

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

WEB STANDARDS HANDBOOK

(386 DM 3)



Revised April 4, 2007

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

FOREWORD

In February 2006, the Office of the Chief Information Officer released the Departmental Web Standards Handbook as a guide to the minimum and recommended requirements for Department of the Interior bureau and office Web sites. This Handbook supplemented the requirements prescribed by 386 Departmental Manual 3 and established Department-wide policies and procedures for the proper implementation of all Federal laws, regulations and policies, including the recent Office of Management and Budget policies, related to Federal Agency Public Web sites. This Handbook was not designed to be used as a detailed "how to" manual for the development and maintenance of Web sites. Rather, bureaus and offices should use these standards as a basis for developing their own, more detailed, guidelines for their Web sites, which may also include bureau-specific requirements such as visual identity or branding elements.

The continuous improvement of technology and the expanding role of the web in delivering information and services from the bureaus and offices to their targeted audiences and the general public impacts the way the Web is managed. As such, the DOI Web Standards is a dynamic document which is reviewed and updated on a regular and ongoing basis.

The following conveys the first such revisions. These include a revision making it a requirement for Web pages to link to USA.gov (Sections 3.3 and 4.3.10) and a revision to make the No Fear Act Notification a required link on the homepage of every agency/bureau website (Sections 2.1.5 and 4.3.11).

Proposed changes may currently be submitted through various means including a proposal to bureau representatives on the Web Council or directly to the DOI Web Manager. If approved, revised versions will be disseminated to bureau representatives and posted online at <http://www.myinterior.doi.net/webcouncil/documents.html>.

Questions regarding the contents of the Handbook may be directed to the Departmental Web Manager or to the bureau or office Web Managers. Additional copies of the Handbook may be obtained by contacting the bureau Web Managers.



Karen Siderelis
Acting Chief Information Officer

Date: APR 4 2007

Revision History

Maintenance of this Document

The DOI Web Manager and DOI Web Council maintain this document.

New technologies, standards, and ever-changing Federal regulations and Departmental policies require these standards to be a dynamic publication. This document will be periodically updated and will always show the latest revision date to indicate when an update has been made.

To propose specific additions or revisions, or obtain more information about this document, you may contact your representative on the DOI Web Council or the DOI Web Manager. These Standards will be maintained online at <http://www.myinterior.doi.net/webcouncil/documents.html>

Revision History

Any substantial revisions, other than minor typographical corrections, will be listed in this section, with a brief description of the changes made and the date of the revision.

DATE	CHANGE	SECTIONS
1/11/2007	Revised name and url (web address) of required link of Firstgov.gov to USA.gov	3.3 4.3.10
	Revised to make the No Fear Act Notification a required link on the homepage of agency/bureau Web sites(s).	2.1.5 4.3.11

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Effective Date:

Chapter 1: Organizational Roles and Responsibilities

Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

1.1 DOI Web Council

A. Overview: The DOI Web Council (DWC) is charged with engineering the DOI Web presence to be customer focused while establishing management controls. DWC is comprised of bureau content and Web technical experts, which will provide Department-wide assessments and recommendations to the Department Chief Information Officer (CIO) to ensure customers can easily locate, share, and use information over the DOI Web. The Department of the Interior and its bureaus have established a multitude of Web sites to provide the public with information about the functions and policies of the Department. The Office of the Chief Information Officer has implemented the DOI Web Council as part of an effort to improve the user experience, security, and costs of managing the Department's Web sites.

1.2 Web Management

A. Standard: The Department and all bureaus will each appoint a Web Manager to oversee the development, implementation, and maintenance of their Web presence on the Internet.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: The intent of this requirement is to ensure clear accountability of Web management responsibilities. All government information, activity, and public content should be maintained by a trusted, accountable government employee, such as a Web Manager. The public relies on fast, accurate information and Web content and clear accountability is necessary to ensure application of appropriate rules, standards and policies.

D. Implementation Guidance: The bureaus may choose to appoint a single Web Manager, or a Web Content Manager and/or a Technical Webmaster. As an alternative, the bureaus may choose a Web Team with a chairman to oversee their Web presence.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

1.3 Web Governance Process

1.3.1 Registration

A. Standard: The Department and all bureaus will have a process in place for registering all Internet Web sites with their Web Manager or Web Team. This inventory of Web sites and related information (i.e. author, developer, purpose, etc) will be used to maintain a Web site inventory and provide data, as necessary, to the Department, OMB, and/or other oversight organizations.

A Web site may be defined in the following manner:

Web site - A Web site is a navigationally connected set of one or more pages, documents, services and/or application(s). It is intended for a specific audience(s), accessible through the internet or intranet via a Web browser, with a primary point of entry (home page), has a defined purpose and is managed as a distinct collection.

It is recommended, though not required, that the same process be instituted for DOI and bureau internal intranet Web sites.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: The Department and all bureaus will maintain an inventory of Web sites in order to properly manage content, costs and accountability, and also control proliferation or unnecessary duplication of Web sites. They may also be called on to provide information and data on the number of Web sites and related information to entities such as the OMB, the Office of the Inspector General, and others.

D. Implementation Guidance: The bureaus may implement this standard according to their own process/guidelines.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated (refer to OCIO Directive 2004-011)

1.3.2 Review and Approval

A. Standard: The Department and all bureaus will implement a review and approval process for proposed Web sites that will include an evaluation of the purpose and necessity of the Internet Web site, the technical requirements and responsibility for content, as well as provisions for compliance with all standards and guidelines, and appropriate approvals from supervisory/management personnel.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: The Department and all bureaus are required to maintain appropriate and necessary controls over the Web sites accessible to the public to ensure the regulatory compliance, appropriateness, quality, usability and accessibility of the information.

D. Implementation Guidance: The bureaus may implement this standard according to their own processes/guidelines. This may be accomplished through the formation of a configuration management board or similar governance structure.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated (refer to OCIO Directive 2004-011)

1.3.3 Certification/Audits

A. Standard: The Department and all bureaus will have a process that includes the ongoing review of all Internet Web sites to ensure continued compliance with all applicable standards and regulations, and to ensure they meet the requirements of Section 508 Accessibility and Section 515 Information Quality. (See Section 2.1.15 Information Quality)

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Internet Web sites and Web pages are dynamic by nature and can have frequently changing information. This information should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure the public has access to the most current and accurate information and that duplicative or outdated information is removed from Internet Web sites in a timely manner.

D. Implementation Guidance: The bureaus may implement this standard according to their own processes/guidelines. (For additional information, see Section 2.1.15 Information Quality Guidelines and Timeliness of Information)

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

Reference Web Sites

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d)

<http://www.section508.gov/>

Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001: Public Law 106-554, "Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Organizations": <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/reproducible2.pdf>

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Chapter 2: Requirements/Responsibilities Mandated by Federal Laws, Regulations and Policies

Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

2.1 Adherence to Federal Laws, Regulations and Policies

A. Overview: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and other directives. The following sections address the most relevant applicable current authorities.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: In order to provide information in a timely, accurate, and user focused manner, all DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with the applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and other directives that ensure access to quality information.

D. Implementation Guidance: See the guidance for each specific requirement listed in this section.

E. Implementation Deadline: See the deadline for each specific requirement listed in this section.

2.1.1 Privacy Policy

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with laws and directives that require protection of the privacy of the DOI and bureau Web visitors, particularly the Privacy Act.

B. Exceptions: None

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must comply with laws and directives that require protection of the privacy of the DOI and bureau Web visitors.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Requirements for DOI Internet Web sites are as follows:

1. A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) must be conducted on every Web site that collects, maintains or disseminates information in identifiable form from, or about, the public. www.doi.gov/ocio/privacy/pia.htm
2. Every Web site must link to the Departmental Privacy Policy at <http://www.doi.gov/privacy.html>
3. Every Web site must link to the Department Privacy Disclaimer Statement at <http://www.doi.gov/disclaimer.html>
4. Display a prominent link to the Departmental Children's Privacy Statement on every Web site designed for children, under the age of 13 years, at: <http://www.doi.gov/chprivacy.html>
 - a. Each Web site designed to collect information from children will include the Children's Privacy Statement and a description of the agency's information collection practices, including:
 - 1) Types of personal information collected from children (e.g., name, home address, email address, or hobbies)
 - 2) How the information collected will be used (e.g., to market to the child who supplied the information, to notify contest winners, or to make the information available through a child's participation in a chat room).
 - 3) Notifying whether personal information will be forwarded to advertisers or other third parties.
 - 4) Providing a point of contact for the site.
 - b. Bureaus must obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting information, using, or disclosing personal information about a child. Attachment C of OMB Memorandum M-03-22 explains the methods by which verifiable consent may be obtained. Advance consent is not required when a site is collecting an email address to:
 - 1) Respond to a one-time request from the child before deleting the email address.
 - 2) Provide notice to and seek consent of the parent.
 - 3) Protect the safety of the child or the site, as long as the parent is notified and given the opportunity to prevent further use of the information.
 - 4) Respond to a request to send a newsletter or other information on a regular basis as long as the site notifies the parent and gives him or her a chance to say no to the arrangement.
5. Do not use "Persistent" Web cookies on Web sites, unless the following conditions are met:
 - a. The site gives clear and conspicuous notice;
 - b. There is a compelling need to gather the data on the site;
 - c. Appropriate and publicly disclosed privacy safeguards exist for handling any information derived from the cookies; and
 - d. The Department CIO gives prior approval for the use. (OCIO Directive 2001-001)

6. Obtain collection clearance from OMB when Web forms are used to collect information from the public, and proceed as follows:
 - a. Collect only information that is absolutely necessary to accomplish your mission, and only information you have a legal authority to collect.
 - b. Post Web forms that collect information from the public on Web site only after receipt of OMB collection clearance (also see 2.1.7 for OMB information).
 - c. Establish and post a specific Web privacy policy statement that addresses the specific authority to collect the information
7. Every principal Web site, major entry points, or any Web page that collects substantial information in identifiable form must provide privacy policy in a standard machine-readable format.
8. Establish and implement a review/approval process of Web information to ensure information published on the Web is not sensitive, non-public information or considered security sensitive.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

DOI P3P Guidance: http://www.doi.gov/Web_council/p3p.html

OMB Memorandum 03-22, OMB Guidance for Implementing the Privacy Provisions of the E-Government Act of 2002:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/m03-22.html>

E-Government Act of 2002, Section 207(f)(1)(B):

http://www.archives.gov/about_us/basic_laws_and_authorities/egov_act_section_207.html

Privacy Act of 1974:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/foia/privstat.htm>

OMB Circular A-130, App 1:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a130/a130appendix_i.html

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA):

<http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm>

2.1.2 Digital Rights, Copyright, Trademark, Patent Laws

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that address the digital, copyright, trademark and patent rights of the public.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: To ensure that the property rights of private sector sources are adequately protected. Most content posted on Federal Internet Web sites should be in the public domain and should not require copyright or other intellectual property notices. However, when an organization uses or duplicates protected/proprietary information as part of an information resource, product or service, the organization must ensure that the property rights of the private sector source are protected and clearly indicate the limited use of the content. The terms of use should be made available from the page displaying or accessing the protected/proprietary content. These protections apply to any material posted to Federal Internet Web sites, such as documents, graphics, or audio files.

