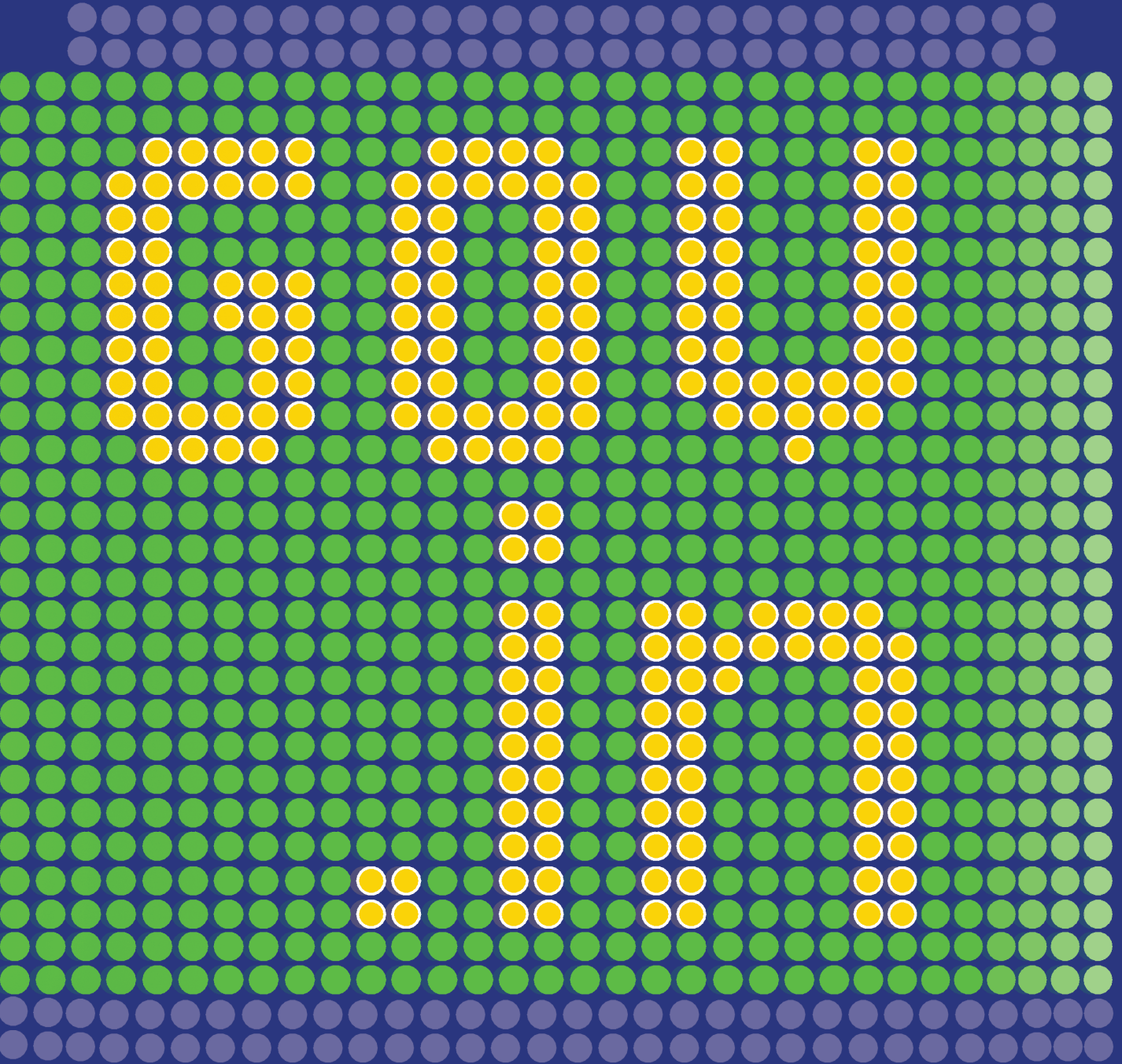




सत्यमेव जयते

GUIDELINES FOR INDIAN GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

*An Integral Part of
Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure*



Prepared By :
National Informatics Centre (NIC),
Department of Information Technology,
Ministry of Communications and Information Technology,
Government of India.

Adopted By :
Department of Administrative Reforms and Public
Grievances (DARPG),
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pension,
Government of India.



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JANUARY 2009

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राज्य मंत्री
प्रधान मंत्री कार्यालय तथा
कार्मिक, लोक शिकायत एवं पेंशन मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार

MINISTER OF STATE
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND
MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL,
PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



पृथ्वीराज चव्हाण
PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN

MESSAGE

It is indeed a pleasure to learn that the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, in association with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), has formulated Guidelines for Indian Government Websites.

With the advent of e-Governance and focus on web enablement of citizen services, there has been an urgent need for such guidelines. I am confident that these guidelines will bring uniformity in the quality of content as well as enhance the overall usability and functionality of Indian Government Websites. These guidelines would also assist the Government of India to improve the standard of information and service delivery through the electronic media and demonstrate its commitment to enhance government citizen interaction through application of internet technologies.

The inclusion of these "Guidelines for Indian Government Websites" in the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (CSMOP) would augment the Manual and enable it to prescribe procedures for the management of government presence in the web space.

(Prithviraj Chavan)

MESSAGE

The World Wide Web is poised to be the most widely used medium for implementation of e governance initiatives. Realising the importance of this medium a large number of websites belonging to different government entities have been published on the web to ensure maximum reach of government information and services to the citizens of India. However, to make this delivery channel more effective a need for coherence in technical, design and navigation standards across all government websites was felt.

National Informatics Centre (NIC) for long has been anchoring e-governance initiatives in the country. NIC has also developed and launched the National Portal of India, under the aegis of National e-governance Plan (NeGP). To further strengthen the National Portal, NIC has formulated 'Guidelines for Indian Government Websites' in accordance to be internationally accepted standards to ensure that the websites belonging to any constituent of the government at any level are user friendly, secure and easy to maintain.

With the efforts of Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances these guidelines have now been included in the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedures (CSMOP) which will further enhance their status.

Compliance to these will enable the departments to enhance the quality of online delivery of information and services and also ensure high degree of consistency and uniformity in the Indian Government Web Space.

Jainder Singh
Secretary
Department of Information Technology
Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

MESSAGE

It is an accepted premise both in theory and practice that information and communication technologies can make a significant contribution to the achievement of national development goals. Government Departments especially those with extensive public interface are increasingly using websites as a tool to reach out to the citizens. With digital penetration increasing in India, in times to come websites would be the preferred mode of contact for a majority of the citizens with the government departments. The “Right to Information Act” has further given an impetus to the government departments to develop their websites to conform with the proactive disclosure requirements under the Act.

While we are witness to an increasing number of government websites, the user experience with the various government sites is not uniform. This emanates from different technology standards, design layouts, navigation architecture, functionality etc. This is one major impediment in making government website usage by citizens pervasive.

It is in this context that the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in association with Department of Information Technology and National Informatics Centre took up the initiative to bring out the “Guidelines for Indian Government Websites”. These Guidelines have been finalised through extensive consultation with Content Advisory Committee (CAC) having representatives from various government departments and the subgroup constituted for this purpose. It is hoped that the guidelines would assist individual departments to design their websites conforming to a minimum national standard, thereby assuring quality of government information and services. The inclusion of the guidelines in the Central Secretariat Manual for Office Procedures will further aid this effort and realise the objective of making the government websites citizen centric and user friendly.

Rajni Razdan
Secretary

Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances
Ministry of Personnel, PG & Pensions

FOREWORD

There has been a long felt need for comprehensive guidelines for development and management of Government Websites given that the government departments are increasingly using websites as a tool for interface with the citizens. The guidelines presented in this document are an effort towards this direction.

These guidelines are an outcome of extensive deliberation by the Content Advisory Committee, feedback from government departments and advice of experts in Information Technology and Government processes. Guidelines of other countries as well as International bodies like ISO and W3C were also consulted.

Special attention has been paid to ensure that the content of the guidelines conform to the overarching philosophy of ensuring that the government websites are citizen centric and user friendly. Inclusion of the chapter on Compliance Matrix which provides a checklist of the essential elements which a government website should have would ease compliance. The write-up has been kept simple with minimal use of technical jargon, examples have also been provided to ease comprehension and provide clarity of the concept under discussion.

This manual has benefited from suggestions of a number of individuals and organisations, the contribution is gratefully acknowledged. Readers of this manual are encouraged to provide comments/suggestions for making these guidelines more effective and keep the contents topical.

D.V. Singh
Additional Secretary
Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances
Ministry of Personnel, PG & Pensions

PREFACE

Over the years a large number of websites belonging to different Government bodies have been published on the internet to facilitate access to government information and service to the citizens of India. However varied nomenclatures, different layout standards, navigation strategies as well as of different technology have defeated the very purpose of these websites.

National Portal of India was set up as a single point access to government information and services. In this process of unification it aggregates content from over 5000 website of Indian Government. National Portal of India cannot serve its users primarily; citizens of India beyond a certain level of quality, unless the inherent quality of government websites increases. With this objective a Content Advisory Committee with the senior officers from different Ministries and State Governments as its members, was constituted to look into the means to enhance the intrinsic quality of the Government websites.

At the advice of the Content Advisory Committee, NIC has developed 'Guidelines for Indian Government Website' in accordance to the international standards to ensure that the website belonging to any constituent of the Government at any level are user friendly, secure and easy to maintain. A subgroup from amongst the members of Content Advisory Committee was specifically constituted to advice NIC during various stages of development of the guidelines. After extensive deliberations and reviews by the subgroup and subsequent refinements, these guidelines have been approved by the Content Advisory Committee.

I would like to thank Special Secretary, DIT, Sh. R. Chandrasekhar for his valuable advice and support in formulation of these guidelines. I appreciate & acknowledge the efforts put in by all the members of the Content Advisory Committee for reviewing these guidelines. I would also like to thank Additional Secretary, DARPG, Sh. D.V. Singh for adopting these guidelines as an integral part of CSMOP. Members of the subgroup have spared their valuable time going through the draft in detail and providing valuable input. I acknowledge & commend the efforts of Mrs. Lekha Kumar, Director DARPG and Mrs. Neeta Verma, Senior Technical Director, NIC for putting their best efforts in producing this high quality and extremely useful document.

I hope, with the support and cooperation of all of you these guidelines will go a long way in improving the quality of Indian government web space.

Dr. B. K. Gairola
Director General
National Informatics Centre
Department of Information Technology
Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

ABOUT THE DOCUMENT

This document contains recommended guidelines for development and management of Government websites and Portals in India. The primary objective of these guidelines is to ensure that Indian Government websites, belonging to any constituent of the Government, at any level, are citizen centric and visitor friendly. It is advised that these guidelines be followed while developing or managing any Government website, portal or web based application.

Authorship

This document has been developed by a team at Data Centre and Web Services Division of National Informatics Centre (NIC), Department of Information Technology, Government of India, under the National Portal Project. Though each member of the division has contributed to the document in one way or the other, the primary authors are:

Neeta Verma, Senior Technical Director

Lokesh Joshi, Senior Systems Analyst

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Guidelines Development Process

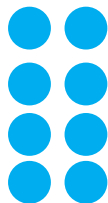
National Informatics Centre has developed these Guidelines as an initiative under the National Portal of India Project. Development of these guidelines involved an extensive consultation process involving representatives from National Informatics Centre and various other Indian Government Departments, at the Centre and State levels. Established and recognised Guidelines of other countries as well as International bodies like ISO and W3C have also been referred to, while drafting these guidelines.

The draft guidelines underwent an elaborate process of review and consultation by the concerned committees (as indicated below) and were also circulated to several Departments for their feedback, which have been duly incorporated.

Reviewed By

These Guidelines have been reviewed and enhanced by a Sub-Group constituted by the Content Advisory Committee of National Portal of India (india.gov.in). The Sub-Group comprises of the following members :

A.K. Srivastava	Principal Secretary (IT), Meghalaya
Dr G.D. Badgaiyan	Secretary, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation ,New Delhi
Neeta Verma	Senior Technical Director, National Informatics Centre
Lekha Kumar	Director, Dept. of Admin. Reforms & Public Grievances
Renu Budhiraja	Director, Department of Information Technology
Alka Mishra	Technical Director, National Informatics Centre



Approved By

The draft of this document, as finalised after incorporating the suggestions of the Sub- Group, has been approved by the Content Advisory Committee, an Inter-Departmental Committee at the National level looking after the policy making and management of content for the National Portal of India. The composition of the Content Advisory Committee as on 20th August 2007 is as follows: -

D.V. Singh	Additional Secretary, Dept. of Admin. Reforms & Public Grievances
R. Chandershekhar	Additional Secretary, Department of Information Technology
Dr. B.K. Gairola	Director General, National Informatics Centre
R. Sridharan	Joint Secretary, Planning Commission
N.K. Sinha	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development
V. N. Gaur	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs
B. B. Tyagi	Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs
P. D. Sudhakar	Joint Secretary, Department of Corporate Affairs
A.K. Saxena	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation
Ajay Kumar Sawhney	Joint Secretary, Department of Personnel & Training
C.K. Mathew	Principal Secretary, IT, Government of Rajasthan
Leena Nandan	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
D.N. Narsimha Raju	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas
Rinka Dugga	IT Secretary, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
Rajendra Kumar	Secretary, IT, Government of Delhi
Ajay Seth	Secretary, IT, Government of Karnataka
Neeta Verma	Senior Technical Director, National Informatics Centre
Lekha Kumar	Director, Dept. of Admin. Reforms & Public Grievances
Rakesh Verma	Director, IT, Government of Punjab

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1.3 UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

1.4 DEFINITIONS & CONVENTIONS

1.5 COMPLIANCE TO GUIDELINES

1.6 HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

1.7 MANDATORY, ADVISORY AND VOLUNTARY

1.8 FEEDBACK & SUGGESTIONS



INTRODUCTION

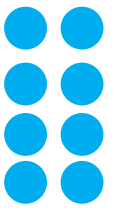
1.1

Background

India, the largest democracy in the world, is set to emerge as an ICT Superpower in this millennium. Realising the recognition of 'electronic governance' as an important goal by Governments world over, Indian Government has also laid a lot of emphasis on anytime, anywhere delivery of Government services. As of today, there are over five thousand Government websites in India. A close look at these websites, belonging to both Central and State Government reveals that most of the important Government entities have already made headway in establishing their presence on the Net and others are in the process of doing so. Every other day, there is a new Government website, be it of a Department of a Ministry, Taskforces set-up by the Government, new project, citizen service initiative, State Government Department or even a remote district of India. Awareness about the fast changing ICT world and keenness to keep pace with the latest has ensured that almost all the State Governments in India already have their websites up and running. In fact each state has multiple websites belonging to different Departments.

However, these websites follow different Technology Standards, Design Layouts, Navigation Architecture, or, in simple terms, different look and feel as well as functionality. This invariably requires a common citizen to familiarise himself/herself with the functionality of each individual website which results in a lot of inconvenience, thus defeating the very purpose of these initiatives.

The need for standardisation and uniformity in websites belonging to the Government cannot be stressed enough, in today's scenario. Ideally, properly audited technical 'Standards' should form the foundation of the web efforts of any Country's Government but it shall take some time for any Country, no matter how developed and advanced it is in terms of ICT levels to reach that stage of maturity. It is therefore imperative that a 'phased approach' be adopted to bring out a set of recommended guidelines and policies based on common knowledge and accepted National and International norms. As a first step, it is suggested that the Indian Government websites adhere to certain common minimum standards which have been derived, in the form of guidelines discussed in this document, as prerequisites for a Government website to fulfill its primary objective of being a citizen centric source of information & service delivery. These guidelines could eventually form the basis for establishment of the desired standards.



1.2

Scope & Objective

This document recommends policies and guidelines for Indian Government websites and Portals, at any organisational level and belonging to both Central Government as well as State/UT Governments (including District Administrations to Village Panchayats) for making Indian Government websites citizen centric and visitor friendly. Compliance to these guidelines will ensure a high degree of consistency and uniformity in the content coverage and presentation and further promote excellence in Indian Government Web space.

These guidelines address common policy issues and practical challenges that Government Departments face during development and management of their websites. The guidelines aim to assist the Departments in ensuring that their website conform to a consistently high standard. This is expected to enhance the trust level of the citizens while accessing Government information and availing services online.

1.3

Universal Accessibility

The term 'Universal Accessibility' refers to making a website accessible to ALL irrespective of technology, platforms, devices or disabilities of any kind. In other words, Departments should consider the needs of a broad spectrum of visitors, including general public, specialised audiences, people with disabilities, those without access to advanced technologies, and those with limited English proficiency. Guidelines to address the above needs have been given in various sections of this document.

Most pertinent guidelines have been placed in the mandatory category while others have been made advisory or voluntary. Following the mandatory guidelines shall insure compliance to W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (Level A)

1.4

Definitions & Conventions

Visitors:

Throughout this document, the broad term 'visitors' encompasses all those who visit and use the Indian Government websites for their needs with regards to government information and services.

Departments:

All Government entities owning a website, including Ministries, Departments,



Administrations, Organisations, Corporations *et.al.* shall be commonly addressed as 'Departments' or 'Entities' in this document for the purpose of simplicity.

1.5

Compliance to Guidelines

These Guidelines have been framed with an objective to make the Indian Government Websites conform to the essential pre-requisites of UUU trilogy i.e. Usable, User-Centric and Universally Accessible. They also form the basis for obtaining Website Quality Certification from STQC (Standardisation Testing Quality Certification) an organisation of Department of Information Technology, Government of India.

