

CHAPTER 3: A CLOSER LOOK AT “BEST-IN-WEB” ORGANIZATIONS

Each participating organization provided a summary of its Web history and challenges, which, together with some general information, better explains their Web strategies and accomplishments.

This chapter presents a snapshot of each participating organization. Included are the name, homepage address (URL), the “About Us” URL, the organization’s mission statement, number of locations, number of employees, number of web pages, the annual budget (for the organization), the steps they took in developing their Web presence, and notes from the follow-up interview, which describe their Web approaches in more detail. This summary shows that there can be many strategies used in Best-in-Web organizations. These organizations illustrate the three models of centralization: unified, federated, and distributed.



Department of Housing and Urban Development

Homepage URL	www.hud.gov
"About Us" URL	www.hud.gov/about/index.cfm
Mission(s)	To increase homeownership, support community development and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination.
# of locations	81
# of employees	9,100
# of Web pages	110,000
Annual budget	\$30.5B
Steps in	From the very beginning - in 1995 – HUD Web managers focused on

Best Practices in Web Management

developing their Web site	citizens as the primary customer. HUD writes and organizes information from the customer’s point of view; and HUD reaches out to customers to get their views of the Web site, so it can be made better. Some very smart executives at HUD - both political and career - made some very good guesses in the mid-90s. The HUD Web team has always been part of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary’s office, tying it to the management of HUD as a whole. See the explanation entitled "Why It Works" at www.hud.gov/library/bookshelf15/Webwhy.cfm
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 62 ACIS score, first quarter 2004: [none] Recent Web awards: [none]

HUD Follow-up Interview –

To balance centralized authority (for Web management) with distributed activities HUD uses a “centrally decentralized” approach. Strict central policies are enforced across a distributed organization. To provide overall consistency and effectiveness in serving all Web customers, HUD content developers work within general parameters and the content goes into HUD’s single design. HUD does a quarterly sign-off on the content of the Web (in HQ by the Assistant Secretary, in field by Regional Directors); the first time the Assistant Secretary for Housing was required to certify, he had his deputies print and sign off each page before certification. In this first round, this part of HUD alone reduced the number of their pages by 1200.

HUD Deputy Secretary (in effect, the “Chief Management Officer”) has overall responsibility for content and the Chief Information Officer has control of IT infrastructure operations and maintenance. HUD has two Departmental Web managers who work for the Deputy Secretary: one who coordinates the HQ office Web managers and one who coordinates the regional Web managers. Together, the Departmental Web managers manage the Departmental Web Team and propose policies, develop procedures, and provide leadership for HUD’s entire Web management organization. Each HQ Office has a Headquarters Web manager. In the field, each of HUD’s ten regions has a Regional Web manager. All HQ and Field Web managers are trained, directed, and coordinated by the Departmental Web managers. Web content is the driver, and IT is seen as a support function for HUD overall.

The Departmental Web Team and Regional Web managers use a single technical support contractor to operate and maintain the Web infrastructure. HQ Web managers use contractors and government employees to do this work. Oversight is by HUD government staff, and most Technical support staff is contractors.

The Departmental Web Team and Regional Web managers are GS343/45 Management Analyst positions with basically the same position descriptions. HQ Web managers use a variety of titles, PD’s, and grades for these positions. These are high-grade government positions with major responsibilities. HTML coders and other Web support staff are mostly contractors, although government staff does some coding in HUD HQ.

Best Practices in Web Management

HUD's Web Team does strategic planning year-round, but the annual goals are articulated in the HUD Management Plan every October. The Web Team creates a "State of the Web" report every spring, laying out accomplishments, and explaining goals for the future; this supports the Investment Board's review of budget proposals. A HUD scoring process occurs in the summer, and Exhibit 300's for OMB are done in the fall. Funding for Web infrastructure at one time was considered overhead, but now is from project funds, forcing Web activities to compete with projects for funding.

Even before PMA came along HUD has been doing PMA-type tasks (strategic planning, aligning and measuring for effective outcomes, serving citizens, and managing effectively). HUD is involved in E-Gov initiatives. They are a major participant in the homes.gov project, which lists all properties being sold by Federal agencies, and they participate in grants.gov. Considering E-Gov in the broad sense, HUD excels. HUD is a leader in providing access to information of many agencies through their Web-based Kiosk program and HUD's "public computers." HUD also partners with hundreds of local organizations to provide Web access to housing information.

