

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250**

<b>DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION</b>		<b>Number:</b> 1496-001
<b>SUBJECT:</b> Digital Strategy Governance	<b>DATE:</b> November 21, 2012	
	<b>OPI:</b> Office of Communications	

1. PURPOSE

This Department Regulation (DR) establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for the governance of digital services within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In order to improve programs and information exchange with external customers, partners and employees, USDA seeks to provide mission and business program support through a digital strategy that is information and customer-centric, leverages existing resources to the greatest extent possible, and ensures that digital content incorporates adequate privacy and security controls. This policy establishes the framework to provide the public, entrepreneurs, and agricultural programs with the ability to better leverage valuable USDA data to further advance innovative applications and beneficial services. It focuses on innovating with less to deliver better digital services, and specifically promotes an overall approach to increase returns on Information Technology (IT) investments, reduce waste and duplication, and improve the effectiveness of IT solutions through the use of shared services.

The Office of Communications (OC) sponsors USDA's digital services strategy in partnership with the USDA Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), and component agency and office Web, information technology, and public affairs offices.

2. BACKGROUND

In May 2012, the Federal Chief Information Officer (CIO) within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued guidance instructing agencies and offices to develop a digital strategy to improve the management and delivery of digital services to their customers. An overall strategy was developed to promote the adoption of core principles to: share information in an open, accurate and more widely available manner; share resources in order to reduce costs and cycle time for service delivery; produce "user friendly" services that can be easily understood, accessed, and utilized by customers; and, ensure that adequate security and privacy controls are consistently and effectively incorporated into digital products and services. A major emphasis on innovation was also incorporated into the strategy to encourage agencies and offices to move beyond existing products, processes, and paradigms. USDA is committed to adopting these principles to perform USDA's mission.

### 3. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATION

This policy will complement the following USDA regulations:

- a. [DR 1440-002](#), Communications Coordination and Review Policy
- b. [DR 1490-002](#), Creative Media and Broadcast Policy
- c. [DR 1495-001](#), New Media Roles, Responsibilities and Authorities
- d. [DR 3140-002](#), USDA Internet Security Policy
- e. [DR 3150-001](#), Internet Domain Name Policy
- f. [DR 3410-001](#), Information Collection Activities – Collection of Information From the Public
- g. [DR 3430-001](#), Web Site Development and Maintenance
- h. [DR 3515-001](#), Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies
- i. [DR 3600-000](#), USDA Information and Technology Transformation

### 4. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

- a. OMB “[Digital Government: Building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Platform to Better Serve the American People.](#)” May 23, 2012.
- b. OMB Memorandum [M-10-06](#) “Open Government Directive.” December 8, 2009.
- c. 7 CFR Part 2 “[Revision of Delegations of Authority.](#)” Federal Register Vol. 76, No. 208, October 27, 2011.

### 5. DEFINITIONS

- a. Customer – For purposes of this document, customers may be internal to USDA, or external (e.g., individual citizens, academia, state, local and tribal governments, grant or loan recipients, media).
- b. Digital Information – Information that the government provides digitally. Information, as defined by OMB Circular A-130, is any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms.
- c. Digital Services - The delivery of digital information (e.g., data or content), and transactional services (e.g., online forms, applications) across a variety of platforms, devices and delivery mechanisms (e.g., websites, mobile applications, and social media).
- d. High-Value – Information or services are considered “high-value” as they can be used to increase agency accountability and responsiveness, improve public knowledge USDA and its operations, further our core mission, create or stimulate economic opportunity, or respond to needs and demand as identified through customer interaction.

- e. Open Data or Content – Digital information that is structured and made available in a way that makes it accessible for meaningful use beyond its system of origin, be that internal to the Department or external to the public. This term expands upon the definition of “openness” in OMB Memorandum [M-10-06](#) *Open Government Directive*, which specifically concerns the release of information to the public: “Agencies shall respect the presumption of openness by publishing information online...To the extent practicable and subject to valid restrictions, agencies should publish information online in an open format that can be retrieved, downloaded, indexed and searched by commonly used web search applications. An open format is one that is platform independent, machine readable, and made available to the public without restrictions that would impede the re-use of that information.”

## 6. SCOPE

This policy applies to all USDA digital communication activities including websites (USDA.gov, agency, and other partner websites) and social media. It is applicable to all digital communications content, whether accessed by desktops, mobile devices, or other methods, including web content, data, and apps.

This policy applies to USDA employees, contractors, grantees, institutions, and partners who are responsible for creating and managing digital content, tools, and processes on behalf of the Department.

## 7. POLICY

USDA will establish a collaborative, customer-focused, and data-driven digital services delivery framework to:

- a. Enable USDA customers and employees to access high-quality digital content, information, and services more efficiently and effectively anywhere, anytime, on any device;
- b. Establish more agile acquisition and budget processes that support the procurement and management of digital technologies in a manner that: is affordable; reduces time to delivery; considers the use of shared, government-wide acquisition vehicles; and, complies with Federal guidelines for information, data and content management including adequate security and privacy controls;
- c. Identify, unify, and make more efficient current fragmented digital services policies and practices; and ensure that continuous improvement is part of future digital policy development;
- d. Ensure that digital service development, design and delivery meets the widest possible scope of national, regional, and local customer requirements, including USDA employees;

- e. Establish a collaborative, repeatable oversight process that incorporates measures against performance goals for customer satisfaction, alignment with Federal guidelines, incorporation into the USDA Enterprise Architecture, cost savings, and time to delivery; and,
- f. Ensure that high-value data is open, accurate, clearly described, structured, machine-readable, and incorporates adequate security and privacy controls by default.

## 8. PROCEDURES

This policy is further delineated in a procedural manual published as a companion document within the Regulation series.

## 9. RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy assigns the responsibilities for effectively governing USDA digital communication investments and activities as follows:

- a. USDA Director of OC will:
  - (1) Serve as the primary business lead for strategic digital services;
  - (2) Coordinate the execution of strategies that meet the needs and preferences of internal and external customers;
  - (3) Coordinate content management across agencies;
  - (4) Represent the voice of the customer;
  - (5) Fully participate in digital strategy development;
  - (6) Serve as the coordinator between and among the Agency and Office webmasters and public affairs directors; and,
  - (7) Review and approve all investments supporting digital communication services and activities, in coordination with the USDA CIO.
- b. USDA CIO will:
  - (1) Serve as the technical lead for digital service platform and infrastructure development, provisioning and management for innovative digital services;
  - (2) Coordinate with OC to gather requirements for technical service delivery;

- (3) Lead digital services portfolio development and management;
  - (4) Coordinate across agencies and offices to develop and maintain data structure management process;
  - (5) Fully participate in the digital strategy development;
  - (6) Provide a secure and rapidly scalable infrastructure to support mobility;
  - (7) Serve as the coordinator with Agency and Office Chief Information Officers; and
  - (8) Review and approve all USDA digital strategy investments pursuant to the requirements of the Clinger-Cohen Act (CCA) and other applicable laws and regulations.
- c. USDA Agencies and Staff Offices will:
- (1) Participate fully in the USDA Digital Strategy effort and serve as the business leads to provide requirements for the development and implementation of digital services and investments;
  - (2) Identify opportunities for innovation and requirements for digital services and investments;
  - (3) Implement this policy within their respective organizations by developing and coordinating an integrated operational digital service framework; and
  - (4) Establish partnerships with USDA functional counterparts, including Web, information technology, portfolio management and public affairs.

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