These Guidelines are based on International Standards including ISO 23026, W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Disability Act of India as well as Information Technology Act of India. Further, the long standing experience of the authors in design, development and management of Government Websites as well as their knowledge of the ground realities and challenges faced by the Government Departments in developing and managing their websites have helped significantly in drafting these Guidelines.

These guidelines are being circulated amongst all Indian Government Departments at all levels (Central, State, District). These should be followed and implemented on priority basis so that the overall aim of making all Indian Government websites citizen focused and visitor friendly may be realised.

1.6

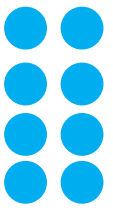
How to use these Guidelines

Departments are expected to read, understand and implement these guidelines on all of their web-based initiatives. In other words, all the websites set up and owned by the Departments must comply with these guidelines. Though not mandated, it is advised that even Intranet applications of the Departments, which are mostly browser based, may follow these guidelines. The Departments may draw their short term and long term timelines, depending upon their specific requirements, for compliance with these guidelines.

1.7

Mandatory, Advisory and Voluntary

Guidelines are divided into three categories *viz.* mandatory, advisory and voluntary. Explanation and requirement of each of these categories is given as follows.



- **Mandatory:** The usage of the term ‘MUST’ signifies requirements which can be objectively assessed and which the Departments are supposed to mandatorily comply with. It is anticipated that there will be no exceptions for a Department not complying with these. In the case of any Department, these guidelines shall apply to all the WebPages/websites under the ownership of that Department. The websites will be checked against these guidelines when audits for compliance are undertaken or for the purpose of quality certification. It is the responsibility of each Department to address and bring into compliance, any non-compliant issues found in any website under their ownership.
- **Advisory:** The usage of the term ‘should’ refers to recommended practices or advisories that are considered highly important and desirable but for their wide scope and a degree of subjectivity these guidelines would have otherwise qualified to be mandatory. Departments are, however, expected to comply with these advisories.
- **Voluntary:** The usage of the term ‘may’ refers to voluntary practice, which can be adopted by a Department if deemed suitable. These have been drawn from good practices and conventions that have proved successful and can help a Department achieve high quality benchmarks for their web endeavours.



1.8

Feedback & Suggestions

Feedback and Suggestions on the guidelines are welcome. We will try to include as many suggestions/feedback as possible in the future versions. It will help in enhancing/refining the guidelines further thus making them more comprehensive and relevant.

Feedback, Suggestions, Clarifications and Queries on this document may be sent at :

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Email : webguidelines@nic.in
Website : <http://web.guidelines.gov.in>
Fax: 011-24368854

2.1 INDIAN GOVERNMENT IDENTITY

2.2 GOVERNMENT DOMAINS

2.3 LINK WITH THE NATIONAL PORTAL

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IDENTIFIERS

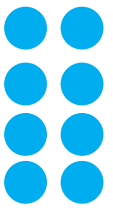
2.1

Indian Government Identity

Visitors to a Government website are very particular about ensuring the veracity and authenticity of the official status of the website before trusting its contents. Hence, it is important to convey in some way to the visitors that Indian Government officially sponsors and owns the information and services being provided in the concerned website. All websites and Portals belonging to the Indian Government Domain at any hierarchical level (Apex Offices, Constitutional Bodies, Ministries, Departments, Organisations, States/UTs, District Administrations, and Village Panchayats et al) must prominently display a strong Indian Identity and ownership of Indian Government. The above objective can be achieved through the following :

- 2.1.1** The National Emblem of India MUST be displayed on the Homepage of the websites of Central Government Ministries/Departments. The usage of National Emblem on an Indian Government website must comply with the directives as per the 'State Emblem of India (Prohibition of improper use) Act, 2005'. Further, the State Governments should also display the State Emblem (or the National Emblem in case the State has adopted the National Emblem as its official State Emblem) as per the Code provided in the above Act. The Public Sector organisations and autonomous bodies should display their official logo on the Homepage of the website to reinforce their identity.
- 2.1.2** The Homepage and all important entry pages of the website MUST display the ownership information, either in the header or footer.
- 2.1.3** The lineage of the Department should also be indicated at the bottom of the Homepage and all important entry pages of the website. For instance, at the bottom of the Homepage, the footer may state the lineage information, in the following manner:

- a. 'This Website belongs to Department of Heavy Industries, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India' **(for a Central Government Department).**
- b. 'This Website belongs to Department of Industries, State Government of Himachal Pradesh, India' **(for a State Government Department).**



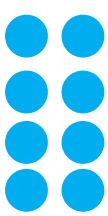
- c. ‘This is the official Website of Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), a Public Sector Undertaking of the Government of India under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas’
(for a Public Sector Undertaking).
- d. ‘This is the official Website of the District Administration of Thanjavur, State Government of Tamil Nadu (India)’
(for a District of India).

- 2.1.4** All subsequent pages of the website should also display the ownership information in a summarised form. Further, the search engines often index individual pages of a website and therefore, it is important that each webpage belonging to a site displays the relevant ownership information.
- 2.1.5** In case of those websites which belong to Inter-Departmental initiatives involving multiple Government Departments which are difficult to list on the Homepage, the Government ownership should still be reflected clearly at the bottom of the page with detailed information provided in the ‘About the Portal/Website’ section.
- 2.1.6** The page title of the Homepage (the title which appears on the top bar of the browser) MUST be complete with the name of the country included, for instance, instead of the title being just Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, it should state, Government of India, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. Alternatively, in case of a State Government Department, it should state ‘Department of Health, Government of Karnataka, India’. This will not only facilitate an easy and unambiguous identification of the website but would also help in a more relevant and visible presence in the search engine results. Further, it is important since the screen readers used by the visually impaired users first read the title of the page and in case the title is not explanatory enough, it may confuse or mislead them.

2.2

Government Domains

The URL or the Web Address of any Government website is also a strong indicator of its authenticity and status as being official. In today’s era with a large proliferation of websites, which resemble Government websites and fraudulently claim to provide reliable Government information and services, the role of a designated Government domain name assumes a lot of significance.



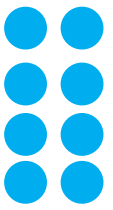
- 2.2.1** Hence, in compliance to the Government's Domain Name Policy, all Indian Government websites MUST use 'gov.in' or 'nic.in' domain exclusively allotted and restricted to Government websites. The military institutions and organisations in India may also use 'mil.in' domain in place of or in addition to the gov.in/.nic.in domain. The above naming policy applies to all Government websites irrespective of where they are hosted.
- 2.2.2** Those Departments and Government entities that are using and have been publicising a domain name other than the above should take appropriate early action to register official government domain names and use the existing ones as 'alias' for a period of six months. An intermediary page with a clear message notifying the visitors about the change in the URL and then auto re-directing them to the new URL after a time gap of 10 seconds should be used.
- 2.2.3** The Domain Name Conventions, as specified in the '.IN Registration' policy should be followed while registering a 'gov.in' Domain Name. A summary of the domain name conventions is given below:

Domain Naming Conventions:

- Domains can contain the English-language letters 'a' through 'z', and the digits 0 through 9.
- Departments can also use hyphens, but hyphens cannot begin or end a domain name. Also, two hyphens together are usually not permitted, and hyphens cannot appear in both the third and fourth positions.
- Spaces and special characters (such as !, \$, &, _ and so on) are not permitted.
- The minimum length is 3, and the maximum length is 63 characters (excluding extension ". gov.in").
- Domain names are not case-sensitive. (i.e. you may use a mix of upper or lower case letters).

Restrictions on the composition of domain names under .IN:

- Generic names are not allowed (e.g. shipping.gov.in is not allowed).
- For domains under gov.in, the domain MUST be derived from the name of the organisation name/entity. (e.g. Central Vigilance Commission can opt for a domain cvc.gov.in but NOT xyz.gov.in or vigilance.gov.in).
- One and Two letter domain names are not allowed for registration (e.g. ab.gov.in).



- The generic second level names (SLDs) of .in should not be used as third level names. (e.g. mil.gov.in and org.gov.in are not allowed as mil and org are generic second level names under .in).

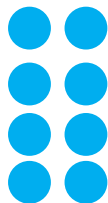
Source : <http://registry.gov.in>

Obtaining a GOV.IN Domain for your website

National Informatics Centre (NIC) is the exclusive Registrar for GOV.IN domain names. The use of GOV.IN Domain is restricted to the constituents of Indian Government at various levels right from Central, State/UT, District & Sub-District, block, village etc.

For detailed information and step-by-step procedure on how to register a .GOV. IN Domain, one may visit <http://registry.gov.in>

The screenshot displays the gov.in website interface. At the top, it features the 'gov.in' logo and the text 'Domain Registration Services, India.' alongside the Indian national emblem. A search bar labeled 'WHOIS' is visible. Below the header, a navigation menu includes links for 'FAQ', 'Support', 'Sign In', and 'Sign Up'. A 'New Announcements' button is also present. The main content area is divided into three columns: 'Domain Name Information' (listing .IN Domain Policy, Domain Dispute Resolution Policy, Domain Statistics, and Domain Naming Conventions), 'Domain Name Registration' (listing Check Availability, Eligibility Requirements, Registration Process, Register your Domain, and Authorization Letter Format), and 'Domain Name Management' (listing Check Domain Status, Modify Domain Details, Renew Domain Name, and Cancel Domain Name). At the bottom, the 'india.gov.in' logo is displayed with the tagline 'The national portal of India'. A footer note states: 'This web site is designed, developed & hosted by National Informatics Centre (NIC), Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India'.



2.3

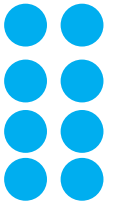
Link with the National Portal

india.gov.in; The National Portal of India is a single window source for access to all information and services being provided by the various constituents of the Indian Government to its citizens and other stakeholders. The Portal is an aggregator of all Indian Government websites belonging to different entities of the Government. National Portal is a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan of the Department of IT, Ministry of Communications & IT. The Portal has been designed, developed and hosted by National Informatics Centre (NIC), the premier ICT organisation of the Government with a nationwide presence.

india.gov.in has a unified interface and seamless access to a wide variety of services for citizens from all walks of life and from varied demography. This official Portal for the Government of India acts as a gateway to a plethora of information and services provided electronically by the different departments of Indian Government. It acts as an escort to the visitors and guides them through varied web sites of Indian Government constituents and also presents a lot of value added information like their association/status in terms of sectors, ministries, departments etc. in a unique and unified manner.

There are exclusive sections on Citizens, Business, Overseas, Government, Know India, Sectors etc. catering to the information needs. Sections targeting special interest groups such as Government Employees, Students, Senior Citizens, Kids etc. are also present. A variety of citizen services being provided by the government across sectors and States/UTs can also be accessed from the Portal. The Portal also provides comprehensive information & access to Government News, Press Releases, Documents, Policies, Forms and Tender Notifications etc. The Portal combines the best of technology with the best of content. The content of the Portal is also available in Hindi. Further, the content can be personalised for each viewer based on his/her demographic profile and area of interest.

- 2.3.1** Since the National Portal is the official single entry Portal of the Indian Government, all Indian Government websites **MUST** provide a prominent link to the National Portal from the Homepage and other important pages of citizens' interest.
- 2.3.2** The pages belonging to the National Portal **MUST** load into a newly opened browser window of the user. This will also help visitors find information or service they could not get on that particular website. It is quite common that citizens are not aware which information or service is provided by which Department.



[Skip to main content](#) | [Accessibility Options](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Link to us](#) | [Add to Favourite](#) | [Tell a Friend](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Contact Us](#)

62nd

62nd Anniversary

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Government

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Citizens

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in focus

AWARDEES LIST

NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY

ECI FOR ASSESSMENT of e-Gov Projects

Spotlight

RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT

HOW DO IT

- Put forward complaints to Farmer Helpline...
- Verify and register for upcoming projects...
- Ask your questions related to Agriculture...
- Pursue status of your complaints online...

NEWS UPDATE

- Mubarak refuses to step down; promises constitutional reforms
- PM takes serious view of panel findings on CWG broadcast deal
- CAG report won't be only back for

62nd Republic Day Celebrations

HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE

Commencement of 62nd Anniversary Celebrations 2010

62nd Anniversary

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India Gov.in

This is the National Portal of India, developed with an objective to enable a single window access to information and services being provided by the various Indian Government entities. The content in this Portal is the result of a collaborative effort of various Indian Government Ministries and Departments, at the Central/State/District level. This Portal is Mission Mode Project under the National E-Governance Plan, designed and maintained by National Informatics Centre (NIC), DIT, MoCIT, Government of India.

[NIC](#)

[e-Governance](#)

[MOC](#)

[MOC](#)

[MOC](#)



How to link to the National Portal

As per linking Policy of the National Portal, no prior permission is required to link 'india.gov.in' from any Indian Government website. However, the Department providing a link to The National Portal is required to inform the National Portal Secretariat about the various sections of the National Portal that they have linked to, so that they can be informed of any changes, updations/ additions therein. Also, it is not permitted that the National Portal Pages be loaded into frames on any site. These must be loaded into a new browser window.

Special Banners in different sizes and colour schemes for providing a link to the National Portal have been given at <http://india.gov.in/linktous.php>.

Instructions on how to provide a link have also been given. The Government websites/ Portals may choose any banner from the ones provided, depending upon their site design and place the same on their Homepage.

Link To Us

We welcome and encourage you to place a link on your Web site to INDIA.GOV.IN - the National Portal of India. The Portal provides a single window interface to the online information and services being provided by various Indian Government Departments.

As per our linking Policy, no prior permission is required to link 'india.gov.in' from your website. However, we would like you to inform us (using the 'feedback' option) about any links provided to this Portal so that you can be informed of any changes or updations therein. Also, we do not permit our pages to be loaded into frames on your site. The pages belonging to this Portal must load into a newly opened browser window of the User.

We encourage you to choose from the following graphic banners which can be conveniently placed on your website and linked to our Portal. The Banners may be hyperlinked to any of the following URLs

- <http://india.gov.in>
- <http://www.india.gov.in>

Banners for Download :

Download one of the images below to use on your website. Please note that the banner images given below may be used only to promote and link to the 'india.gov.in' Portal and not as a form of endorsement or approval from any constituent of the Indian Government. Kindly adhere to the design specifications as mentioned with each banner so that the image appears as intended and does not get distorted in any way.

1.		• 200X55 Pixels, • Colour • GIF Format • Download
2.		• 200X55 Pixels, • Black & White • GIF Format • Download
3.		• 128X34 Pixels, • Colour • GIF Format • Download
4.		• 116X31 Pixels, • Colour • GIF Format • Download
5.		• 380X66 Pixels, • Colour • JPEG Format • Download

- 3.1 CONTENT COPYRIGHT**
- 3.2 CONTENT HYPERLINKING**
- 3.3 TERMS & CONDITIONS**
- 3.4 PRIVACY POLICY**

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

3.1

Content Copyright

Copyright is a form of protection provided under the law to the owners of “original works of authorship” in any form or media. It is implied that the original information put up on the website by a Government Department is by default a copyright of the owner Department and may be copied, reproduced, republished, uploaded, posted, transmitted, or distributed only if the copyright policy of the concerned Department allows so.

3.1.1 Hence, the information, material and documents made available on an Indian Government website MUST be backed up with proper copyright policy explaining the terms and conditions of their usage and reference by others. The copyright policy of a Department could be liberal, moderate or conservative depending upon their preferences based on the kind of information available on their website. However, since it is a duty of a Government Department to provide all the information in the public domain freely to the citizens, the Departments should aim to have a liberal copyright policy.

3.1.2 In cases where the document is in public domain and there is no restriction on its reproduction, the copyright statement may be worded as follows:

Sample : Copyright Statement

“Material featured on this site may be reproduced free of charge in any format or media without requiring specific permission. This is subject to the material being reproduced accurately and not being used in a derogatory manner or in a misleading context. Where the material is being published or issued to others, the source must be prominently acknowledged. However, the permission to reproduce this material does not extend to any material on this site, which is explicitly identified as being the copyright of a third party. Authorisation to reproduce such material must be obtained from the copyright holders concerned.”

3.1.3 In cases where the nature of information/document calls for a restriction on its reproduction, the copyright statement may be worded as follows:



Sample of alternate Copyright Statement

“Material on this site is subject to copyright protection unless otherwise indicated. The material may be downloaded without requiring specific prior permission. Any other proposed use of the material is subject to the approval of (*name of Department*). Application for obtaining permission should be made to (email address of the concerned Department).”

- 3.1.4** The Departments should also be sensitive towards publishing any information having a third party copyright. The Government Departments MUST follow proper procedures to obtain the permission, prior to publishing such information on their websites.
- 3.1.5** If any published Government Document/Report is being reproduced on any website, whether as excerpts or in full, the source of the same i.e. Full Title of the Report/Document along with the name of the concerned Department and year of publication MUST be provided.