HUD, the Model of Unified Web Management

HUD's current approach to Web management in many ways is the model for a less internally diverse organization to follow. Enabled by the support of senior HUD leadership, a "centrally decentralized" team manages all content on the HUD Web site. Regional and Headquarters Web managers work together as a team. These are professionals who have the title of Web Manager; they devote their time and expertise to Web tasks and are evaluated on appropriate criteria. The purpose of the HUD Web site is to give citizens and partners information and services about homes and communities so they can solve their problems and meet their local objectives (cite Statement of purpose). The HUD Web site, therefore, includes links to non-HUD sources of information and services. Every HUD office contributes to the Web site.

The Web site has a uniform overall design with minimal graphics but with many cross-links on a page for ease of navigation. HUD seeks to present what the customers want and in terms they can easily understand. New content is written "for the Web," it is tested and approved before being posted, and it conforms to the official template. Content is validated quarterly and out-of-date material is archived.

HUD gathers feedback from their customers and partners in many ways, and they monitor their Web statistics, and use the data to improve the Web site. They also market their Web site in many easy and low-cost ways, for example by handing out bookmarks with the Web address at a table at community events where they can also ask people for their feedback about specific pages. Web managers also reach out to HUD partners, providing Web Clinics at which they teach how to set up and operate a Web presence to lay people in small organizations. They even developed the HUD Web Clinic Wizard, free software they give away that helps build Web sites. They also have a special Web site for "alumni" of these clinics where they can download copies of the clinic materials, the latest version of the Wizard software, a discussion room where they can post questions and offer lessons learned, and links to their own Web sites. This all leverages

Best Practices in Web Management

HUD expertise and builds a wider network of information sources that can help people with their housing needs.

Infrastructure that supports the Web is managed under HUD's Office of Administration, which includes the Chief Information Officer and an Executive Services Arm. The CIO manages the hardware and software, and tech support is under contract with Executive Services. This approach splits the management of Web tasks into content and infrastructure, an approach other organizations use.

The HUD Web site is one element in a larger approach to serve citizens, an approach that includes more than 100 kiosks in public places around the country and Public Computers in HUD's 81 offices that provide free Web access to anyone. HUD Web Clinics also extend this service.

Note also that HUD Web Managers are leaders in the Interagency Committee on Government Information, which is developing the new Web content standards for Federal Government use ("Recommended Policies and Guidelines for Federal Public Web sites," 2004 <http://www.cio.gov/documents/ICGI/ICGI-June9report.pdf>).

Notable Aspects of the HUD Web Site

- Its name: Homes and Communities
- Feature buttons
 - Local Information
 - En Espanol (link to Spanish version of virtually every page; a parallel Web site with headers, footers, and sidebars all in Spanish and full navigation)
 - Print version
 - Email this to a friend
- Text only mode
- Let's Talk (interactive online communication with a HUD representative)
- Resources (a library of reference documents filed by subject, including Web Management and Good Stories)
- Pages dated
- Channels for kids, students, teachers, and media
- Resources for "Alumni" of HUD Web Clinics

Best Practices in Web Management



Department of the Treasury

Homepage URL	www.treas.gov
"About Us" URL	www.treas.gov/education/duties/index.html
Mission(s)	To promote the conditions for prosperity and stability in the United States and encourage prosperity and stability in the rest of the world.
# of locations	
# of employees	116,000
# of web pages	28,500
Annual budget	\$11.2B
Steps in developing their Web site	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involved upper management in major web activities. 2. Kept management aware of problems and successes. 3. Encouraged a sense of ownership of the agency Web site by content providers and web staff. 4. Involved stakeholders in redesign activities. 5. Developed and enforced web content standards. 6. Measured customer satisfaction and adjusted to changing customer needs.
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 64 ACIS score, first quarter 2004: 64 Recent Web awards: E-Gov 2003

Treasury Follow-up Interview

Web management at the Department of the Treasury occurs at 2 major levels, at the Bureaus and at the Department. Treasury’s eleven Bureaus are diverse organizations that manage their own Web sites. (IRS stands out as an award-winning Web organization that got very high scores from ACIS and the Brown University study.) While Treasury Bureaus have authority over their own Internet activities, they are required to have a link to www.treas.gov on their home pages and observe other Treasury or OMB regulations.)

