



USDA Web Presence Style Guide

DRAFT

Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction 1**
- 2 Web-based Components 2**
 - 2.1 Masthead 3
 - 2.2 Top Navigation Bar 7
 - 2.3 Left Navigation Column 8
 - 2.4 Right Navigation Column..... 10
 - 2.5 Footer 12
 - 2.6 Content Area..... 13
 - 2.7 Exception Pages 15
 - 2.8 Error Handling..... 16
 - 2.9 Technical Considerations..... 18
- 3 Font, Color, and Style Formatting 20**
 - 3.1 Font..... 21
 - 3.2 Web Site Color Palettes 22
 - 3.3 Style Formatting..... 27
- 4 Web Presence Templates..... 29**
 - 4.1 agency1 Template 30
 - 4.2 local_navigation Template..... 33
 - 4.3 child_window Template..... 35
 - 4.4 data_presentation Template 37
 - 4.5 user_registration Template 39
 - 4.6 newsroom Template..... 41
 - 4.7 photo_gallery Template 44
- 5 Editorial Content..... 47**
 - 5.1 Crafting Text..... 48
 - 5.2 Strategies for Crafting Text 50
 - 5.3 Guidelines for Ensuring Clarity..... 51
- 6 Targeting USDA Audiences 53**
- 7 Accessibility Guidelines 60**

8 Usability Guidelines 63

9 Migration Strategy 65

10 Appendix 66

1 Introduction

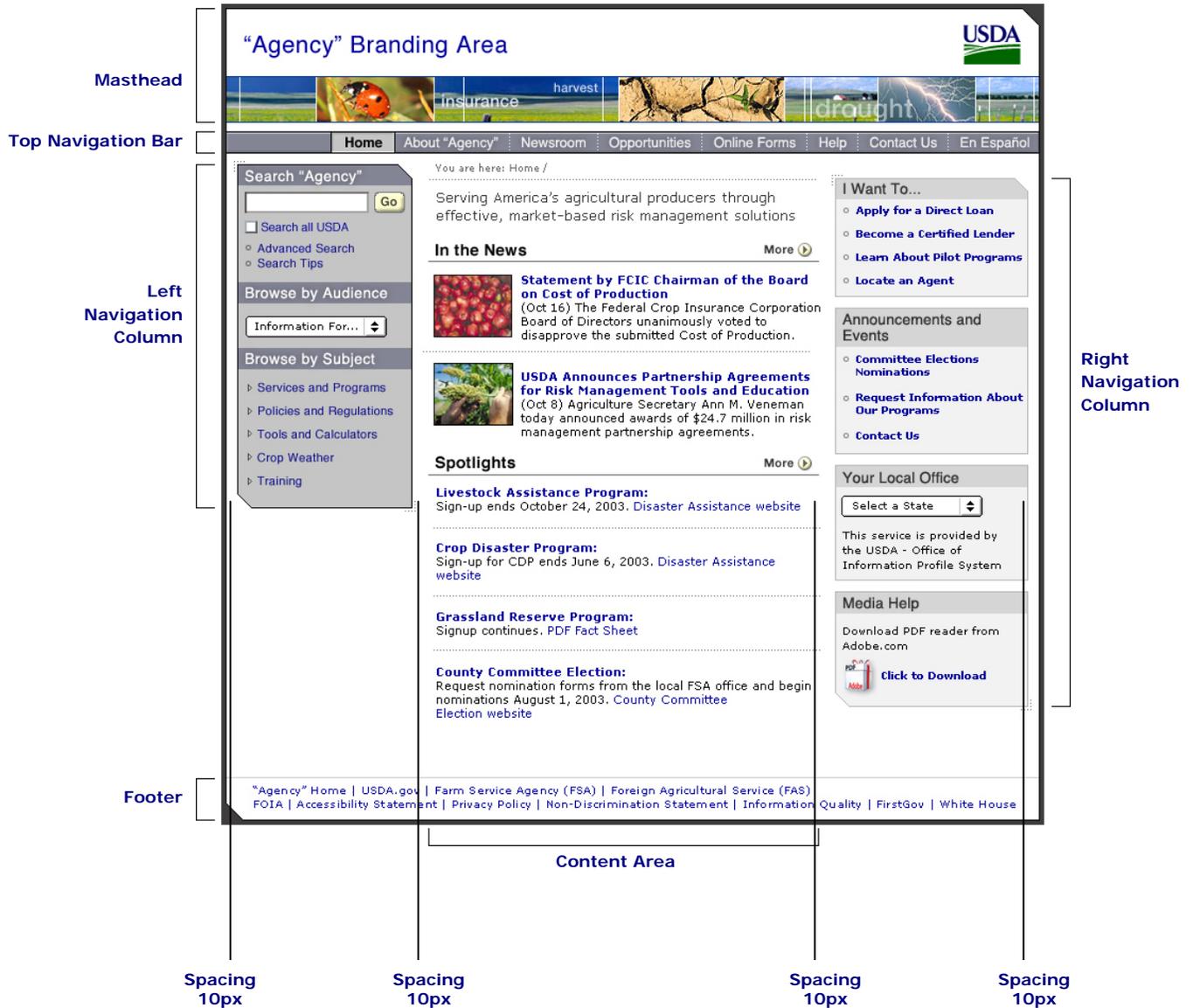
USDA currently has approximately 70 official Web sites representing its various agencies and staff offices, as well as numerous Web-based applications used within those agencies and offices. Many of these Web sites and applications have unique navigation models, content structures, and visual presentations. This presents a challenge to the citizens, business partners, and employees who come to USDA to find information, complete forms, or conduct transactions. Each time they visit any given site or application, it is necessary to “re-learn” the navigational structure and other features. In order to overcome these challenges, an enterprise-wide User Interface (UI) Style Guide has been created for USDA agencies and offices to leverage in designing and developing their Web sites and Web-based applications.

The USDA Agency Web Presence Style Guide defines guidelines and standards for look, feel, and navigation that will promote consistency while also improving the overall user experience. The guide will help reinforce and protect the integrity of the USDA brand. Designers and developers should use this guide to better understand how to apply the Web Presence standards to new Web pages created for USDA agency Web sites and Web-based applications.

This Style Guide is your blueprint for building out new Web pages. While it is not possible to plan for every contingency, you should find all the resources and framework you need to make informed decisions in your Web page development efforts. The guide provides detailed information and templates for varying levels of Web pages. The seven templates included were chosen to provide designers and developers with examples of how to display commonly used information amongst agencies. The guide also includes specifications for color palettes and typography to ensure that new Web pages meet department-wide standards. Finally, this guide provides you with guidelines and advice on how to prepare editorial content for your Web pages to maximize the user’s ability to locate, understand, and use information.

2 Web-based Components

Most USDA agency Web sites and applications have content that can be structured within the following six sections: the *Masthead*, *Top Navigation Bar*, *Left Navigation Column*, *Right Navigation Column*, *Footer* and *Content Area*. The basic components of these areas will allow you to build additional pages within your Web site or application.

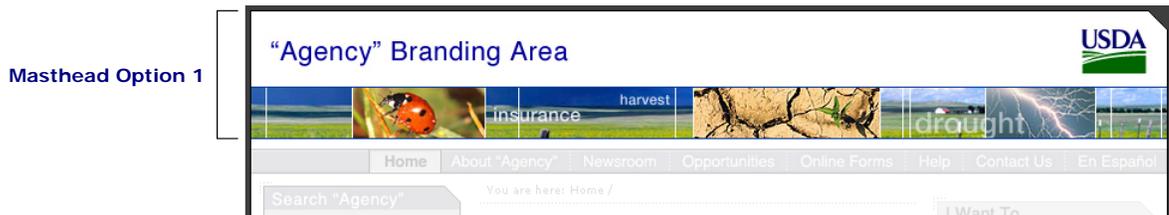


2.1 Masthead

The Masthead is the main branding area for your agency Web site or application and will appear on every page. It consists of the *Branding Area* and *Photo Banner*. Various options for handling the masthead component of your Web site or application are described below.

Masthead Option 1

This option closely resembles the USDA.gov masthead, with the same image and typography sizes and relationships. The images used should be directly relevant to the specific mission of your agency. This type of masthead can be developed quickly with minimal effort.



Masthead Components

1. Branding Area (TBD)

This is the area at the top of the masthead where your agency logo and typography appear at the top left; the USDA logo appears at the top right. The size, position and placement of the Branding Area elements cannot be altered.

Attributes: Logo and text: “ ‘Agency’ Branding Area” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: masthead_logo.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 64px / Cutsheet Name: masthead.psd

2. Photo Banner

The *Photo Banner* is a series of images that represents the diversity of your agency. Each agency is responsible for providing and updating the images used.

Attributes: Image: masthead_banner.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 44px / Cutsheet Name: masthead.psd

Masthead continued

Masthead Option 2

This masthead option has the same size and relationships as the USDA.gov masthead. This masthead also includes *Did You Know* factoid animation. Additionally, the images in the photo banner should be relevant to the specific mission of your agency.

Agencies are welcome to incorporate this kind of element if they have the resources to maintain it. This type of animation works well if there are enough facts to support it. ¹

Masthead Option 2



1. Branding Area

This is the area at the top of the masthead where your agency logo and typography appear at the top left; the USDA logo appears at the top right. The size, position and placement of the Branding Area elements cannot be altered.

Logo and text: “ ‘Agency’ Branding Area” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: masthead_logo2.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 53px / Cutsheet Name: masthead2.psd

2. “Did You Know” Factoid

The animated GIF highlights three facts about the agency that visitors may not know. These facts correspond to the three photos within the *Photo Banner*. The GIF, along with the *Photo Banner*, changes on a daily basis. An archive of *Did You Know Factoid* animations and *Photo Banners* is available for rotation.

Attributes: Text (For example: “The forest service manages over 400,000 miles of bike paths”) / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 10px / Color: #333333 / Rollover: none / Rollover color: none / Image: masthead_anim_forest.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 22px / Cutsheet Name: usda_home.psd

Animation: 3 frames / 10 seconds p/frame

3. Photo Banner

The *Photo Banner* is a series of images that represents the diversity of the agency and corresponds to the Factoid above. This image and the corresponding *Did You Know Factoid* animation should change on a daily basis. An archive of *Did You Know Factoid* animations and Photo Banners is available for rotation.