3.2

Content Hyperlinking

- 3.2.1** Since Government websites often receive queries and requests from owners of other websites who might want to provide a hyper link to their web pages, every Indian Government website MUST have a comprehensive and clear-cut hyper linking policy defined and spelt out for those who wish to hyper link content from any of its sections. The basic hyper linking practices and rules should ideally be common across the websites of a State/Ministry.
- 3.2.2** The hyperlinking policy enumerating the detailed criteria and guidelines with respect to hyperlinks with other sites may be made available under the common heading of ‘Hyperlinking Policy’ and displayed at a common point on the Homepage of all sites under the ownership a State/Ministry.
- 3.2.3** In case the concerned Department has no objection to anyone providing a hyperlink to their website, the policy statement may be worded as:



Sample Hyperlinking Policy

“We do not object to you linking directly to the information that is hosted on our site and no prior permission is required for the same. However, we would like you to inform us about any links provided to our site so that you can be informed of any changes or updations therein. Also, we do not permit our pages to be loaded into frames on your site. Our Department’s pages must load into a newly opened browser window of the user.”

- 3.2.4** In case Prior permission is required by anyone who wishes to provide a link to a Government website, the policy statement may be worded as follows:

Sample of alternate Hyperlinking Policy

“Prior permission is required before hyperlinks are directed from any website to this site. Permission for the same, stating the nature of the content on the pages from where the link has to be given and the exact language of the Hyperlink should be obtained by sending a request at (*Email address of the Department*).”

- 3.2.5** Many a times, cross linkages between different websites can cause ambiguity in the mind of the visitors about the owner of a particular portion of content and whom to be contacted in case of any query. Also, many a times, there could be a difference in the security domains of two linked websites. Hence, it is important to notify the visitors when they are leaving a particular website through a hyperlink and entering another one. Clear indications **MUST** be given when leaving the Government site for a non-Government website.

Sample of indication of leaving the Government Website

“This link shall take you to a page outside the (*website URL*). For any query regarding the contents of the linked page, please contact the webmaster of the concerned website.”

- 3.2.6** To create a visual distinction for links that lead offsite, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) controls or XSL or some such similar mechanism should be used. In case the link takes the user to another website of the same Department/Ministry/ State, a seamless transition should be used through appropriate CSS controls.
- 3.2.7** Third party content should only be linked when consideration about the copyright, terms of use, permissions, content authenticity and other legal and ethical aspects of the concerned content have been taken into account.



- 3.2.8** The overall quality of a website's content is also dependent, among other things on the authenticity and relevance of the 'linked' information it provides. This fact is all the more significant in the context of a Government website since there is a lot of credibility attached with an official website. Therefore, all Indian Government websites should make sure that the external hyperlinks, wherever present on the site **MUST** be verified and checked on a regular basis to ensure that the information being provided 'through' them is up-to-date, accurate and relevant.
- 3.2.9** Further, it **MUST** be ensured that 'broken links' or those leading to 'Page Not Found' errors are checked on a regular basis and are rectified or removed from the site immediately upon discovery. A number of technology tools are available for convenient discovery of broken links.

3.3

Terms & Conditions

- 3.3.1** With the increased proliferation of Internet, more and more citizens are accessing information from Government websites. Clearly defined Terms & Conditions including well-worded disclaimers regarding the usage of websites **MUST** be present on every Indian Government website.
Terms & Conditions shall address the following aspects:
- Ownership Details
 - Usage Policy of Content
 - Legal Aspects
 - Responsibility towards hyperlinked Sites
- 3.3.2** Since it is the responsibility of all Indian Government Departments to uphold and maintain the trust imposed in them by the visitors to the sites, the Government websites should not out rightly 'disclaim' the content of another Government website. Instead, a politely worded statement clearly indicating the ownership of the particular piece of content and the relevant details for further queries and information may be provided. Once all Indian Government websites follow standard content practices, the visitors should be able to move from one Government website to another in a manner as seamless as possible.
- 3.3.3** The Terms & Conditions **MUST** also clarify whether the information available on the website may be construed as a statement of law to be used for any legal purposes or not. It should also be mentioned that in case of any legal dispute arising out of the content on the Government website, the matter shall be heard in a court of law within the jurisdiction of the State where the concerned owner



Department of the website/portal is located.

- 3.3.4 In case the content is sourced / linked from a non-government website at the other end; the Terms & Conditions MUST clearly state this fact and disclaim responsibility for its accuracy and currency.
- 3.3.5 In case the website involves any e-payment features where electronic transactions are involved, appropriate disclaimers, worded in consultation with the involved agencies (bank, payment gateway service provider etc.) and the legal cell of the Department should be placed on the site.

Sample Statement for Terms & Conditions

This website is designed, developed and maintained by (name of Department), Government of India.

Though all efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and currency of the content on this website, the same should not be construed as a statement of law or used for any legal purposes. In case of any ambiguity or doubts, users are advised to verify/check with the Department(s) and/or other source(s), and to obtain appropriate professional advice.

Under no circumstances will this Department be liable for any expense, loss or damage including, without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage, or any expense, loss or damage whatsoever arising from use, or loss of use, of data, arising out of or in connection with the use of this website.

These terms and conditions shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the Indian Laws. Any dispute arising under these terms and conditions shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of India.

The information posted on this website could include hypertext links or pointers to information created and maintained by non-Government/private organisations. (*Name of Department*) is providing these links and pointers solely for your information and convenience. When you select a link to an outside website, you are leaving the (*Name of Department*) website and are subject to the privacy and security policies of the owners/sponsors of the outside website.

(*Name of Department*), does not guarantee the availability of such linked pages at all times.



(Name of Department), cannot authorise the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked websites. Users are advised to request such authorisation from the owner of the linked website.

(Name of Department), does not guarantee that linked websites comply with Indian Government Web Guidelines.

3.4

Privacy Policy

- 3.4.1** Government websites should follow an extremely cautious approach when it comes to collecting personal details/information about the visitors to the sites. It should be an endeavour to solicit only that information which is absolutely necessary.
- 3.4.2** In case a Department solicits or collects personal information from visitors through their websites, it **MUST** incorporate a prominently displayed Privacy Statement clearly stating the purpose for which information is being collected, whether the information shall be disclosed to anyone for any purpose and to whom.
- 3.4.3** Further, the privacy statement should also clarify whether any cookies shall be transferred onto the visitor's system during the process and what shall be the purpose of the same.
- 3.4.4** Whenever a Department's website allows e-commerce and collects high risk personal information from its visitors such as credit card or bank details, it **MUST** be done through sufficiently secure means to avoid any inconvenience. SSL (Secure Socket Layer), Digital Certificates are some of the instruments, which could be used to achieve this.

It is further informed that the following examples of Privacy Statements are only for reference purpose and Departments are requested to customise it to the requirements of their own websites.



Sample Privacy Statement :

Thanks for visiting website of (*Name of Department*), and reviewing our privacy policy.

We collect no personal information, like names or addresses, when you visit our website. If you choose to provide that information to us, it is only used to fulfil your request for information.

We do collect some technical information when you visit to make your visit seamless. The section below explains how we handle and collect technical information when you visit our website.

Information collected and stored automatically

When you browse, read pages, or download information on this website, we automatically gather and store certain technical information about your visit. This information never identifies who you are. The information we collect and store about your visit is listed below:

- The Internet domain of your service provider (e.g. mtnl.net.in) and IP address (an IP address is a number that is automatically assigned to your computer whenever you're surfing the web) from which you access our website.
- The type of browser (such as Firefox, Netscape, or Internet Explorer) and operating system (Windows, Linux) used to access our site.
- The date and time you accessed access our site.
- The pages/URLs you have visited and
- If you reached this website from another website, the address of that referring website.

This information is only used to help us make the site more useful for you. With this data, we learn about the number of visitors to our site and the types of technology our visitors use. We never track or record information about individuals and their visits.

Cookies

When you visit some websites, they may download small pieces of software on your computer/browsing device known as cookies. Some cookies collect personal information to recognise your computer in the future. We only use non-persistent cookies or “per- session cookies”.



Per-session cookies serve technical purposes, like providing seamless navigation through this website. These cookies do not collect personal information on users and they are deleted as soon as you leave our website. The cookies do not permanently record data and they are not stored on your computer's hard drive. The cookies are stored in memory and are only available during an active browser session. Again, once you close your browser, the cookie disappears.

If you send us personal information

We do not collect personal information for any purpose other than to respond to you (for example, to respond to your questions or provide subscriptions you have chosen). If you choose to provide us with personal information— like filling out a Contact Us form, with an e-mail address or postal address, and submitting it to us through the website—we use that information to respond to your message, and to help you get the information you've requested. We only share the information you give us with another Government agency if your question relates to that agency, or as otherwise required by law.

Our website never collects information or creates individual profiles for commercial marketing. While you must provide an e-mail address for a localised response to any incoming questions or comments to us, we recommend that you do NOT include any other personal information.

Site Security

- For site security purposes and to ensure that this service remains available to all users, this Government computer system employs commercial software programs to monitor network traffic to identify unauthorised attempts to upload or change information, or otherwise cause damage.
- Except for authorised law enforcement investigations, no other attempts are made to identify individual users or their usage habits. Raw data logs are used for no other purposes and are scheduled for regular deletion.
- Unauthorised attempts to upload information or change information on this service are strictly prohibited and may be punishable under the Indian IT Act.



Sample of alternate Privacy Policy Statement (in case a website does not collect any personal data)

As a general rule, this website does not collect Personal Information about you when you visit the site. You can generally visit the site without revealing Personal Information, unless you choose to provide such information.

Site Visit data:

This website records your visit and logs the following information for statistical purposes -your server's address; the name of the top-level domain from which you access the Internet (for example, .gov, .com, .in, etc.); the type of browser you use; the date and time you access the site; the pages you have accessed and the documents downloaded and the previous Internet address from which you linked directly to the site.

We will not identify users or their browsing activities, except when a law enforcement agency may exercise a warrant to inspect the service provider's logs.

Cookies:

A cookie is a piece of software code that an internet web site sends to your browser when you access information at that site. This site does not use cookies.

Email Management

Your email address will only be recorded if you choose to send a message. It will only be used for the purpose for which you have provided it and will not be added to a mailing list. Your email address will not be used for any other purpose, and will not be disclosed, without your consent.

Collection of Personal Information:

If you are asked for any other Personal Information you will be informed how it will be used if you choose to give it. If at any time you believe the principles referred to in this privacy statement have not been followed, or have any other comments on these principles, please notify the webmaster through the contact us page.

Note: The use of the term "Personal Information" in this privacy statement refers to any information from which your identity is apparent or can be reasonably ascertained.

- 4.1 INFORMATION IN PUBLIC DOMAIN**
- 4.2 PRIMARY CONTENT**
- 4.3 SECONDARY CONTENT**
- 4.4 TERTIARY CONTENT**
- 4.5 MINIMUM CONTENT**
- 4.6 INFORMATION MEANT FOR INTERNAL USE**
- 4.7 INFORMATION TO AVOID**

SCOPE OF CONTENT

4.1

Information in Public Domain

The content of a Government website is its soul as the citizens rely heavily upon a Government website to access authentic and up-to-date information. Ideally, an Indian Government website ought to have the following kinds of content:

a. Primary Content :

Primary content shall be the original content that is sought by target audience of the website which could be citizens, business community, overseas citizens or other Government Departments or even Government employees. Examples of such content are information about the Department, various schemes and programmes of the Department, documents, forms etc. Besides regulatory content mandated by legislation such as IT act, RTI or even directives from apex offices shall also form a part of this category e.g. parliament question and answers.

b. Secondary Content :

Secondary content is generated from the assortment, packaging of primary content to suit the requirement of different audience, events and occasions Examples of such content are advertisements / banners/ spotlight / media gallery/related sites etc.

c. Tertiary Content :

Information about the 'Primary' and 'Secondary' content forms a part of the tertiary content. This includes sections like About the Site, Online Help, Terms and Conditions and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

Departments/ Organisations should compile their own list of contents/ sub contents which they feel should be in public domain or needed by their intended audience. Information could be free to access by all or part of information, (due to concerns of privacy & sensitivity) could be made available only to registered users.

A generic list of content is given at the following pages



Generic List of Content	
Primary Content	
Long Term Value	Short Term Value
About The Ministry/Department/State	News
Acts & Rules	Press Releases
Programmes & Schemes	Tenders
Documents	Recruitments
Forms	
Services	
Sectoral Profile	
Regional Profile	
Contact Information	
Secondary Content	
Special Interest Group/ Audience Specific Views	
Events / Announcements	
Discussion Forum	
Spotlight	
Related Links	
Media Gallery	
Greetings	
Advertisements & Banners	
Tertiary Content	
About The Portal	
Sitemap, Search	
Terms and Conditions	
FAQ	
Feedback (General / Content Specific)	
Help	
Registration	
Content Contributor, Source & Validity	

Guidelines pertaining to compilation of content in some of the common content categories have been given in the following sections.



4.2

Primary Content

Primary Content forms the main focus of any Government website as it comprises information which the citizen has visited the website for. Examples are information about the Department, schemes and programmes, contact information, forms, documents, tenders etc. Broadly, the following sub categories encompass most of the Primary Content that ought to be made available on an Indian Government Website.

4.2.1 About Us

(Ministries/Department / State Govt./ Organisation/ District Administration)

This essentially refers to the content describing the owner Department of the website and comprises the following information:

- Profile
- Mission/Vision Statement
- History/Background
- Departments/Divisions/Cells
- Role/Functions/Responsibilities/Activities
- Agencies under the Administrative Control
- Organisational Structure
- Who's Who

This content should be reviewed frequently to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information. All information concerning the Legislative/Government officials MUST always be kept up to date.

4.2.2 Profile of a Sector / Region

Some websites/portals shall also be required to include a section on the overview of sector(s) they deal with naming all information concerning that sector present on their website or website of other Government entities working in that sector. This should be made accessible to give a comprehensive view to the visitors.

Similarly some of the portals are required to publish profile of a region e.g. National Portal publishes a profile of India. States Portals should publish a profile of the respective States while District websites should publish a profile of their respective district.

Detailing of this segment should be done by each Department and included in their web content policy. Policy must also include the frequency / event of updation as well as officers responsible for updating this content.



4.2.3 Programmes & Schemes

The Government Departments at the Centre and State have welfare programmes, and schemes benefiting the individuals, groups of citizens (e.g. women, physically challenged etc.) or community at large running in different regions and sectors across the country. Information about all such schemes of the Central as well as State Governments is included in this category. These schemes could be Centrally Sponsored, or being run by the State/ District Administration itself. It is important to note that these schemes should be directly benefiting the individuals, special interest groups of citizens (e.g. widows, physically challenged etc.) or the community at large. Also, information should only be highlighted with regard to those schemes, which are currently active and ongoing, and not about schemes which are no longer open/available to the public.

- a. The content submitted about schemes should be reviewed at least every quarter to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information.
- b. The complete official title of the Scheme MUST be reflected and should be self-explanatory. The correct title would lead to an accurate search output for information on that scheme and it would be easy for the users to locate it. Any abbreviation in the title should be expanded.
- c. This site should enlist all those who are eligible to receive benefits under the scheme e.g. women, children, disabled, poor etc. Also, the details of the eligibility criteria for availing those benefits should be clearly mentioned.
- d. Information should be given about whether the scheme entails monetary or non-monetary benefits. Also, what are the specific kinds of non-monetary benefits, which can be availed e.g. Subsidy, training, land allotment etc.
- e. Procedure to be followed, whom to contact, supporting documents to be carried etc. for availing benefits under the scheme MUST form a part of this content.
- f. Validity of the scheme MUST also be mentioned so that the information could accordingly be moved to archives after the expiry date and the visitors are not misled in any way.

4.2.4 Services

A large number of citizen services are being provided by the various Ministries, Departments and State/UT Governments. Information about these services as well as the interface to access and use them (if it is available online) should be made available on their websites.

- a. It is important to clearly understand what constitutes the term 'services' in this context. Information about all services provided by the Government,



whether fully online, partially online or available offline but whose description and details exist online can be called services. For example, if the complete details about how to apply for a birth certificate in a particular State are given along with the facility to download the requisite application form, it shall be categorised as a Service. However, just information about things like a programme of any Department, or access to a some searchable database without any service associated will not constitute a 'Service'.

- b.** The complete title of the Service MUST be reflected and should be self-explanatory. The correct title would lead to an accurate search output for information on that service and it would be easy for the users to locate it. Any abbreviation in the title should be expanded.
- c.** The websites should prominently display the most often used/ accessed services, so that visitors can locate and access them quickly.
- d.** The website MUST provide a complete description of what the service is, how is it useful for the citizens, how it can be availed, who is eligible to avail the service, who is to be contacted and during which hours. This is very important for the common citizens to understand the significance of the service and what are the steps to be followed for availing it.
- e.** If the service is delivered online then it should be developed as a webservice so that other websites and portals can access it seamlessly, subject to authorisation of the owner Department. All on-line services should be made available through the National Portal as a 'web service.'

4.2.5 Application Forms

Visitors to Government websites want fast, easy service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They do not want to wait until an organisation is open for business. They do not want to wait in line or on the phone to get forms and documents to avail the desired service. Therefore, all application forms existing in the public domain and meant for applying for licenses, certificates, scholarships, grants, services, information, loans, utilities etc. should be published on the concerned Government website for the convenience of citizens.

- a.** All Forms MUST be provided in an accessible format (refer section 7.4.2).
- b.** The title of the form MUST be clearly indicated and should be self-explanatory and devoid of any abbreviations which may render it universally incomprehensible. The correct title would lead to an accurate search output for information on that Form and it would be easy for the users to locate it. Also, in case the Form is popularly known by a number (e.g. Form 16 for Income Statement or Form 4 for Driving license), the same should also be mentioned



along with the title.