The Web Manager oversees a Department-level Internet activity that showcases Departmental offices and creates a Department “Web front door” to the Treasury

Best Practices in Web Management

Bureaus. He manages a contract staff of 5 who handle daily content updates, new site creation, special projects and other web activities. The management of the physical infrastructure for www.treas.gov is outsourced and centralized. Treasury also hosts activities for some Bureaus who have left the department for Homeland Security. This model handles current Web activities. Treasury has a Web Working Group comprising members from across all its bureaus.

Management of intranet and extranets is different from management of their Internet activities. The Treasury Intranet site is managed by another person.

Strategic planning begins with ideas. Throughout the year Treasury receives requests for new services on www.treas.gov and implements as many as time and resources allow.

The Presidents Management Agenda and the E-Government Act of 2002 have influenced Treasury, and will do more in the coming months. Treasury staff has been involved in the Interagency Committee on Government Information, which drafted the new proposed Web standards, which OMB is expected to adopt by year's end. The Treasury Department's Web site already complies with these proposed standards for the most part, but the new standards will change some things on their Web presence.

Notable Aspects of the Department of the Treasury Web Site

- Links for buyers and collections, including seized property auctions
- Links to major IRS web service sites
- Webcasts (new or previous events back to September 2002)
- Pages for researchers, students, and teachers
- Links to buying Savings Bonds and other Treasury securities online 24 X 7
- Email subscription services for 20 kinds of information
- History of the Treasury
- Spanish pages for selected content

Best Practices in Web Management



Environmental Protection Agency

Homepage URL	www.epa.gov
"About Us" URL	www.epa.gov/epahome/aboutepa.htm
Mission(s)	The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and the environment. Since 1970, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people. View the Agency's complete strategic plan , annual report , and policy resources .
# of locations	>45
# of employees	18,000
# of web pages	539,000
Annual budget	\$7.6B
Steps in developing their Web site	EPA coordinated a Web workgroup to network practitioners with one another. A "Web guide" was developed to inform practitioners of best practices, policies, and procedures. Early on, in the mid-1990's EPA realized the need to establish a management structure to support the Web. Senior leadership took a direct interest in the Web as "the face of the Agency" and provided input and direction in how it should evolve. EPA sought the advice and support of experts in the field (e.g. Jakob Neilson, Gerry McGovern, Lisa Welchman, and Eric Schaeffer). EPA uses librarians to organize the Web content and to assess the effectiveness of that structure over time.
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 50 ACIS score, first quarter 2004: [none] Recent Web awards: Leadership in E-Gov Transformation 2003

EPA Follow-up Interview

EPA is currently figuring out the best way to balance centralized Web authority with the distributed activities of the organization. EPA used to "let a million flowers grow." This has changed, and now responsibility and authority is being shared between Office of Environmental Information (OEI) (under the CIO) and Office of Public Affairs (OPA) (under the Administrator). An MOU exists between OEI and OPA for Web activities. OEI does the technical work, and OPA controls the content. EPA now has specific design

Best Practices in Web Management

specs and policies, as well as procedures to better manage their Web. An EPA Web Governance Task Force recently drafted Web Governance Principles in which decentralization issues are discussed; following the OEI/OPA sharing model, each program and region will have one person on each side of the organization to manage their Web activities. EPA appears to be starting a new approach, where previously informal responsibilities are being formally delegated to these specific people.

EPA has a Web-savvy Administrator and CIO who understand the value and importance of the Web. The organizational structure seems to work well (OEI & OPA); it is supplemented by a distributed network of about 400 people who participate in the EPA Web Workgroup, which meets twice each year and provides advice through a Steering Committee. This workgroup generated a paper "How to improve the EPA Web site," which recommended instituting a template. This was a very well received, helpful suggestion. EPA also has a "WebOwner" listserv that is used for exchange of info and ideas inside the organization. OPA also has a network of communications employees, and they, too, participate in Web-related activities.

EPA has a very centralized Web infrastructure; their National Computing Center is in Research Triangle Park, NC, and they have offsite backup hardware in a different location. EPA policy is that all content needs to be on EPA servers unless a waiver is approved. Infrastructure is operated and maintained by contract staff.

Staff varies across the agency. Some programs have government staff doing Web tasks, but many IT functions are successfully handled by contractors. The high level government staff still can change production Web pages in case of emergency. OEI and OPA government staff are high-level managers. EPA programs allow interested and able government staff to participate in Web activities. No formal career ladders exist for Web positions, but the EPA Web Work Group has raised this issue. They say Web activities need better visibility for recognition, too.