D. Implementation Guidance: Originators of documents, graphics or audio files must authorize the posting of such files to the Internet. Originators must also authorize the copying of such files, if copied when posted. The authorization details and terms of use must be readily accessible from the page in which the content is accessed.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

Digital Millennium Copyright Act: http://frWebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=105_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ304.105.pdf

Copyright Law: <http://www.copyright.gov>

U.S. Trademark Law: <http://www.uspto.gov/Web/offices/tac/tmlaw2.html>

U.S. Patent Law, U.S. Code 35, Chapter 26:
http://frWebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+35USC261

2.1.3 Records Management

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and regulations related to the management of Internet Web records. This includes the need for organizations to comply with necessary policies and standards to implement the E-Government Act of 2002, Section 207(e), "Public Access to Electronic Information". The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) issued Guidance on Managing Web Records in January 2005.

B. Exceptions: The following will not be accepted for transfer to NARA under their guidance:

1. Program or administrative records documenting the management of Web sites.
2. Referenced content (e.g., accessed via hyperlink) that resides in a different domain and is not managed for an agency under a formal agreement.

3. Static images, such as screen shots, of Web content records, because they do not retain hypertext functionality. (Note: PDF is not considered an image format).

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with records management regulations. They should give individuals or entities the option to submit information or transact with agencies electronically, when practicable, and to maintain records electronically, when practicable. The Act specifically states that electronic records and their related electronic signatures are not to be denied legal effect, validity, or enforceability merely because they are in electronic form, and encourages the Federal Government use of a range of electronic signature alternatives.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Requirements for all DOI and bureau Internet Web sites are as follows:

1. Maintain adequate documentation of records validity (i.e., trust verification records)
2. Retain contextual information to adequately document the validity of the electronic signature at the time the record was electronically signed. This info must be retained for as long as the electronically signed record is retained and be logically accessible from the location of the hosting record.
3. Ensure that the printed name of the signer and the date when the signature was executed be included as part of any human readable form of the electronic record. (Note this is mandated in case the signature name becomes unreadable over time because of record or technology obsolescence.)
4. Dispose of records only with approved records disposal authority from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
5. Make and preserve records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization functions, policies, decisions, procedures and essential transactions of the agency.
6. Maintain the ability to re-validate digital signatures by using a public key to validate the signature. With this approach, the following procedures must be followed:
 - The signature, the public key, the certificate related to that key and the certificate revocation list from the certificate authority that corresponds to the time of signing all must be retained for as long as the digitally-signed record is retained. Both contextual and structural information of the record must be retained.
7. Bureau Records and Office Records Manager must contact NARA to discuss what they will need to transfer the records to NARA.
8. Display digital signatures only on Web applications in which official authorization has been provided.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 36 CFR Chapter XII, Parts 1220-1238:

<http://www.archives.gov/about/regulations/subchapter/b.html>

E-Government Act of 2002, Section 207(e), "Public Access to Electronic Information":

<http://www.archives.gov/about/laws/egov-act-section-207.html>

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) issued Guidance on Managing Web Records in January 2005.

<http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/policy/managing-web-records-index.html>

2.1.4 Security Protocols to Protect Information

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with Section 207(f)(1)(b)(iv) of the E-Government Act of 2002, which requires organizations to have security protocols to protect information.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Rationale for security protocols is as follows:

1. To provide computer standards for government-wide computer security, and to facilitate training in security matters of persons who are involved in the management, operation, and use of Federal computer systems, and for other purposes.
2. To improve the management of information systems.
3. To establish clear accountability for information resources management activities. To promote a coordinated, interoperable, secure and shared Government-wide infrastructure.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Requirements for DOI and bureau Internet Web sites are as follows:

1. Establish Security Plan for the security and privacy of sensitive information and conduct appropriate related training.
2. Certify and Accredite networks and Web servers.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Site

E-Government Act of 2002, Section 207(f)(1)(b)(iv):

<http://www.archives.gov/about/laws/egov-act-section-207.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a130/a130trans4.html>

<http://csrc.nist.gov/policies/FISMA-final.pdf>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/fy04/m04-25.pdf>

<http://csrc.nist.gov/publications/nistpubs/800-44/sp800-44.pdf>

2.1.5 No Fear Act Notification

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that address accountability of the Department for violations of anti-discrimination and whistleblower protection laws.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: DOI and bureaus will comply with the No Fear Act requirements, closely monitor agency EEO and whistleblower complaint activity and act expeditiously to resolve complaints at the administrative level when it is appropriate to do so.

D. Implementation Guidance: Every DOI or bureau shall prominently place a hyperlink titled “No FEAR Act Data” on the homepage of its public Web site(s) which will link to the Department of Interior No FEAR Act Web page at http://www.doi.gov/diversity/no_fear_act.html.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Site

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 29 CFR Part 1614, Final Rule - <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-12432.htm>

2.1.6 Prohibition of Lobbying

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that prohibit appropriated funds from being used for direct or indirect lobbying. (Caution should also be taken not link to sites that may have information that could be considered lobbying.)

B. Exceptions: None

C. Rationale: In order to ensure that no money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction or official of any government, all DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must comply with the applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders and other Directives.

D. Implementation Guidance: Do not post information on Internet Web sites that directly or indirectly is intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction or official of any government, to favor, adopt or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation or appropriation by Congress, whether before or after the introduction of any bill or resolution proposing such legislation or appropriation.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Site

"Prohibition of Lobbying," Title 18, Section 1913 of the U.S. Code:
http://frWebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+18USC1913

2.1.7 Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) to ensure that information collected from the public minimizes burden and maximizes public utility. One of the principal requirements of the PRA is that organizations must have OMB approval before collecting information from the public (such as through the use of forms, general questionnaires, surveys, instructions, and other types of collections), and they must display the current OMB control number on the collection.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale:

1. To further the goals of the Paperwork Reduction Act by having Federal agencies become more responsible and publicly accountable for reducing the burden of Federal paperwork on the public, and for other purposes.
2. To make information required by law available electronically to a customer only if he or she affirmatively consents to receive the information electronically *and* the bureau clearly and conspicuously discloses specified information to the customer before obtaining his or her consent.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Requirements for DOI Internet Web sites are as follows:

1. Obtain collection clearance from OMB when Web forms are used to collect information from the public, and proceed as follows:
 - a. Collect only information that is necessary for the proper performance of the agencies' mission, and only information you have a legal authority to collect.
 - b. Post Web forms that collect information from the public on the Web site after receipt of OMB collection clearance.
2. Ensure that information collection is:
 - Inventoried
 - Displays a OMB control number and, if appropriate, an expiration date
 - Indicates the collection is in accordance with the clearance requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, Section 3507

- Provide the reason the information is being collected; the way such information is to be used; an estimate, to the extent practicable, of the burden of the collection; whether responses to the collection of information are voluntary, required to obtain a benefit, or mandatory; that the agency may not conduct or sponsor the collection; and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information, unless it displays a valid control number
3. Ensure the relevance, accuracy, timeliness, integrity, and objectivity of information collected or created for statistical purposes.
 4. Obtain customer's consent to receive information electronically.
 5. Inform the customer of any right or option to obtain the record on paper or in non-electronic form, and the right of the customer to withdraw the consent to have the record provided or made available in an electronic form and of any conditions, consequences (which may include termination of the parties' relationship), or fees in the event of such withdrawal. Also:
 - inform the customer of whether the consent applies only to the particular transaction which gave rise to the obligation to provide the record, or to identified categories of records that may be provided or made available during the course of the parties' relationship
 - describe the procedures the customer must use to withdraw consent as provided in clause and to update information needed to contact the customer electronically
 - inform the customer how, after the consent, the customer may, upon request, obtain a paper copy of an electronic record, and whether any fee will be charged for such copy
 6. After customer consent, notify customer if a change in the hardware or software requirements are needed to access or retain electronic records.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

Paperwork Reduction Act:

<http://reginfo.gov/public/reginfo/prs.pdf>

Guidance from OMB: "Paperwork Requirements":

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/infocoll.html>

2.1.8 Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA)

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with the Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 2003 (GPEA, Pub. L. 105-277). The Act requires that, when practical, Federal organizations use electronic forms, electronic filing, and electronic signatures to conduct official business with the public.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale:

