

.gov Reform Initiative

Department of State 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 State, 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 State.

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.)?

Governance

The Department's Internet Steering Committee (ISC) is the authoritative governing board for all Department websites. The ISC considers, recommends, and manages policies, procedures, and functions related to control of the Internet presence, use and services. The overall goal of the ISC is to achieve balance among: 1) Information strategy and policy; 2) Mission related uses of the Internet, including content management; 3) Management of security risks; and 4) Technology challenges and issues.

The Department websites comply with Departmental information standards, as reflected in the Department's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH). The Department of State Content Management System (CMS) Policy (US Department of State Telegraphic Message Reference Number (MRN): 132990) mandates that all overseas websites will use CMS. CMS is a secure Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) delivery platform in a cloud computing environment that facilitates the development, hosting, and maintenance of a centralized multilingual content management system to streamline the creation and delivery of high quality information for web content. Migrating domestic internet sites under the CMS is proposed for 2012. Upon adoption by domestic sites, the Department-wide CMS policy will be fully implemented.

This permits the website owners to focus on the content instead of platform support or compliance issues. CMS is carefully managed and tracked through the Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) process and monitored by Senior Department officials and the Office of Management and Budget. Overlapping services are integrated and migrated under CMS.

Technology/infrastructure

CMS is implemented as a cloud computing service IaaS. This IaaS environment facilitates the development, maintenance, and hosting of a centralized multilingual content management system to

streamline the creation and delivery of high quality information for web content (text, video, audio, etc.). It provides a secure delivery platform and infrastructure for website owners, freeing them from concerns about platform support and compliance with laws, mandates, and executive orders.

Hosting

CMS supports Really Simple Syndication (RSS) enabled and Extensible Markup Language (XML)based Content Syndication, which allow for the seamless repurposing of content across multiple Department websites. It also provides an integrated search engine using taxonomies, automated submission of new content to the Internet Google Search Engine, and Web log analysis and reporting. CMS offers a commenting feature that allows individuals from the International public to provide feedback on articles. In addition, CMS customers are surveyed annually regarding CMS features, emerging technologies, and their business needs. CMS hosting is delivered through a cloud computing Software as a Service (SaaS) Application Services Model.

Staffing

CMS is a 24/7 operation including Continuity Of Operations (COOP). This policy projected a \$4.4 million cost avoidance in website personnel support costs for just 58 posts in 2007. In 2011, 430 posts are supported by CMS.

Operations

CMS provides all operational support, including training and new technology development. As new software components and services are added, these packages are available for use by all CMS customers. Best of breed emerging technologies to support growing business needs, such as expanding social media tools, are integrated into a single platform as part of the standard CMS package.

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

CMS is a 24/7 operation with 508 compliance and 99.9% availability. The Department's policy states, "any office or mission that creates or 'publishes' a public Web site is responsible for its content, organization, and adherence to the Department's standards and practices, and federal regulations" and "The designated editor or content manager should ensure that information published on their websites is current, relevant, and accurate." The ISC provides oversight to ensure accessibility, accuracy, and currency.

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?

CMS includes a feedback feature to solicit input from the public. In addition, CMS customers are surveyed annually regarding CMS features, emerging technologies, and their business needs. As new software components and services are added, these packages are available for use by all CMS customers. Website owners are responsible for reviewing and evaluating technology, developer, subject matter expert, and user inputs. Website owners work through the ISC and within CMS capabilities to continuously enhance their websites.