonomy throughout government.

Membership:

- Bill Hall - Lead
 - Andy Bailey
 - Eleanor Frieson
 - Tina Kelly
 - Lori Klein
- Advisory Member
- Joanne McGovern

Task 2. Public Domain Directory of Public Federal Websites: The Act requires the creation of a public domain directory of public federal websites. It is clear that directories currently exist that the group can recommend be endorsed as the “official” public domain directory. To make its recommendations, the group will:

- a. Establish criteria the public domain directory must meet. At a minimum, the criteria will include the following:
 - The directory must be in a format useful to citizens.
 - The directory must reside on or be linked from the official government portal, FirstGov.gov.
 - The source of the data must be the government.
 - A process must be in place for maintenance to keep the information official and real time in an Internet environment.
 - There must be a connection between posting directory information on agency websites and the central directory.
- b. Identify the FirstGov.gov Organizational Directories (A-Z Index, Hierarchical Index, Cross Agency Portals), and other existing directories of federal government websites that can meet the mandate of the E-Gov Act.
- c. Review current process for input to the Federal Register regarding organizational changes, NARA and GPO for publication in the U.S. Government manual, and to other sources to further define the directory and how it should be presented and maintained as the official public domain directory.

Outcomes:

- a. Develop criteria to evaluate potential directories for meeting the mandate.
- b. List existing government-wide directories, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and best practices
- c. Recommend and provide rationale for how the directory should be displayed. This can include improvements to, expansion of, or replacement of the FirstGov.gov organizational and cross agency portal directories as the official domain directory of federal public websites. This can also include how information should be displayed on agency websites that feed into the governmentwide directory (work with web content standards group).
- d. Recommend ways to efficiently keep a directory of public websites up to date, including processes to use sources of data on organizational changes and website changes that can be reported once, shared with many, and reused for multiple displays and purposes.

Membership:

- Michael White - Lead
- Kevin Novak
- Joanne McGovern

Advisory Members

- Russell O'Neill
- James Vaughn

Task 3. Display and Policies for .gov and .mil Domains. Review .gov and .mil to refine the scope of the directory and assess existing policies regarding the use of .gov, .mil, and other domains by federal government websites. To accomplish this, the group will:

- a. Review existing top level domains used by federal government websites.
- b. Determine duplicates (aliases) and separate remaining top level federal sites by web domains leading to government organization's home pages versus sites set up to represent specific audiences, topics, transactions, or other purposes.
- c. Determine what reliable information we already have about these websites from the registration and maintenance process, and how data are organized.

Outcomes:

- a. Identify touchpoints between .gov and .mil domain registration process and public domain directory display and maintenance process.
- b. Provide organized list of .gov domains, with recommendations for how top-level non-organizational websites should be displayed in conjunction with the public domain directories and FirstGov.gov taxonomies.

- c. Recommend policy changes and standards for naming conventions, criteria and process for registering .GOV and .MIL domains, responsibilities associated with owning a top level domain, and ways to accomplish those changes.

Membership:

- Keith Thurston - Lead
- Alan Vander Mallie
- Maruan Barakat
- Tony Mazzuchi

Advisory Members

- Terry Davis
- Joanne McGovern
- Bev Godwin

Task 4: Long-term strategy: Discuss ideas for future improvements to the public domain directory and ways to communicate changes. To do this, the group will:

- a. Review possibilities for longer-term strategy for creating and maintaining a public domain directory infrastructure that stores data in a reusable format, using information about website domains and/or government organizations.

Outcomes:

- a. Recommend and document process(es) for future continuous maintenance, improvement and communication of subject taxonomies.
- b. Recommend standard for capturing information about website domains and/or government organizations.

Membership:

- Dan Brown
- John Teeter
- Pamela Mason

Advisory Members:

- Kurt Molholm
- George Thomas
- John Murphy

Assumptions

- The scope of work is limited to U.S. government information available through the World Wide Web to the public only. Intranets and extranets will not be part of the Public Domain Directory, as they require restricted access.
- Web content management is about what gets displayed to the websites. What gets displayed to the public must be different than the categorization of government information and data for internal business operations.
- A public domain directory of federal websites by organization and subjects taxonomies (by topic and by audience) have been created by FirstGov.gov, the official federal internet portal as specified under Section 204 of the E-Government Act. The E-Government Act provides the foundation for working with agencies to improve FirstGov.gov and the directory. The workgroup will build upon those efforts.
- The Working Group will focus on making existing efforts better, and avoid reinventing the wheel. It will build upon FirstGov.gov, cross agency portals, and government agency expertise of what Americans want from government websites.
- People look for information in different ways. The workgroup will adopt FirstGov.gov's policy that multiple organizational principles may be expected and preferred.
- There is too much duplication of effort across federal websites, which is inefficient and causes confusion to the public. Operate to greatest extent feasible on principle to develop content once, and reuse it many times.
- Top level domains are (should be) important websites that meet certain criteria and carry with them certain responsibilities.
- Departments and large independent agencies' home pages should serve as citizen-centric portals to their sub-organizations.
- The Working Group will take a user-centered approach to the FirstGov.gov expansion, the Cross-Agency Portal Strategy, and agency website improvement, while keeping those charged with the maintenance of such Web sites top-of-mind.
- A user-centered approach is crucial, but will not succeed unless the Web sites have an organizational infrastructure to support them.
- Look for things that can be done in the short term that make sense and are useful to the public. Set in place processes to accomplish longer term objectives.

- Lessons learned from the Public Domain Directory workgroup will feed into the other ICGI workgroups (Web Content Standards, electronic records policy, and categorization of information).
- Do what is right for the American public.

Public Domain Directory Work Group Chairs: Phyllis Preston, DOT/FAA and Dan Brown, DHS/TSA

Interagency Committee on Government Information Executive Sponsor: Bev Godwin, GSA