Attributes: Three thematic images to match animated gif of facts / Font: none / Image: masthead_banner.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 46px / Cutsheet Name: agency_one.psd

¹ The annual USDA Fact Book is a good source of information to populate this area.

Masthead continued

Masthead Option 3

This masthead option uses the large photo image as the background image for the branding area. It integrates the two areas into one unit. This option uses flash to rotate five different background images all related to their agency.

Masthead Option 3



Masthead Components

1. Branding Area (TBD)

This is the area at the top of the masthead where your agency logo and typography appear at the top left; the USDA logo appears at the top right. The size, position and placement of the Branding Area elements cannot be altered.

Attributes: Logo and text: “ ‘Agency’ Branding Area” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #323467 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: masthead_logo3.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 118px / Cutsheet Name: masthead3.psd

Masthead continued

Masthead Option 4

This masthead option uses the smaller photo image as the background image for the branding area. It integrates the two areas into one unit.

Masthead Option 4



Masthead Components

1. Branding Area (TBD)

This is the area at the top of the masthead where your agency logo and typography appear at the top left; the USDA logo appears at the top right. The size, position and placement of the Branding Area elements cannot be altered.

Attributes: Logo and text: “ ‘Agency’ Branding Area” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #323467 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: masthead_logo4.gif / Width: 767px / Height: 86px / Cutsheet Name: masthead4.psd

2.2 Top Navigation Bar

The Top Navigation Bar appears in the same place on every page of the Web site or application. Agencies have flexibility in determining which Top Navigation sections are appropriate for their agency. However, there are some items that should always be included in the top navigation bar. These are: *Home*, *About Agency*, *Help*, *Contact Us*, and *En Español*.



Top Navigation Component Parts

The Top Navigation Bar includes a rollover state. When you roll over each section of the Top Navigation Bar, the section type changes color and appearance. When you are in a particular screen of the Web site or application, the corresponding top navigation will remain locked in the rollover state.

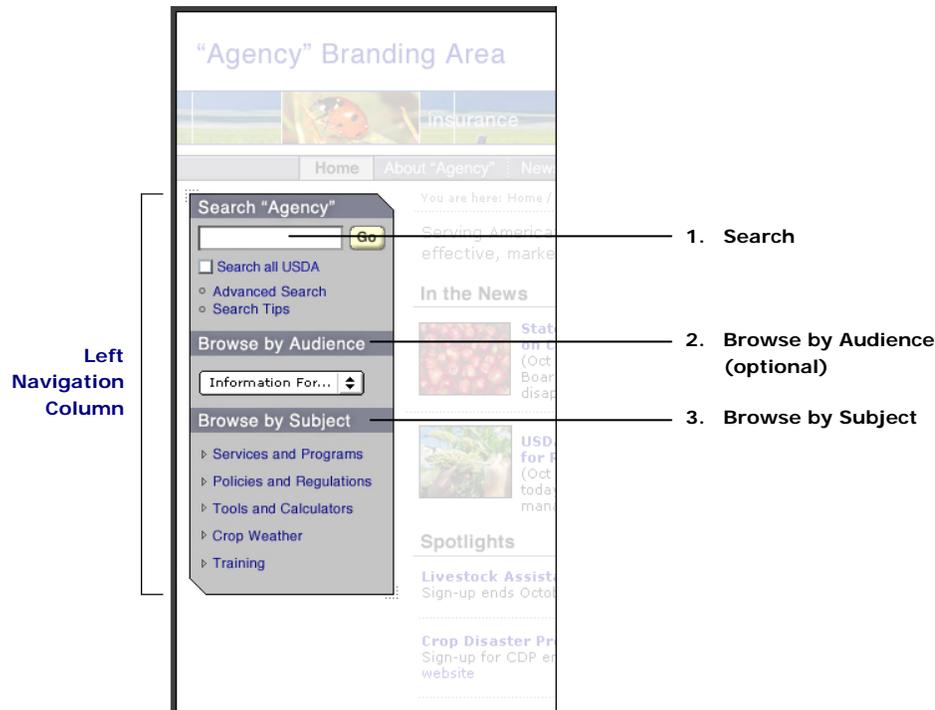
Content: "Home, About 'Agency', Newsroom, Opportunities, Online Forms, Help, Contact Us, En Español"
 / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 13px / Color: #FFFFFF / Rollover: color and background /
 Rollover Color: #000000

Images:

nav_top_home.gif, nav_top_home_over.gif / Width: 54px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_about.gif, nav_top_about_over.gif / Width: 107px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_newsroom.gif, nav_top_newsroom_over.gif / Width: 82px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_help.gif, nav_top_help_over.gif / Width: 47px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_contact, nav_top_contact_over.gif / Width: 84px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_opportunities, nav_top_opportunities_over.gif / Width: 97px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_espanol, nav_top_espanol_over.gif / Width: 85px / Height: 21px
 nav_top_onlineforms, nav_top_onlineforms_over.gif / Width: 98px / Height: 21px
 Cutsheet Name: global_nav.psd

2.3 Left Navigation Column

The Left Navigation Column appears on every page of your agency Web site or application. There are three main ways to find information. The user can *Search* for specific information. *Browse by Audience*, an optional component, will direct users based on audience type. *Browse by Subject* will direct users by common topics of interest. These components always appear in the same location on every page.



Left Navigation Column Components

1. Search

The Search area consists of a search field, “Go” Button, “Search all USDA” checkbox, “Advanced Search” link and “Search Tips” link. If populated, the “Search all USDA” checkbox allows users to search the usda.gov site in addition to the agency site.

Overall Size: Width: 171px / Variable height / Content: “search” image / Form Field and Button: button_go.gif

Cutsheet Name: buttons.psd

Navigation Headings: Text: “Search ‘Agency’” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px
Color: #FFFFFF / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_head_search.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

Left Navigation Column continued

Other Headings: Text: “Advanced Search” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: underline / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_nav_advanced.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 15px / Cutsheet Name: usda_home.psd

Other Headings: Text: “Search Tips” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: underline / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_nav_tips.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 15px / Cutsheet Name: usda_home.psd

2. Browse by Audience (optional)

This area contains a drop down menu that provides information based on specific types of users, such as “Producer”. Many agencies have conducted audience analyses or other relevant audience studies to understand the specific needs of users. These agencies should use this area of the site to cater to those individual groups’ interests. The recommended number of audience links is 10 or fewer; the maximum number is 15.

Overall Size: Width: 171px / Variable height / Content: “Browse by Audience” image and drop down menu of audience types.

Navigation Headings: Text: “Browse by Audience” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #FFFFFF / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_head_audience.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 30px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

3. Browse by Subject

This area contains links to common topics of interest. The subjects in this list should be based on the top level of your agency’s taxonomy. The recommended number of subject links is 10 or fewer; the maximum number is 15.

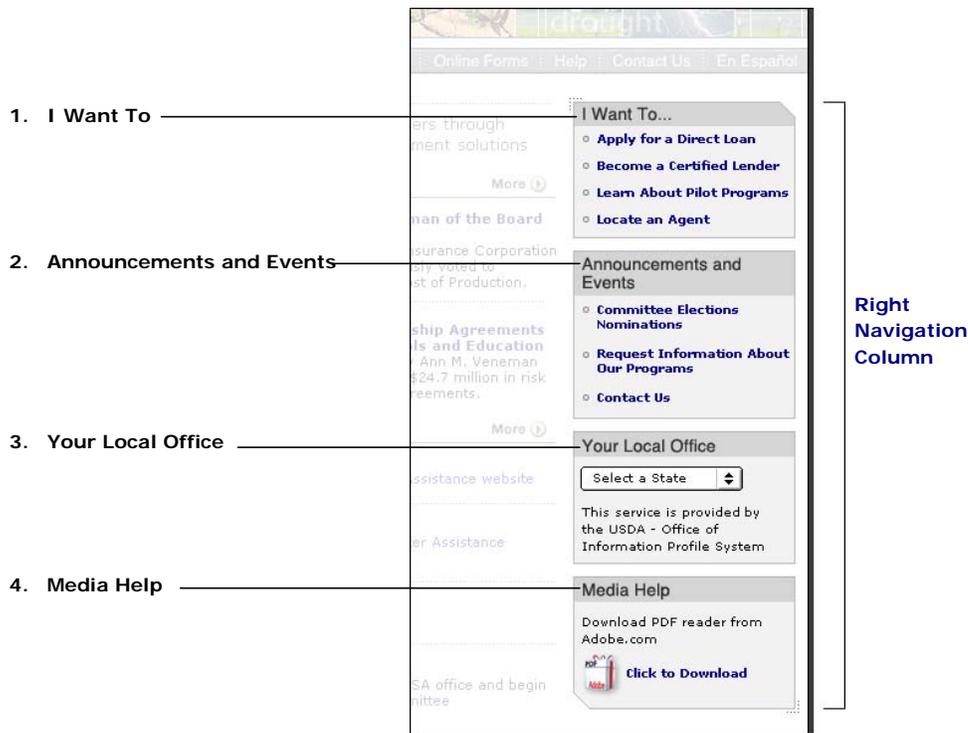
Overall Size: Width: 171px / Variable height / Content: “Browse by Subject” image and bulleted list of various subjects

Navigation Headings: Text: “Browse by Subject” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #FFFFFF / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_head_subject.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 30px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

Other Headings: Text: “Services and Programs” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: Underline / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_nav_agricultural.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 15px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

2.4 Right Navigation Column

The Right Navigation Column appears on most pages of the Web site or application. The Right Navigation Column contains complementary and supplementary links based on the page that the user is on. The information in the Right Navigation Column changes on every page. Some utility pages like *Data Presentation*, *Error Page*, *New User Registration* or *Local Navigation* will not have a Right Navigation Column.



Right Navigation Components

Each agency is responsible for defining the components of the Right Navigation Column. The content of this section will vary on an agency-by-agency basis, depending on the information architecture of the respective agency's site. Some suggested options are described below for your reference.