- c. It should be specified whether the language of the form is English, Hindi or any other Regional language. In case of the latter, the name of the concerned language MUST be mentioned clearly. If the form is bi-lingual/ multi-lingual, it is important to mention the languages it exists in.
- d. Information assisting the user in filling up the application form should also be provided such as where to submit and which supporting documents to attach etc.

4.2.6 Acts & Rules

All the Acts passed by the Parliament as well as the State Legislative Assemblies should be reflected on the website of the concerned Government Department so that they can be accessed for reference. Further, the Rules/Sub-ordinate legislations issued by the Departments based on those Acts should also be displayed on the website.

- a. The complete title of the Act as written in the official notification MUST be mentioned which should be self explanatory and devoid of any abbreviations etc. which may render it universally incomprehensible. The correct title would lead to an accurate search output for information on that Act and it would be easy for the users to locate it.
- b. The 'Extent of the Act' or the scope or geographical region to which the Act applies should also be mentioned. In case it is a Central Act passed by the parliament, the extent is normally the whole of India. However, the Acts passed by the State Legislatures are usually confined to the boundaries of the concerned state.
- c. The Commencement Date from which the Act comes into force should also be mentioned.
- d. As far as 'Rules' are concerned their relation with respective Acts should be highlighted as far as possible.
- e. Acts and Rules MUST be compiled in an accessible format (refer section 7.4.2).

4.2.7 Documents/Reports

- a. All documents developed/published and issued in the Public Domain by Government Departments, Ministries, State/UT Governments, Public Sector Units and Organisations must be published in the website. The following list gives an idea of the variety of Government documents that can be covered



under this :

- Five-year Plan documents
 - Annual Reports
 - Budget Documents
 - Guidelines by Government
 - Citizen Charters
 - Census Documents
 - Survey Outcomes / Reports
 - Statistical Reports etc.
- b.** This content should be reviewed every quarter to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information.
 - c.** The complete official title of the document **MUST** be mentioned on the site. The correct title would lead to an accurate search output for that document and it would be easy for the users to locate it. For example: 'Policy on Promotion of Tourism in the State of Manipur' is a more appropriate title than just 'Tourism Policy.' Any abbreviation in the title should be expanded and the title should not be formulated on just a document number/date.
 - d.** In case any reference to a document of another Government Department is given, it should be clearly specified as with whom lies the ownership of the document i.e. which is the exact Ministry/Department at the Central or State level which has produced/published/issued the concerned document.
 - e.** It should be specified whether the language of the document is English, Hindi or any other Regional language. In case of the latter, the name of the concerned language **MUST** be mentioned clearly. If the document is bi-lingual/ multi-lingual, it is important to mention the languages it exists in.
 - f.** It is important that if the document is valid only for a certain time period, the validity **MUST** be clearly mentioned on the site. In fact, the document should be moved to the archives after expiry of the validity period.
 - g.** Documents **MUST** be made available in an accessible format (ref. section 7.4.2).
 - h.** In case a document is large it may be broken down into multiple parts to facilitate easy download.

4.2.8 Circulars/Notifications

There are various Circular/ Notifications that are released from time to time by the Indian Government at the Central or State level. Information about all the Circular/ Notifications of the Central as well as State Governments should be made available on the National Portal.



- a. The official title of the Circular/ Notification MUST be mentioned and should be self explanatory. The correct title will also help in accurate search output for information on that circular and thus, it would be easy for the users to locate it.
- b. The ownership of the concerned circular should be specified i.e. Ministry/ Department and also the level i.e. Central/ State etc.
- c. Circulars/Notifications MUST be made available in an accessible format (refer section 7.4.2).
- d. If the Circulars/Notifications are valid only for a certain time period, the validity MUST be clearly mentioned on the site. In fact, the Circulars/Notifications should be moved to the archives after expiry of the validity period.

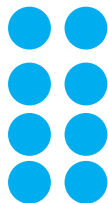
4.2.9 Tenders

Government and Public Sector Procurement / Tenders/ Notifications issued by the Central and State Governments and other public bodies across India for goods, services and works MUST be made available through the websites. As is also directed by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) following are some of the guidelines with respect to tenders.

- a. Information MUST include the notifications and complete documents for tenders.
- b. Tenders of all categories including open tenders, limited tenders, empanelment, auctions, work contracts, service contracts etc. should be published on the website.
- c. All these tender notifications should be uploaded on the single entry Tenders Portal for the Government (<http://tenders.gov.in>), which is a one-stop source for tenders of various Government Departments, developed on the advice of the Central Vigilance Commission (refer- <http://www.cvc.gov.in>).
- d. Outdated tenders MUST be immediately removed from the website and moved to archive or deleted as per the Departmental policy. If the tenders are published through the Tenders Portal it is automatically taken care of.
- e. All tender documents MUST be published in an accessible format (refer section 7.4.2).

4.2.10 Recruitment

All Indian Government websites MUST provide complete and transparent information on their recruitment policies for the benefit of those who would like to join the Government and serve the nation. In case the recruitment is through some Central or State level examination or recruitment agency such as UPSC, SSC etc. that should be highlighted



along with a link to respective pages of those organisations websites. In either of the cases information about the recruitment should abide by the following guidelines.

- a. The title of the recruitment notice should be self-explanatory.
- b. This site should enlist all those who are eligible for a particular recruitment. Also the details of the eligibility criteria should be clearly mentioned.
- c. All required application forms should be made available on the website so that the interested person can download and submit the same.
- d. Procedure to be followed, whom to contact, supporting documents to be carried etc. for the particular recruitment MUST form a part of this content.
- e. All currently open vacancies may be highlighted on the Homepage of the website.
- f. All recruitment notices MUST also be registered with the National Portal for wider access by target audience.
- g. Information for those recruitment notices in which the last date is over MUST be either removed or moved into the archives section.

4.2.11 News and Press Releases

News having national importance and significance for the Citizens as well as Government Press Releases issued by Departments and organisations at the Central and State level should be published on the website of the concerned Department. News and Press Releases MUST carry the date and should be organised as per the Archival Policy of the website. News and Press releases should be published in RSS format so that associated offices and Departments can also consume them on their websites with due permission or based on their access policy.

4.2.12 Contact Information on Government Websites

Citizens would like to contact any Government Department or entity to ask questions, get information, seek clarifications or sort out problems. Therefore it is essential that Government websites provide them with the means to do that.

- a. All Indian Government websites MUST have a 'Contact Us' page, linked from the Homepage and all relevant places in the website.
- b. The 'Contact Us' page should be categorised according to the various divisions handling different kind of queries; e.g. grievance redressal, file status, procedural details etc.



- c. The contact details for the Important functionaries in the Department MUST have the telephone numbers, fax numbers, postal address as well as email address along with the timings specified for personal public dealing (if applicable). The content policy of the department should enlist the functionaries whose details are to be given on the website.
- d. There should be a clear-cut policy for redress (correction) of inaccurate information found on the website. The contact details of the Web Information Manager, who is overall responsible for the content on the website, should be provided.

4.2.13 Presence on the National Portal

Mechanism MUST be in place to ensure that all Citizen Services, Forms, Documents, Schemes are registered with the respective repositories of the National Portal.

4.3

Secondary Content

Secondary content is generated from the assortment and packaging of primary content to suit the requirement of different audience, events and occasions. Examples of such content are advertisements/banners/spotlight/media gallery/related sites.

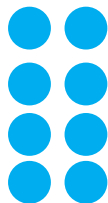
4.3.1 Special Interest Group Corner

In case there is an event or occasions, Government departments may introduce a special section for a particular target group e.g. during result time a special section for students may be put up or the Department of Social Welfare may open a section for senior citizens on its website. Here, it must be noted that the original content that is sourced from various sections of the website to make up this section should remain as such so that it may be referred to once the section has been removed.

4.3.2 Events and Announcements

Government websites should have a section to cover various Events & Announcements such as.

- Announcements having International/National/State level importance should be published on the website.
- Announcements related to important upcoming Government events being organised by a Ministry/Department/State/UT.



- Announcements should be worded in simple English/Regional language depending on whom it is meant for.
- Announcements related to schemes/grants/scholarships/fellowships etc.
- Warnings of Natural disasters/Epidemics etc.
- Calls for relief funds during disasters. Other help from citizens or civic agencies.
- Display of important helpline numbers in case of crisis.

Guidelines relating to events and announcements are as follows:

- a. It is **MUST** to take off / archive the announcement once it loses its relevance or after the expiry of the time period attached to the event or happening.
- b. All important announcements should also be published on the National Portal for wider access.

4.3.3 Discussion Forums & Chat Rooms

Discussion forums are becoming an increasingly popular tool for sharing viewpoints and information. Discussion Forums could be initiated by a Department on any relevant topic of public interest and can prove quite useful in obtaining opinions and viewpoints of the citizens on issues important for policy making. While initiating an online discussion forum on a Government Department's website, the following has to be kept in mind:

- a. The purpose and objective of the Discussion Forum should be clearly defined. Preferably, an initiating document or background paper explaining the theme of the topic for the forum may be provided on the site.
- b. Clear-cut Terms and Conditions for participating in the Discussion Forum should be indicated and a Usage Policy (see box) should be defined.
- c. The discussion forums on a Government website **MUST** be moderated so that there is some control to avoid publishing unwanted content on the website. All the inputs submitted by the users must first be reviewed by the moderator for context and appropriateness of the language and then posted on the website.
- d. The discussion forum should be open for a limited period of time and the validity of the same should be prominently indicated on the site. However, rather than closing the forum abruptly, it is advised that a summary of the inputs received as well as an Action Taken Report, if possible, should be provided on the website so that the visitors are assured that their inputs are being seriously considered and valued by the Department.



Chat Rooms

Chat rooms on a website could be used by citizens to exchange their viewpoints on some common topic amongst each other as well as by the Departments to facilitate an online conversation between a senior functionary and citizens. Like Discussion Forums, Chat rooms should also follow a Usage Policy (see box) and a proper code of conduct. It is desirable that the participants of an online chat through a Government Department’s website be registered before they are allowed to log in and post their messages. Permanent chat rooms should be monitored frequently. In case of temporary or special occasion chat sessions with a senior functionary, it is advised that questions be submitted to the interviewee, before being published in the chat room.

Online Discussion Forum : Usage Policy

A Usage Policy should be established and published alongside all online discussion forums and chat rooms on a Government website. This policy should be prominently displayed to any new user who should be made to pass through a page with this information before being able to input data. The usage policy should clearly specify that the following is forbidden :

- Insulting, threatening or provoking language.
- Inciting hatred on the basis of race, religion, gender, nationality or sexuality or other personal characteristics.
- Swearing, using hate-speech or making obscene or vulgar comments.
- Libel, condoning illegal activity, contempt of court and breach of copyright.
- Spamming, i.e., adding the same comment repeatedly.
- Impersonating or falsely claiming to represent a person or organisation.
- Posting in a language other than the language of the website.
- Invading people’s privacy.
- Posting off-topic comments.

4.3.4 Related links

For every content topic in different modules of the website, a section should be provided for ‘Related Links’ to the concerned information.

- a. Each content topic covered in the website may have some Related Links to other Government websites which provide further details on the topic.
- b. For every Related Link, the complete URL of the Homepage/Concerned



webpage MUST be provided correctly along with the complete title of the Website which shall appear on the screen.

- c. The validity and accuracy of the URL MUST be checked on a regular basis to make sure that the information is relevant and the linked address is correct.

Only Government websites/webpages should be provided as 'Related Links' for further information since there is no control over the veracity and availability of information on private websites.

4.3.5 Spotlight

The website may have a section called 'Spotlight' which focuses on a certain issue of importance and brings it in to the limelight. The guidelines with regard to this section are:-

- a. Every Spotlight topic should be chosen keeping in mind the relevance and significance of the topic in today's context. It should be ensured that the chosen topic is of significance and should interest a diverse group of audience.
- b. The content for the Spotlight Section should have the following essential elements:
 - Brief introductory text to appear on the Homepage of the website.
 - Detailed text on the topic in the Main Page of the Spotlight section. This content should comprise key highlights of the topic and the facts ought to be sourced from authentic and official sources relating to the topic.
 - Address of the Webpage/Websites which have detailed information on the topic addressed in the Spotlight.
 - Graphical Banner highlighting the Spotlight topic and linked to the webpage with further details.
- c. Once the new Spotlight is launched, the older one should be passed in an Archives section along with the date for future reference.

4.4

Tertiary Content

Information about the 'primary' and 'secondary' content forms a part of the tertiary content. The guidelines for this type of content are given as follows:

- 4.4.1 About the site i.e. Department that is responsible for the contents as well as the



maintenance of the site, what is the purpose behind the development of the site, when was it launched, where is it hosted etc.

4.4.2 Navigation Aids Sections such as Online Help, Site Map, and Search (described in detail in the latter sections).

4.4.3 Terms and Conditions with respect to the usage of content on the site. This includes policies on Copyright, Privacy, Legal Implications etc. as well as Content Disclaimers. This has been explained in detail in the previous chapter.

4.4.4 ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ or FAQs

Although the content developers of websites make (and should make) all possible efforts to ensure that the content answers all possible and anticipated information needs of the citizens, it is sometimes not possible to address it completely. Visitors still have questions because either they couldn't find what they were looking for or because it is presented in such a manner that it is difficult for them to comprehend or understand. In such a case, a detailed list of answers to common questions can prove highly useful to the website audience. Also, it has been proved by usability studies that information presented in a 'question-answer' form is much easier for people to understand than lengthy write-ups.

Hence, Government websites, particularly the ones having frequent interaction with citizen for various services/schemes should have a 'Frequently Asked Questions' module linked from the Homepage and all other relevant places in the site.

The web information managers can compile the list of commonly asked queries and their answers through the following sources:

- Email, phone calls and letters from the public.
- A survey could be conducted amongst the public.
- Input from people who answer phones and mail in the organisation.
- Review of website usage statistics and top search terms.

4.4.5 User Feedback

A commonly used method of receiving the feedback from the visitors of the site is through feedback forms or guest books. Feedback forms, with pre-decided fields, to be filled in by the visitors, enable a much more structured way of receiving feedback and hence make it easy to categorise or analyse the same. Forms are also quite useful for receiving grievances/complaints from the users in a structured and formatted manner. The information collected through feedback forms can also be used as a means of knowing the usage pattern of the website and can be used in the enhancement of further versions of the website.



- a. All feedback **MUST** be collected through online forms for reasons explained above.
- b. All feedback forms must be prominently displayed on the website.
- c. Departments **MUST** respond to the feedback explaining how it shall be processed.
- d. Departments should also make it clear on the response screen whether citizens should expect a reply on their feedback. If 'yes' then in how many days.

4.4.6 Help

A special section 'Help' on the website **MUST** be created, which allows and guides for a pleasant experience while browsing the website. This category includes the kind of content which allows for an easy and convenient navigation for the visitor to the website (e.g. online help, how to open files of certain formats, how to access audio/video on the portal, kinds of plug-ins required etc.). Further, the content which clarifies the purpose of the website as well as its policies for the visitors should also be included in this category.

4.4.7 Downloads and Plug-ins

a. Information about downloadable material

Downloading material from the Internet can be an expensive and time-consuming exercise. Therefore, Government websites **MUST** provide Information that will help visitors determine whether they want to access downloadable material. This information would concern the following:

- Self explanatory title of the document/file.
- Download and use instructions (install, open, view).
- File format & file size.

b. Size of downloads to be minimised:

The total size of the file should be kept to a minimum to ensure acceptable download times for all users, especially those that do not have high-speed, reliable Internet connections.

c. Virus Free Downloads:

Prior to making downloadable material available for visitors, Government websites **MUST** check for viruses and clear them.



4.5

Minimum Content

The homepage of a website is the primary entry page to the entire content of the website. It is important that the visitors to the site get to access the most important content elements from the Homepage itself.

- 4.5.1** Government websites **MUST** ensure the availability of the following minimum content elements on the Homepage. This is applicable not just to the websites of Departments but also to any Indian Government website, be it on a specific Project, a Task Force, Committee or Service etc.

Minimum Content on the homepage of a Department

- Department Name (alternatively, the name of the Project, Service etc. as applicable).
- National Emblem/Logo (as applicable).
- About the Department (including its main activities & functions).
- Link to all the major modules/sections of the site.
- Link to all the citizen services offered by the Department.
- A link to the ‘Contact Us’ page of the website.
- A link to the “Feedback” page.
- A link to National Portal.
- Search/Site Map.
- Terms and Conditions of Use.

4.5.2 Minimum Content on Subsequent Pages:

Apart from the Homepage, the subsequent pages of the website **MUST** have the following minimum information, in addition to the **main content**.

- Self explanatory title of the page.
- Link to the Homepage.
- Link to the parent section/top module of the individual page.
- Ownership (name of the Department owning the website).
- Link to the “Contact Us” page.
- Last Reviewed / Updated date.



4.6

Information meant for Internal Use

Government websites contain information and services for the public. Therefore, it has to be strictly noted that Indian Government websites should not be used to convey information specific to the Department's employees. Information meant for the internal consumption of the employees should be disseminated through Intranets. This is required, since information intended for employees can confuse the common public visiting the website.

- All information meant for internal consumption and not in public domain, presently existing on any Indian Government website should be moved to an Intranet secured through proper authentication.

In case for some reason it is not possible for the Department to develop an Intranet, the information meant for internal use may be isolated and explicitly labelled (e.g. 'for employees' or 'for internal use'), to make it clear to the public that it is not intended for them.