Intranet work is not as centralized as Internet activities. The EPA central intranet (EPA@Work, run by OEI) is relatively recent, and is not accessed as much in some regions because each region has their own intranet site. EPA is working to make the official intranet better and universally accepted. Internet is a higher profile Web activity, and is therefore managed more formally. Extranets are typically set up with program partners and managed by the individual programs. Because there is an increased interest in portal technology, the agency is creating a portal infrastructure to address a possible proliferation of portals.

Internet activities are included in many parts of the annual budget and plan. Much Web-content-related activity is in the programs, and is not easily split from other program work. OEI may be the clearest part of EPA's Web budget picture. The Web is incorporated into Enterprise Architecture and the Capital Planning Investment Process (part of the Exhibit 300 process).

EPA experienced little or no change as a result of the PMA and E-Gov. EPA already was citizen-centered and results-oriented. It is possible that more high-level executives are

Best Practices in Web Management

now interested in EPA's Web activities because of EPA's involvement in E-Gov initiatives. CIO staff tracks EPA's participation in E-Gov activities.

Notable Aspects of the EPA Web Site

- Help Us Improve (a button to gather feedback)
- Feature buttons
 - o Where You Live (info by place name or zip code)
 - o Recursos en español
 - o Print Version
 - o Recent Additions
- Navigation path shown near top of every page
- Pages dated at the bottom
- Pages for kids, students, teachers
- Newsroom for the media
- Subscribe to EPA news updates
- Test Your Enviro-Q (a quiz on environmental facts)
- Link to Best Workplace for Commuters (resources to encourage carpooling and public transportation, in cooperation with Department of Transportation)



Federal Aviation Administration

Homepage URL	www.faa.gov
"About Us" URL	www.faa.gov/aboutfaa/index.cfm
Mission(s)	To provide a safe, secure, and efficient global aerospace system that contributes to national security and the promotion of US aerospace safety. As the leading authority in the international aerospace community, FAA is responsive to the dynamic nature of customer needs, economic conditions, and environmental concerns.
# of locations	FAA has about 600 facilities
# of employees	48,600
# of Web pages	Estimated FAA has over 1 million Web pages
Annual budget	\$13.8B
Steps in	Executive management support. Establishment of a centralized Web

Best Practices in Web Management

developing their Web site	management office and Web Manager. Active Web Council representing FAA organizations advise Web manager and help implement Web policies and standards.
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: [none] ACIS score, first quarter 2004: 67 Recent Web awards: E-Gov 2003

FAA Follow-up Interview

FAA is moving away from a Web approach that allows much creativity and flexibility toward strict standards for content, page design, and navigation. Because they are not starting this policy on a brand new Web site, they still have many styles and formats in their content, and the relatively new Web manager is prioritizing the tasks. For example, improvements to Internet content are the top priority; improvements to intranet content will follow. The Web manager is hoping that recognition of the improvements on the public Web site will influence Web staff to make similar progress on FAA's intranet. The Web Council, who previously managed Web tasks and issues, recommended FAA hire a full-time Web manager, which FAA did in mid-2003. This group comprises representatives from two staff offices and five lines of business, and is chaired by the Web manager; it will be expanded to represent every FAA Office and will be governed by a Steering Committee. Reps must be government staff, not contractors.

The FAA Web Management function is organizationally part of the Office of Public Affairs. The Web manager has access to top management. The Web manager believes the organizational placement of the Web management function is a key factors in its effectiveness - - it needs to be high enough in an organization to influence top management to consider it an important function and an agency priority. The Web management structure needs to be integrated into the Agency organizational so Web decisions are supported and can be implemented. In the past, informal channels were used to extend and support the Web manager's influence. Part of the difficulty is that FAA Web activities currently are decentralized; the Web manager, who still is relatively new to this job, is establishing a more centralized governance structure for web management that will establish responsibility and accountability for Agency Web activities.

FAA is working to centralize their Web infrastructure in two or three hosting facilities. FAA has several data centers. The CIO and Web manager are leading an Agency initiative to optimize and consolidate internal data centers. Senior Web and IT managers are FAA staff, and designers and server operators are contractors. Content creators are FAA staff.

As part of the efforts to consolidate Web hosting, FAA is moving toward reducing the number of people involved in the technical aspects of Web development and making sure that individuals performing that work have the required skills. Currently, some Web development functions are done by staff who are not Web development professionals. Often they perform this work as part of their other direct mission related duties.