1. I Want To

This is a section in the Right Navigation Column that lists common and important tasks relevant to your agency such as *Apply for a Direct Loan*, *Become a Certified Lender*, *Learn about Pilot Programs*, *Locate an Agent*, etc. Topics should be limited to a maximum of five.

Overall Size: Width: 188px / Variable height / Content: "I Want To" image and bulleted list of various tasks.

Navigation Headings: Text: "I Want To" / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #313131 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: l_c_head_iwantto.gif / Width: 188px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

Right Navigation Column continued

2. Announcements and Events

This is a section in the Right Navigation Column that lists information such as important reports, announcements, upcoming events and publications.

Overall Size: Width: 188px / Variable height / Content: “Announcements and Events” image and bulleted list of various links.

Navigation Headings: Text: “Announcements and Events” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #313131 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: Image: l_c_head_announcements.gif / Width: 188px / Height: 39px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

3. Your Local Office

This is an agency specific feature and may be used to promote a notable item or application. In this example the space is used to assist users to locate their local office.

Overall Size: Width: 188px / Variable height / Content: “Your Local Office” image and text

Navigation Headings: Text: “Your Local Office” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #313131 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: Image: l_c_head_yourlocaloffice.gif / Width: 188px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

4. Media Help

This is an optional component that provides links to download plugins that may be needed on that page.

Overall Size: Width: 188px / Variable height / Content: “Media Help” image and text

Navigation Headings: Text: “Media Help” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #313131 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: l_c_head_mediahelp.gif / Width: 188px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

2.5 Footer

The Footer consists of two lines of HTML links. The first line links to agency-specific items, agencies in the same mission area, and/or links to related Web sites. The second line must contain the following links: *FOIA*, *Accessibility Statement*, *Privacy Policy*, *Non-Discrimination Statement*, *Information Quality*, *FirstGov*, and *White House*.



Footer Component Parts

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none /
Hover: underline

2.6 Content Area

The center portion of the page is devoted to content. Elements that may appear within the Content Area are *Bread Crumb Trail*, *Headline Bars*, *Headlines*, *Body Text*, *Divided Lines* and *Imagery*. The content area may extend across the page if no Right Navigation Column is needed.

The screenshot shows the 'Agency' branding area of the USDA website. It features a search bar, navigation menu, and several content sections. Numbered callouts point to the following elements:

- 1. Bread Crumb Trail:** Points to the 'You are here: Home /' breadcrumb trail.
- 2. Headline Bars:** Points to the 'In the News' section header.
- 3. Headline:** Points to the main headline of the first news item: 'Statement by FCIC Chairman of the Board on Cost of Production'.
- 4. Body Text:** Points to the main text of the first news item: '(Oct 16) The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors unanimously voted to disapprove the submitted Cost of Production.'
- 5. Divided Line:** Points to the horizontal line separating the first news item from the second.
- 6. Imagery:** Points to the image of a red apple in the first news item.

Content Area Components

This section focuses on the components of the content area; however, it does not go into detail about specific types of content that should be included. This decision will be left to the discretion of the agency and will vary on an agency-by-agency basis.

1. Bread Crumb Trail

The *Bread Crumb Trail* is a navigation tool that allows a user to see where the current page is in relation to the Web site or application's hierarchy. Any page visited (other than the current page) will be an HTML link. The Bread Crumb Trail allows users to know where they are and they have been within the Web site or application at any given time.

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 10px / Color: #666666 / Text-Decoration: none /
 Hover: underline

Content Area continued

2. **Headline Bars**

Headline Bars designate a section of content and have been created as graphic elements. The Headline Bar may vary in width. It may measure half of the Content Area column; full length of the Content Area column; or extend to the right margin of the page if right navigation is not required. Sometimes a *More* button will appear in the right margin of the bar.

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “In the News” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_inthenews.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

Other Headings: Text: “Spotlights” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_spotlights.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

3. **Headline**

A *Headline* is displayed as bold HTML text and should always function as an HTML link. A Headline may stand alone or may be followed by Body Text.

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: underline

4. **Body Text**

Body text is HTML text that represents descriptive copy. Body Text may contain HTML links, which must appear in blue type.

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none / Link Color: #000099

5. **Divider Line**

The *Divider Line* is a graphic device used to separate stories within a Headline Bar area.

Attributes: Width: 368px / Height: 10px / Cutsheet Name: presence_home.psd

6. **Imagery**

Imagery is a photo or graphic used to visually support content. Imagery may be horizontal or vertical in format and must be scaled and cropped to the pixel dimensions provided below. All photos must have a 1 pixel black border.

Attributes: not required / Portrait Orientation: Width 70px, Height 80px / Landscape Orientation: Width 80px, Height 70px

2.7 Exception Pages

Exception pages do not follow the typical application navigation described above. The following pages are examples of exception pages.

Login

The Login page allows the user access to the application. On Logout, the user simply returns to the Login page.

The Login page contains:

- USDA branding area
- Masthead
- Welcome message (exit message if Logout)
- Username field
- Password field
- Link to Forgot Password page
- Login button
- Cancel button

Child Windows

Child windows launched in a separate browser window will contain no navigation other than to close and return to the window that spawned them. Child windows will not contain any browser or global navigation elements.

When launched, these types of windows will display at the upper left-hand corner of the screen. Child windows will always have a “Close” button, and when closed, the window that spawned the child window will refresh to its position prior to spawning the window.

2.8 Error Handling

Errors are defined as any action that impedes forward progress of the application.

Error Handling

There are two different error types that will be discussed: General Errors (low severity) and System Errors (high severity).

Examples of error types are:

- General Error – This type of error occurs when a user leaves a required field in a form blank, or when a user attempts to submit invalid information to the application.
- System Error – This type of error occurs when there is a hardware or software disruption.

Error messages must be informative and explicit. Regardless of error type, every error must produce a description of what went wrong and what the user can do to correct the error. When appropriate, a link should be provided to the user allowing them to access the applicable section of the help document. Error codes or system-generated messages that the user would not understand should never display.

General Errors

An informative error message should be displayed if a general error occurs. When users submit a form, for example, a specific JavaScript function will check to see that all required fields have been filled with valid information. If there are any errors, an informative error message will appear in red text above the form fields warning the user of the problem. The cursor focus will be set to the missing or incorrectly formatted field on the form.

You are here: [Home](#) / [Registration](#) / [Registration Error](#)

New User Registration

Registration Error

Please review the information submitted in your registration form. Not all required fields have been completed.

Problem with form field: Email Address

Username*: Create a username that you will remember. For example, your first initial and last name: jdoe.

Password*: For help, please view the [password specifications](#).

Confirm Password*:

First Name*:

Middle Initial:

Last Name*:

Email Address*: *Please enter a valid Email Address*

Confirm Email Address*:

Country*: ▾

Zip Code*: By providing your geographic location of where you reside, we can supply information that is best suited to you.

Error Handling continued

Errors are defined as any action that impedes forward progress of the application.

System Errors

An error page will be displayed when a high-severity system error occurs. System errors occur when the user can no longer continue through the application. This type of error usually happens if the application server or database server goes down, the server is hanging on an operation, or when the user attempts to perform an illegal operation. If any of these errors occur, the application should fail gracefully and redirect the user to a formatted error page.

The following error information will be provided for the user on the System Error page:

- Error description
- Possible side effects
- Fix or solution
- Who to contact for support and how
- Link to Home page
- Link to Help

2.9 Technical Considerations

The following guidelines will define best practices regarding general implementation of the HTML pages.

Frames

Web Presence Web sites and applications should be designed to avoid the use of frames. No template on this site or application should be used or loaded into frames of other Web sites. A script should be provided to detect when and if that happens. The script will be responsible for breaking the page in question out of the confines of the offending frame.

Platforms

Operating Systems

All Web pages must be accessible on the following Operating Systems:

- Microsoft Windows
- Macintosh
- UNIX/Linux

Note: Each operating system must provide the ability to use assistive technologies for those individuals with disabilities.

Web Browsers

The following Web browsers must be supported:

- Netscape Version 4.7x - Must provide as much functionality as possible, with the consideration that minor look and feel differences may occur compared to the latest browser versions.
- Netscape Version 6.x
- Netscape Version 7.x+
- Internet Explorer Version 5.x+
- Safari Version 1.0 (Macintosh)

Note: Non-standard browsers such as AOL and Opera are not required to be supported. Agencies may choose to support these browsers.

Accessibility Considerations

Web pages that require an applet, plugin, or other application be present on the user's machine to interpret page content, must provide a link to the necessary application. If a user chooses not to install the applet or plugin they still should be able to view the Web page without an error message appearing.

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

All Web pages will use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). With CSS, designers and users can create style sheets that define how fonts, colors, layouts of different elements, such as headers and links, appear. These style sheets can then be applied to any Web page. A CSS has been developed for USDA.gov which other agencies can use if desired to adhere to the Web Presence style guidelines. In order to adhere to accessibility requirements, all pages must be viewable without the use of style sheets.

Screen Size and Bit Depth

All pages should be designed for a minimum of 800 x 600 pixel screen resolution with consideration of the navigational bars that each Web browser contains (i.e., top header icons, status bar, right side scrollbars). The minimum color bit depth should be 16-bit (65,536 colors).

Technical Considerations continued

Load Time

Based on a 56-kilobytes (KB) connection, the recommended maximum load time for any page should be 10 seconds in a test environment. For any page that requires more time there should be a status bar indicating the loading progress. The table below can be used as guideline to determine page load times:

Connection Type	Max. Speed	Max. Transmission Speed
28.8K modem ("v.34")	28.8 Kbps	2.4 KB/sec
56K modem ("v.90")	56 Kbps	4.8 KB/sec
DSL/Cable Modem	384 Kbps to 1544 Kbps	35 KB/sec and upwards
LAN/Intranet	10 or 100Mbps	350 KB/sec or 3.5 MB/sec

3 Font, Color, and Style Formatting

There are stylistic standards set for all fonts, forms, and tables used on agency Web sites and applications. This section will detail how to format the information presented on your pages. Your agency should use this section as a guide to layout your text, pictures, forms, and tables.