4.7

Information to Avoid

- 4.7.1 Commercial banner advertisements should be avoided on Government websites. Banner advertisements that promote and link to other Government agencies as well as social messages are permissible.
- 4.7.2 Any information in text, visual or any other media which may offend/harm the National sentiments, religious communities as well as security and integrity of the Country MUST be avoided on the websites.
- 4.7.3 Government Information which is confidential or only for restricted use should be avoided on a website meant for the common public.

CH 05 QUALITY OF CONTENT

- 5.1 CITIZEN ORIENTATION
- 5.2 CONTENT AUTHENTICITY, ACCURACY & CURRENCY
- 5.3 LANGUAGE
- 5.4 CONSISTENT TERMINOLOGY
- 5.5 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS
- 5.6 INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE & RELATIONSHIP
- 5.7 MULTILINGUAL VERSIONS



QUALITY OF CONTENT

5.1

Citizen Orientation

The crucial element of an effective presence of Government on the Web is the way its content is written and packaged. Indian Government websites should be oriented towards their prospective audience. Intended audience to the Government website could be Citizens, Businesses, Government Departments as well as Government employees. Following are the guidelines towards the same.

- 5.1.1** The content **MUST** be selected keeping the audience in mind, not from the Government's perspective. Apart from the selection of the content, equal emphasis should be given to the way it is written and presented on the web. Content aimed at the common public should be written in simple language so that people from diverse professional, educational and demographic backgrounds can easily comprehend the same.
- 5.1.2** Homepage of the website should be designed carefully and effectively to provide a good interface for the citizen. Homepages should ideally not feature photos of individuals and office bearers of the Department. Those photos may be appropriate on the "About Us" or "News" page.
- 5.1.3** In order to gauge the content requirements of the citizens, who are the prime target audience of any Government website. Government Departments may use following means to determine the best way to identify and package information for citizens and other stakeholders.
 - Discussion Forums.
 - Customer satisfaction surveys.
 - Online feedback from citizens.
 - Analysing website usage reports, including search terms and statistics.
 - Usability testing and research.



5.2

Content Authenticity, Accuracy & Currency

It is the duty of every Web Information manager to ensure that the content on his/her website is always authentic, up-to-date and latest. This fact assumes paramount significance in the context of Government websites since the public puts a lot of trust in the information available on the official websites of the Government.

- 5.2.1** Each and every bit of content published on a Government website should be verified and checked thoroughly as the public expects nothing less than authentic and accurate information from a credible source such as an official Government website. The Departments MUST have a Content Contribution, Moderation and Approval Policy (CMAP) stating the responsibility, authorisation and workflow details with regard to content publishing on the site.
- 5.2.2** The Homepage MUST and every important entry page of all Indian Government websites/portals should display a time stamp indicating the following:
 - a.** Date on which the information was posted on the website.
 - b.** Date on which the content was last reviewed and/or modified.
- 5.2.3** Every piece of content appearing on the Government website should be reviewed after a pre-decided duration for its accuracy, relevance and currency. All Government Departments MUST formulate a proper web Content Review Policy (CRP) depending upon the nature of their content and if possible; also publish the policy on their website.
- 5.2.4** In case the nature of the content is 'historical' i.e. it will never change (e.g. press releases, speeches, published reports/documents of a Department etc.), the date of posting the content may be mentioned along with a note indicating the nature of the document and explaining that it is not subject to revision.
- 5.2.5** In case the reports and documents are voluminous and it is difficult to mention the time stamp on every page, the same MUST be indicated on the main page as well as on all icons/places which link to that document.
- 5.2.6** For time sensitive content which expires after a certain date (e.g. tender notifications, announcements for conference registrations, contest entries etc.), a policy on whether the content should be archived for future reference or removed altogether from the website should be decided by the concerned Department after careful consideration of their nature of content. However, 'expired' content MUST not be presented or flashed on the website. The Departments MUST have a clearly laid out Content Archival Policy (CAP) clarifying the rules set in this regard.

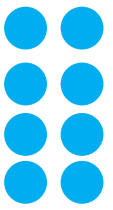


5.3

Language

The language used in a Government website is very important for ensuring effective communication with the target audiences. If the language on the website is complex and uses terminology which a common visitor is unfamiliar with, the very purpose of having the website will be lost.

- 5.3.1** Departments **MUST** ensure that homepage, all major entry points, and navigational elements of Government websites are written in the clear and simple language appropriate for the sites content.
- 5.3.2** Indian Government websites normally have diverse target audience with diverse demographic profiles and educational background. Therefore it is highly desirable that the language used in the Government website is understood easily and correctly by all sections of the audiences.
- 5.3.3** Departments may test the language and its comprehension with a sample set of typical visitors before making the site live for all audiences.
- 5.3.4** Writing for the web is very different from writing for the Print medium. One of the best ways of making the language web friendly is to keep the sentences short and simple. Long, convoluted sentences seem forbidding on screen and can distract the visitors.
- 5.3.5** There are tools available which can help a Department evaluate how easy to understand and comprehend the language used on their website is. Departments should use such language tools, including language software, to evaluate the readability of the website's content.
- 5.3.6** The language used in a Government website **MUST** be free from any spelling or grammatical errors of any kind. Further, there should be uniformity across the site when it comes to using British/American English.
- 5.3.7** Abbreviations/Acronyms, which may be typical in Government parlance and may not be commonplace with citizens of diverse backgrounds should be avoided or expanded at all possible places. At the same time, if a short form or abbreviation of a term is more popularly known and understood by the citizens than even its full form, the short form should be mentioned.
- 5.3.8** Where ever there is a change in the default language of the document e.g. Hindi used in English document, these changes in the language of a document's text and any text equivalent (e.g., captions) **MUST** be clearly identified.



5.4

Consistent Terminology

Common look and feel in Government websites of any country helps in promoting the brand image of the Government; raises user confidence; provides a user-friendly experience in navigating Government websites; and organises information more consistently to facilitate search. An integral part of the common look and feel strategy is the usage of standard content terminology, positioning and framework. Usability Research has established that using common terms and placement of content can help visitors locate the information they want more quickly and conveniently.

- 5.4.1** Hence it is suggested that ‘Consistent Content Terminology and Positioning’ should be adopted by Government websites in India. This could act as a beginning for adopting a larger view towards common look and feel of Indian Government websites in the long run. If a certain ‘term’ has been presented in a particular manner at one place in the website, it should be referred to in the same manner at all places in the site.
- 5.4.2** Consistency in nomenclature **MUST** be maintained across a website and should also be followed across all the websites owned by a State/Ministry.

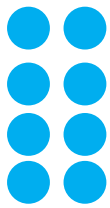
For example

- If a certain Government entity has been referred to as the ‘Department’ at one place in the site, it should not be mentioned as ‘organisation’ or some other name at an alternative place in the same site.
- In any application form, if the button to submit information after filling up the form says ‘SUBMIT’ then it must say so across the entire website. It should not happen that different terminology is used in the same context at various places in a single website.

5.5

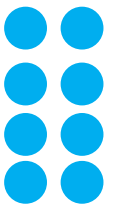
International Conventions

Web as a medium transcends all geographic and physical boundaries. Obviously therefore, the target audience of every website could be multicultural with highly varied demographic backgrounds. It should be ensured that the content of every Indian Government website takes international and cultural conventions into account.



- 5.5.1 Currency:** The mention of Indian Currency should be uniform across any Indian Government Website. As per international convention, any monetary value in terms of Indian currency may be described as INR (Indian National Rupee).
- 5.5.2 Time:** To mention timings in any context, the IST (Indian Standard Time) should be used and if possible, the standard reference of with respect to the more widely known internationally GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) may be mentioned.
- 5.5.3 Phone Numbers:** The format for mentioning the phone numbers should be according to international conventions (+Country Code – Area Code- Phone No.) and uniform across all Indian Government websites. e.g. +91-11-24305364.
- 5.5.4 Date:** the format for date across all pages of Indian Government websites should be dd/mm/yyyy to ensure uniformity.
- 5.5.5 Holidays:** Holidays and Work Hours may vary between geographical areas and cultures and hence the websites should provide and clarify information taking into account the culturally specific terms. Time zone variations as well as workday variations should be considered in this context.
- 5.5.6 Icons:** Icons can be international symbols or may be culturally dependent. Icons may be accompanied by text to assist by individuals who are not familiar with the icons used, individuals traversing the Web by text, and persons with visual impairment.
- 5.5.7 Hemispherical:** Some references are hemispherically oriented. Winter means something different in the northern hemisphere than it does in the southern hemisphere. Equating seasons to months should be avoided. Note that references such as “west” or “east” may be culture-or hemisphere-specific.
- 5.5.8 Postal/Physical Address:** When presenting or collecting address information, country, state and postal/pin code should be included. It is important to know that postal codes across Countries vary in format, and validation code should take this into consideration. It may be useful to collect Country, State or Postal/PIN Code information before other information to minimise the user entry required, although it may not be made compulsory as many users may not know details such as PIN Code.

Though it is preferable to follow international convention, however if for some reason there is a deviation the same should be highlighted in the ‘help’ section.



5.6

Information Architecture and Relationship

'The world can be seen as only connections, nothing else? A piece of information is really only defined by what it's related to, and how it's related. There really is little else to meaning. The structure is everything.' -

Tim Berners-Lee

Information Architecture is concerned with how information is organized, structured, labelled, and presented for maximum access. The content of a Government website or any website per se, has to be structured in such a way that the target audience is able to access the desired information with minimum effort. For the same, it is imperative that the information and services on the website are well organised and categorized into relevant modules/sections and sub-sections so that any information can be located conveniently and is not buried deep inside WebPages. Also the information structure, relationship between the information and the meaning is maintained across all presentation styles.

The following guidelines are important to achieving the objective of well-organized Information Architecture:

- 5.6.1** The objective of the Homepage of a website is always to allow the visitors to locate the desired information in the easiest possible manner. Homepages must be designed so as to prominently highlight the most requested information and services. Further, the homepage should provide an easy-to- identify section where the purpose of the website and the value to citizens is explained in terms they can understand. Indian Government websites **MUST** ensure that all information, which is of direct importance to the citizen, is accessible from the Homepage itself. In case the information cannot be displayed on the Homepage; it should be ensured that it is available in not more than three clicks from the homepage.
- 5.6.2** Sighted users perceive structure and relationships through various visual cues (page headings are in a larger & bold font; list items are preceded by a bullet; form fields may be positioned as groups that share text labels; a different background color may be used to indicate related items and so on). It must be ensured that these information and relationships are preserved even when the presentation format changes. (For example when the content is read by a screen reader or CSS is turned off or replaced).Therefore departments **MUST** ensure that Information, structure, and relationships conveyed through presentation can be programmatically determined or are available in text.
- 5.6.3** When the sequence in which content is presented affects its meaning, a correct reading sequence **MUST** be programmatically determined. This helps people who rely on assistive technologies like screen readers because the meaning evident



in the sequencing of the information in the visual presentation will be the same when the content is presented in spoken form. This also preserves the meaning of the page when the CSS is turned off or not supported. It should be noted that a sequence is meaningful if change of order shall impact its meaning. Two independent content items like two separate articles in a page may be placed in any sequence without affecting the meaning. Similarly the navigation block and the content area may be placed in any sequence without affecting their meaning.

5.7

Multilingual Versions

India is a country with diverse cultures and as many as 22 official languages. One of the major users of Government websites are common citizens with highly diverse demographic profiles. Due to the various initiatives taken by Centre and State Governments, as well as the private sector, Internet is now accessible even in the remote parts of the nation. For example Community Information Centres (CIC) project of the Ministry of Communications and IT has made the Internet reach all over the North Eastern States in urban as well as rural parts, despite the difficult terrain.

At present, a majority of the content in Government websites is in English, except few which have content in Hindi or one of the Regional languages. Thus, even though Government websites are accessible, they are still not usable. Hence, there is a need to put the information in Regional languages. Depending on the nature of the content and its prospective usage, content should be translated in desired languages and should be a part of the same website with prominent links. Technology for publishing the content in Indian languages is already quite developed and a large number of tools are available to support this.

- 5.7.1** Ideally all the pages on the website should be translated in Hindi and other Regional languages. In case it is becoming difficult to do so, Departments should identify the content which is widely accessed by the public and begin to put up such content in multiple languages.
- 5.7.2** It MUST be ensured that the documents/pages in multiple languages are updated simultaneously so that there are no inconsistencies, at any point, between the various language versions.
- 5.7.3** In case it is practically difficult to update the versions in all languages simultaneously due to delays on account of translation etc., the obsolete information should be removed from the site till the latest information is uploaded. In any case, a time stamp indicating the date of uploading the information and its validity should be put along with all the time sensitive documents.

CH 06 DESIGN

- 6.1 VISUAL IDENTITY**
- 6.2 PAGE LAYOUT**
- 6.3 GRAPHIC BUTTONS & ICONS**
- 6.4 TYPOGRAPHY**
- 6.5 COLOUR**
- 6.6 IMAGES**
- 6.7 AUDIO/ VIDEO /ANIMATION**
- 6.8 NAVIGATION**
- 6.9 SITE SEARCH**
- 6.10 SITEMAP**
- 6.11 FRAMES**



DESIGN

6.1

Visual Identity

Design in the broad sense is a process that achieves the end result of enhancing the user experience by presenting the content in a form that is easily understandable, navigable and searchable by the user, in addition to being visually appealing. Interface design is the design and layout of the websites graphic and textual elements. The branding of a website can be established by incorporating common design elements such as colours, logos, styles, etc., into every page. This presents a professional and consistent visual identity as well as an important signpost that tells visitors where they are.

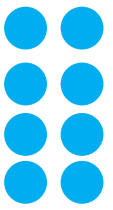
- 6.1.1** Therefore, visual/textual identity elements highlighting the Indian Government's ownership of the site **MUST** prominently stand out on the page.

6.2

Page layout

Page Layout is a significant consideration in the overall design interface of any website. Following are some guidelines to achieve well laid out pages :

- 6.2.1** A consistent page layout **MUST** be maintained throughout the site. This means that the placement of navigation and text elements should be uniform across the website.
- 6.2.2** Most important elements should be visible on the first screen and should not go inside a scroll.
- 6.2.3** Focus should be laid on a few important elements of the page, so that the visitor may be guided to those portions, which deserve most attention. If a lot of elements in a webpage are blinking/flashing or highlighted, the visitor will not be able to concentrate on the essence of the page.
- 6.2.4** There should be a clear demarcation of components. This can be guided by the Information Architecture where information of one kind is grouped together and presented visually at one point in the page.



6.3

Graphics, Buttons and Icons

Buttons and icons are symbolic representation of objects and the representation of actions that can be applied to objects. Icons if used properly can be a powerful technique for communication and attracting attention. They can hold the users attention, add interest to a website and quickly convey information. They are also free from the barriers of language.

- 6.3.1** While using national identity symbols like Flag, National Emblem etc., it **MUST** be ensured that the images are in a proper ratio and colour.
- 6.3.2** The graphic elements like buttons and icons should be simple and their meaning and symbolism should be self explanatory and relevant. This simply means that an icon should look like what it means.
- 6.3.3** Buttons and Icons should be large enough to be distinguishable on a high-resolution monitor, since the display size of components decreases with the increase in the screen resolution set by the user.
- 6.3.4** Graphics should not be used to present major content in an alternative style as those using text only browsers shall not be able to access the information thus rendering the site inaccessible to many. Wherever a graphic is used meaningful 'alt text' must be given.

6.4

Typography

- 6.4.1** The content of the site should be readable with default standard fonts.
- 6.4.2** Fonts like Verdana and Georgia that are suited for screen viewing may be used. Text that must be in a particular font for reasons such as branding may use an image and provide the same as Alt text.
- 6.4.3** When using Hindi/Regional language fonts the page **MUST** be tested on major browsers for any inconsistency (loss of layout). Further, links to download the font must be provided to the visitors.
- 6.4.4** Italic fonts are not legible in small font sizes. All capital characters and italics should be used sparingly as they hinder legibility in big blocks of text.



- 6.4.5 It is author's responsibility is to create Web content that does not prevent the user agent from scaling the content effectively therefore Except for captions and images of text, text MUST be resizable without assistive technology without loss of content or functionality.
- 6.4.6 Font properties should be such that the text MUST be readable both in electronic and print format and the page MUST print correctly on an A4 size paper.

6.5

Colour

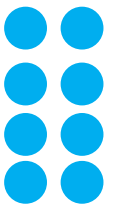
- 6.5.1 There MUST be adequate contrast between text and background. Using combinations like red text on blue background makes the text unreadable.
- 6.5.2 Use of colour should depend on the type of target audience. For example, a site for children may use bigger fonts and bright colours to grab the attention of kids while a site designed for researchers and academicians should focus on content with subtle use of colours.
- 6.5.3 Websites should ensure the colours used for text and graphics look good on a variety of platforms, monitors and devices by selecting them from the 216-colour web-safe palette.
- 6.5.4 Designers MUST ensure that all information conveyed with colour is also available without colour, for example from context or markup.

6.6

Images

6.6.1 Use of images should be limited

Though images add life to a website, they also increase downloading time. Images should only be used when it adds value to the content. Images should not be used to present text in an alternative style as those using text only browsers shall not be able to access the information thus rendering the site inaccessible to many. The use of text, rather than images, should be considered for headings and website navigation.



Commonly used images, such as those for website identity and navigation, should be re-used to decrease download time. Images stored in the browser's cache will not need to be re-loaded and will display faster.

