

.gov Reform Initiative

Department of Commerce 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 Commerce, 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 Commerce.

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

Yes.

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

Commerce has a robust capital planning, investment and control process that includes Web resource management as part of maintaining its infrastructure investments. The Commerce information technology (IT) capital planning and investment control process is built on a foundation of strategic and operational IT planning that is integrated with processes for the selection, control, and evaluation of IT investments. Web resources management is linked to enterprise architecture, IT security and privacy, electronic government, IT accessibility, and other domains of IT management responsibility. The Commerce Information Technology Review Board (CITRB) is co-chaired by the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Chief Financial Officer. Recommendations of the CITRB are based on consensus evaluations, using decision criteria to determine such factors as alignment to Commerce and operating unit high-level performance goals, net risk-adjusted return on investment, project management strategies, risk mitigation and risk metrics, security implementation, architectural compliance, and overall value of proposed IT projects. Regular CITRB reviews are now supplemented by targeted, action-oriented TechStat reviews following guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

In addition to the Commerce Capital investment control process, the Web Advisory Council (WAC) provides recommendations to improve the management and use of the DOC Web presence and enabling technologies that incorporate the consideration of mission needs and IT security risks. The WAC reviews and periodically updates existing DOC Web policies, developing new policies when necessary; reviews and recommends decisions on requests for accounts for approved social media services to the DOC Director of New Media; reviews and recommends decisions on requests for new top-level domains to the DOC CIO; develops skills, knowledge, best practices, ideas, and solutions for Web developers and content managers; ensures that DOC Web sites are in compliance with Web policies set forth by the DOC and the OMB; and supports FISMA compliance reporting.

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

The Commerce Office of the Chief Information Officer conducts a Web certification survey that requires the Commerce operating unit (OU) CIOs to attest that their Web sites comply with Commerce Web policies. The OU's Chief Information Officer (CIO) certifies annually to the Department's CIO that all Web sites of their organization comply with the Department's Web policies, located at www.osec.doc.gov/webresources. If any deficiencies exist, the certifying CIO shall provide a plan to bring the Web sites into compliance. OU CIOs must further identify the associated, current IT security plan for the servers hosting these sites. The Department's CIO will determine whether the proposed approach is acceptable, and retains the authority to shut down any site for non-compliance.

These policies incorporate OMB-related policy concerning IT accessibility, IT privacy, domain name policy, offsite notification, and evaluation of information before publication. The Commerce Searchable Web Page policy requires tags to describe Web content, use standard meta data and provide a search capability on all major pages. All Commerce Web content is subject to the Commerce Information Quality Guidelines that ensure the integrity, utility, and objectivity of all data disseminated by Commerce.

Before publishing information on Web sites, Department of Commerce organizations must ensure that the content is appropriate for dissemination and that the proposed level of access is appropriate to the content. The Evaluation of Information before Publication policy requires DOC organizations to make a two-step evaluation before publishing any information to the Web to evaluate the information for content appropriateness; and to evaluate the information to determine the appropriate level of access, e.g., Internet, Intranet. These steps entail balancing the mission-related value of dissemination against the potential risk of publishing the information at a particular level of access. No information should be published to the Web unless there is a mission-related business purpose for doing so. If a mission-related business purpose does exist, that purpose should be balanced against any risk posed by publication.

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?

Commerce is committed to obtaining feedback from its Web visitors and enhancing the user experience. All Commerce sites are required to have contact information through multiple means for the public to contact us. In the last nine months, we posted a Social Media and Web 2.0 (SM/W2.0) Use Policy, which encourages the use of social media to better reach our diverse audience. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for operating units and Commerce employees to take full advantage of SM/W2.0 technologies while, at the same time, protecting Commerce and its employees by mitigating the risks inherent in using these services without the proper safeguards. Last month, we posted a Web Measurement and Customization Policy to optimize the user experience and provide statistically

accurate data about use of Web sites. Commerce allows the use of Web measurement and customization technologies; these technologies include, but are not limited to, cookies. Cookies are placed in the user's browser to track the user's activity on a Web site and customize the user experience. This policy mandates that the privacy policies posted on Commerce Web sites must include how to opt out of the Web measurement and/or customization technology; and provide alternative access if the user elects to opt out of the technology.

Commerce operating units use a variety of tools to measure customer satisfaction such as Google Analytics and Web Trends. We also employ tools that follow the American Customer Satisfaction Index methodology for surveys such as ForeSee and 4Q.