3.1 Font

These are the guidelines set for all font usage.

Font Size

Center content area HTML font should be 11pt. HTML text in the right navigation and footer should be 10pt.

Font Type

The designated font order of Font Type for all HTML text is: {Verdana, Arial, Sans-Serif}. Based on best practices, this font family was selected for its ease of readability.

The designated font for all graphical images is Helvetica.

The maximum number of unique font types that can be used on a page is two. The only exception to this rule applies to the logo. A bolded version of the same font type is not considered a unique font.

Font Style

Never use ALL CAPS. The only exception to this rule occurs when denoting special instruction or acronyms.

Limit the use of italics. Italics should be used for providing specific emphasis, scientific names, or denoting various available versions of a document such as printer friendly version and en español.

No static text will be underlined. The user may confuse underlined static text with a hyperlink.

Numeric and Grammatical Formatting

The following standards should be applied consistently throughout all Web sites and applications.

- Web site is two words, with the word Web capitalized in all instances.
- Homepage is one word.
- All U.S. states should be either spelled out in its entirety or abbreviated to two letters.
 - Example: Maryland, DC, VA
- Dates should be in this format: (Sep 4) when used in a listing of any sort.
 - Example: **Farmer's Market Show** (Sep 4) – Virginia's local farmers will display and sell their season's best
- All U.S. phone numbers will be listed in this format.
 - Example: (202)720-0000
- All numbers between zero and nine should be spelled out in its entirety. Any number above 10 should be displayed numerically.
 - Example: eight, 15

3.2 Web Site Color Palettes

The USDA Web Presence has three sample color palettes to choose from to build out your agency Web site or application.

3.2.1 Web Site Color Palette One

Shown below are the colors for Color Palette One. All colors are represented as hexadecimal values.

1. Left Navigation Dark Grey: #838594

2. Button Yellow: #FFFED0

3. Left Navigation Medium Grey: #C5C5C5

4. Blue Link Color: #000099

5. Purple Visited Link Color: #660099

6. Black Rule: #000000

7. Right Navigation Grey: #D5D5D5

8. Right Navigation Light Grey: #F2F2F2

9. Right navigation Grey Rule: #B8B8B8

Left Navigation Column

Right Navigation Column

10. Background Dark Grey: #3F3D3E



Web Site Color Palette One continued

Section Bars

11. Services and Programs Green: #228622	Services and Programs
12. About "Agency" Navy: #35106E	About "Agency"
13. Newsroom Blue: #536CA5	Newsroom
14. Opportunities Maroon: #7F1C1C	Opportunities
15. Online Forms Rust: #A1420F	Online Forms
16. Help Orange: #7F1C1C	Help
17. Contact Us Red: #B32F01	Contact Us
18. En Español Purple: #73305F	En Español

3.2.2 Web Site Color Palette Two

Shown below are the colors for Color Palette Two. All colors are represented as hexadecimal values.

- 1. Left Navigation Dark Blue: #707F94
- 2. Button Yellow: #FFFED0
- 3. Left Navigation Medium Blue: #BDC5D0
- 4. Blue Link Color: #000099
- 5. Purple Visited Link Color: #660099



Left Navigation Column

- 6. Black Rule: #000000

- 7. Right Navigation Blue: #CBD3DE
- 8. Right Navigation Light Blue: #E7ECF2
- 9. Right navigation Grey Rule: #B8B8B8



Right Navigation Column

- 10. Background Dark Grey: #3F3D3E



3.2.3 Web Site Color Palette Three

Shown below are the colors for Color Palette Three. All colors are represented as hexadecimal values.

1. Left Navigation Dark Green: #788E79
2. Button Yellow: #FFFED0
3. Left Navigation Medium Green: #B8C9B9
4. Blue Link Color: #000099
5. Purple Visited Link Color: #660099



Left Navigation Column

6. Black Rule: #000000

7. Right Navigation Green: #C6D4C5
8. Right Navigation Light Green: #E7EEE6
9. Right Navigation Grey Rule: #B8B8B8



Right Navigation Column

10. Background Dark Grey: # 3F3D3E



3.3 Style Formatting

The following section describes overall guidelines for style formatting .

Links

Text links should always be Blue #000099. The hover state of all text links on the site is always underlined. Visited text links should always be Purple #660099.

Links to resources or Web sites out of the USDA domain must explicitly indicate that by adding the full URL of the destination link. Example: "...as reported here (<http://www.pbs.com>)."

Justification of Text

All text in this Web site or application is aligned top/left at a table-cell level (container). No elements, images or text should have alignment attributes applied to them.

Imagery

There are two types of imagery displayed on Web sites and applications, photographic images and non photographic images such as charts, maps, etc.

For photographic images, the file format is .jpg. Image quality compression should be at medium level. The minimum dots per inch (dpi) requirement is 72. All colors should be in RGB, not CMYK.

Thumbnail Images (photographical images)

Attributes: not required / Portrait Orientation: Width 70px, Height 80px / Landscape Orientation: Width 80px, Height 70px

Large Images (photographical images)

Attributes: not required / landscape orientation Width 135px, Height 90px

Enlarged Images (photographical images)

This option is reserved for enlarged photographs inside a photo gallery.

Attributes: not required / landscape orientation Width 315px, Height 230px

Charts, Maps, Tables (non photographical images)

For charts, maps, and other types of non photographic images, the file format is .gif. The width of these elements will be no greater than 396 pixels for those items placed within the center content area when a right navigation bar is present. If there is no right navigation bar present, the width of these elements will not exceed 584 pixels.

Table Formatting

Tabular information should be displayed in a table with the following general attributes:

- Border Color: #339933
- Cell Padding: 0
- Cell Spacing: 0
- Border: 1px
- Table Header Color: #339933

Tables should be labeled (table_id) with a descriptive term to help screen readers (Section 508) identify content. Additionally, a summary attribute (HTML) may be used to further describe the content of the table displaying complex information.

Style Formatting continued

Forms Formatting

Forms may be used anytime input from the user is necessary. For text input, a simple text field may be used. Anytime a text field is required, it must be clearly noted using an asterisk (*) at the end to avoid form submission errors. Some general guidelines related to using forms are as follows:

- Use radio buttons when user inputs must be one choice between two or more options.
- Use a check box when user input may be none, one or more choices among one or more options.

Form fields must be organized in the order in which they should be filled out. Form field labels should be left aligned on the page and a colon “:” must follow the label (e.g. “First Name*:”). When not possible, tab indexing (HTML) is required to ensure proper flow of the process. Forms should provide as much information as possible to aid the user in populating the form. For example, text hints or context-sensitive help should be displayed where appropriate.

Buttons

All buttons on the site should be consistent in appearance. Placement of all buttons on the page must be right aligned with the form fields on the page. The text on all buttons should be succinct and descriptive of the action of the buttons. The text on all buttons should be center aligned on the button and have 6 pixels of spacing between the text and right and left edges of the button.

Attributes: Text: “*Sample Text*” / Type: Helvetica Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #333333 / Height: 20px / Variable width / Cutsheet Name: buttons.psd

Bullets

All bullets on the site should be consistent in appearance. Bullets used in the center content area must be HTML bullets. The bullet and text should be “baseline” aligned if the text following the bullet extends to more than one line.

4 Web Presence Templates

The following seven designed pages were chosen to provide you with examples of virtually every component you might need in building your own Web pages or applications. These templates include examples of varying levels of pages as well as all the specifications required to help you design and develop Web pages or applications in compliance with USDA standards. While each agency or office's content components will vary, you should adhere to the structure of the layout of these templates.

4.1 agency1 Template

The agency home page contains the following areas of information: *Introduction, In the News, Spotlights, Your Local Office* and *Media Help*.

The screenshot shows the "Agency" branding area of a USDA website. At the top, there's a "USDA" logo and a banner with images related to agriculture (harvest, insurance, drought). Below the banner is a navigation bar with links: Home, About "Agency", Newsroom, Opportunities, Online Forms, Help, Contact Us, and En Español. On the left, there's a search box labeled "Search 'Agency'" and a sidebar with "Browse by Audience" and "Browse by Subject" categories. The main content area includes an introduction text: "Serving America's agricultural producers through effective, market-based risk management solutions". Below this is the "In the News" section with two news items: "Statement by FCIC Chairman of the Board on Cost of Production" and "USDA Announces Partnership Agreements for Risk Management Tools and Education". The "Spotlights" section features four program announcements: "Livestock Assistance Program", "Crop Disaster Program", "Grassland Reserve Program", and "County Committee Election". On the right side, there are several sidebar sections: "I Want To..." with links like "Apply for a Direct Loan", "Become a Certified Lender", "Learn About Pilot Programs", and "Locate an Agent"; "Announcements and Events" with links like "Committee Elections Nominations", "Request Information About Our Programs", and "Contact Us"; "Your Local Office" with a "Select a State" dropdown; and "Media Help" with a "Click to Download" link for a PDF reader. Five numbered callouts on the right side of the image point to these specific areas: 1. Introduction Text, 2. In the news, 3. Spotlights, 4. Your Local Office, and 5. Media Help.

agency1 Template Components

1. Introduction Text

The Introduction Text is slightly larger than other body text on the Web site. It can be used as an introduction to your agency or a mission statement. The Introduction can be two to four lines in length.

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 13px / Color: #333333 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

agency1 Template continued

2. In the News

This section highlights the top four or five current news releases and should be updated frequently. News release headlines are bold text and are HTML links. Use of imagery or summary is optional. When a summary is shown, it will always begin with the news release date.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “In the News” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_inthenews.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Headlines

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: underline

C. Body text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

D. Images

Attributes: not required / Portrait Orientation: Width 70px, Height 80px / Landscape Orientation: Width 80px, Height 70px

3. Spotlights

Spotlights contain important programs that will appear on the homepage for a longer period of time than *News Releases*. Each program headline is a bolded HTML link. Use of imagery or summary is optional.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Spotlights” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_spotlights.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Headlines

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: underline

C. Body text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

D. Images

Attributes: not required / Portrait Orientation: Width 70px, Height 80px / Landscape Orientation: Width 80px, Height 70px

agency1 Template continued

4. Your Local Office

This is an agency specific feature and may be used to promote a notable item or application. In this example the space is used to assist users in locating their local office.