6.6.2 Images should be created in an appropriate format

Images should be created in an appropriate format to minimise load time and maximise the display quality. There are three formats for displaying images in web browsers – GIF, JPEG and PNG. Use:

- GIF format for images that contain line-art and flat areas of colour such as icons and graphs.
- JPEG format for images that contain many colour variations, such as photographs. JPEG images can contain up to 16 million colours.
- PNG format does not have any patent restrictions and can be read and written freely by software developers and webmasters alike.

6.6.3 Size of image files should be minimised

The size of image files should be reduced as much as possible to minimise the download time of web pages. A variety of techniques can improve the download time of pages:

- Scaling of images should be avoided as they tend to distort. Instead a correct size should be prepared in image processing software.
- A thumbnail (a smaller version) for a large image and link to the full-size copy should be provided where appropriate.

6.6.4 Images should be made Accessible

- A meaningful explanatory text description **MUST** be specified for images, graphics and other non text elements using the ALT attribute. The ALT text for an image is displayed before the image is fully downloaded and also when cursor is over the image. It is the main source of image information for users of text-only browsers, users of browsers with graphics turned off, and users who are sight impaired. The description should summarise the content or purpose of the image. For example, to use the description 'Picture' to explain a graphic does not serve any purpose.
- The HEIGHT and WIDTH dimension attributes force the browser to allocate space for images and download the text first. The height and width specifications should be the same as the actual height and width of the image. This speeds up the time to download the web page and display the content.



- The LONGDESC attribute provides a link to a web page that contains a detailed description of the image. Screen readers that are used by the visually impaired can read this information. This attribute should be used for providing summaries of charts, tables etc. where brief 'alternate text' will not hold much meaning.

6.7

Audio/Video/Animation

The use of audio video clips in a website can enrich the content and render the communication more effective for the visitor; however, the following guidelines should be followed while including audio/video clips on the website.

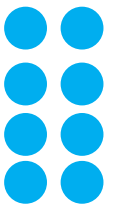
6.7.1 Download Details for Video and Audio Clips

- a. Download information **MUST** be provided to help users determine whether they wish to access the video or audio clip. This includes the download and usage instructions, file size, and file format.
- b. If a specific software programme is required to access the multimedia file, a link to enable the user to download it **MUST** be provided.
- c. Formats of audio/video files should be common across a website and across the websites owned by a State/Ministry.
- d. As far as possible streaming audio/video should be used rather than forcing the users to download the entire file, which eventually may not turn out to be what they are looking for.

6.7.2 Text Equivalents for Video and Audio Clips

In order to ensure that content of video and audio clips is accessible to all, including those with impaired vision or those accessing the information on slow connections

- a. Government websites **MUST** provide equivalent information of audio/video clips (e.g. a text description of the audio /video). In case of video clips audio description of the video may be provided in place of text. This makes it possible for users with and without vision impairment to review content with equal ease.
- b. All important audio clips **MUST** be accompanied with captions for the benefit of hearing impaired or those who do not have access to audio. Captions must



not only include dialogue, but identify who is speaking and include non-speech information conveyed through sound, including meaningful sound effects.

6.7.3 Animations

The use of animation can be an effective means for drawing attention to key aspects of a website. However, Government websites should ensure that animations used on the site do not distract or irritate users or lead to unacceptable download times. Animation should be used only if it adds value to a page. File sizes of animated images should be kept small by limiting the number of frames. Certain special effects such as spiralling, throbbing or flashing have been reported to cause epileptic seizures and should be avoided.

- a. Certain special effects such as spiralling, throbbing or flashing have been reported to cause epileptic seizures. Web pages **MUST** not contain anything that flashes more than three times in any one second period.
- b. For any moving, blinking or scrolling information that starts automatically and is presented in parallel with other content, there **MUST** be a mechanism for the user to pause, stop, or hide it (unless the movement, blinking, or scrolling is part of an activity where it is essential).
- c. If any audio on a Web page plays automatically for more than 3 seconds, there **MUST** be mechanism to pause or stop the audio. This is important because Individuals who use screen reading software can find it hard to hear the speech output if there is other audio playing at the same time. Also as screen reader's speech output is controlled via the same volume control as the system sound control the webpage **MUST** provide a means to control audio volume independently from the overall system volume level.

6.8

Navigation

Consistent navigation makes it easy to use a website since a visitor does not need to understand or remember different navigation styles for different sections. Therefore to promote ease-of-use for all citizens, Government websites must have a navigation scheme that is used consistently across the website.

The organisation and navigation scheme of the content in the website should be either categorised by subject (topic, tasks, services, life events), by audience group, by geographic location, or by any combination of these factors. The navigation should not be based on the Department's organisational structure, as it will render



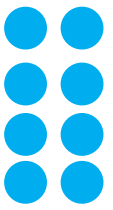
the content from the Governments' perspective rather than the visitors'. Web information managers should analyse the wants and needs of citizens and other intended target groups when organizing the content of Government websites.

- 6.8.1** It MUST be possible for a visitor to reach the Homepage from any other page in the website.
- 6.8.2** The positioning and terminology and navigation scheme used for navigation items MUST be consistent across the website.
- 6.8.3** Navigation items of the same type should look and behave the same way. For example, if a set of pages on one topic has subtopic links in the left navigation bar, pages on other topics should also have subtopic links in the left navigation bar that look and behave identically.
- 6.8.4** Links to under construction pages MUST be avoided as far as possible.
- 6.8.5** Each page MUST be a standalone entity in terms of ownership, navigation and context of content.
- 6.8.6** List of all levels between the homepage and current page should be provided on each page.
- 6.8.7** Navigation to external websites should be enabled in such a manner that the external website opens in a small sized browser window. This is to ensure that the context remains on the screen for the visitor.
- 6.8.8** Web pages and applications often have content that is repeated other pages or screens (for example navigation links, heading graphics, banner frames etc). A sighted user can ignore the repeated material by focusing on the main content area but it is not possible for a person using a screen reader. Therefore WebPages MUST provide a mechanism to bypass blocks of content that are repeated on multiple Web pages. This may be done by providing a skip to content link at the top of the webpage.

6.9

Site Search

“Search” is a standard facility on any website now as visitors expect to be guided to the desired information and service through an easy to use search facility. Effective search functionality is crucial for mining through the large volumes of information made available on Government websites. Following are some of the guidelines to achieve the



same :

- 6.9.1** Government websites MUST include either a “Search” box or a link to a “Search” page from every page of the website. The search box or link must be titled “Search”, as it is a standard term understood by web surfers world over. As per internationally accepted Usability principles, search boxes are most effective when placed in the same position on all pages (usually within the upper third part of the webpage).
- 6.9.2** Search results should be displayed in an easy-to-read format that, at a minimum, shows visitors the term(s) they searched for and may highlights the term(s) in each search result.
- 6.9.3** Departments should carefully determine the scope of its search index to determine which content should be included and which content should be excluded. This further implies that the content not meant to be in the public domain should not be included in any web-based file that could be retrieved through any search engine.
- 6.9.4** The frequency of indexing the content of a Government website should be pre-decided by the hosting provider. Content that is added and updated frequently, such as press releases, should be indexed more frequently.
- 6.9.5** Government Departments should regularly use traffic analysis tools to identify the common search terms used to reach their website. This shall enable a higher ranking of the site on search engines after due customisation.
- 6.9.6** Although usability research indicates that very few people use “advanced” search features, Departments should allow visitors to conduct more refined, focused searches to achieve more relevant results.
- 6.9.7** Considering the fact that many people are unfamiliar or unskilled at using search technology, the website should provide help, hints, or tips, and include examples, along with its search facility to aid the visitors.
- 6.9.8** Users may expect the site index /search to access all the appropriate content and not display content from outside the site. In case the search results reflect the results from outside the website, it should be clearly distinguished and mentioned on the top of the page.



6.10

Sitemap : Powerful Navigation Aide

The citizens visiting Government websites need to be able to find the information and services they seek, as easily and quickly as possible. A site map represents the structure of a website, textually as well as graphically, on a single page. A proper 'Site-Map' can provide a convenient and easy-to understand view of the contents in the whole site. It also facilitates quick access to the information that the citizens want. Following are some of the guidelines concerning site maps:

- 6.10.1** Every Indian Government website **MUST** have a 'Sitemap' link to Homepage as well as all important entry pages of the site.
- 6.10.2** The site map should be universally accessible and should be provided in plain text format.
- 6.10.3** Web information managers should establish a schedule or process for regularly reviewing and updating the Sitemap.

6.11

Frames

Frames are an HTML technique used by web site designers to display two or more pages in the same browser window. Each frame is built as a separate HTML file, but with one "master" file to identify each frame. When a user requests a page with frames, several pages are displayed as panes. Use of frames must be minimised as many search engines do not index framed web pages properly, however if frames are used each frame **MUST** be titled to facilitate frame identification and navigation.

CH 07 DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1 MARK-UP LANGUAGES
- 7.2 CASCADING STYLE SHEETS (CSS)
- 7.3 SCRIPTING LANGUAGES
- 7.4 FILE FORMATS
- 7.5 READY REFERENCE FOR DEVELOPERS
- 7.6 VALIDATION & TESTING
- 7.7 WEB APPLICATION SECURITY



DEVELOPMENT

Use of Open Standard based tools and technologies for the development of websites, software as well as content are very important to interoperability and accessibility of websites. Worldwide web consortium (W3C) is an International body working towards defining standards in web technologies and formats for publishing content on the web.

Department of IT, Government of India is also working towards establishing standards for ICT applications in the Indian Government. Departments are advised to follow these standards for developing their web applications. However, till this initiative finalises on some standards, Indian Government websites should comply with W3C standards. Most of the browsers, software, companies/communities, also try to comply with W3C standards. Some of the commonly required standards are listed below:

7.1

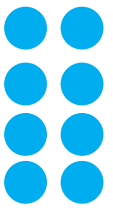
Mark-up Languages

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) is at the core of the foundation of World Wide Web. Language has undergone a number of revisions to enable it to be more powerful. HTML 4.01 version has established it as a structural document markup language and is oriented towards the use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). XML (Extensible Markup Language) is the means to extend HTML further and make it more generic. XSL (eXtensible Stylesheet Language) is the preferred style sheet language of XML. XHTML 1.0 is an XML based markup language and gives a new dimension to markup languages.

Indian Government websites/web documents/pages/forms should validate to following published grammars:

- HTML 4.01
- XHTML 1.0
- XML 1.0

Web pages should be tested for compliance with validation tools such as W3C mark-up validator. For further details on the above markup languages, visit the website of W3C at <http://www.w3c.org>.



7.2

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is a style sheet language used to describe the presentation of a document written in a markup language. Its most common application is to style web pages written in HTML and XHTML. The CSS specifications are maintained by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

CSS is used by both the authors and readers of web pages to define colours, fonts, layout, and other aspects of document presentation. It is designed primarily to enable the separation of document content from document presentation. This separation can improve content accessibility, provide more flexibility and control in the specification of presentational characteristics, and reduce complexity and repetition in the structural content. CSS can also allow the same markup page to be presented in different styles for different rendering methods, such as on-screen, in print, by voice (when read out by a speech-based browser or screen reader) and on Braille-based, tactile devices.

To know more about CSS, visit <http://www.w3.org/Style/CSS/>.

Advantages of using CSS include:

- Presentation of information for an entire website or collection of pages can be held in one CSS file, allowing global changes to be propagated quite conveniently.
- Web browser software can store a copy of the CSS file in the computer's cache, so that it doesn't have to be downloaded each time the user views a web page that references it, hence improving the access time.
- Different users can have different style sheets: for example a large text alternative for visually impaired users or a layout optimised for small displays for mobile phones.
- The document code is reduced in size and complexity, since it does not need to contain any presentational markup.

7.2.1 Therefore Indian Government websites MUST use Cascading Style Sheets as much as possible to control layouts/styles.

7.2.2 Websites that use style sheets should 'degrade' gracefully so that the site remains fully functional even if the style sheet settings are ignored. Therefore the WebPages in Indian Government websites MUST have the same logical order without the style sheets as they have with the style sheets.



7.3

Scripting Languages

Scripting languages are an easy and fast means to enable or include more controls in WebPages. They can be implemented either as server side scripting languages using PHP, JSP, PERL and ASP or as Client side scripting language using JavaScript, Jscript.

- 7.3.1** Server side scripting languages should be preferred over client side since client side scripting may face issues of browser incompatibility, scripts being turned off by browsers, security etc.
- 7.3.2** It **MUST** be ensured that pages are usable when scripts, applets, or other programmatic objects are turned off or not supported. If this is not possible, provide equivalent information on an alternative accessible page.

7.4

File Formats

Documents form a very important and significant component of Government websites. Indian Government Websites should therefore provide access to documents in appropriate File Formats that are based on open standards and do not impose an unnecessary burden of downloading or acquiring specific software on the intended audience.

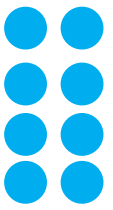
When choosing file format(s), Departments should consider:

- Intended use of the material
- Frequency of use
- Accessibility of the format and
- Level of effort and time required to convert the material to the specific format.

File formats for different forms of content are discussed below:

7.4.1 Graphics & Multimedia files

- a.** Sites should have image and graphic components in JPEG, PNG and GIF formats and the same should be compressed without losing on visual quality as far as possible, to allow faster downloads.
- b.** Multiple graphic images at the server may be used (such as providing a thumbnail image with a link to a higher resolution graphic) to make the site more usable even for low bandwidth connections.
- c.** Departments may use Web and multimedia technologies to enhance sites, on the condition that all elements are accessible.



7.4.2 Documents

- a. Government websites shall have a lot of information in the form of documents such as Acts, Rules, Schemes, Gazettes, Forms, Circulars and Notifications. Accessibility & usability of these documents by all citizens is as important as that of the entire website. Department of Information Technology, Government of India is working towards establishing standards for ICT applications in the Indian Government. Standard for documents shall also be defined as a part of this initiative. However till it gets finalized departments MUST either use HTML format or any other format that makes the document Accessible. In case documents are published in a format other than HTML format, departments MUST provide a link to the website from where the document reader can be downloaded free of cost.
- b. When the document has been provided in a format other than HTML, websites should include a text description of the document, including the title, file type, file size, and effective date. This will ensure that visitors have a reasonable understanding of what to expect when they view the document.
- c. Large or complex documents (generally, more than 10-15 pages) should be organized into sections or chapters and linked together. Government Websites should also provide a link to download the entire document since some readers may have high-speed Internet access and thus prefer to print the entire document for later reading.

7.5

Ready Reference for Developers

- a. It must be ensured that in content implemented using markup languages, elements have complete start and end tags, elements are nested according to their specifications, elements do not contain duplicate attributes, and any IDs are unique, except where the specifications allow these features. This helps to ensure that user agents, including assistive technologies, can accurately interpret and parse content. If the content cannot be parsed, then different user agents may present it differently. Some user agents use “repair techniques” to render poorly coded content. Since repair techniques vary among user agents, authors cannot assume that content will be rendered correctly by specialized user agents.
- b. Labels or instructions MUST be provided when content requires user input (for example in forms). Text instructions that describe the input must be provided at the beginning of a form or set of fields. Elements

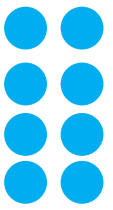


associated with input must be labeled to ensure that information about the input field is spoken by screen readers when the field receives focus.

- c. In situations where web functions are time-dependent, (for example filling out on-line form) it will be difficult for people with disabilities such as blindness, low vision, dexterity impairments, and cognitive limitations to perform the required functions before a time limit occurs. This may render the service inaccessible to them. It must therefore be ensured that such users are given adequate time to interact with Web content whenever possible. For each time limit that is set by the content, the user **MUST** be allowed to turn off the time limit, adjust the default setting before encountering it or is warned before time expires and given option to extend the time limit with a simple action (for example, “press the space bar”)

Activities that essentially require a time limit (for example an online auction) or the time limit is too long (say 20 hours) are exceptions.

- d. Many users including the visually challenged cannot perceive shape, size or use information about location or orientation. For such users the content that relies on knowledge of the shape or position of objects becomes inaccessible (for example, “round button” or “button to the right”). Hence It **MUST** be ensured that Instructions provided for understanding and operating content do not rely solely on sensory characteristics of components such as shape, size, visual location, orientation, or sound. Additional information needs to be provided to clarify anything that is dependent on this kind of information.
- e. If an input error is automatically detected, the error **MUST** be described to the user in text. The error message should be as specific as possible. This will ensure that users are aware that an error has occurred and can determine what is wrong. Describing the error in text in addition to highlighting the errors will help screen reader users, who cannot distinguish colour and users with cognitive disorders who have difficulty in perceiving the meaning of other visual cues.
- f. All functionality of the content **MUST** be operable through a keyboard interface without requiring specific timings for individual keystrokes, except where input depends on the path of the user’s movement (for example drawing freehand curves or using handwriting to write).
- g. Whenever a web page is rendered using plug-ins or embedded applications it is possible that functionality of the Web page restricts the focus to a subsection of the content, unless the user knows how to leave that state and “untrap” the focus. This situation may affect navigation for people who rely on a keyboard or keyboard interface to use the Web including visually challenged and people



with physical disabilities. Therefore it **MUST** be ensured that if focus can be moved to a component of the page using a keyboard interface, then focus can be moved away from that component using only a keyboard interface, and, if it is not possible the user is advised of the method for moving focus away.