Best Practices in Web Management

To maintain easy navigation as the Web site evolves, FAA limits the number of links on each page. Using feedback from customers, they organize all their content around the 20 topics customers want most. Customer analysis identified the need for a specific section for pilots, the top visitor group to the FAA web.

FAA's Web manager oversees Internet and intranet. Priority has generally been to address Internet needs first, but intranet needs now are probably more important. (Limited staff prevents all tasks from being addressed.)

Strategic Web planning is accomplished as part of FAA's annual budget process. Web activities are in the programs, not as separate activities with their own budget.

FAA benefits from its participation in the American Customer Satisfaction Index program. Before the recent launch of Web site improvements, FAA received their first ACIS scores – one of the lowest scores among federal agencies. The most recent ACIS scores earned FAA the distinction as the most improved Web site over the past nine months.

Notable Aspects of the FAA Web Site

- Automated (quick and good!) responses to common questions
- Subscription for airport status info to be sent to your phone, cell phone, pager, email, PDA, or wireless device
- Link to near-real-time airport status info
- Airline in-time performance and causes of delays
- National Wildlife Strike database
- Lots of information for passengers
- Most improved, June 2004, according to American Customer Satisfaction Index
- Link to NOAA weather information



General Services Administration

Homepage URL	www.gsa.gov
"About Us" URL	www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/home.do?tabId=6
Mission(s)	To secure the buildings, products, services, technology, and other workplace essentials federal agencies need by offering, at best value, superior workplaces, expert solutions, acquisition services and management policies.

Best Practices in Web Management

# of locations	11
# of employees	12,700
# of web pages	94,200
Annual budget	\$500M
Steps in developing their Web site	<p>Began by contracting with a superb Web design consultant who remediated and then rebuilt the entire GSA Web site; is providing significant ongoing refinements and enhancements to the site; is working with GSA to consolidate all relevant material on the portal. Web management at GSA supports all the best practices discussed in this questionnaire, but Web managers are midway through the process of getting agency-wide buy-in, hence there may be some disparities in these answers. GSA has had excellent support in some areas, and less in others, particularly in regional offices.</p> <p>GSA is about mid-way through the process to revamp the Web presence. This task began with the portal and that work is ongoing. GSA has taken on the larger task of GSA's total web presence and is bringing as much content onto the portal as is feasible.</p>
Criteria for selection to this study	<p>Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 56</p> <p>ACIS score, first quarter 2004: 67</p> <p>Recent Web awards: E-Gov 2003</p>

GSA Follow-up Interview

Web management at GSA is currently in the middle of a redesign of the GSA Web site. Initial launch of this design was late 2003, and it featured services and staff offices. Additional content from regional offices is in process.

This GSA Web site design project follows some that have been less successful. GSA found that when the Web site didn't work well, Web tasks went underground, and the situation soon became chaotic. This has led GSA to create a very centralized management structure to handle Web activities. This is a challenge now as the centralized Web manager works with regional GSA staff to set up a structure that meets the needs of the regions. Three regions have prototyped modifications to the GSA template, which will be reviewed by the Web Council, who will decide which one will be adopted for the regional content. Some Offices in GSA are more decentralized than others, and pulling them together around a uniform Web presence is difficult and takes time and diplomacy. Regional and other decentralized staff needs to be involved in making the change to be able to take some ownership. Previous experience has demonstrated that a dictatorial approach to Web management does not work, and neither does managing the Web site by committee, where there is no clear leadership or authority.

Best Practices in Web Management

GSA's Administrator makes the Web a priority, but not to the point of intervening to resolve issues. (That is the Web manager's job.) With full support from the Administrator, the Web manager has three main groups working for her: Headquarters government staff, contractors, and the Web Council, which is distributed across several locations. The Web manager exerts central control, but works as collaboratively as possible to gather input for all decisions. Flexibility is also important as decisions play out so as to avoid or minimize negative consequences. GSA's Web manager works in the Office of Citizen Services and Communications, which also oversees FirstGov and USA Services, which provides Federal agencies the tools to more easily respond to citizen requests for services and information. Broader participation in Web activities across the regions is being accomplished with the help of a Web Council made up of representatives of each region. In addition, a small group of "Executive Editors" manage the content from their offices and regions; these are the few who are authorized to post new content. Authority for final approval of new content rests with the Web manager.