Overall Size: Width: 188px / Variable height / Content: “Your Local Office” image and text

Navigation Headings: Text: “Your Local Office” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #313131 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: l_c_head_yourlocaloffice.gif / Width: 188px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

5. Media Help

This is a utility item that provides links to download plugins that may be needed on that page. Again, this is a feature that agencies may choose to leverage.

Overall Size: Width: 188px / Variable height / Content: “Media Help” image and text

Navigation Headings: Text: “Media Help” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 14px / Color: #313131 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: l_c_head_mediahelp.gif / Width: 188px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

4.2 local_navigation Template

Some agencies may prefer not to incorporate a Right Navigation Column into their Web sites or applications. This template shows how you can modify the Left Navigation Column to include sublevels of information in order to eliminate the need for the Right Navigation Column.

The screenshot displays the "Agency" branding area with the following components:

- 1. Section Bar:** A green horizontal bar with the text "Services and Programs".
- 2. Body text:** A paragraph of text describing the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000.
- 3. Pilot Programs:** A section header followed by a list of links to access policy information.
- 4. Menu Selected State:** A table with two columns: "Policy Name" and "Policy #".

Policy Name	Policy #
Adjusted Gross Revenue Insurance Policy	2001-AGR
Coverage Enhancement Option (CEO)	00-026A 08/06/99
Producer Premium Percentage Tables for Coverage Enhancement Option (CEO) in Lotus spreadsheet format	

< Previous 1 2 3 Next >

USDA Home | About "Agency" | Newsroom | Opportunities | Online Forms | Help | Contact Us | En Español

Search "Agency" [input] [Go]

Search all USDA
 Advanced Search
 Search Tips

Browse by Audience

Information For... [dropdown]

Browse by Subject

- Services and Programs
 - Dairy Options Pilot Program (DOPP)
 - Directives and Handbooks
 - Sales Closing Dates
 - Archives
- Policies and Regulations
- Tools and Calculators
- Crop Weather
- Training

"Agency" Home | USDA.gov | Farm Service Agency (FSA) | Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) | FOIA | Accessibility Statement | Privacy Policy | Non-Discrimination Statement | Information Quality | FirstGov | White House

local_navigation Template Component Parts

1. Section Bar

The Section Bar appears on all second and third-level pages. The Section Bar color is *Services and Programs* Green (#228622).

Overall Size: Width: 575px / Height: 37px

Headings: Text: "Services and Programs" / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 24px / Color: #FFFFFF / Image: topics_head_services.gif / Width: 575px / Height: 37px / Cutsheet Name: section_heads.psd

local_navigation Template continued

2. Body Text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

3. Pilot Programs

This section contains tabular information that allows users to navigate directly to descriptions of the pilot programs.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Pilot Programs” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_pilotprogram.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Body text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

C. Content Table

This section shows how to format information in data tables.

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

Table Attributes: Table border: 1px / Color #339933 / Background Color: #EDF2ED

4. Menu Selected State

This is an expanded view of the left navigation. If the user chooses *Services and Programs* from the Left Navigation column, the Subject will expand on the next screen as shown in the example.

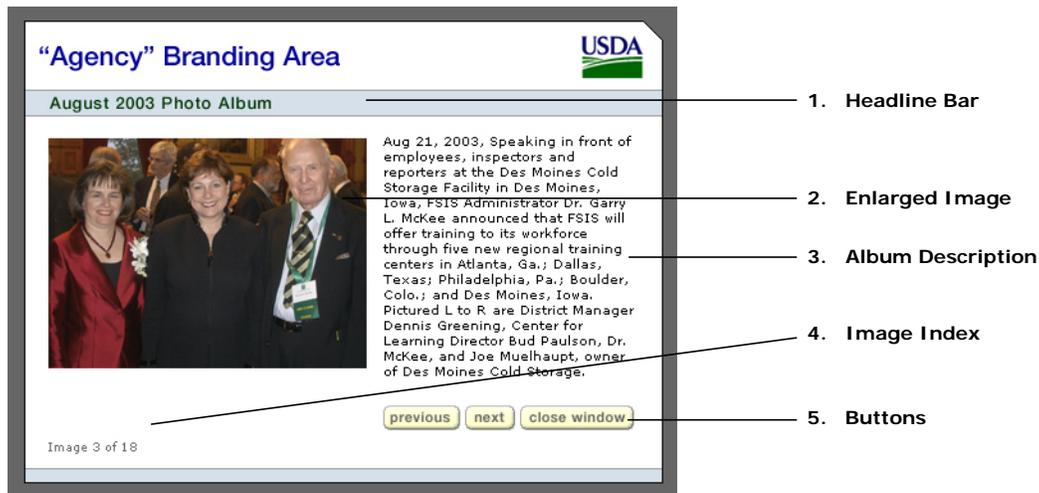
Overall Size: Width: 171px / Variable height / Content: “Browse by Subject” image and bulleted list of various subjects

Navigation Headings: Text: “Services and Programs” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: underline / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_nav_services.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 22px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

Sub Topics: Text: “Dairy Options Pilot Program (DOPP)” / Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 10px / Color: #000099 / Rollover: underline / Rollover Color: none / Image: r_c_subtopic_dairy.gif / Width: 171px / Height: 22px / Cutsheet Name: nav_columns.psd

4.3 child_window Template

This example illustrates how a child window should appear.



child_window Template Component Parts

1. Headline Bar

This Headline Bar is unique to the *child_window template*. It extends the length of the window. In this example the headline bar represents a photo album from August 2003.

Overall Size: Width: 500px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: "August 2003 Photo Album" / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000
Image: content_head_child.gif / Width: 500px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: section_heads.psd

2. Enlarged Image

An *Enlarged Image* is a photo or graphic used to visually support content. An Enlarged Image may be horizontal or vertical in format and must be scaled and cropped to the pixel dimensions provided below. All photos must have a one pixel black border.

Attributes: required / Landscape Orientation: Width 315px, Height 230px

3. Album Description (Body Text)

The *Album Description* provides information on the image, including identification of all persons pictured, date, place and event.

A. Body text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

child_window Template continued

4. Image Index

The *Image Index* indicates the position of the image in the series contained in the Photo Album.

A. Body text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 10px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

5. Buttons

These buttons assist users to navigate the Photo Album.

Attributes: Text: “Previous, Next and Close Window” / Type: Helvetica Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #333333 / Height: 20px / Variable width / Cutsheet Name: buttons.psd

4.4 data_presentation Template

This template shows an example of how a page with data can be formatted and displayed.

The screenshot displays a web page titled "Agency" Branding Area. The page features a navigation bar with links: Home, About "Agency", Newsroom, Opportunities, Online Forms, Help, Contact Us, and En Español. A search box is located on the left side. The main content area is titled "Customer Statement" and includes a "Contact Summary" section with fields for Customer Name, ID, Address, City, State, Zip, Statement Date, Email, and Telephone. Below this is a "Program Summary" table with columns for Program, Data Source, Contract Amount, Payments, and Balance. A "Summary of New Activity" table follows, with columns for Date, Description, Data Source, and Amount. At the bottom of the content area are "Edit" and "Save" buttons. The page footer contains various links including "Agency" Home, USDA.gov, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), FOIA, Accessibility Statement, Privacy Policy, Non-Discrimination Statement, Information Quality, FirstGov, and White House.

1. **Headline Bar**

2. **Content Tables**

3. **Buttons**

data_presentation Template Component Parts

1. Headline Bar

Headline Bars designate a section of content and have been created as graphic elements. The Headline Bar may vary in width. It may measure half of the Content Area column; full length of the Content Area column; or extend to the right margin of the page if no Right Navigation is required. Sometimes a *More* button will appear in the right margin of the bar.

Overall Size: Width: 561px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: "Customer Statement" / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 /

Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_customer.gif / Width: 561px / Height: 23px /

Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

data_presentation Template continued

2. Content Tables

The *Content Table* can be formatted as needed to allow display of the information desired.

A. Table Header

Attributes: Border: 1px / Color: #339933

Text : Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000000

B. Table Text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000

3. Buttons

Buttons allow a user to edit or save the information in their statement.

Navigations Headings: Text: “Save and Edit” / Size: Helvetica Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #333333 / Height 20px / Variable width / Cutsheet Name: buttons.psd

4.5 user_registration Template

The *User Registration Template* is a utility page that does not include a Right Navigation Column, which allows content to extend across the page.

The screenshot displays the 'Agency' Branding Area with the following components:

- 1. Headline Bar:** The top section featuring the 'Agency' branding area with a search bar and navigation menu.
- 2. Body Text:** The main content area containing the 'New User Registration' heading and instructions: 'Please complete the information below to register as a new user. All required fields are denoted by an asterisk (*). Select **Continue** once you are finished.'
- 3. Form Fields:** The registration form fields, including:
 - Username* (text input)
 - Password* (text input)
 - Confirm Password* (text input)
 - First Name* (text input)
 - Middle Initial (text input)
 - Last Name* (text input)
 - Email Address* (text input)
 - Confirm Email Address* (text input)
 - Country* (dropdown menu)
 - Zip Code* (text input)
- 4. Buttons:** The bottom section containing the 'Reset', 'Cancel', and 'Continue' buttons.

user_registration Template Components

1. Headline Bar

Headline Bars designate a section of content and have been created as graphic elements. The Headline Bar may vary in width. The width of the Headline Bar may measure half of the Content Area column; full length of the Content Area column; or extend to the right margin of the page if no Right Navigation is required. Sometimes a *More* button will appear in the right margin of the bar.

Overall Size: Width: 573px / Height: 37px

Headings: Text: "Producer" / Font: Helvetica / Size: 24px / Color: #FFFFFF Image: audience_head_producer.gif / Width: 364px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: section_heads.psd

user_registration Template continued

2. Body text

Body text is HTML text that represents descriptive copy. Body Text may contain HTML links, which must appear in blue type.