- h.** It **MUST** be ensure that the purpose of each link can be determined from the link text alone or from the link text along with its programmatically determined link context.
- i.** When any component receives focus, it **MUST** not initiate a change of context. Developers must use “activate” rather than “focus” as a trigger for changes of context. This ensures that functionality is predictable as visitors navigate their way through a webpage. (Examples of changing context when a component receives focus include, forms being submitted automatically when a component receives focus or new windows launched when a component receives focus).
- j.** Entering data or selecting a form control must have predictable effects. Changing the setting of any user interface component **MUST** not automatically cause a change of context unless the user has been advised of the behaviour before using the component. Unexpected changes of context can be disorienting for users with visual disabilities or cognitive limitations
- k.** Metadata adds semantic information to pages and sites and provides contextual information for people navigating the site, especially those with screen readers who rely on things such as page titles, structured page headings and lists. Metadata may also be used by some search engines. Indian Government websites **MUST** provide metadata for page title, keywords, description and language at least on Homepage and all important entry pages.
- l.** Tables help in organising and presenting data on a webpage, however, many designers in the past have been using tables to make the layout of WebPages. This has resulted in the WebPages not being accessible to people using assistive technologies such as screen readers. For this reason
 - Use of Tables for page layout should be avoided.
 - For data tables, proper tags and markup **MUST** be provided to identify row and column headers and associate data cells and header cells.
- m.** When users navigate sequentially through content, they should encounter information in an order that is consistent with the meaning of the content and can be operated from the keyboard. Hence if a Web page can be navigated sequentially and the navigation sequences affect meaning or operation,



focusable components **MUST** receive focus in an order that preserves meaning and operability.

- n.** For all user interface components, it is a **MUST** that the name and role can be programmatically determined; states, properties, and values can be programmatically set; and notification of changes to these items is available to assistive technologies.

Note: These guidelines are strictly for the developers. Many guidelines in this section have been adopted from W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG2). The details for the same are available at

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

7.6

Validation & Testing

Websites should be validated and tested with automatic tools and human review. Automated methods are generally rapid and convenient but cannot identify all issues. Human review can help in issues like ensuring clarity of language and ease of navigation.

Following are some important validation methods that may be followed:

- a.** Departments may use automated accessibility tool and browser validation tool.
 - Validate syntax (e.g., HTML, XML, etc.).
 - Validate style sheets (e.g., CSS).
- b.** It is a **MUST** that Indian Government websites are tested for multiple browsers and versions of browsers, operating systems, connection speeds, and screen resolutions to ensure access by all.
- c.** Use of a self-voicing browser, a screen reader, magnification software, small display, etc.
- d.** Use spell and grammar checkers. Eliminating grammar problems increases comprehension.
- e.** Review the document for clarity and simplicity. Readability statistics, such as those generated by some word processors may be useful indicators of clarity and simplicity. Better still, ask experienced (human) editors to review written content for clarity.

7.7

Web Application Security

Web Application security is of paramount concern to owners as well as consumers of the website. A lot of security threats are handled at data centres and server administrator level where the application is hosted. Application developers should however be sensitive about security aspects, as a lot of security threats arise due to vulnerability of application software code.

These application driven attacks sometimes turn out to be quite fatal. Best Practices to follow while developing web applications using various technologies are available on CERT-IN website (<http://www.cert-in.org.in>) as well as in internet space. Developers should read, understand and follow these Best Practices during development. NIC as well as CERT. IN have empaneled a number of agencies to conduct the security audit of applications.

- 7.7.1 Each website / application MUST undergo a security audit from empaneled agencies and clear the same, prior to hosting and after addition of new modules.
- 7.7.2 Department MUST formulate a security policy to address of various security issues related to the website.
- 7.7.3 Any application configured to send mail to their subscribers needs to be enabled over SMTP - AUTH.

8.1 WEBSITE HOSTING

8.2 HOSTING SERVICE PROVIDER

8.3 CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT



WEBSITE HOSTING

8.1

Website Hosting

The fundamental purpose of a Government website is to deliver the information and services to the citizens and other stakeholders using the medium of Internet. Generally, websites/portals/web applications are hosted on special purpose servers in a Data Centre.

Data Centre is a facility equipped with controlled power, cooling, systems, physical security and access control. Generally, a large number of servers are hosted in a Data Centre, powered by high speed networking infrastructure, storage system along with a storage network. Provision for back-ups of data/information residing in Data Centres is also an important service of Data Centre. Multi-tier security infrastructure is also a crucial component of Data Centres.

While it is extremely important to develop websites using state-of-the-art technologies, hosting infrastructure plays a crucial role in the performance, availability and accessibility of these websites to end users with varying set-ups.

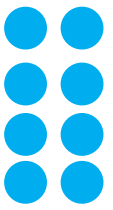
Hence, configuration of hosting server infrastructure as well as facilities at Data Centres is an important aspect to review, prior to hosting. Following section details the kinds of facilities and services that the Department should expect from their hosting service providers.

8.2

Hosting Service Provider

8.2.1 Indian Government websites **MUST** be accessible to the public in a fast and secure manner on 24x7 basis. It is important that the Web Hosting Service Provider (HSP) for a government department be chosen with extreme caution and care and the following have to be kept in mind:

- a. The HSP **MUST** possess state-of-art multi tier security infrastructure both at physical and network level as well as security policies to ensure the best possible security to Government websites.
- b. The Web Hosting Service Provider **MUST** also use devices such as firewall



and intrusion prevention systems to make the website more secure.

- c. The Web Hosting Service Provider MUST have a redundant server infrastructure to ensure fastest restoration of the website in the event of any unforeseen hardware/software failure.
- d. The HSP MUST perform regular backups of the websites. It is also advisable to conduct a mock test of restoration of data once in a while to plug any loopholes.
- e. The HSP MUST have a Disaster Recovery (DR) Centre in a geographically distant location and a well drafted DR plan for fast restoration of the services during any disaster.
- f. Provision should be given to the concerned Department to remotely update their website in a secured manner.
- g. The HSP should also provide the facility of staging infrastructure in order to facilitate the testing of the new websites as well as their enhanced or revised versions content prior to publishing on the internet.
- h. HSP should provide web server statistics required for performance evaluation on a regular basis. If possible, online access to the traffic analysis should be provided so that the Department can access the traffic analysis at any point of time for the purpose of evaluation.
- i. Web Hosting Service Provider MUST provide helpdesk & technical support to the department on 24 x 7 x 365 basis.

8.3

Contingency Management

The website of a Government Department is its presence on the Internet and it is very important that the site is fully functional at all times. It is expected of the Government websites to deliver information and services on a 24x7 basis. Hence, all efforts should be made to minimise the downtime of the website as far as possible.

It is therefore necessary that a proper Contingency Plan MUST be prepared in advance to handle any eventualities and restore the site in the shortest possible time. The possible contingencies include:

- 8.3.1 Defacement of the website:** All possible security measures MUST be taken for a Government website to prevent any possible defacement/hacking by unscrupulous elements. However, if despite the security measures in place, such an eventuality occurs, there must be a proper contingency plan, which should immediately



come into force. If it has been established beyond doubt that the website has been defaced, the site must be immediately blocked. The contingency plan must clearly indicate as to who is the person authorised to decide on the further course of action in such eventualities. The complete contact details of this authorised person must be available at all times with the web management team. Efforts should be made to restore the original site in the shortest possible time. At the same time, regular security reviews and checks should be conducted in order to plug any loopholes in the security.

- 8.3.2 Data Corruption:** A proper mechanism has to be worked out by the concerned Government Departments, in consultation with their web hosting service provider to ensure that appropriate and regular back-ups of the website data are being taken. These enable a fast recovery and uninterrupted availability of the information to the citizens in view of any data corruption.
- 8.3.3 Hardware/Software Crash:** Though such an occurrence is a rarity, still in case the server on which the website is being hosted crashes due to some unforeseen reason, the web hosting service provider must have enough redundant infrastructure available to restore the website at the earliest.
- 8.3.4 Natural Disasters:** There could be circumstances whereby due to some natural calamity, the entire data center where the website is being hosted gets destroyed or ceases to exist. A well planned contingency mechanism has to be in place for such eventualities whereby it should be ensured that the Hosting Service Provider has a 'Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC)' set up at a geographically remote location and the website is switched over to the DRC with minimum delay and restored on the Net.

Apart from the above, in the event of any National Crisis or unforeseen calamity, Government websites are looked upon as a reliable and fast source of information to the public. A well defined contingency plan for all such eventualities MUST be in place within all Departments/organisations so that the emergency information/contact help-lines could be displayed on the website without any delay. For this, the concerned person in the Department responsible for publishing such emergency information MUST be identified and his/her complete contact details should be available at all times.

9.1 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

9.2 WEBSITE PROMOTION TECHNIQUES



WEBSITE PROMOTION

Web is a medium of mass information dissemination. With the exponential growth in the number of websites, which has even crossed the one billion mark, the question of visibility on the Net has assumed critical significance.

The ultimate aim of any Government website should be to provide information and services to as many citizens as possible. The existence of any Government site lying inaccessible on the web is meaningless. For this purpose a conscious and concentrated effort has to be made to increase the reach of the website.

Therefore, the importance of website promotion, especially in the context of Government websites which aim to reach the largest possible number of citizens and stakeholders cannot be emphasised over.

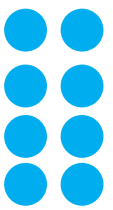
9.1

Search Engine Optimisation

People usually search for a website through search engines. Therefore searching for a site in a search engine by using the Department name or the services offered by it as keywords MUST bring the website in the first five results on major search engines.

In order to achieve this, the following guidelines may be followed

- 9.1.1** The Page Title should include useful and distinctive indication of the contents and should be self-explanatory. The HTML title should be chosen carefully considering its role in search engine indexing, query responses, window title bar and in bookmark labels.
- 9.1.2** Department name, services offered, schemes, location etc. should form a part of the Meta information (meta tags) of the HTML page. The important metatags that MUST be included are the title tag, keywords tag and the description. These tags are present in the <head> portion of the html page and while they are not displayed as part of the page content in web, search engines can read them.
- 9.1.3** Search engines often display the first few lines of a Web page to help searchers to identify the sites they want to visit. The description meta tag should be used to provide guidance to search engines on what to present to the users in the search response.



- 9.1.4 Search engines only consider some limited number of keywords when indexing pages. Government websites should present keywords in priority order and without duplication.
- 9.1.5 As far as possible, the content of the web page should be in textual form, including hyperlinks. Important points/programmes/schemes etc. should be highlighted as bold or form a part of the page / paragraph heading.
- 9.1.6 HTML links should be specific. Instead of just 'Our Programmes' a link saying 'The Programmes of *Department name*' will be more favourable for a search engine.
- 9.1.7 Link exchange with related Government sites increases the weightage of the site for search engines, thus improving its ranking in search results. It will also bring more visitors, who are looking for similar schemes, services or information, to the site.

9.2

Website Promotion Techniques

Apart from search engines the website may be promoted through other media like print, television etc. This will prompt casual visitors to browse the website and if they find the information useful may visit the site more often.

- 9.2.1 All the advertisements/public messages including Press Releases, Tender Notifications etc. issued in the Newspapers/Audio-visual media by the concerned Department MUST prominently mention the URL of the web site clearly in order to give it due publicity. It should be directed that no press release or advertisement of any Government Department shall be issued to the press without checking the presence of the URL of the website and necessary steps should also be taken to ensure the presence of relevant corresponding information on the website.
- 9.2.2 All the stationery items of the Department such as Letterheads, Visiting Cards Publicity material such as Brochures, Pamphlets and documents such as the Annual Report etc. MUST display the URL of the web site.
- 9.2.3 The website URL may become a part of the mail signature for all the outgoing mails from the Departments and its employees.
- 9.2.4 The website should also be promoted by link exchange with other Government websites as well as international websites.



- 9.2.5** Providing regular and updated news on various issues related to the Government, citizens etc. are very important tools of promotion. Regular revised updates on all important issues related to Government and in interest of the citizens should be given on the website. Frequent updates and change in contents will bring the visitors back to the portal and will keep the readers hooked to the website.
- 9.2.6** Sending regular updates on the websites to registered and interested users through an electronic newsletter should constitute an important means of promotion.

10.1 WEBSITE MANAGEMENT TEAM

10.2 WEBSITE MAINTENANCE TOOLS

10.3 WEBSITE MONITORING

10.4 ARCHIVING OF DOCUMENTS

10.5 COMPLIANCE WITH GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

10.6 WEBSITE REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT

10.7 WEBSITE POLICIES



WEBSITE MANAGEMENT

10.1

Website Management Team

The success of any endeavour depends upon the backing of a strong and enthusiastic team. In case of a Government website, the role of a Website management team assumes paramount importance in ensuring its credibility amongst its patrons.

10.1.1 Departments MUST appoint a Web Information Manager whose role shall be to ensure that there is a proper flow of content to the site and that content quality and user satisfaction issues are taken care of. To achieve this she/he has to coordinate with the various groups within the Department. The Web Information Manager should undertake the following activities with regard to the Indian Government website being maintained by her/him.

- Formulation of policies concerning management of content on the web through its entire life cycle viz. Creation, Moderation, Approval, Publishing and Archival. Ensuring that all content on the website is always authentic, up-to-date and obsolete information or services are removed.
- Set a mechanism for periodically validating links to related information. An automated report can provide a list of broken links on the site, which can be immediately corrected.
- Ensuring the entry of the website at a prominent rank in all the major search engines so that the site's visibility is enhanced and users are made aware of its address.
- Web Information Manager is overall responsible for quality and quantity of information and services on the website. The complete contact details of the Web Information Manager must be displayed on the website, so that the visitor could contact him/her in case of some queries or requirements.
- Since the websites receive a lot of feedback/query mails from the visitors, it is the responsibility of the Web Information Manager to either reply to all of them himself/herself or designate someone to regularly check and respond to the feedback/query mails.

10.1.2 Besides the Web Information Manager, a Technical Manager should also be



appointed for every Indian Government website whose responsibilities would be :

- Regular monitoring of website for Performance, Security and Availability.
- Ensuring compliance with policies (organisational, regulatory, legislative, etc.) that may require changes in website content, architecture, security, and process.
- Periodic security audit of the website in line with major revisions.
- Analysis of traffic on website and feedback to development /management team.

10.1.3 In case of a large website/ multiple websites, a team should be set up with Web Information Manager having professionals skilled in HTML authoring, Programming, Design, Content etc.

10.2

Website Maintenance Tools

A web is a dynamic medium and a website grows with time with addition of new content and features. The website therefore requires regular maintenance to ensure that the quality is maintained and it meets the expectations of the visitor. With the increase in content size and complexity it becomes difficult to manually maintain the site and therefore automated tools should be used for updation, analysis and checking the site. It is intended that the practice of using these tools may be adopted from the beginning as it avoids difficulties later.

Some such tool categories are suggested below:

10.2.1 Website Authoring Tools

Website authoring tools is software for generating well-engineered web pages. Lots of web page authoring tools are available in the market, as well as in the free domain. One can choose any tool based on the requirements, however, the following should be ensured while selecting the tool:

- It generates pages that conform to all of the requirements, recommendations and options of this guideline
- It conforms to the Web Consortium's Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines



10.2.2 Web Content Management System

A web content management system (CMS) is the software used for creating and managing web content. It is used to manage and control a large, dynamic collection of content on a website/portal (HTML documents and their associated documents and files). CMS facilitates content creation, content control, editing, and many essential content maintenance functions. Usually the software provides interface where users with little or no knowledge of programming languages and markup languages can create and manage content with relative ease of use. A wide variety of CMS solutions are available right from customised CMS to enterprise class CMS software available commercially as well as in free domain.

Ease of use, support for a variety of content, automated templates, content workflow management are some of the features to be looked into in CMS software. For small scale websites, developers could also develop website specific CMS solutions, as it may turn out to be cost effective in many instances.

10.2.3 Web Analytic tools

Many organisations rely on statistics regarding site usage to measure the impact of the site and also for reorganising or enhancing their website further. Some use simple counters while others use more sophisticated Web analyser tools to obtain data. Counters add little value to a site and often appear to be self-congratulatory. Web analyzer tools provide more information and are virtually transparent to the end user, therefore Web analyser tools should be the standard means of collecting site usage data. Counters should not be used to perform this function.

10.2.4 Validation and Testing

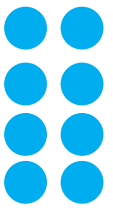
The code of the webpages, scripts and applications may be tested manually or with automated tools to ensure that the quality of web content is maintained and all compliance related guidelines or adhered to.

10.3

Website Monitoring

Web being a dynamic medium, changes in terms of technologies, access devices and even the requirements and expectation levels of visitors happen fairly frequently. Keeping this in mind, Indian Government websites MUST have a website monitoring policy in place. Websites must be monitored periodically in accordance with the plan to address and fix the quality and compatibility issues around the following parameters:

- a. **Performance:** Site download time should be optimised for a variety of network



connections as well as devices. All important pages of the website should be tested for this.

- b. **Functionality:** All modules of the website should be tested for their functionality. Moreover, interactive components of the site such as discussion boards, opinion polls, feedback forms etc. should be working smoothly.
- c. **Broken Links:** The website should be thoroughly reviewed to rule out the presence of any broken links or errors. A number of tools and techniques are now available to easily detect the broken links in a website
- d. **Traffic Analysis:** The site traffic should be regularly monitored to analyse the usage patterns as well as visitors' profile and preferences. Traffic Analysis tools also give reports on broken links.
- e. **Feedback:** Feedback from the visitors is the best way to judge a website's performance and make necessary improvements. A proper mechanism for feedback analysis should be in place to carry out the changes and enhancements as suggested by the visitors.