1. To be compatible with standards and technology for electronic signatures that are generally used in commerce and industry and by State governments.
2. To ensure that one industry or technology is not inappropriately favored.
3. To ensure that electronic signatures are reliable as is appropriate for the purpose in question and to ensure that the information submitted is kept intact.
4. To ensure that agencies that anticipate receipt by electronic means of 50,000 or more submittals of a particular form take all steps necessary to ensure that multiple methods of electronic signatures are available for the submittal of such form.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Requirements for DOI Internet Web sites are as follows:

1. When using a Web site to conduct agency business that requires documentation with signatures, provide that such signatures may be made electronically.
2. Provide for the electronic acknowledgment of electronic forms that are successfully submitted.
3. Encrypt all private information transmitted electronically. Use Secure Socket Layer (SSL) when transmitting private information via the Web, and store private information (i.e., passwords and social security numbers) in databases encrypted.
4. Require a hard copy authorization for use of electronic signatures. Retain a hard copy of the electronic signature authorization for the life of the electronic signature's use within an electronic signature. Annually check the hard copy electronic signature authorization to ensure that it is still legible and has not deteriorated in any way.
5. Provide multiple methods of electronic signatures if 50,000 or more submittals of a particular form are anticipated.
6. Provide the public with a statement of the hardware and software requirements for access to and retention of the electronic records prior to customer or visitor affirmation.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Site

OMB Guidance on implementing the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA):
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/gpea2.html>

2.1.9 Small Business Paperwork Relief Act

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with Small Business Paperwork Relief Act of 2002, which requires organizations to designate a single point of contact for small businesses, and to post the contact information on the organization's Web site.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale:

1. To facilitate compliance by small business concerns with certain Federal paperwork requirements.
2. To support the DOI in examining the feasibility of streamlining paperwork requirements applicable to small business concerns, and for other purposes.

D. Implementation Guidance: Post the Department's Point of Contact for Small Businesses on your DOI or bureau's Internet Web site as follows: <http://www.doi.gov/osdbu/>

E. Implementation Deadline: Policy currently mandated. Link to be added by December 31, 2006

Reference Web Sites

Department's Point of Contact for Small Businesses: <http://www.doi.gov/osdbu/>

Small Business Paperwork Relief Act of 2002:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/sbpra102803.html>

2.1.10 Government Performance Results Act (GPRA)

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which requires organizations to make their annual performance plans readily available to the public.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale:

1. To improve the confidence of the public in the capability of the Federal Government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving program results.
2. To initiate program performance reform with a series of pilot projects in setting program goals, measuring program performance against those goals, and reporting publicly on their progress.
3. To improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction.
4. To help Federal managers improve service delivery, by requiring that they plan for meeting program objectives and by providing them with information about program results and service quality.
5. To improve Congressional decision-making by providing more objective information on achieving statutory objectives, and on the relative effectiveness and efficiency of Federal programs and spending; and
6. To improve internal management of the Federal Government.

D. Implementation Guidance: DOI and bureaus should make their annual performance plans readily available to the public at the appropriate location on their Web sites.

For those bureaus that do not have their own Performance Plans, they must link to the Departmental of Interior Performance Plan at <http://www.doi.gov/ppp/>

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Site

Government Performance Results Act of 1993:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/mgmt-gpra/gplaw2m.html>

2.1.11 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives implementing the Freedom of Information Act. The principal requirement is that Web sites must include certain content as required by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). This page should include information about how the public can request information under the FOIA. Organizations should review the FOIA and implementation guidance to ensure that their Internet Web sites meet the full range of requirements.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureaus should make reasonable efforts to provide government records available to requestors in the medium of their choice. They should use technology to ensure greater public access to simplify the process; decrease response time; increase consistency and quality of information provided; and enhance usefulness of information collected, maintained, and disseminated.

D. Implementation Guidance: DOI and bureau Web sites must have a prominent link to the Departmental Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) page (www.doi.gov/foia.html). The DOI FOIA page clearly explains the required steps to complete a FOIA request.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

DOI FOIA page: <http://www.doi.gov/foia.html>

DOI FOIA website: <http://www.doi.gov/foia/>

Freedom of Information Act: Public Law 89-554 (5 USC Section 552) As Amended in 2002:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/04foia/foiastat.htm>

Implementation guidance from the Department of Justice:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/foiapost/2003foiapost9.htm>

The Freedom of Information Act 5 U.S.C. § 552, As Amended By Public Law No. 104-231, 110 Stat. 3048

http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/foia_updates/Vol_XVII_4/page2.htm

2.1.12 Categorization of Information - E-Government Act of 2002

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that address the organization and categorization of Government information, the definition of categories, and determination of priorities and development of schedules for initial implementation of standards by agencies.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that address categorization of Government information.

D. Implementation Guidance: Implementation guidance will be based on recommendations from the Interagency Committee on Government Information (ICGI) Categorization of Information Working Group when they are issued.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2005

Reference Web Sites

E-Government Act of 2002, Section 207(d)(1)(B):
<http://www.archives.gov/about/laws/egov-act-section-207.html>

2.1.13 Section 508 Accessibility for People With Disabilities

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that address the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), designed to make online information and services fully available to individuals with disabilities.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing laws and directives that address the need to assure that Federal employees and members of the public with disabilities have access and use of information and data that is comparable to those who are without disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency.

D. Implementation Guidance: All DOI and bureaus must have an "Accessibility" page that describes their efforts to make the information accessible and comply with Section

508 and who to contact if accessibility problems are encountered on any pages of the Web site. All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must be developed in compliance with Section 508 as follows:

1. Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element (e.g., via “alt”, “longdesc”, or in element content).
2. Synchronize equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation with the presentation.
3. Provide non-color text each time information is conveyed with color, for example from context or markup.
4. Organize documents so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.
5. Provide redundant text links for each active region of a server-side image map.
6. Provide client-side image maps instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.
7. Identify row and column headers for data tables.
8. Use markup to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.
9. Provide titles to frames with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation.
10. Design pages to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2Hz and lower than 55 Hz.
11. Provide a text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality to make a Web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.
12. Provide information that identifies the functional text and can be read by assistive technology when pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements.
13. Provide a link to a plug-in or applet when a Web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content.
14. Design on-line electronic forms to allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.
15. Provide a method that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.
16. Send an alert to the user and allow the user to indicate that more time is needed when a timed response is required.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

Accessibility (Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act) 29 USC Section 794d:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/508/508law.html>

<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=12>

2.1.14 Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with existing requirements of Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for People with Limited English Proficiency." The EO applies not only to DOI's Federally conducted activities, but also to all entities that receive Federal funds. The EO is based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination in Federally assisted programs and activities. The EO also calls for all Federal agencies to ensure that their own Federally conducted programs and activities are meaningfully accessible to limited English proficient individuals. To that end, the general standards set forth in DOI's LEP guidance for DOI recipients would also apply to DOI's own operations. (DOI's LEP guidance was published in the Federal Register on December 24, 2003). [68 FR 74633]. Agencies must specifically follow that guidance related to agency Web sites.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Executive Order 13166 calls for all Federal agencies to ensure that their own Federally conducted programs and activities are meaningfully accessible to limited English proficient individuals.

D. Implementation Guidance: DOI and all bureaus are required to provide appropriate access for people with limited English proficiency by implementing Department of Justice guidance for Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for People with Limited English Proficiency." DOI and all bureaus must determine whether any individual document on their Federal agency Internet Web site(s) requires translation.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Web Site Reference:

DOI Office of the Secretary, Limited English Proficiency Guidance to Recipients of Federal Financial Assistance--Request for Comments
<http://www.lep.gov/doirecipientguidance7.htm>

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency, 65 Fed. Reg. 50123 (August 16, 2000).
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/13166.htm> and
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/lepqa.htm>

2.1.15 Information Quality

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with Public Law 106-554, "Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Organizations" and will comply with the Department's or bureaus' published Information Quality Guidelines.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Federal organizations are required to follow their guidelines for "ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by Federal organizations." Organizations should review the Act and implementation guidance to ensure that their Internet Web sites meet its requirements.

D. Implementation Guidance: All DOI and bureaus must follow their specific Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality, Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated. A process should be in place to ensure regular review and monitoring of Web site content for compliance with Information Quality Guidelines and policies. DOI and all bureaus must reasonably assure suitable information and service quality, consistent with the level of importance of the information. A link to the Department's (for DOI Web sites) or the specific Bureau's Quality of Information page is required and recommended to be located on the Notices page.

Reasonable steps include:

1. Clearly identify the limitations inherent in the information dissemination product (e.g., possibility of errors, degree of reliability, and validity) so users are fully aware of the quality and integrity of the information or service.
2. Take reasonable steps to remove the limitations inherent in the information.
3. Reconsider delivery of the information or services.

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Reference Web Sites

Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001: Public Law 106-554, "Guidelines for Ensuring and Maximizing the Quality Objectivity, Utility, and Integrity of Information Disseminated by Federal Organizations": <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/reproducible2.pdf>

The Department's and each bureaus' Information Quality Web site.

2.1.15.1 Ensure Content is Current and Provide Dates

A. Standard: Every DOI and bureau homepage, navigational page, and document on a Federal Internet Web site must have a visible date showing that it is current, that it has been reviewed within the past 12 months, or that it is an historical document. Content that is obsolete and is not required by law or regulation should be removed or archived, in compliance with the organization's records management schedules.

B. Exceptions:

1. If a document is reproduced from another entity and can not be altered to add a posting date or notification that it is an historical document.

2. Existing documents/Web pages, (not homepages or navigation pages) established before these DOI Web standards were adopted, are grandfathered: however, as time and resources permit organizations should date those documents also.

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with citizens, businesses, and other governments' expectation that the information on Federal Internet Web sites is valid, accurate, and current. Researchers, media, students, and others need to cite dates.