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none / Link Color: #000099

3. Form fields

This is a standard HTML form field.

Attributes: Required fields are indicated by an * / Size: 23 characters

4. Buttons

Buttons allow a user to edit or save the information in their statement.

Attributes: Text: “Reset, Continue, Cancel” / Type: Helvetica Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #333333 / Height: 20px / Variable width / Cutsheet Name: buttons.psd

4.6 newsroom Template

This is an example of a second-level page that is accessed by selecting *Newsroom* from the Top Navigation Bar. Agencies have control over the types of information displayed. This is one example of how you may display newsroom information.



newsroom Template Component Parts

1. Section Bar

Section Bars appear on all the second and third-level pages. This section bar color is *Newsroom Blue* (#536CA5).

Overall Size: Width: 573px / Height: 37px

Headings: Text: "Newsroom" / Font: Helvetica / Size: 24px / Color: #FFFFFF /

Image: section_head_newsroom.gif / Width: 573px / Height: 37px / Cutsheet Name: section_heads.psd

newsroom Template continued

2. News Releases

This section displays a maximum of three to four news releases and should be updated frequently. *News Release* headlines are specified as bold HTML links. Use of imagery or a summary is optional. When a summary is shown, it will always begin with the news release date.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “News Releases” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_newsreleases.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Headlines

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: underline

C. Images

Attributes: not required / Portrait Orientation: Width 70px, Height 80px / Landscape Orientation: Width 80px, Height 70px

3. Featured Stories

Featured Stories is a HTML listing with a maximum of three important news items.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Featured Stories” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_features.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Headlines

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: underline

newsroom Template continued

4. Events

Events is a HTML listing with a maximum of three important events. *Events* listing is always followed by the date.

A. Headline Bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Events” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_events.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Headlines

Attributes: Font: Verdana Bold / Size: 11px / Color: #000099 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: underline

5. Agency Promotions

A graphic promotion element, *Agency Promotions* can be used to highlight an event, promotion or call to action. When it appears, it is always the last item in the Right Navigation Column.

Cutsheet Name: promotions.psd

4.7 photo_gallery Template

This Photo Gallery template is usually part of the Newsroom section. This page shows how photo albums are displayed.

The screenshot shows the USDA Newsroom page with the following components labeled:

- Section Bar**: The blue header bar containing the "Newsroom" title.
- Image Library**: The section below the header, including a search bar, "Browse by Audience" and "Browse by Subject" menus, and a "View photo albums from:" dropdown set to "2003".
- Featured Album**: A large photo album titled "Featured Photo Album" showing Administrator Dr. Garry L. McKee speaking.
- Photo Albums**: A list of smaller photo albums, including "Ms. Newton-John, Dr. Murano, and Chef Mauler explain how to use gel packs..." and "64th Annual Meeting, American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP)".

Additional elements visible in the screenshot include the "USDA" logo, a navigation menu (Home, About "Agency", Newsroom, Opportunities, Online Forms, Help, Contact Us, En Español), a "Search 'Agency'" box, a "Newsroom" sidebar with links to News Releases, Featured Stories, Events, Speeches, Image Library, and Constituent Reports, an "Email Subscription" form, and a footer with links to "Agency" Home, USDA.gov, FOIA, Accessibility Statement, Privacy Policy, Non-Discrimination Statement, Information Quality, FirstGov, and White House.

photo_gallery Template Component Parts

1. Section Bar

Section Bars appear on all the second and third-level pages. This section bar color is *Newsroom Blue*.

Overall Size: Width: 575px / Height: 37px

Headings: Text: "Newsroom" / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 24px / Color: #FFFFFF /

Image: section_head_newsroom.gif / Width: 575px / Height: 37px / Cutsheet Name: section_heads.psd

photo_gallery Template continued

2. Image Library

This section contains instructions and forms to assist the user to navigate the image library section.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Image Library” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_library.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Year Drop-Down Menu

The year Drop-Down menu allows the user to view past photo albums.

Menu: “Year”

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 10px / Color: #000000

Default: Current Year

3. Featured Photo Album

You may wish to feature one of the photo albums in the *Image Library*. The featured photo album displays a sample photo at a larger thumbnail size than the other photo albums. Like the other photo albums, the user can click on the photo to get a child window to display the complete album. See *child_window template* for more information.

A. Headline bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Featured Photo Album” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_featuredphotoalbum.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Image

Attributes: Required / Portrait Orientation: Width 105px, Height 155px / Landscape Orientation: Width 155px, Height 105px

C. Body Text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

photo_gallery Template continued

4. Photo Albums

A photo album is a series of photos related to an event, press release, etc. that you may wish to display. Once the user clicks on the image a child window will pop-up to display the images individually with captions. See *child_window template* on page 28 for more information.

A. Headline Bars

Overall Size: Width: 368px / Height: 23px

Headings: Text: “Photo Albums” / Font: Helvetica Medium / Size: 15px / Color: #000000 / Rollover: none / Rollover Color: none / Image: content_head_photoalbums.gif / Width: 368px / Height: 23px / Cutsheet Name: subheads.psd

B. Image

Attributes: Required / Portrait Orientation: Width 70px, Height 80px / Landscape Orientation: Width 80px, Height 70px

C. Body Text

Attributes: Font: Verdana Regular / Size: 11px / Color: #000000 / Text-Decoration: none / Hover: none

5 Editorial Content

Although the basics of good writing are universal, writing copy for the Web differs from preparing text for a printed publication. Just as the Style Guide serves to help USDA and agency Web developers create user-friendly, consistent, informative and effective Web pages, this section on editorial content will ensure that the text throughout your Web site or application meets those same standards.

5.1 Crafting Text

This chapter provides specific information on how users read Web text; strategies for structuring text; and guidelines for ensuring clarity.

Overview: How people read Web content

Users of information enter sites with specific goals in mind. When visitors to your site need specific information, they look for structure to guide them through your site. As a creator of visual information, you must work to develop a structured site – one that enables users to quickly find the information they require.

This first section explains how people read Web text and presents the most common challenges users face.

What do people demand from Web text?

The Web is a “performance-based” medium. Users turn to Web sites for information, and as the amount of information increases, the demand for attention increases. Readers will remain in your Web site as long as they can find the information they require, but it must be presented clearly.

People want to complete tasks.

Some users browse the Web for recreational purposes or for entertainment. But when your users look for information, they do so because they have a task they want to complete.

Think about the users of information on USDA sites. When they enter “information space,” they are looking for specific information. They want to make their way through a Web site quickly and efficiently, absorbing as much information as possible.

Think in terms of tasks and actions. Give users what they are looking for in a structure they don’t have to “work” through, so they can achieve their goals and come away satisfied.

People want text that matters to them.

Users attempting to complete tasks are looking only for the information that pertains to them. Their first question will always be, “What’s in it for me?”

Present this information clearly and succinctly so they can complete their tasks. A successful user experience delivers the value proposition in a way every user can understand it. Poorly constructed text does not allow your audience to engage fully and in a broader sense, it diminishes the Web site’s usefulness in the user’s mind.

People want an intuitive hierarchy of information.

Users are accustomed to receiving information in a particular way. Begin with the most pertinent and/or general information and from here, users can decide whether or not to delve deeper into content. Every element on the screen can draw attention to another element. As a Web developer, it is your job to place text and graphics in an order that mirrors users’ expectations.

Crafting Text continued

People want their expectations fulfilled.

When people read, they want to have a good understanding of how they might move through content. You have the opportunity to structure information that “predicts” what’s coming up.

Good Web writing supports the users’ expectations and facilitates relationships between sections and chunks of information.

People want a good experience.

Research tells us that Web users want to successfully complete their tasks. Do not offer them fluffy marketing prose or pedantic academic ramblings. Respect your reader’s intelligence. You have the opportunity and the obligation to craft information that supports users’ needs.

Challenges with reading Web text

Research shows that reading from the screen is tiring for the eyes. Some statistics even indicate that reading from a Web site is approximately 25% slower than reading print. Users do not read word for word; they scan.

More importantly, users tend to visit more than one site. If you cannot provide useful information, they will go to your “competition.” Be mindful of this and remember that burying information will cause you to lose your user’s interest.

In the following section, you will see how content must enable people to see the structure in documents, find relationships and act.

5.2 Strategies for Crafting Text

As Web writers, you have the opportunity to focus content, chunk it into digestible units, and use expectation structures to help readers anticipate the content for any given page.

You should be aware of the GPO Style Manual ([Government Printing Office Style Manual](#)). This Style Manual is the product of many years of public printing experience, and its rules are based on principles of good usage and custom in the printing trade.

The Style Manual has served Federal printers since 1894, and with this 29th edition, the traditions of printing and graphic arts are carried forward into new technologies. The Manual, supported by act of Congress, is considered the Public Printer of the U.S. Government Printing Office is authorized to determine the form and style of Government printing except in the cases of press releases, media advisories, or program announcements. For these press related items, Associated Press (AP) Style Guide should be used except for exceptions noted in the Office of Communications Guidelines – [Style Guidelines for Media Materials](#).

On some matters of Grammar and Usage, the *GPO Manual* suggests you refer to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Many writers and editors consider the *Chicago Manual of Style* to be the essential reference in publishing.

5.3 Guidelines for Ensuring Clarity

Web writing should be concise. It uses headings, lists, and subheadings to convey information. Don't worry about transitions. Web readers don't look for a smooth, essay-like structure. They do want to see how sentences and sections fit together.

Help readers envision the text.

You can help users see the sentences you are writing if you help them visualize who is doing what in a sentence. To help users see the structure in a sentence, you need to help them see characters and actions.

In much of today's writing, there is a tendency to downplay the question of who is doing what. Sometimes you want to hide the character. Other times, you are following traditional conventions or modeling the ways your supervisors learned to write.

In Web writing, however, your goal is to structure information with the user in mind. You know from experience that Web readers want text that is clear, concise, and engaging.

Make text concise.