10.4

Archiving of Documents

Government websites generally are storehouses of a large number of documents and reports, which are of relevance and importance to specific audiences as well as citizens at large. Many times, these documents also have historical importance and are also referred extensively for academic and research purposes. These documents can be kept for online access only for a specific period of time and need to be moved to offline archives on the expiry of the pre-decided duration. This is important since these old documents sometimes need to be referred to for regulatory or legal purposes.

The Departments MUST have a clear-cut Archival Policy with regard to such old documents stating for how long would they be kept online, when would they be moved to offline archives and if /when would they be permanently deleted or purged.

10.5

Compliance with Guidelines and Standards

Since these guidelines aim at fulfilling the common objective of making the Indian Government websites citizen friendly and conform to high standards of quality, the website development and management teams in all Departments should endeavor to comply with these guidelines in earnest spirit until the time the National Standards for ICT application are in place.



Further, the website management teams should ensure that all Government websites undergo and clear a security audit carried out by an authorised empaneled agency before being hosted, as well as after major revisions.

10.6

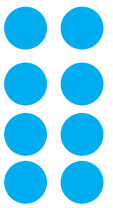
Website Review & Enhancement

Departments and Organisations that own Government websites, and the citizens they serve, want these websites to be as useful as possible. Government Departments at all levels should evaluate visitor satisfaction and usability of their websites and use the outcome of assessments to improve the websites.

10.6.1 Besides regular feedback through feedback form, Departments may obtain visitor feedback through online questionnaires or surveys where the visitors can be asked to rank the website on various parameters and give detailed inputs on what more they would like to be added on the website.

10.6.2 Detailed review of web analysis reports over a long span may also reveal a lot of information on usage or expectations from the website.

10.6.3 In order to keep abreast with the latest technologies as well as to cater to the visitor's demands for major changes and enhancements in the website, Indian Government sites should opt to undergo a formal review by an internal group or an external agency to further orient them towards citizens and other stakeholders.



Example: An online questionnaire on the National Portal seeks the visitors' opinion on the portal's performance and what more to be included in it

india.gov.in Skip to main content | Skip to navigation | Accessibility Options

You are here: Home > **Speak Out**

Speak Out

National Portal of India has been developed by the Government of India with an objective to facilitate single window, easy access to a variety of services and information about the Country. The first version of the Portal has been released and we are still working on further enhancements. We would like to have your valuable opinion on this Portal and your suggestions for further improvement. Please spare a minute or two of your precious time and tell us what you like or don't like on this Portal and what more would you like to be added on to it.

Read the following instructions before filling up the form:

- Fill in all the fields that are marked as required
- Ratings: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Unsatisfactory

How do you rate this Portal in terms of:

Content & Information	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Ease of Navigation/ User Friendliness	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Layout & Design	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Page Download Speed	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Please tell us how you would like us to improve this Portal?

Apart from what already exist, what is the other kind of information that you would like to be added on this Portal?

Which of the sections have you visited in this Portal?

Citizen Business Overseas Government Know India Sectors How do I? Others

Please tell us a little about yourself:

Name (required):

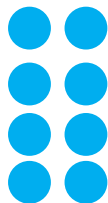
Email (required):

Country:

State (if in India):

Verification Code:

Please enter the Verification Code shown on the image



10.7

Website Policies

Websites represent the face of the department in the cyber world. Like the Department itself, the website also has to continually grow and evolve. As the website grows in size and reach the expectations of the citizen also grow. It is therefore important that we set down rules and regulations to operate and manage the websites effectively.

Although different policies and their need and purpose is explained in various sections of this document for the sake of convenience, a complete list of policies along with the section are referenced below:

S.No.	Policy	Ref No.
1.	Copyright Policy	3.1
2.	Hyper linking Policy	3.2
3.	Terms & Conditions	3.3
4.	Privacy policy	3.4
5.	Content Contribution, Moderation and Approval Policy (CMAP)	5.2.1
6.	Web Content Review Policy (CRP)	5.2.3
7.	Content Archival Policy (CAP)	5.2.6
8.	Website Security Policy	7.7.2
9.	Website Monitoring Policy	10.3
10.	Contingency Management	8.3

All the above policies MUST be duly approved by the Head of the Department.

COMPLIANCE MATRIX

1. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IDENTIFIERS

2. BUILDING CONFIDENCE

3. SCOPE OF CONTENT

4. QUALITY OF CONTENT

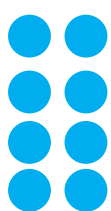
5. DESIGN

6. DEVELOPMENT

7. WEBSITE HOSTING

8. WEBSITE PROMOTION

9. WEBSITE MANAGEMENT



Compliance Matrix

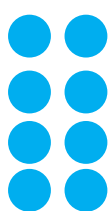
Given below is a checklist of mandatory guidelines outlined in this document. Departments may use this checklist to validate their websites against these guidelines and make necessary modification to ensure compliance.

S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
1. Government of India Identifiers		
1	Association to Government is demonstrated by the use of Emblem/ Logo, prominently displayed on the homepage of the website	2.1.1
2	Ownership information is displayed on the homepage and on all important entry pages of the website.	2.1.2
3	Complete and self explanatory title of the homepage (appearing on the top bar of the browser) is provided.	2.1.6
4	Website is registered under 'gov.in' or 'nic.in' domain.	2.2.1
5	Website provides a prominent link to the 'National Portal' from the Home Page and Pages belonging to National Portal load in new browser window.	2.3.1 2.3.2
2. Building Confidence		
6	Website has a Copyright Policy, prominently displayed on the homepage.	3.1.1
7	Due permissions have been obtained for publishing any content protected by copyright.	3.1.4
8	Source of all documents, whether reproduced in part or full, is mentioned.	3.1.5
9	Website has a comprehensive Hyper Linking Policy.	3.2.1
10	Clear indications are given when a link leads out to a non government website.	3.2.5
11	The mechanism is in place to check the accuracy of Hyperlinked Content	3.2.8 4.3.4(c)
12	Mechanism is in place to ensure that there are no 'broken links' (internal as well as external) or 'Page not found' errors.	3.2.9

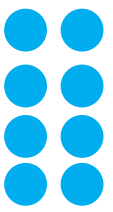


COMPLIANCE MATRIX

S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
13	Website has a comprehensive Terms & Conditions statement, linked from all important pages.	3.3.1
14	Terms & Conditions statement disclaims responsibility of the content sourced/ linked from a non Government website and clearly indicates whether information available on the site can be used for legal purposes or not.	3.3.3 3.3.4
15	Website has a Privacy Policy linked from all the relevant pages.	3.4.2
16	All electronic commerce transactions are handled through secure means.	3.4.4
3. Scope of Content : Primary Content		
About us		
17	All information about the department, useful for the citizen and other stakeholders, is present in the 'About Us' section and mechanism is in place to keep the information up to date.	4.2.1
Schemes		
18	The complete title of the Scheme is reflected.	4.2.3(b)
19	Website provides a complete description of the scheme along with the procedure for obtaining the associated benefits.	4.2.3(e)
20	The validity of the scheme has been mentioned.	4.2.3(f)
Services		
21	Self explanatory title of the service is published.	4.2.4(b)
22	The website provides a complete description of the service along with the procedure to apply for/avail the same.	4.2.4(d)
Forms		
23	The website provides the complete title of the form along with the purpose it is used for.	4.2.5(b)
24	Language of the Form (other than English) is mentioned clearly.	4.2.5 (c)
Acts		
25	The complete title of the Act (as written in the official notification) is mentioned.	4.2.6(a)
Documents		
26	The complete title of the Document is mentioned on the website.	4.2.7 (c)

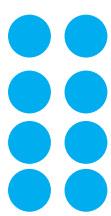


S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
27	The language of the Document (other than English) is mentioned clearly.	4.2.7(e)
28	Validity of the Document has been mentioned.	4.2.7(f)
Circulars and Notifications		
29	The official title of the Circular/ Notifications is mentioned.	4.2.8(a)
30	Validity of the Circular/ Notification is mentioned.	4.2.8(d)
Tenders and Recruitment		
31	Mechanism is in place to ensure that all Tender/ Recruitment Notices issued by the Department are published on the website.	4.2.9 4.2.10
32	Website provides a complete description of the Tender/ Recruitment notice along with the procedure to apply for the same.	4.2.9 (a) 4.2.10(d)
33	Mechanism is in place to ensure that information on old/irrelevant Tender/ Recruitment notices is removed or moved into the archive section.	4.2.9(d) 4.2.10(g)
News and Press Releases		
34	News / Press releases are displayed along with the date and these are organized as per the archival policy of the website.	4.2.11
Contact Us		
35	Website has a 'Contact Us' page, linked from the Home Page and all relevant places in the website.	4.2.12(a)
36	The complete contact details of important functionaries in the Department are given in the 'Contact Us' section.	4.2.12(c)
Presence on the National Portal		
37	Mechanism is in place to ensure that all the Citizen Services, Forms, Documents and Schemes are registered with the respective repositories of the National Portal.	4.2.13
Scope of Content : Secondary Content		
38	Mechanism is in place to ensure that all outdated announcements are removed from the website or moved to archive.	4.3.2(a)
39	All Discussion Forums on the website are moderated.	4.3.3 (c)
40	For every related link, the complete URL of the Home Page/concerned webpage is provided.	4.3.4(b)

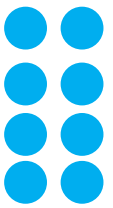


COMPLIANCE MATRIX

S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
Scope of Content : Tertiary Content		
41	Feedback is collected through online forms and mechanism is in place to ensure timely response to feedback/queries received through the website.	4.4.5(a) 4.4.5(c)
42	The website has a readily available Help section.	4.4.6
43	Complete information including title, size (playing time for audio/video), format, usage instructions and plug-in to view the file is provided for downloadable material including documents.	4.4.7(a) 6.7.1 (a) 6.7.1 (b)
44	Mechanism is in place to ensure that all downloadable material is free from virus.	4.4.7(c)
45	Minimum content as prescribed in the guidelines is present on the homepage.	4.5.1
46	Subsequent pages of the website have the minimum content as prescribed in the guidelines.	4.5.2
47	Website is free from offensive/discriminatory language	4.7.2
4. Quality of Content		
48	Content is compiled and packaged with citizen orientation.	5.1.1
49	The Department has a Content Contribution, Moderation and Approval Policy (CMAP) for the website.	5.2.1
50	Home page and every important entry page of website displays the last updated /reviewed date.	5.2.2
51	Department has a Content Review Policy (CRP) for the website.	5.2.3
52	All Documents/Reports have a time stamp at least on the main page.	5.2.5
53	The Departments have a clearly laid out Content Archival Policy (CAP) for the website.	5.2.6 10.4
54	Clear and simple language has been used throughout the website.	5.3.1
55	The language is free from spelling and grammatical errors	5.3.6
56	Whenever there is a change in the language of a web page it has been clearly indicated.	5.3.8
57	Consistency in nomenclature is maintained across the website.	5.4.2
58	All information, which is of direct importance to the citizen, is accessible from the Homepage.	5.6.1
59	Information structure and relationship is preserved in all presentation styles.	5.6.2

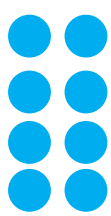


S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
60	The meaningful reading sequence is preserved in all presentation styles.	5.6.3
61	Documents / pages in multiple languages are updated simultaneously.	5.7.2
5. Design		
62	Visual/textual identity elements highlighting the Government's ownership of the website are prominently placed on the page.	6.1.1
63	A consistent page layout has been maintained throughout the website.	6.2.1
64	National identity symbols like Flag, National Emblem etc., are in a proper ratio and colour.	6.3.1
65	Hindi/regional language fonts have been tested on popular browsers for any inconsistency (loss of layout).	6.4.3
66	Web pages allow resizing of text without the use of assistive technology.	6.4.5
67	Text is readable both in electronic and print format and the page prints correctly on an A4 size paper.	6.4.6
68	There is adequate contrast between text and background colour.	6.5.1
69	All information conveyed with color is also available without color.	6.5.4
70	Alternate text is provided for non text elements (e.g. images).	6.6.4
71	Websites provide textual description of audio/video clips & multimedia presentation.	6.7.2(a)
72	Caption have been provided for all important audio content.	6.7.2 (b)
73	Web pages do not contain any content that flashes for more than three times in a second.	6.7.3(a)
74	There is a mechanism for user to control scrolling, blinking content.	6.7.3 (b)
75	There is a mechanism for user to control (stop, pause...) audio that starts automatically.	6.7.3 (c)
76	All pages on the website have a link to the home page.	6.8.1
77	The positioning and terminology used for navigation items and navigation scheme is consistent across the website.	6.8.2
78	There are no links to 'under construction' pages.	6.8.4
79	Each page is a standalone entity in terms of ownership, navigation and context of content.	6.8.5
80	Web pages allow the user to bypass repeated blocks of content	6.8.8

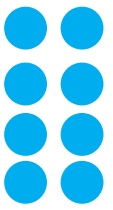


COMPLIANCE MATRIX

S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
81	Website has either a “search” box or a link to a “search” page from every page of the website.	6.9.1
82	Website has an up to date Site Map that is linked to the Home page as well as to all important entry pages of the website.	6.10.1
83	If the site uses frames, each frame is properly titled.	6.11
6. Development		
84	Website uses Cascading Style Sheets to control layouts/styles.	7.2.1
85	Website is readable even when style sheets are switched off or not loaded.	7.2.2
86	Web pages are usable even when scripts, applets etc are turned off.	7.3.2
87	Documents are provided either in html or other accessible formats. Instructions / Download details for viewing these formats are provided	7.4.2(a)
88	In content implemented using markup languages the elements have been use according to specification.	7.5 (a)
89	Labels have been provided when content requires input from the users.	7.5 (b)
90	Time limit for time dependent web functions can be adjusted by the user (also refer exceptions).	7.5 (c)
91	Instructions for operating/understanding content do not rely solely on characteristics like shape size location etc.	7.5 (d)
92	All input errors are flashed in text.	7.5 (e)
93	Functionality of content is operable through keyboard.	7.5 (f)
94	Focus is not trapped in any component while navigating through keyboard only.	7.5 (g)
95	Purpose of each link is clear to the user.	7.5 (h)
96	When any component receives focus it does not initiate change in context.	7.5 (i)
97	Changing the setting of a component does not change the context unless the user has been informed of the same.	7.5 (j)
98	Metadata for page like title, keywords, description and language is appropriately included.	7.5 (k) 9.1.2
99	Data tables have been provided with necessary tags/markup.	7.5 (l)



S.No.	GUIDELINE	REF. No.
100	All components receive focus in an order that preserves the meaning/ operation.	7.5 (m)
101	Role of all interface components can be programmatically determined.	7.5 (n)
102	The website has been tested on multiple browsers.	7.6 (b)
103	Website has cleared Security Audit by certified agency and has a Security Policy. Applications configured to send mail are enabled over smtp - auth.	7.7.1 7.7.2 7.7.3
7. Website Hosting		
104	Websites are accessible to the intended audience in an efficient and secure manner on 24x7 basis.	8.2.1
105	The Hosting Service Provider possesses state-of-the art multi-tier security infrastructure as well as devices such as firewall and intrusion prevention systems.	8.2.1 (a) 8.2.1 (b)
106	The Hosting Service Provider has redundant server infrastructure for high availability.	8.2.1 (c)
107	The Hosting Service Provider performs regular backup of the website.	8.2.1(d)
108	The Hosting Service Provider has a Disaster Recovery (DR) Centre in a geographically distant location and a well crafted DR plan for the website.	8.2.1 (e)
109	Web Hosting Service Provider provides Helpdesk & technical support on 24x7x365 basis.	8.2.1(i)
110	All possible security measures have been taken to prevent defacement/ hacking of the website and the department has contingency plan in place for situations like these.	8.3
8. Website Promotion		
111	Website ranks in the first five results on major search engines when searched with relevant keywords.	9.1
112	It has been ensured that all stationery of the department as well as advertisements/public messages issued by the concerned Department prominently display the URL of the web site.	9.2.1 9.2.2
9. Website Management		
113	Department has nominated a Web Information Manager as defined in the guidelines.	10.1.1
114	The website has a website monitoring policy	10.3
115	All policies and plans are approved by Head of Department	10.7



This document is an integral part of CSMOP (Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedures). It shall facilitate the Indian Government Constituents to make their websites Usable, Citizen Centric and equally Accessible by all the sections of society, whether differently abled or having constraints of education or access, to technology.

This is the first version of the document. All efforts have been made to make it as comprehensive as possible. We would welcome feedback & suggestions from all of you. Your feedback is very valuable for us, It would indeed help us in enhancing/enriching these guidelines further.

To facilitate you further on these guidelines we have set up a website at

<http://web.guidelines.gov.in>

This website shall not only provide access to complete text of this document but shall also facilitate implementation of these guidelines. Provision for online consultation on these guidelines is also envisaged on this website.

In case you develop some website conforming to above guidelines, please let us know. We shall be glad to acknowledge your effort on this website. It shall also become a good reference for others to follow.

At the end I would like to express my gratitude to ALL who have contributed towards the development, review & approval of these guidelines.

Looking forward to your kind cooperation & valuable support towards successful implementation of these guidelines across the entire web space of Indian Government.

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