

.gov Reform Initiative

U.S. Agency for International Development Web Improvement Plan

Working Draft as of 10/11/2011

Background

In the [August 12, 2011 Agency Instructions for Completing Web Inventories and Web Improvement Plans](#), Agency CIOs were asked to work with their Agency Web Manager and Office of Public Affairs to submit an Interim Progress Report on their efforts to streamline Agency-managed .gov domains (due September 6, 2011) and to begin development of an Agency-wide Web Improvement Plan.

“By October 11, Agencies shall develop a Web Improvement Plan that communicates their **strategy for managing web resources more efficiently, improving online content, and enhancing the customer experience of Agency websites.**” This comprehensive plan will “address the broader objectives of **streamlining content, infrastructure, and ultimately improving customer service.**”

The purpose of this Web Improvement Plan is to identify the strategy, actions, measurements, and timelines that the Agency is using to streamline website infrastructure, improve web content, and enhance the customer experience with Executive Branch websites.

Agencies are being asked to create a Web Improvement Plan that will be developed iteratively over the next few months. In this plan, Agencies will describe Agency-wide efforts to effectively manage publicly accessible websites in the .gov domain. Only agencies in the Executive Branch are required to submit a Web Improvement Plan. The initial plan for the U.S. Agency for International Development, due to OMB by October 11, 2011, is in the following section.

Step 1: Current State of Agency-wide Web Improvement Efforts

Over the past few months, Agencies have been reviewing their .gov domains, web operations, and other web-related efforts in response to OMB .gov Reform data collection efforts (individual domain inventories, web governance survey, interim progress reports, etc.). The following describes the state of current web improvement efforts at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

1) Does your Agency currently have an Agency-wide web strategy?

no.

2) How does your agency currently ensure that Agency-wide web resources are managed efficiently (e.g. governance, technology/infrastructure, hosting, staffing, operations, etc.)?

This is achieved through several methods. First, USAID has a standard hosting platform that web resources are being migrated to, Drupal on LAMP servers. By having a consistent platform, the Agency can better manage, train on, and update web-based resources. Second, USAID has a dedicated team of web developers and designers. This ensures consistency in the design, creation, and implementation of web resources. Third, the hosting platforms are supported and maintained by the Agency's Operations & Maintenance (O&M) staff. Using a well-managed change control process, the O&M team ensures that all changes to Agency platforms are thoroughly reviewed, tested, and documented prior to being made, which helps to ensure a common, consistent environment. Fourth, USAID's Information Security team (CISO) performs regular scans of all Agency servers and websites. These scans help to ensure that web resources are managed in a secure manner. Lastly, USAID has policy documents and web-based resources that outline the standards and regulations that all USAID websites are required to follow.

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

USAID has, for the past few years, been migrating websites to Web Content Management Systems (CMS). In particular, the Agency has been migrating publically-accessible websites to the Drupal CMS. The main advantage to a CMS is that it allows web developers to create a website with templates that can be easily updated and maintained by content providers without requiring any knowledge of web coding. The sites also take advantage of their easy integration of Web 2.0 tools like RSS and blogs. All of this makes it easier to keep sites updated with fresh content while still maintaining a consistent look and feel across all pages.

4) How does your Agency currently ensure that websites are meeting user expectations and needs and that the customer experience with websites is continually enhanced?

This is done by three means. The first is when requests come into the USAID web development team from site owners. These can be in the form of requests for a site redesign or enhancement. The second way is through site updates. As new enhancements are added to one site, the USAID web team will approach site owners about adding that enhancement to their site. With websites sharing a common CMS, updates and enhancements can be easily and rapidly deployed across multiple sites. The final way that the Agency ensures that websites are meeting expectations is through regular surveys of users to gauge their satisfaction and solicit ideas for improvements.