D. Implementation Guidance:

- There are several options for implementing this practice.
 - **Date Posted:** If the page or document has been posted within the past year, the "date posted" may be adequate. Documents older than one year may appear out-of-date. At that point, it would be advisable to go to a "last reviewed" date to show that the content remains current.
 - **Date Last Modified or Updated:** If the page or document has been modified or updated in the past year, the "date last modified" or "last updated" may be adequate. Again, content older than one year should be reviewed and the review date should be noted. Organizations do not need to change the date last modified or updated for corrections of spelling or typographical errors.
 - **Date Last Reviewed:** Unless a document is historical, if content is more than one year old, it should be reviewed. The date of that review can be used to show that the content is current.
 - **Date Last Certified:** Some agencies use a quarterly or annual certification process to ensure that all content is reviewed regularly. In that case, the date of the last certification can be used to show the content is current.
 - **Historical Document:** For pages or documents that will never change, such as news releases, official reports, final rules, etc., the date of publication can be used, along with a notation that this is an "historical document."
- It is not essential to put the date on every page of a document, though it is desirable.
- PDF documents should either be dated or the date should appear in the link to the PDF.
- Organizations should adopt a routine review process-monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually-to identify obsolete content and remove it.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

2.1.16 E-Government Act of 2002 – Priorities/Schedules for Posting Content

A. Standard: DOI and bureaus must establish priorities and schedules for making information available and accessible, and must make the schedule available to the public on the Internet.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: DOI and all bureaus are already required under OMB Circular A-130 and the Paperwork Reduction Act to disseminate information to the public in a timely, equitable, efficient, and appropriate manner and to maintain inventories of information dissemination products.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Section 207(f)(2) of the E-Government Act of 2002 requires each agency to:

1. Establish a process for determining which information will be made available on the Internet and by other means.
2. Develop priorities and schedules for making that information available.
3. Make those priorities and schedules available for public comment.
4. Post the priorities and schedules on the Web site.
5. Report the priorities in their annual report to OMB on implementing the E-Government Act.

The Department has developed a Schedule for Posting Content for DOI and all bureaus to link to and it is required that this link be placed on the Notices page.
<http://www.doi.gov/soc.html>

E. Implementation Deadline: Currently mandated.

Department of the Interior
Departmental Manual
Web Standards Handbook
(386 DM 3)

Effective Date:

Chapter 3: Identification (Authenticity and Branding)

Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

3.1 Government Branding

A. Overview: Government Web sites provide a powerful opportunity to inform the public on issues of interest and concern. However, with this power comes a responsibility to uphold a high-standard of consistency and quality branding recognizable to the public.

3.1.1 Use of Government Domains

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will use Government Domains: Every Federal Internet Web site must be established in the .gov, .mil, or .us domain to communicate to the public that these are Web sites which they can trust to provide official government information. This requirement applies to any DOI and bureau Internet Web site, even if that Web site resides on a non-Federal government owned server. All domains and sub-domains must follow the appropriate approval process. (OCIO Directive 2004-011) All DOI information placed on non-DOI Web sites must follow the appropriate approval process.

B. Exceptions:

1. Government agencies that are quasi-governmental.
2. DOI and bureau Web sites that are developed in partnership or through grants with non-Federal organizations, where content is not exclusively official Federal government information.

C. Rationale: DOI and bureau Web sites must be clearly identifiable because:

1. Many Web sites exist that resemble government Web sites or that appear to provide “official” government information. They can mislead the public into believing and acting on erroneous information.
2. Visitors looking for official government information must be confident that the information is reliable. The Federal government must ensure that Internet Web sites are

clearly branded. Using domains that are exclusive to the government is one way to communicate to citizens that Federal Internet Web sites are legitimate.

3. Citizens must be able to trust that Federal Web sites will provide current and accurate government information. Authenticity, branding, and timeliness of Federal Internet Web sites are critical to maintaining public trust.

4. The .mil, .gov, and .us domains are restricted to government agencies. Using these exclusive domains assures the public that these are official government sites and that a government agency is accountable for the site's content. Using these exclusive domains also will ensure that the USA.gov search engine will find all official Federal Web sites and that the USA.gov directory of Federal Internet Web sites will list them.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Organizations must register their Web sites in the .gov, .mil, or .us domain and follow existing domain registration policy and procedures under 41 CFR Part 102-173 (<http://www.dotgov.gov/agree.aspx>) and Defense Data Services Management Bulletin 9605 24 September 1996.

2. Some organizations that have been using and have publicized other domains (such as .edu, .org, and .com) may retain those domains and domain names, using them as an "alias." However, those organizations must register a .gov, .mil, or .us domain as their official domain; and they must host their content on the official domain. They can use an automatic redirect from the alias to the official domain.

3. Web sites established after these requirements go into effect must use the .gov, .mil, or .us domains exclusively.

4. All DOI information placed on non-DOI Web sites must follow the appropriate approval process.

E. Implementation Deadline: Immediately, for new Web sites. December 31, 2007, for existing Web sites.

Reference Web Site

OCIO Directive 2004-011

OMB Policies for Federal Web sites

http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/policies_and_implementation.shtml

Federal Web Content Managers Toolkit

www.webcontent.gov

3.2 Indicate Sponsorship of Web sites

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will show U.S. Sponsorship: Every Federal Internet Web site must clearly display the name of the agency or organization that sponsors the Web site on every Web page. If the agency or organization title does not include “United States,” then the Web page must show other wording to indicate that the U.S. Government sponsors the site.

B. Exceptions:

1. Pages or files reprinted from outside sources are exempted.
2. PDF files are exempted.
3. Cross-agency portals do not have to show the name of each agency on each page; however, they must include wording to show U.S. Sponsorship.

C. Rationale:

1. Visitors need to be sure that they are getting official government information, when that is what they seek. Agency or organization titles alone do not always convey that they are part of the U.S. Government. It is important, then, to use “United States” or “U.S.” if it is an official part of the agency’s or organization’s name. If it is not, then it is important to convey in some other way that the U.S. Government sponsors the Web site.
2. Sponsorship must be noted on every page because visitors do not always come through the “front door.” Many visitors enter a Web site at a second, third, fourth, or lower level. Thus, it is important to ensure that visitors can identify the sponsorship of a Web page, no matter where they enter the site.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Web sites must use one of the following practices to indicate sponsorship:
 - (a) The full name of the agency or organization, including “United States” or “U.S.”
 - (b) The agency or organization name AND a statement that this is an official U.S. Government Web site (if the agency or organization name does not include “United States”).
 - (c) A logo that incorporates the official name of the agency AND sponsorship by the U.S. Government. If a logo is used, the name of the agency and U.S. sponsorship must be plain enough that visitors can recognize the words easily.
2. Web site homepages and second level pages must include a title tag with the agency’s full name or a commonly accepted shortened version that the public will recognize. The organization name may precede or follow the page title in the title tag.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.2.1 DOI Link and Use of Seal Requirements

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Web pages will include the DOI logo or the text "U.S. Department of the Interior" that links to the URL <http://www.doi.gov>.

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page. Pages or files reprinted from outside sources are exempt.

Historical documents may be exempt if compliance would cause an undue burden on the Department or bureau as determined by the Web management. For remaining pages, they may be converted as time and resources permit.

C. Rationale: See 3.2.C

D. Implementation Guidance: All DOI and bureau Web pages will include the DOI logo or the text "U.S. Department of the Interior" that links to the URL <http://www.doi.gov>.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.2.2 Bureau Link and Logo Requirements

A. Standard: All bureau Web sites will include the bureau logo or the text name of the bureau that links back to the URL for the homepage of the bureau's main Web site.

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page. Pages or files reprinted from outside sources are exempt.

Historical documents may be exempt if compliance would cause an undue burden on the Department or bureau as determined by the Web management. For remaining pages, they may be converted as time and resources permit.

C. Rationale: See 3.2.C

D. Implementation Guidance: All bureau Web sites will include the bureau logo or the text name of the bureau that links back to the URL for the homepage of the bureau's main Web site.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.3 Government Portals and Other Federal Sites

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will link to Appropriate Cross-Agency Portals. Federal Internet Web sites will link to appropriate cross-agency portals, when applicable, to guide visitors to additional resources that exist across the U.S. Government.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Links to cross-agency portals can supplement the information on an organization's Web site. Links to other government information can guide visitors to additional resources to help them find what they need. This is especially important for Federal Internet Web sites since many visitors do not know the organizational structure of the government and may need additional assistance to get to the Web site that best meets their needs. These links can also help ensure that visitors are being directed to the most authoritative, current source for the information, rather than having individual organizations attempt to keep the information accurate and up-to-date themselves.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. All links and pointers to sites that are not funded or supported in whole or in part by DOI and/or the bureaus are considered as either "Federal" or "non-Federal links". DOI and/or the bureaus' Web sites will attempt to disclaim these non-Federal Web sites to the citizen utilizing one of the DOI Web site exit procedures discussed in Section 3.4.1.D.2.
2. Acceptable Federal links include federal government-owned or government-sponsored Web site domains include .gov, .mil and .fed.us. DOI also links to: quasi-government agencies and Web sites created by public sector/private sector partnerships; state and local government sites; and some government-sponsored Web sites that end in .com, .org, or .net.
3. When a DOI or bureau Web site provides information on a particular topic or for a particular audience for which there is an appropriate, useful government-wide portal, the organization should link to the government-wide portal from its page(s) on that topic. A list of recognized cross-agency portals is provided on USA.gov.
4. As with all links, organizations should regularly review links to cross-agency portals to ensure they are current and accurate.
5. When providing organizational information to visitors (for example, a list of all cabinet-level agencies or independent agencies), organizations should link to the organizational directory pages on USA.gov, which provides a comprehensive listing of all Federal organizations.
6. To avoid confusion, organizations should not link to cross-agency portals unless those Web sites are related to the organization's mission or function.