Joseph Williams² offers the following tips for writing concise text:

- Remove confusing “characters.”
 - Do you read a sentence and wonder, “Who’s doing what?”
 - Look at your writing and identify any TO BE verbs (is, are, was, were, etc.) Can you change your sentence so your reader can more easily visualize your content?
- Delete words that mean little or nothing.
 - Avoid extra words. They will not impress others. As a builder of information, you do not have long to impress your audience. When they come to your site they have a goal in mind. Excess words will wear your reader out before they feel happy with the information they have gathered from you.
 - Work against the urge to fill space with by adding unnecessary text. Believe it when you hear the saying, “In this case, less is more.” The shorter the amount of time it takes your audience to achieve their goal, the higher their satisfaction level.
- Delete the words that repeat the meaning of other words.
 - Do you need all the words you use? For example, would you write, “Sprint quickly” or “Yell loudly?” Reduce the words to “Sprint” or “Yell.”
- Remove redundant pairs.
 - Do you have a tendency to say something is “true and accurate” when you could you simple say “true?”
 - Look at your writing for the word “and”. Do you need all your redundant pairs?

² Joseph Williams, *Style Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 2000

Guidelines for Ensuring Clarity continued

- Change negatives to affirmatives.
 - If you write in negatives, people generally turn the sentence around in their head to process it.Examples:
 - Not different = same
 - Not many = few
 - Not often = rarely
 - Not include = omit
- Replace complicated words with shorter ones.
 - This does not reduce wordiness but it can make your writing easier to understand.Examples:
 - Transmit = send
 - Prior to = before
 - Endeavor = try
 - Utilize = use
 - Ascertain = find out

6 Targeting USDA Audiences

This chapter provides the users of the style guide, such as designers, developers, content providers, and content presenters, with an overview of USDA's target user audiences.

Audience and Purpose

The USDA Web audience comprises a diverse group of internal and external audiences. Because the audience interacts with multiple USDA agencies, a cohesive on-line visual presence will greatly aid users in finding the information they need quickly and efficiently. The Style Guide will help USDA on-line content providers with a vehicle to ensure that important information is effectively communicated on-line to the audiences that need it most.

Context

USDA's Web Presence strives to be consistent with the goals of the President's Management Agenda, the eGovernment Act of 2002, and the USDA eGovernment Strategic Plan. As a result, USDA's Web Presence should incorporate consistent site architecture and clear navigational tools, which greatly enhance overall site usability. After all, USDA's Web audiences want to find the content they need and move on to using it offline. This overview will help focus content to specific user groups. It provides a brief synopsis of the knowledge gained by USDA's [Web Presence Audience Analysis](#) (completed in 2003) and examples of content that will be helpful to the target audience groups.

Targeting USDA User Groups

USDA user groups can be viewed as two distinct groups: an internal audience and an external audience. This section introduces you to each group, and identifies a sample site where you can see how one USDA agency has focused its audiences.

Internal User Groups

Internal User Groups include employees and policy makers.

Employees

USDA has over 100,000 employees. This group includes employees who are Washington-based (headquarters), state and regional offices, field offices and some foreign locations. Approximately fifty percent (50%) of USDA employees are Service Center employees and about 25% are Forest Service employees. Most USDA employees have a computer at work and/or at home. Headquarters and Service Center personnel have high-quality Internet connections. A marked disparity exists with Field, Inspection and Foreign-based personnel, who are less like to have any access.

Effective Web content for this group may include the following:

- Clear links to USDA departments/divisions,
- E-Mail Alerts, i.e. "Issues of the Day",
- Clear links to research on-line, i.e., AgWeb.com, National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service,
- On-line calendars of important agency events, and
- Links to staff training opportunities through Human Resources and the USDA Graduate School.

Targeting USDA Audiences continued

Policy Makers & Influencers

This group includes 541 members of Congress, 7,382 State legislators and USDA's own policy staff. Additional users in this group include the 295,000 employees of more than 147,000 associations and interest groups.

Some 10,000 Washington, DC-based lobbyists are also included in this highly educated, Internet savvy user group. Members of this group are overwhelmingly male, possess advanced degrees and serve professions like law, communications, public relations and journalism.

Effective Web content for this group includes the following:

- Clear links to research on-line, i.e. AgWeb.com, National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service,
- E-Mail Alerts, i.e. "Issues of the Day", and
- Links to related government research tools they are already using, such as Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute, the Library of Congress's THOMAS system, the Congressional Research Service and the Mann Library at Cornell University.

External User Groups

USDA has a variety of external user groups. As you consider the groups for your site, keep in mind the following:

Producers

It is estimated that the potential USDA audience includes some 2.2 million ranchers, agricultural, aqua-cultural and specialty crop producers, among others. The majority of this audience is male; over age 50; has at least completed high school, and fluently speak and read English.

A significant sub-set of this group is Spanish-speaking. The primary reason this group goes to USDA (traditionally in person) is to determine program eligibility and complete application processes. They are highly motivated, don't want to waste time on paperwork and thus, rely heavily on USDA staff and/or intermediaries for support.

Fifty-four percent (54%) of producers own or lease a computer and 43% of all US farms have Internet access, predominantly dial-up. Producers with sales in excess of \$100,000 had the highest prevalence of computer ownership (73%); however, small sale producers (sales less than \$10,000) still had 50% computer access rates.

Effective Web content for this group includes:

- Clear summaries of eligibility requirements for benefits,
- On-line form submission capability and/or easily down-loadable forms,
- Links to farm policy documents, i.e. the Farm Bill, and
- Links to topical information such as farm loans, marketing assistance, crop insurance and risk management, etc.

Targeting USDA Audiences continued

Agribusiness & Cooperatives

There are approximately 100,000 members of this audience group, including non-farm, agricultural-related businesses (processors, packers and cooperatives). This is highly educated group, as most hold a four-year degree and many hold graduate degrees.

The members of this audience typically support farm businesses and help them process their applications to USDA programs. The target audience is interested in agricultural research, public meeting announcements, enforcement reports and hazard analysis, among other topics. This group is on-line an average of two hours a day; these are savvy user of USDA and other on-line sources of information.

To craft clear content for this group, include the following:

- Clear summaries of eligibility requirements for benefits, grants, and partnerships,
- On-line form submission capability and/or easily down-loadable forms,
- Links to topical information like Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Plans, and
- Links to appropriate FDA sites to obtain temporary food licenses.

Low-Income Families & Individuals

USDA provides assistance to approximately 20 million low-income families and individuals. This group has low literacy rates and other language barriers. They appreciate straightforward text with content aimed at basic comprehension.

Only 12.7% of low-income families have Internet access. Over the last year, this represented a 78% increase among low-income populations, demonstrating that more and more low-income users are availing themselves of on-line capabilities at public libraries, community centers and schools. Due to share computer usage, this group is somewhat leery of using on-line forms requesting personal information; however, eligibility requirements for benefits and programmatic news are of interest.

Effective Web content for this group includes the following:

- Clear summaries of eligibility requirements for benefits,
- Information clearly segmented with descriptive titles like “seniors,” “families with kids,” and “rural families”, and
- Bilingual information, as known Spanish-speaking populations are included in this target audience group.

More than any other group, Web Presence for this audience should be marketed and backed-up with paper literature placed in libraries and community centers, so that users are aware that they can read about topics of interest off-line.

Targeting USDA Audiences continued

Children & Caregivers

There are approximately 55,000 child nutrition professionals, including food service employees and managers; nutrition services coordinators, principals and superintendents.

This target group is located in almost 15,000 school districts and serves the 30 million children receiving USDA benefits (school meals, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and other Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) sponsored programs. It should be noted that 99% of all U.S. schools have Web access and 85% of these schools use broadband technology.

Effective Web content for this group includes the following:

- Clear links to state education agencies administering school food service programs,
- Curriculum, lesson plans, recipes and other educational materials for in-school use,
- Links to children's pages,
- Downloadable posters with good nutrition messages to hang in classrooms studies have shown educators use these posters and children aged 4-18 connect more readily with USDA through these messages than on-line, and
- Links to food safety educational materials and alerts.

Rural Communities & Businesses

This is a significant target group, as some two million rural families directly and indirectly receives USDA loan aid. This group also includes almost 5,000 rural businesses and cooperatives (with four million members) and 3,000 rural utility cooperatives. Forty-two percent of rural families are using the Internet, as are 48% of rural businesses. Educational levels vary widely, similar to those in urban areas.

Effective Web content for this group includes the following:

- Information clearly segmented with descriptive titles like “rural business” “rural power/utilities” and “rural families”,
- Links to USDA agencies such as Rural Housing Service, Farm Service Agency and the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, among others, and
- Information on empowerment zones, credit guarantees and export assistance.

Researchers & Academic Community

Another significant group, the researcher and academic community encompasses professionals at more than 3,300 colleges and universities. This group has some overlap with K-12 educators (already discussed in detail above in “Children & Caregivers”).

Targeting USDA Audiences continued

Researchers and the academic community often work in scientific fields such as food science, biology, horticulture and veterinary medicine. This is a well-educated group, as many teachers and researchers at the university level hold a Ph.D. On-line use is very high, with many having access to a computer at both home and office. Corporate-based researchers share these same demographics.

Effective Web content for this group includes the following:

- Links to data from the Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Agricultural Research Service, National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service,
- Ability to choose, compare and contrast among different data elements to determine usefulness of data for their audiences,
- Ability to use on-line tools to gather and analyze data,
- Downloadable publications,
- Clear explanations of grant program eligibility, on-line submission and/or downloadable applications from the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, and
- Links to trade data and industry regulations.

Landowners & Conservationists

There are approximately 10 million members of environmental groups, private forest and other landowners. This target user group includes recreation users, ranchers, forest producers and mining industries.

Landowners are overwhelmingly middle-aged and male. While most of their children no longer live at home, they will one day inherit their land. Members of environmental groups account for 4.2 million of the 10 million users; this sub-group includes the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and many smaller groups.

Some 33% of ranchers have Internet access as compared to 87% of forest product and mining worksites.

Environmental groups are also Web savvy, using on-line information for both research and advocacy. Educational levels vary among this group, but Internet access rates suggest a high level of users with some college if not a four-year degree or higher.

