

**Title of Nomination: Web Presentation Guidelines**  
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**Web Presentation Guidelines**  
**NASCIO 2003**  
State IT Management Initiatives Category

**Executive Summary**

State agencies work cooperatively to build out digital government in Washington state, taking an enterprise approach as they launch Web-based content and services. The Web Presentation Guidelines (WPG) function as an important tool that provides a clear roadmap to the elements of successful Web design across the state enterprise.

The guidelines represent best practices and policies that have been developed and recommended from a multi-agency perspective. More than 20 state agencies have participated in the creation and evolution of the guidelines since the first edition was published in the spring of 2000.

For the constituent, the WPG enable a common look and feel, ease of use and convenience. For an agency business program and/or Web developer they reduce risk, speed time-to-market and eliminate redundancies

The guidelines function as both a business and technical tool to help manage the complexity and change associated with delivering government services online. They provide a logical sequence of project steps for business managers, Web developers, content creators and designers.

These guidelines are designed to provide direction for the delivery of interagency and public Web-based information and services. They are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Department of Information Services (DIS) in coordination with the state's Customer Advisory Board (CAB) to assess impacts of changes in technology and capabilities.

The Web address for the guidelines is <http://www.wa.gov/dis/webguidelines/index.htm>.

**Description of the project, including length of time in operation**

The Washington State Web Presentation Guidelines represents a compilation of business and technical tools to help business managers, Web developers, content creators and designers as they build state Web sites and launch new online services.

More than 20 state agencies have participated in the creation and evolution of the guidelines since the first edition was published in the spring of 2000. The guidelines were updated in late 2002 through the collaborative efforts of a 20-agency workgroup.

**User-friendly features.** The guidelines are organized alphabetically to help the user move quickly to locate a specific topic. A To-Do Quick List is provided with each topic and a convenient Master Checklist for all topics is available to view online or download. Version 4.0 is presented in a new Web format that makes it easier to work through 20 subject areas. The WPG are available in three formats: Web pages (html), MSWord and PDF file format.

The guidelines address the following topic areas:

Accessibility	Performance
Browser Compatibility	Policy Guidelines
Common Look and Feel	Privacy
Copyright, Hardware/Software	Records Retention
Hyperlinks	Testing Environment
Image Design	Usability
Maintenance	Video Guidelines
Meta tags	WPG Checklist
Navigation	Writing for the Web
PDFs	

## **B. Significance to the improvement of the operation of government**

Washington state agencies take a responsible and prudent approach to using state resources. They search continually for opportunities to streamline administrative processes and stretch precious dollars. As best practices are identified, they are integrated into a suite of central services designed to improve statewide efficiencies and cost savings over time. The Web Presentation Guidelines are a key *best practice* for the following reasons:

- Develop and implement a shared enterprise vision and architecture framework
- Guide strategic choices
- Manage the state's resources as assets within its portfolio of investments
- Promote shared IT services and unified state policies
- Extend business linkages between Federal and local jurisdictions
- Manage organizational and technological change and complexity
- Facilitate cross-organizational analysis
- Identify duplicative investments, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration

### **C. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state.**

One Washington state enterprise objective is to provide "one face" to online government by providing a common look and feel for digital government Web-based services. This way, the general public, businesses and employees can experience accessible, convenient and easy-to-use government interactions and transactions.

The aim has always been to help agencies create Web sites that that are technically stable, easy-to-use and present cohesive elements visitors can recognize when browsing between different parts of government.

A comprehensive set of standard Web design guidelines is critical as digital government application developers and Web designers strive to reach the broadest possible audience with accessible, convenient and useful digital government services.

The Web Presentation Guidelines:

- Balance access needs, functionality requirements and industry technical requirements
- Help Web developers design digital government services from a citizen and business-centric perspective
- Create efficiency across the enterprise by speeding the flow of information to the public
- Improve interoperability between state agencies
- Reduce the risk of Web design failure
- Help to build a spirit of community and commonality across a diverse environment of government agencies

For many agencies, having the guidelines in place saves the time and expense of developing their own.

**D. Return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculation). Projects must exhibit measurable operational benefit.**

It is estimated that the Web Presentation Guidelines save 30 hours of development work per project.

**Readily available for use by all.** Approximately 150 of the 300 state agencies, boards and commissions have Web sites. The level of attention to Web sites varies significantly between agencies. Small agencies typically have one person assigned part-time to develop and maintain a Web page. Some of the larger agencies may have 100 or more technical, design and editorial staff devoted to a robust Web presence. About half of these agencies use at least some elements of the "Access Washington" look and feel in their Web site design and all can benefit from the many sections of Web Presentation Guidelines. Since the guidelines are readily available on the Internet, they are an easily replicated model for all government jurisdictions -- state, city, county and tribal.

**Less time, better results, more business online.** Agencies report that use of the guidelines free up much of the time investment required during the front-end development phase of Web design. The WPG are easy to use and make a valuable contribution to contribute to the enterprise environment. With the "roadmap" in place, more of the attention on the design work can be on content development and on reaching business objectives with online services.

**Save time and money allocated for application development.** Agencies, local governments and firms, which do business with the state can download the guidelines and use them as part of their development of online services provided by the state of Washington. With their straightforward, easily navigated design, the WPG guide Web developers through an extensive amount of material and research. Potentially, they can save the average Web developer or contractor a minimum of 30 hours of research and development time. (Outside contractors are frequently used for Web application development so required use of the WPG can provide a running start). Conservatively, if 100 developers saved 30 hours, at \$60 per hour, by using the guidelines that would yield an estimated savings of \$180,000.

**Avoid costly mistakes.** Step-by-step, the guidelines integrate best practices, policies and technologies in use by the state. One unmistakable measure of the success of the Web Presentation Guidelines is that several agencies have incorporated the WPG into their own Web design guides.