7. Because the Web sites of other Federal Web sites must follow the same government-wide policies that DOI does, links to these sites (including the U.S. military) are made without notification or disclaimer.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.4 Linking Policy and Linking to Non-Federal Web sites

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will comply with the DOI Linking Policy as indicated in this Section.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites need to be consistent in their policies and procedures for linking to non-Federal Web sites.

D. Implementation Guidance: When DOI and bureau Internet Web sites provide links to non-Federal Web sites, they must adhere to the following policy:

1. Evaluation Criteria

(a) Links must be consistent with sound public policy and support the mission of DOI and/or the bureaus and their programs.

(b) If DOI and/or the bureaus have a formal relationship with organizations or businesses, the DOI or bureau Web sites may link to their sites. All participating partners in a business venture with and/or the bureaus must be treated equally.

(c) Links to commercial sites must avoid even the perception of favoritism or bias relative to other similar commercial sites. If other sites exist which offer similar products, information, or services there must be a link to all sites or none.

(d) DOI and the bureaus must regularly review the quality and usefulness of the sites to which they link. However, DOI and/or the bureaus cannot be responsible for the content or privacy policies of those sites, as noted in the Disclaimer of Endorsement below.

(e) Web sites that are separate from DOI and/or the bureaus, but which are funded or supported in whole or in part by DOI and/or the bureaus, are considered part of DOI and/or the bureaus' overall web presence. Therefore direct links from DOI and/or the bureaus' Web sites to these sites can be provided without notification or disclaimer.

2. Links to Non-Federal Web sites

(a) All links and pointers to sites that are not part of the U.S. Federal Government are considered "non-Federal links". DOI and bureau Web sites will attempt to disclaim these "non-Federal" Web sites to the citizen utilizing one of the DOI Web site exit procedures discussed in Section 3.4.1.D.2.

(b) In rare instances, DOI and bureau Web sites may link to Web sites that are not government-owned or government-sponsored if these Web sites provide government information and/or services in a way that is not available on an official government Web site. DOI and the bureaus provide these non-government websites as a public service only. The U.S. Government, including the Department of the Interior, neither endorses nor guarantees in any way the external organizations, services, advice, or products included in these Web site links. Furthermore, the U.S. Government neither controls nor guarantees the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of the information contained in non-government Web site links. (See Disclaimer of Endorsement more information on this topic.)

3. Disclaimer of Endorsement (All DOI and bureaus' will link to the standard DOI Disclaimer at <http://www.doi.gov/disclaimer.html> See Section 4.3.5)

(a) The inclusion of links and pointers to Web sites is not intended to assign importance to those sites or to the information contained on those sites. It is also not intended to endorse or recommend any views expressed or products or services offered on these sites.

(b) DOI and the bureaus do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a linked Web site.

(c) DOI and the bureaus do not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked Web sites, nor the views they express or the products/services they offer.

(d) DOI and the bureaus cannot authorize the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked Web sites. Visitors must request such authorization from the sponsor of the linked Web site.

(e) DOI and the bureaus are not responsible for any communications visitors receive from linked Web sites.

(f) DOI and the bureaus do not guarantee that outside Web sites comply with Section 508 (Accessibility Requirements) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4. Prohibitions

(a) DOI and the bureaus will not link to any Web site that exhibits hate, bias, or discrimination.

(b) DOI and the bureaus reserve the right to deny or remove any link that contains misleading information or unsubstantiated claims, or is determined to conflict with DOI and/or the bureaus' mission or policies.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.4.1 Vendor and Partner Linking Policy

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must use the standard DOI Linking Policy for linking to vendors and partners.

B. Exceptions: Organizations are not responsible for maintaining links contained in documents or reports belonging to another organization or entity that are republished on the Web site.

C. Rationale: Linking to outside Web sites – both Federal and non-Federal – can add real value to a Web site, but organizations must manage links effectively.

1. The public needs to know how an organization chooses its links. DOI and bureaus have a policy for linking to other Web sites, including criteria or guidelines for selecting links to non-Federal government sites as indicated in Section 3.4. DOI and bureau Web sites should limit external linking to information or services necessary for the proper performance of the Department or bureau functions.
2. Links need to work, and they need to lead the visitor to additional information related to a particular topic.
3. Visitors expect Federal Internet Web sites to take them to other sites that will be helpful. Web content managers of Federal Internet Web sites have a responsibility to their visitors to ensure that they select links that fulfill that expectation.
4. Linking to other Web sites reduces the duplication of content. Content should be posted once by agencies with the greatest expertise and used by other agencies and portals, through links.
5. When sending a visitor to a non-Federal Web site, owners of Federal Internet Web sites have a responsibility to inform visitors that the site they are going to does not necessarily operate under the same laws, regulations, and policies as Federal sites. DOI and bureaus should utilize reasonable management controls to assure external links remain active or otherwise continue to provide the level of quality (including objectivity, utility, and integrity) as intended by the agency and expected by users.
6. Linking to another Web site brings that site additional visitors, so links are viewed as being valuable. As a minimum, Web content managers of Federal Web sites should use the criteria, identified in Section 3.4., for deciding which links they will use, particularly when they are asked by another Web site owner to establish or trade links. DOI and bureau links to

commercial organizations or interest groups present special challenges with respect to maintaining agency objectivity and thus must be used judiciously. Care should also be taken to comply with the anti-lobbying restrictions in Section 2.1.6.

7. OMB's Information Quality guidelines exclude hyperlinks from the definition of information. This exclusion does not remove DOI and bureau responsibility to exercise due diligence when determining whether to link externally. Therefore, when the Department or a bureau determines external links are necessary for and material to the presentation of agency information or the delivery of services in the proper performance of an agency function, they must take reasonable steps to ensure the presentation is accurate, relevant, timely, and complete.

8. Agencies must reasonably assure suitable information and service quality, consistent with the level of importance of the information. Reasonable steps include:

- (a) clearly identifying the limitations inherent in the information dissemination product (e.g., possibility of errors, degree of reliability, and validity) so users are fully aware of the quality and integrity of the information or service
- (b) taking reasonable steps to remove the limitations inherent in the information and
- (c) reconsidering linking to the information or services

9. The mandatory links for All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites are detailed in Section 4.3 Required Links/Pages.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. DOI and all bureaus must establish a process and schedule for reviewing existing links to make sure that they work and that they still add value. Organizations should review links monthly or, at a minimum, no less than quarterly. Sites such as portals, which may have a large number of external links, should be reviewed more often.

2. DOI and all bureaus must use one of the following options to notify visitors that they are leaving the Web site include one of the following:

- (a) Placing an icon next to the link
- (b) Identifying the destination Web site in the link text or description itself
- (c) Inserting an intercepting page that displays the notification, after the user selects the link or
- (d) Displaying all non-Federal links in a separate listing from Federal links

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.4.2 Prohibition of Commercial Endorsement

A. All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must not endorse or appear to endorse commercial products or Web sites.

B. Exceptions: There are no exceptions to this requirement. Use appropriate Disclaimer when linking to non-Federal partner sites.

C. Rationale: When sending a visitor to a non-Federal Web site, owners of Federal Internet Web sites must inform visitors that the Web site to which they are going does not necessarily operate under the same laws, regulations, and policies as Federal Web sites.

Linking to another Web site is valuable since it brings additional visitors to the Web site. Web content managers of Federal Web sites must have clear and fair criteria for deciding which links they will use, particularly when they are asked by another Web site owner to establish or trade links.

D. Implementation Guidance: Links to commercial or non-Federal Web sites are permitted only when there is a clear common interest and related subject matter. It must be clearly indicated that DOI and the bureaus neither sponsor or endorse non-DOI or bureau Web sites.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

3.4.3 Exit Strategy

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must have an exit strategy which clearly indicates when the visitor is leaving their Federal Web site.

B. Exceptions: There are no exceptions to this requirement. Use appropriate Disclaimer when linking to non-Federal partner sites.

C. Rationale: See 3.4.2.C.

D. Implementation Guidance: One of the DOI exit procedures indicated in Section 3.4.1.D.2 must be used on links to non-Federal, non-partner Web sites.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

Department of the Interior
Departmental Manual
Web Standards Handbook
(386 DM 3)

Effective Date:

Chapter 4: Standard Web Elements

Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

4.1 Document Type Definition (DTD) and Standard: Document Title (TITLE)

A. Standard: Every HTML page, where practical, must include a document type definition and unique title using the TITLE element.

B. Exceptions: There may be pages where this requirement may not be feasible, i.e. some pages with data text generated by a query to a database where application of the Document Type Definition (DTD) and Standard: Document Title (TITLE) is not practical for technical or other considerations.

C. Rationale: A valid HTML document declares what version of HTML is used in the document. The text of the TITLE element will appear when a user saves the page's Uniform Resource Locator (URL) in a "hotlist" or "bookmark" list. The title is also used by the visual browser to label its viewing window. Some search engines also classify pages in part by the title and, in many cases, the title is weighted much higher than any other meta tags in the classification of search results. The title is usually the first line shown for a Web page in the search engine results.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. The "document type declaration" names the "document type definition" (DTD) in use for the document. The DTD is the first item to appear in an HTML document, before the <html>, <body>, or any other element. Some Web authoring tools, such as Dreamweaver, will place the DTD in the <head> for you.

2. The TITLE text should be a succinct description of the page, and in choosing a title, great care should be used in selecting an informative title because of its importance in the search process.

3. It is important to use unique titles on pages. This can help reduce the number of search engine results and provide more precise information about a Web page's content. Avoid

beginning the title with insignificant words or phrases such as ‘The,’ ‘A,’ ‘Notes on,’ or ‘Welcome to.’

4. Some search engines will truncate the information in the TITLE element if the length exceeds a certain number of characters.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

4.2 Document Metadata (META)/Meta Tags

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau pages will have the required meta tags.