Effective Web content for this group includes the following:

- Topical information on fire protection, managing public lands, managing natural resources such as coal and timber,
- Secure watershed information (one example of sensitive data),
- More E-forms, i.e., standardized unified Forest Permits, modeled after eReservations for forests and parks through Recreation.gov and/or Rural Development's on-line form system, and
- Educational curriculum on parks and land conservation, targeted to K-12 audience.

Targeting USDA Audiences continued

National & Local Media

This group includes all reporters and freelance journalists for newswires, radio, TV and related news publications. This user group is well educated (most hold at least a four-year journalism degree). Many in this group interact with USDA on-line (via Web Presence) and in person, conducting interviews with key players at USDA as needed. This group is always “on deadline” and wants credible information fast!

Effective Web presentation for this group includes the following:

- Clear Links to summaries of topic information,
- Contact information,
- Tools which will assist in sorting through data,
- E-Alerts of Breaking News/Topics of the Day @ USDA, and agency press release pages, and
- Relevant financial information pertaining to USDA’s producer groups and agricultural products. (This is especially important to financial reporters).

General Public (All Americans)

This is the most diverse user group by far. The Pew Charitable Trusts, through its focused site Pewinternet.org, reports that 58% of American Internet users—68 million adults—have visited at least one government Web site. The general public turns to USDA for information on education and fun topics, such as nutrition and recreation, as well as areas of concern, such as food safety and disasters (i.e. wildfires).

It should be noted that only 13% of all Americans are connected via broadband; many Americans still use dial-up services.

Effective Web content for this group includes:

- Clear links to summaries of topic information,
- Clear summaries of eligibility requirements for benefits,
- Information clearly segmented with descriptive titles like “seniors,” “families with kids,” and “rural families”,
- Information on National parks and other recreational activities,
- Increasing bilingual information, particularly on disasters, as Spanish-speaking populations are more heavily concentrated in Florida, Texas and California, where hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires are prevalent, and
- Nutritional information and downloadable meals plans.

Targeting USDA Audiences continued

Getting to Know Your Audiences

The more you know about Web audiences and what they do, the more you can direct content that will enable them to get their jobs done. One way of focusing on audiences is to develop personas. When you create personas, you envision real people going into your site to complete their tasks. USDA has developed personas for the above-mentioned audiences in the Web Presence Audience Analysis document. These personas can be referenced online at http://www.egov.usda.gov/intranet/WebPresence_docs.html.

Another example of personas in action is provided by USDA's Economic Research Service. As part of a Web strategy document, they identified specific personas for their site and products. You can access this document on-line at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AboutERS/OurSite/> and access PDF samples of personas.

7 Accessibility Guidelines

This section introduces Federal Section 508 Accessibility Guidelines and provides direction for incorporating accessibility and usability research as it is available on-line.

Section 508 Accessibility Guidelines

Section 508 (amendments to the Federal Rehabilitation Act) was implemented in June 2001 and requires Federal agencies to make their websites accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 contains 16 specific technical requirements for websites. These are outlined below with links to additional learning materials.

Alternative (“Alt”) Text

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(a\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(a))

Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element (like images, audio clips, buttons, etc.).

Multimedia Presentations

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(b\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(b))

Provide captions for audio/video presentations that are synchronized with the presentation so that the caption reader can associate body language with the speech.

Color and Meaning

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(c\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(c))

Color should not be the only way that page elements and controls (for example, buttons that activate new windows) are identified. Provide “alt” text or other context-sensitive information along with the color cue.

Readability and Style Sheets

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(d\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(d))

Organize documents so that they are readable without an associated style sheet.

Server-Side Image Maps

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(e\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(e))

Server-side image maps are not accessible. For each active region of a server-side image map, provide redundant text links elsewhere on the page. If possible, you should replace any server-side maps with client-side ones (see next item).

Client-Side Image Maps

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(f\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(f))

Use client-side maps instead of server-side ones, because they are accessible if you provide “alt” text that describes links within each active region of the map.

Accessibility Guidelines continued

Data Tables: Row and Column Headers

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(g\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(g))

Identify all row and column headers in data tables.

Data Tables: Data Cells

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(g\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(g))

Add extra attributes to your source code that associate the data within each cell to its corresponding row and column headers.

Frames

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(i\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(i))

Provide titles for frames to facilitate frame identification and navigation.

Screen Flicker

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(j\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(j))

Pages should not flicker, blink or flash within certain high intensity frequencies. Screen flicker can trigger seizures for some people with photosensitive epilepsy.

Text-Only Pages

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(k\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(k))

Use a text-only page, with equivalent information and/or functions, **only** if there is no other way to comply with the web accessibility requirements.

Readability and Scripts

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(l\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(l))

<http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/software-tutorial.htm>

Developers who create scripts or programs – like JavaScript, Java, etc. -- to display web page content or create an interface, must include functional text within those scripts or programs that is accessible to assistive technology devices.

Link to Plug-Ins

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(m\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(m))

For every page that contains downloadable content which can only be read using a plug-in (like a PDF that requires the Adobe Reader), include a link to the location of the plug-in. Additionally, confirm that the plug-in itself is accessible to people with disabilities before using it.

Electronic, Online Forms

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(n\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(n))

Add extra attributes to your source code that let people using assistive technology access all form information, fill in all fields, trigger all functions, and otherwise follow all directions and cues needed to complete and submit

Accessibility Guidelines continued

the form.

Navigation Links

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(o\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(o))

Add extra attributes to your source code that provide a way for people using assistive technology to skip repetitive navigation links (for example, a navigation bar that is used on every page) and jump directly to the main content areas of the page.

Timed Responses

[http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#\(p\)](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm#(p))

Sometimes, for security, pages that solicit information from customers are designed to expire within a certain timeframe if a response is not received. Add extra attributes to your source code that alert customers about the timed response and give them sufficient time to indicate if they need more time to complete and submit their information.

Categories of Disabilities

There are four main categories of disabilities:

- Mobility (difficulty operating mouse or keyboard)
- Hearing
- Vision (partial/total blindness and color-blindness)
- Cognition/Learning (reading comprehension, focusing)

The breadth of the challenge is significant. The number of people with a disability in the U.S. is estimated to be between 43 and 54 million. Of these, it is estimated that 535,000 Americans are blind and 4 million Americans are vision-challenged.

Weighing Costs and Benefits

Making sites accessible has spillover effects for all users, like those who use low-end modems and wireless Internet devices, and the aging population. Additionally, costs are not significant if you follow user-focused processes for planning. Kynn Bartlett, Director of the HTML Writer's Guild Accessible Web Authoring Resources and Education Center, states that "Making a site accessible adds about one or two percent to the cost." Removing barriers on web sites is simply a matter of good design.

Accessibility Resources

- Official Section 508 site -- <http://www.section508.gov/>
- USDA Section 508 site -- <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/irm/508/sec508.html>
- Free Online Training -- <http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=5>
- Access Board Section 508 site -- <http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm>

8 Usability Guidelines

This section touches on usability issues to consider when designing your Web site or application.

Usability

Usability is the overall measurement of the satisfaction of interactions a user has with a product or system such as a Web site or software application. A high level of satisfaction occurs when users find a Web site or application useful and usable. Users want an engaging experience.

Usability Heuristics

Quality of the user's experience on a Web site can be measured using the following usability principles, or heuristics:

- Use a simple page design
- Know your users and speak their language
- Ensure consistency throughout the site
- Design your site for efficiency and ease of use
- Provide an engaging experience
- Support the user and provide feedback
- Use a clear navigation structure

Weighing Costs and Benefits

An engaging user experience on a particular Web site or application results in increased usage of that site, improved user productivity, and reduced training, support, and development costs. Research shows that users cannot find information they seek on Web sites 60% of the time, leading to wasted time, reduced productivity, increased frustration and loss of repeat visits and money.³ The value of creating a user-focused Web site or application far outweighs its investment.

Usability Guidance

A federal site, www.usability.gov, provides broad information on usability and accessibility. The site comprises original content in addition to links to external Web sites, resources, and articles.

This site is designed to provide current and accurate information on how to make health-related information Web sites and other user interfaces more usable, accessible and useful. The site also links to a variety of quality Web sites and resources on usability, accessibility and related topics that exist in the field.

Among the specific topics are the following:

- What is usability?
- Why is usability important?
- What is the difference between usability engineering and usability testing?
- What steps are involved in usability?
- What is a usability test like?

³ Mauro New Media, Charles Mauro

Usability Guidelines continued

- Do I need a lab to do usability testing?
- How many participants are needed for a usability test?
- How much does it cost to do usability testing?
- Why do iterative usability testing?
- How can you show that usability engineering saves money?
- How can I encourage people in my organization to conduct usability engineering and testing?

9 Migration Strategy

Each USDA agency and office should create a Migration Strategy to stage the implementation of their Web sites and/or applications to full compliance with the USDA Web Presence standards. Initial guidance from the Web Presence team is for agencies or applications to implement a phased approach to comply with Web Presence standards within 18 months following approval of the standards. There is no specific approach that will work for every agency, however, agencies should begin the process of defining the most appropriate approach for achieving compliance in their Web sites and applications.

10 Appendix

Revision History

This Style Guide is a living document that will be updated and maintained by the USDA Web Presence team. All information on past revisions is described in the area below.

Version	Updated By	Date Updated	Reason for Revision
1.0			

Contact Information

Please feel free to contact any one of the following members of the Web Presence Team if you have any questions about this guide.

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Insert names and contact information here			

Resource Sites:

Technical Resources

- <http://www.internet.com/>
- <http://www.webmonkey.com>
- <http://www.webreference.com>

Usability Resources

- <http://www.usability.gov/>
- <http://www.useit.com>

Accessibility Resources

- <http://www.section508.gov/>
- <http://www.usability.gov/accessibility/index.html>
- <http://www.access-board.gov>

Recommended Software:

The following software and fonts are necessary to create and edit the text and imagery on your Web site or application.

Preferred: Adobe Photoshop Version 6+

Alternatives: Fireworks MX 2004, Microsoft Photo Editor

Fonts Required: Helvetica, Verdana