Workplan for the
Web Content Standards Working Group

The Web Content Standards Working Group is part of the Web Content Sub-Committee of the Interagency Committee on Government Information (ICGI).   The Working Group is comprised of representatives from cabinet-level agencies and other agencies, who are researching, analyzing and recommending web content standards and guidelines for federal agency websites.

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

Objectives:
1) Develop web content standards and guidelines that:
- Make it easier for all Americans to find and use the government information and services they want and need on the Internet;
- Provide more standardization and higher overall quality of federal websites.
2) Consult with OMB on Federal research and development websites.

Required Task:
Propose web content standards and guidance for federal agency public Internet websites, to include the following as defined in Section 207(f)(1) of the e-Government Act of 2002:

- Requirements for providing descriptions of the mission and statutory authority of the agency;
- Requirements for providing information made available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act;
- Requirements for providing organizational information about the agency;
- Requirements for providing the strategic plan of the agency;
- Minimum goals for:
    o Search engines, including speed and relevance
    o Tools to aggregate and disaggregate data
    o Security protocols to protect information.

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Proposed Deliverables:
1. Develop recommendations for OMB on website guidance and standards that include:
    o New standards required by the E-Government Act;
    o Reiteration of existing standards required by laws and prior regulations;
    o Additional new standards that will facilitate customer use of federal websites; and
    o Additional guidance that, while not required, will enhance the ease of use of federal websites and their effectiveness in communicating with the public.
2. Web-based "Toolkit for U.S. Government Web Content Managers," on FirstGov.gov. Over time, the Web Content Managers' Toolkit will include standards and guidelines issued by OMB; tools and best practices for implementers of the web content standards; suggested strategies for implementing standards and measuring their success; and background materials to document the rationale for each standard and guideline.
3. Recommendations for an ongoing structure and process for determining future web content standards for federal websites.

Assumptions:
- This working group will focus only on web content requirements and guidelines - not on technology requirements.
- Requirements will be based on making it easier for the American public to find the government information and services they want and need.
- Requirements should result in a basic level of service from agency websites.
- Requirements should be reasonable and not cause an undue burden or excessive costs to agencies, as they implement them.
- Requirements and guidelines should reflect the unique nature of, and demands on, government websites as repositories of information and services for all Americans.
- Requirements should promote the concept of seamless (boundary-less) government.
- Requirements, standards, and other deliverables will be based on information about how the public uses and wants to use the Internet to get government information.
- The Web Content Standards Working Group will work closely with other Working Groups and sub-groups involved in implementing the E-Gov Act, including the Public Domain Directory sub-group, the Electronic Records Working Group, and the Categorization of Information Working Group.

Strategy:
- Take advantage of work and resources that already exist.
- Adopt a strategic, phased approach to ensure that all requirements of Section 207(f)(1) of the Act are met by December 2004.
- Limit initial standards to those actions that:
  o Must be taken because of laws or existing regulations;
  o Will eliminate or mitigate duplication of effort, overlap, and waste;
  o Will immediately make citizens' use of federal websites easier/more successful;
  o Are already commonly accepted
- Provide a limited number of additional "guidelines" that will begin moving toward common content models, without placing an undue burden on agencies.
- Develop and provide tools, techniques, and strategies to help agencies implement the requirements and regulations.
- Produce final products that reflect agency participation and stakeholder buy-in.

Work Plans:
- Assemble a Working Group comprised of current federal web content managers and others who have, or are, working with federal websites.
- Seek input from a wide cross-section of stakeholders and experts.
- Determine and compile all current content requirements pertaining to federal public websites - including privacy, security, accessibility, FOIA – contained in laws and existing regulations.
- Identify and compile additional generally agreed-upon content practices that could become standards.
- Compile guidance – including usability guidelines, plain language guidelines, and other guidance related to website design and content – that could serve as resource information for web content managers.
- Develop guidance and tools to implement the standards.
- Vet proposals, as appropriate, with key stakeholders, including the Federal Web Content Managers Forum, the CIO Council, and other interagency groups.
- Draft final guidance and standard recommendations for ICGI and then OMB review.
- Draft any supplemental instructions or guidelines for those who will be implementing the standards (i.e., web content managers).

- Work with the FirstGov staff to develop a Web Content Managers Toolkit, where standards, guidelines, and resources can be aggregated.
- Develop a strategy for monitoring and updating standards.
- Package all information in an easy-to-use format.
- Present the proposed deliverables, as developed, to the Working Group chair to bring to the ICGA Executive Committee for review.