B. Exceptions: Metadata should generally not be placed on pages within the body of a document. There may be pages where this requirement may not be feasible, i.e. some pages with data text generated by a query to a database where application of the Document Type Definition (DTD) and Standard: Document Title (TITLE) is not practical for technical or other considerations. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, and there may be certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page where it would not be practical. Pages or files reprinted from outside sources are exempt. Older .pdf pages or ones that can not include the tags technical reasons are exempt; however, where possible they should include the title, author, keywords and description.

Historical documents may be exempt if compliance would cause an undue burden on the Department or bureaus as determined by the Web management. These and other pages may be updated as time and resources permit.

C. Rationale: Metadata is data that describes data. The META element (sometimes referred to as the "meta tag") is used within the HEAD element to embed metadata about the document not defined by other HTML elements. META elements are important because they help some search engines find appropriate pages. Such descriptive information can be automatically extracted by server or client software for use in identifying, indexing, cataloging, and presenting relevant information about the document's content.

Judicious use of metadata in Web documents helps to ensure that Web indexers are able to properly locate, compile, index, and present key pages to users in response to their specific queries.

D. Implementation Guidance: Metadata should be associated with every document presented on the Web. At a minimum, all home pages and top-level, major entry points, or parent pages in subject- or application-oriented document collections, including publications, must include appropriately detailed metadata. Of particular interest is the use of the META element to embed title, description and keywords that describe and categorize the information content or function of Web pages.

Below is a summary listing of the standard META elements including descriptions, usage (required or recommended), and syntax. Examples are also provided for each element.

Table 1: Summary of META NAME Elements and Usage

Element NAME	Purpose and Description	Usage¹	Syntax and Defaults	Example Content
title	The title of the page or information object. This is different from the HTML title tag element of Web Pages but should contain the same content	Required	Should be the same name as the one used in the html title tag	DOI Homepage
description	A concise description of the content and purpose of the page	Required	Plain text in sentence form	"Wildlife Problems Associated with Reservoirs Used for Electrical Generation - Call Number: 137671 74A"
author	The name(s) of the person(s) or group(s) credited with authorship of the primary information content of the page, document, or application	Required for formal publications and documents Recommended for other pages	List of names, listed separately or separated by commas or semi-colons	"Oliver, W. H; Wallace, A.R."
keywords	A list of one or more terms describing the primary domain (for example, Reclamation, water resources, power generation, dam) and information content of the page, document, or application	Required see additional information following this table	Minimum content should include bureau name where appropriate; words listed separately or separated by commas or semi-colons	"Reclamation, reservoirs, electrical generation, hydro power, ..."
publisher	The higher organizational entity under whose auspices the page, document, or application is published	Recommended	Default may be bureau name; words separated by commas if needed	"National Park Service, Alaska Area Region "
abstract	A short body of text describing the purpose and information content of the page, document, or application. For formal publications, the abstract should be copied from the document, unless it is too long or otherwise inappropriate	Recommended (especially for formal publications)	Plain text in sentence form	"Ecosystems are communities of organisms, often including humans, and the associated physical and chemical environments in which they live. ..."
creation date	Date indicating when page or document	Required	"YYYY-MM-DD"	"1996-09-25" (25 September 1996)

	collection was first published. This date corresponds to the formal date of publication appearing on a print publication			
revised date	The date the page content was last revised formally. This date corresponds to the published revision date appearing on a print publication	Required (for print publications)	"YYYY-MM-DD"	"1996-06-01" (01 June 1996)
expiration date	Date indicating when page or document collection becomes obsolete and should be replaced or abandoned	Required	"YYYY-MM-DD" "Never"	"1999-12-31" (31 December 1999)
last reviewed date	Date indicating when a page was last reviewed for accuracy, relevancy, appropriateness	Required	"YYYY-MM-DD"	"1998-10-05" (5 October 1998)

Special Locational Meta tags

language	The Language meta tag declares to users the natural language of the document being indexed. Search engines which index Web sites based on language often read this tag to determine which language(s) is supported	Required	The standard acceptable meta tag for English is "EN"	<META HTTP-EQUIV="Content-Language" content="EN">
country	Country or countries to which the document content refers or applies	Optional but Recommended where appropriate	Name or ISO 3 code; "USA" is acceptable	"USA" "US"
state	State(s) to which the document content refers applies	Optional but Recommended where appropriate.	Name or two letter FIPS or postal abbreviation; separated by commas if needed	"Alaska" "Colorado, Virginia, Louisiana" "CO, VA, LA"
county	County or counties to which the document content refers or applies	Optional but Recommended where appropriate	County name; separated by commas if needed	"Fairfax Loudoun" "Fairfax, Prince William, Loudoun"

city	City or cities to which the document content refers or applies	Optional but Recommended where appropriate	City name; separated by commas if needed	"New York, New Orleans, Miami"
zip	U.S. postal zone(s) to which the document content refers or applies	Optional but Recommended where appropriate	U.S. Postal Service 5 or 9 digit code	"20202"

¹ For pages requiring metadata as described in 4.2.B.

Some items to consider when selecting keywords:

Keywords should be chosen from official or standard thesauri or other controlled vocabularies whenever possible. When choosing words to include in the meta tag keywords attribute, you should choose keywords that are actually contained in the body of the document. If a word appears in the meta tag that you do not use in the main body content, it may alert search engines that you might be misusing the keywords just to try to draw visitors to your site. The keyword should accurately reflect the true content of the page, highlighting the most important words that you wish to emphasize in the document.

Also remember to consider if your target audience will more likely type in the plural version of a word rather than the singular version. Place the version of the keyword that your site visitors are likely to use most at the beginning of your keyword list. Do not repeat a keyword more than once and do not use irrelevant words. More is not always better. Most search engines are not case sensitive when analyzing. Make sure the keywords are listed separately or separated by either commas or semicolons.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

4.3 Required Links/Pages

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will include the required links and should consider the recommended links where appropriate.

B. Exceptions: See specific guidance for each link below.

C. Rationale: All Federal Internet Web sites must comply with existing laws and directives. Many of those laws and directives require specific links to be included on Federal Internet Web sites in order to provide the appropriate information in a consistent method to the public.

D. Implementation Guidance: See specific guidance for each link below.

E. Implementation Deadline: See specific deadline for each link below.

The following are required links for all pages and are recommended to be located in the footer:

4.3.1 Accessibility
See Standard 2.1.13 Section 508 Accessibility for People with Disabilities

4.3.2 Privacy Policy
See Standard 2.1.1 Privacy Policy

4.3.3 FOIA
See Standard 2.1.11 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

4.3.4 Notices

All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites must include a notices page to help visitors find Web site policies and links required by laws and regulations.

Implementation guidance regarding the specific links required for this page are found below in Sections 4.3.12 - 4.3.17

4.3.5 Disclaimer

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau's must use the standard DOI Disclaimer.

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page.

C. Rationale: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites *must* disclaim responsibility for the content and privacy policies used by non-Federal government sites. In the interest of seamless government, all DOI and bureau's Internet Web sites *must not* disclaim responsibility for the content of other Federal Internet Web sites.

D. Implementation Guidance: All DOI and bureau's will link to the standard DOI Disclaimer at <http://www.doi.gov/disclaimer.html>

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

The following are required links for all pages and may be placed anywhere on the page:

4.3.6 Department of the Interior Home Page

See 3.2.1

4.3.7 Bureau Home Page

See 3.2.2

The following are required links that must be located somewhere on the homepage and major points of entry (can be included in the footer), and are recommended for all pages:

4.3.8 Contact Us

A. Standard: Include a "Contact Us" link on the homepage and all major points of entry.

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page.

C. Rationale: Citizens expect to be able to contact any Federal government organization to ask questions, get information, or report problems. It is important to provide citizens with a means to contact government organizations.

D. Implementation Guidance: Federal Internet Web sites must have a page entitled "Contact Us". That page must be linked from the homepage and every major point of entry, using the page title as the link text. Contact information must include all of the following, at a minimum:

- Organization mailing address
- Street addresses for any regional or local customer service offices;
- Phone number(s), including numbers for any regional or local offices or toll-free numbers and TTY numbers, if available
- Means to communicate by electronic mail (for example Web-based contact form)
- Contact information for reporting both technical and content problems with the Web site, including accessibility problems

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

4.3.9 Search

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites homepages and any major entry point must include a search function.

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page. However, bureaus may determine in limited circumstances (e.g., for small Web sites) that site maps or subject indexes are more effective than a typical search function.

C. Rationale: OMB Circular A-130 requires Federal agencies to assist the public in locating government information.

D. Implementation Guidance: This search function should, to the extent practicable and necessary to achieve intended purposes, permit searching of all files intended for public use on the Web site, display search results in order of relevancy to search criteria, and provide response times appropriately equivalent to industry best practices. DOI and bureau Web sites should, to the extent practicable and necessary to achieve intended purposes, provide all data in an open, industry standard format permitting users to aggregate, disaggregate, or otherwise manipulate and analyze the data to meet their needs.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2005

4.3.10 USA Gov

A. Standard: Every DOI and bureau Web site must link from its homepage and major entry points to the homepage of USAGov.gov (www.usa.gov).

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page.

C. Rationale: Section 204 of the E-Government Act of 2002 designates USA.gov (formerly FirstGov.gov) as the official Web portal of the U.S. Government. USA.gov serves as the "homepage" for the entire U.S. government by providing a topical and organizational directory of U.S. government Web sites and a government-wide search index. It promotes seamless government by allowing citizens to access the vast amount of information from across government without having to know which agency sponsors the information. In the same way that links to a homepage help people start browsing from a known location, this link will help people who aren't at the Web site of the appropriate agency find the government information and services they need.

D. Implementation Guidance: Every DOI and bureau Web site must link from its homepage and major entry points to the homepage of USA.gov. It may be contained in the standard footer, navigation column or any other location on those pages.

E. Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

The following required link must be located somewhere on the homepage:

4.3.11 No Fear Act Data

See Section 2.1.5 No Fear Act Notification

4.3.12 About Us (Organizational Information)

A. Standard: All DOI and bureau Internet Web sites homepages must include a link to a page that contains information on the organization as described below in 4.3.12 C.

B. Exceptions: PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page. Cross-agency portals are exempt from all items except contact information; however portals should include a description of the purpose of the portal, its intended audiences, sponsorship, and any strategic plans for the portal.

C. Rationale: The public, including students and researchers, often wants to know something about the organization that sponsors a public Web site. The E-Government Act requires specific information that must be included on all Federal Internet Web sites, and several of these are appropriately categorized under "About Us." It will help visitors find this information if every Federal Internet Web site puts it in that same category.

D. Implementation Guidance: Federal Internet Web sites must have a page entitled "About Us" or "About (Organization Name)." That page must be linked from the homepage, using the page title as the link text. The page must provide basic information about the sponsoring organization. At a minimum, it must include all of the following or a link to the appropriate page:

- A description of the organization's mission, including its statutory authority (required by Section 207 (f)(1)(A)(i) of the E-Government Act of 2002);
- Strategic plan (required by Section 207 (f)(1)(A)(iv) of the E-Government Act of 2002);
- Organizational structure (required by Section 207 (f)(1)(A)(iii) of the E-Government Act of 2002);
- Basic information about parent and subsidiary organizations and regional and field offices, as appropriate;
- Name of the agency head and other key staff, as appropriate; and
- Link to Contact Us.

Additional Implementation Guidance:

Small organizations that do not have a specific mission or strategic plan should link back to the parent organization's mission and plan.

On kids' Web sites (other than kids.us Web sites), the "About Us" link can go to:

- (1) The parent organization's "About Us" page, or
- (2) An "About Us" page written for kids. If an organization chooses this option, the "About Us" page still must include a link to the parent

organization's "About Us" page, for the benefit of parents who may want to know more about the sponsoring organization.

Kids' pages developed in the kids.us domain may publish the URL of the parent organization's "About Us" page.

Though the "About Us" link is required only on the homepage, it is desirable to include it on all major entry points.

If possible, the organization chart should be interactive, allowing visitors to find additional details about components of the organization.

E: Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

The following required links (or the information itself) are recommended to be located on a Notices page:

4.3.13 Digital Rights, Copyrights, Trademarks and Patents Policy

See Section 2.1.2 Digital Rights, Copyright, Trademark, Patent Laws

4.3.14 Security Protocols to Protect Information

See Section 2.1.4 Security Protocols to Protect Information

4.3.15 Information Quality

See Section 2.1.15 Information Quality

4.3.16 Employment (Jobs) Page

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Web sites must include information about jobs at the organization, along with a link to the USAJobs Web site.

B. Exceptions: Kids' Web sites are exempt. PDF files are exempt from this requirement. Other file types that cannot physically contain a link are also exempt, as are certain types of data pages called from databases by a query or dynamically generated page.

C. Rationale: Job seekers and curious citizens want to know basic information such as what jobs are available, how to apply, and what it's like to work in Federal organizations.

D. Implementation Guidance: In addition to the link to USAJobs, DOI and bureau Web sites should include information about working at that organization, special jobs programs like internships and work-study, No Fear Act data, and other information particular to that organization.

E: Implementation Deadline: December 31, 2006

4.3.17 Schedule for Publishing Information on Web site

See Section 2.1.16 E-Government Act of 2002 - Priorities/Schedule for Posting Content

4.4 Recommended Links

4.4.1 Site Index

A. Standard: Every Federal Internet Web site should have a page entitled Site Index that gives an overview of the major content categories on the Web site. (Also see 4.3.9 Search)

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: The public needs to be able to find the information and services they seek, as easily as possible.

D. Implementation Guidance: At a minimum, there should be a link to the Site Map or Subject Index from the homepage, using those words as the link text. Site Maps and Subject Indexes must be kept current so they are useful. Even on small Internet Web sites, a Site Map or Subject Index can give them a quick and easy way to find what they want. Usability testing on the terms "Site Map" and "Subject Index" show that the public understands these terms, so DOI and bureau Web sites must use them.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

4.4.2 Frequently Asked Questions

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites should have a page for answers to frequently asked questions. That page should be linked from the homepage and every major entry point, using the title of the page as the link text. This should provide basic answers to questions the agency receives most often.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Provide assistance to visitors to the Web site by providing a response or information related to the most frequently asked questions or requested data.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. There are several ways for Web content managers to compile a list of common questions and answers:

- Look at email, phone calls, and letters from the public
- Conduct a survey
- Arrange focus groups
- Talk to the people who answer phones and mail at the organization
- Look at statistics
- Look at information requested under the Freedom of Information Act
- Review top search terms

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

4.4.3 Grants and Contracts

A. Standard: Every organization that provides grants or has contracting opportunities should provide information about those opportunities on its Web site.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: The President's Management Agenda makes it a priority to centralize and automate the grants application process and to centralize Federal contracting opportunities in cross-agency portals. All DOI and bureaus must support those portals.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Organizations that post grants information should also link to grants.gov and any other Federal portal(s) related to grants.

2. Organizations that post contracts information should also link to fedbizopps.gov and any other Federal portal(s) related to contracts.

3. If an organization has significant grants or contracts available, it may be appropriate to showcase that information – or a link to that information – on the homepage.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

4.4.4 Forms and Publications

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites should offer easy access to public use forms and current publications and link to Federal portals that offer forms and publications for the public.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Web site visitors want fast, easy service, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They do not want to have to wait until an organization is open for business to get forms and publications they need to accomplish their objectives.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Public use forms and current publications should be available on Federal Internet Web sites so that citizens can get them when they need them.

1. Federal Internet Web sites that offer forms should also link to related portals. Currently, fedforms.gov is the only forms portal.

2. Federal Internet Web sites that offer publications should link to portals that offer related publications. Currently, pueblo.gsa.gov and gpoaccess.gov are publications portals.

3. If forms or publications are not available for viewing or downloading, then – at a minimum – the Web site should provide instructions on how to order them.

4. Access to public use forms and publications should be obvious on the Web site.

5. Web sites should provide public use forms in a fillable format, if possible.

E: Implementation Deadline: N/A

4.4.5 Laws and Regulations

A. Standard: Every organization that issues regulations should provide information about those regulations on its Web site, link to the “Regulations.gov” portal, or both.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: The President’s Management Agenda makes it a priority to inform the public about pending regulations and provide them an opportunity to be involved in rulemaking. It helps citizens participate in their government.

D. Implementation Guidance: Every organization that issues regulations should provide information about those regulations on its Web site, link to the “Regulations.gov” portal, or both.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

Department of the Interior
Departmental Manual
Web Standards Handbook
(386 DM 3)

Effective Date:

Chapter 5: Customer Focus/ Ease of Use

Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

5.1 Customer Focus/ Ease of Use

5.1.1 Customer Feedback/Customer Satisfaction/Measurement Tools

A. Standard: Organizations should measure customer satisfaction and usability of DOI and bureau Internet Web sites. Organizations should evaluate customer satisfaction and usability of their Web sites and use the assessments to improve the Web sites. Federal Internet Web sites that reach the widest audiences, including agencies' primary Web sites and all sites using a primary .gov, .mil .fed domain, must use a standard customer satisfaction survey.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Organizations that create them and the citizens they serve want Federal Internet Web sites to be as useful as possible. While Web content managers do their best to write and organize their Web sites to be effective, they need to test their Web sites to identify problem areas and then fix those problems.

D. Implementation Guidance:

Web content managers should measure both the usability and customer satisfaction of their Web sites. Some of the tools that can be utilized to measure customer satisfaction and usability of Web sites include:

1. Usability Testing/Satisfaction Surveys - Usability testing encompasses a range of methods for identifying how users actually interact with a prototype or a complete site. In a typical approach, users — one at a time or two working together — use the Web site to perform tasks, while one or more people watch, listen, and take notes. Online surveys can also be developed and utilized. However, online surveys must be developed with care. The user's reaction to survey length appears to change in five-minute increments. There is a significant drop off rate after 5 minutes and then again after 10 minutes. A survey more than 20 minutes in length may need to be split into multiple surveys or the use of another survey approach should be considered. The download rate for the survey should also be tested, since that will impact the time that people spend. In addition, surveys must receive OMB clearance as referenced in Section 2.1.7.

2. Web Analytics - The most common metrics approach is the collection and analysis of Web log data. Web logs commonly provide metrics such as the number of "page views", the number of unique visitors, the domains of the visitors, and referral and exit information. By analyzing the logs with special software tools and some customized code, organizations can identify various aspects of Web usage. In addition to the analysis of a given set of Web log data, the analysis of the data over time provides other important information.

3. Email/Comment Forms - All Web sites should have email "Contact Us" links or a Comment Form that allows the visitor to be able to submit comments, questions, requests for information or to report problems with the Web site.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

Reference Web Sites

Usability.gov <http://www.usability.gov>
Federal Web Content Manager's Toolkit Information on Usability
<http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/req2e.shtml>

5.2 Customer-Focused Navigation

5.2.1 Link Back to Home Page

A. Standard: Web pages should include a link back to the home page of the Web site.

B. Exceptions: Pages or files reprinted from outside sources are exempted. PDFs and binary files are excepted.

C. Rationale: Visitors can often get "lost" in a Web site, especially those large sites with complex navigation and should be provided with an easy method of returning to the home page of the Web site.

D. Implementation Guidance: A link to enable the visitor to return to the home page of the Web site should be clearly identified on the pages of a Web site. The link should be placed in a common location on the Web page when possible, whether the link is placed in the header, footer, navigation bar or content area.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.2.2 Use Consistent Names for Similar Links (Taxonomy)

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites should use consistent names or titles for similar links throughout the Department or bureau Web sites.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Consistent naming for similar links or titles helps orient users. But be aware that one term can represent different kinds of information.

D. Implementation Guidance: Use consistent titles for the same type of information. For example, if a section of a site is devoted to policy, select a consistent word and use it on all pages that refer to the policy section of the page. Avoid calling it "Policy & Procedures" on the index page, but calling it "Policy Information" on subsequent pages. Try to use the same types of names for similar sections on your site. If a term or a name of an office isn't intuitive or explanatory, consider providing details. A scope note is a brief description which adds depth to the navigational elements.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.2.3 Review to Update Broken Links

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites will be reviewed periodically to update or delete broken links.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: It is important that the links on your Web pages are accurate, so that your visitors are not directed to pages that do not exist. If this happens to them often, they will get frustrated, leave your site and will not return. It also hurts the credibility of the Web site and the sponsoring office.

D. Implementation Guidance: DOI and bureaus must establish a process and schedule for reviewing existing links to make sure that they work and that they still add value. Organizations should review links monthly or, at a minimum, no less than quarterly. Sites such as portals should be reviewed more often. The page returned or "page not found" notice when a visitor clicks on a broken link should provide information on how to report the broken link.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.2.4 Simple and Consistent Navigation

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Web sites should, where possible, maintain consistent navigation to promote ease of use.

B. Exceptions: Web pages where use of the standard navigation would interfere with the functionality or usability of the page or is not possible because of page design or operation (i.e. data/text pages that may be compiled from databases, etc.)

C. Rationale: Consistent navigation makes Web sites easier to use because visitors don't have to learn a new navigation scheme on each new page. Visitors are more likely to get what they need from a site if they aren't confused by changing navigation.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Common items that appear on every page should, if possible, be in the same location on each page and have the same appearance and wording. A navigation item that is shared by a group of pages (such as a set of pages on a single topic, or for an office/division of DOI or a bureau) should also have the same location, appearance, and wording on each page.
2. Navigation items of the same type should also look and behave like each other. For example, if a set of pages on one topic has subtopic links beneath it, pages on other topics should also have subtopic links in a similar location of the page that look and behave the same way.
3. If a particular set of Web pages requires specialized navigation (such as a list of links separate from the standard navigation), you should apply that navigation to the largest possible logical grouping (such as a topic, an audience, or a complete organizational unit). The specialized navigation should be similar in appearance and behavior to the overall navigation scheme.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.3 Customer-Focused Content

5.3.1 Homepages Must Be Customer-Focused

A. Standard: Homepages should be written and organized from the viewpoint of the intended audience. The purpose of the homepage must be to help the public get to the content they need and want most. Homepages must be designed to feature the most requested information and services. Even if citizens are not the primary target audience of a Web site, the homepage should provide an easy-to-identify section where the purpose of the Web site and the value to citizens is explained in terms they can understand.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Federal Web sites need to be focused on helping the public find the services and information they want and need. The homepage is the main tool for sending visitors in the right direction. Web visitors want fast, efficient service. They want to find what they seek in the first screen. They do not want to be distracted by text or graphics that do not help them find what they want. Homepages should anticipate the wants and needs of the public. Homepage space, therefore, should be designed carefully and effectively to provide the very best customer service. Citizens – as a whole - are an audience for Federal Internet Web sites funded by taxpayer dollars.

D. Implementation Guidance: Web content managers should assess their audiences' wants and needs to determine the content of the homepage. There are many options available to determine what audiences want and need.

- Surveys
- Email
- Focus groups
- Statistics
- Usability testing can help Web content managers organize the information in the most effective way.

NOTE: Proper DOI and OMB approval is required for surveys.

The most requested information should be featured prominently.

Homepages should not feature photos of executives or employees of the organization. Those photos may be appropriate on the "About Us" or "News" page. This does not pertain to pictures of employees involved in events, special recognition, or that demonstrate the accomplishment of the mission, etc.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.3.2 Content Should Be Organized in Ways That Make Sense to Citizens

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Internet Web sites should be organized by subject (topic), by audience group, by geographic location, or by any combination of these factors, as the primary navigation. In some cases, DOI and bureau Internet Web sites may include navigation based on their organization's structure; however, that should not be the primary navigation structure of the Web site. Web content managers should analyze the wants and needs of citizens and other target customer groups when organizing the content of DOI and bureau Internet Web sites.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Usability tests and customer satisfaction reviews indicate that most Web visitors - citizens and other audience groups - are familiar with navigating Web sites by topic, audience, or location. These methods are the preferred ways to organize a DOI and bureau Internet Web site. Focus groups and other feedback indicate that citizens do not know - nor do they want to know - how the government is organized to get the information and services they want. Creating navigation according to organizational structure is not the best way to design a Web site for citizens. If a DOI and bureau Web site is available to anyone, then citizens - as a whole - are part of the audience and the Web site must be organized in ways that help them use it.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Web content managers should use a variety of means to determine the best way to organize information for citizens and other customers, including:

- Usability testing
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Focus groups
- Email from the public
- Talking with target audiences
- Talking with other Web content managers
- Analyzing Web logs

NOTE: Proper DOI and OMB approval is required for surveys.

2. Some DOI and bureau Internet Web sites target special audiences, such as specific business partners or other government organizations. Using an organizational structure as a secondary navigation may be desirable when those target audiences are familiar with that structure.

3. Because audience wants and needs change, testing and analysis should be an ongoing effort.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.4 Avoid Unnecessary Duplication

5.4.1 Utilize Existing Web Sites With Same Content Where Appropriate

A. Standard: Agencies should practice—and take advantage of—the principle that information and services are created once and used many times, through links.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: To minimize duplication and improve the public’s ability to locate accurate information across the array of government Web sites, agency Web sites must link to existing government-wide portal or specialized sites when applicable, rather than re-creating these resources themselves.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Before creating new information, the agency should determine if that same – or similar – information already exists within their agency or on another Federal Web site.

2. When an agency Web site provides information or services for which there is a corresponding government-wide portal or specialized site, the agency should link to the government-wide portal or site from its pages on that topic.

3. When a government-wide portal or specialized Web site is available on a subject that the public would expect to find on an agency's site – but the agency does not provide that information – the agency should link to the government-wide portal or site in a logical and useful location.

4. Agencies should not link to government-wide portals or specialized information unless they are related to the agency's mission or function or might be perceived as being related. Links that are in no way related to a Web site's content can be misleading and confusing.

5. When content is the same or similar within agencies or across agencies, those agencies should consult with each other to find ways to share or coordinate content and to mitigate duplication.

6. As with all links, agencies must review links to content on other agency Web sites or to portals and specialized Web sites regularly to ensure they are current and accurate.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.4.2 Linking to Corresponding Web Sites With Similar Content

A. Standard: DOI and bureau Web sites, where appropriate, should link to government Web sites with similar content or subject matter.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Links to other government Web sites or government-wide portals can supplement the information on an agency site. Links to other government information can guide visitors to additional resources that may help them solve their problems and achieve their objectives. It can save the visitors time and effort in locating supplemental information that may be of value to them. Links to other government information also promote a seamless government and simplify and unify information across the government.

D. Implementation Guidance: Web site content authors should include references and links on their pages to other government Web sites that have additional or similar information to assist the visitor in finding as much information as is available on the relevant topic.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.5 Avoid Excessive Download Times

5.5.1 Appropriate Use of Graphics

A. Standard: Web content authors will make appropriate use of graphics.

B. Exceptions: None.

C. Rationale: Graphics that have large file sizes can substantially slow the loading time of Web pages. Many visitors, especially those with slower speed dial-up connections may often leave a site before accessing the needed information if the loading time becomes excessive.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. Graphics and multimedia files should be selected for their quality, information content, and relevance to the subject at hand. Animated graphics are strongly discouraged unless they are needed to convey a specific message or information (there may be exceptions for pages designed for "kids pages").

2. The physical dimension of images should be no larger than necessary to adequately convey their content and meaning. One very effective method for presenting large graphics is to provide a postage stamp sized preview or "thumbnail" of the image which links to the full-size image.

3. To minimize transmission time, standard Web pages including text, embedded applets, and all images (those automatically displayed when a Web page is downloaded), should be kept as small as possible. Images should be optimized using an appropriate graphics software program, but not to the point of distorting the image so as to make its elements unrecognizable or look unprofessional.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A

5.5.2 Reduce Size of Linked Files and Provide Information on File Size and Type

A. Standard: DOI and all bureaus should reduce the size of linked files and indicate the type of file and size.

B. Exceptions: N/A

C. Rationale: Information needs to be provided to the Web site visitor in an efficient manner, which includes the fastest download time possible. The visitor needs to be aware of the file size and type of program in order to make an informed decision as to whether or not downloading the files is the most effective way for them to receive the needed information. If this information is not provided, for those files that cannot be reduced in size, the visitor may become frustrated or think the Web site is not functioning properly.

D. Implementation Guidance:

1. For linked documents that are of substantial file size, when possible, break long documents into smaller sections. Render each section as a separate file named for its

section. Follow “natural” breaks such as chapters, sections, etc. If the natural sections greatly exceed the maximum, create subsections and label the files as such.

2. Utilize the authoring software properly to reduce the file size by selecting the "save for Web" or "optimize/reduce file size" option available in such programs as Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Photoshop and similar programs that may have been used to produce the attached file.

3. Standardized phrasing indicating the type of file should accompany references to links to attached files, especially audio, video, and other binary files. In addition the visitor should be made aware of what type of software program is required to view the file and the file size should be specified. For example, reference might be made to a "Microsoft Word - 100 KB," "Windows Media Player - 2 MB (megabyte)," or an "Adobe Acrobat - 150 KB." This will allow visitors to decide if the file can be downloaded and viewed in a timely manner based on the connection speed and the software installed on their computer.

E. Implementation Deadline: N/A