Infrastructure and Web operations are managed by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), working in concert with the Web manager. In the OCIO, government staff manages in-house contract staff, while also doing some hands-on work. The infrastructure is centralized at two sites in D.C., which are redundant systems for load-balancing. GSA also has an off-site hot backup system that is planned to become a third redundant load-balancing system.

GSA has recently created a "roles and responsibilities" document to help their senior managers better understand the level of work involved in Web tasks. While not trying to supplant position descriptions, this has helped managers better understand staffing needs. Another recent development in this area is a recommendation from the Inspector General that GSA create a Web presence policy, which would include information on editorial requirements.

Intranet has been handled very differently from Internet. The intranet was initially created in house by one person, and it has not been maintained very well over the years. It was within the Office of Communications, as were Internet tasks, but was not as high a priority as Internet. This is now changing, and the designer of GSA's Internet will also work on intranet design, and the Web manager will have more responsibility for intranet. Extranet sites, on the other hand, are not part of her responsibility.

Strategic planning has been informal in this area in recent years. OCIO handles the Exhibit 300, as the editorial tasks for Web content management are seen as tiny compared to the other operational tasks handled in OCIO. With "so much to be done," the Web manager is always doing strategic planning. "Web management is never done; what is created needs to be operated, maintained, and eventually upgraded." GSA executives understand the ongoing commitment (and multi-year budgets) needed for their organization's Web site.

Web management at GSA has not been influenced much by the President's Management Agenda; they already were customer-centered and results-oriented. GSA participates in the quarterly performance reviews for the PMA scorecard. E-Gov may perhaps be a bigger influence, as GSA has leading roles in a few E-Gov initiatives, as well as

Best Practices in Web Management

FirstGov, but these activities do not affect the GSA Web site and its management directly.

Notable Aspects of the GSA Web Site

- Navigation note on each page
- Skip Navigation function
- Pages dated at the bottom
- Customize Your Visit and MyGSA
- Find a GSA organization or region
- Site Map grouped into categories
- Channels for Government, Business, and Citizen
- Historic Federal Buildings database

Best Practices in Web Management



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Homepage URL	www.nasa.gov/home/index.html
"About Us" URL	www.nasa.gov/about/highlights/index.html
Mission(s)	To understand and protect our home planet; to explore the universe and search for life; to inspire the next generation of explorers.
# of locations	11
# of employees	18,900
# of web pages	1,500,000
Annual budget	\$15.4B
Steps in developing their Web site	The NASA Portal evolved from the old NASA Home Page, which was run by the Office of Public Affairs from 1994-2003. The old page was not keeping up with the development of the Internet and growing public expectations. The Portal has a substantially larger budget and staff, and is run as a partnership by the offices of Public Affairs, Education, and the Chief Information Officer. NASA has applied a decade's worth of lessons learned across NASA to the development and ongoing production of the portal, recognizing that no single person or organization has a monopoly on knowledge. NASA has also incorporated a decade's worth of customer feedback into the portal's design and architecture.
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 44 ACIS score, first quarter 2004: 78 Recent Web awards: Webby 2003, Webby 2002

NASA Follow-up Interview

NASA is developing a “federated” Web infrastructure, consolidating Web content and resources where it makes sense to do so, but leaving distributed content and resources intact where appropriate. Some flexibility is expected there, based on the needs of any particular site’s customer(s), and details are not yet defined. Most public Web servers will be off NASA networks in a hosted environment. This will simplify security issues, help monitor compliance to Federal requirements, provide more flexibility to respond to demand, and provide for growth. NASA is moving toward a similar federated publishing process for managing content intended for public customers, where content owners are

Best Practices in Web Management

responsible for the quality of their content, and public is directed toward www.nasa.gov as the main entry into NASA's web resources. The portal team has developed a style guide and templates to present content consistently, allowing flexibility when the needs of a particular customer (for example, teachers or grant-seekers) justify it.

NASA has a split between the management of content and infrastructure. Content is managed by the Media Services Division in the Office of Public Affairs. Infrastructure is managed under the Associate Chief Technology Officer in the NASA CIO Office. Ad hoc web managers are a grassroots group in NASA who discuss and work on Web activities and provide recommendations informally to NASA's managers.

NASA operates in 10 field centers and a few other sites. The IT infrastructure is distributed across these sites, and the new portal is hosted by a commercial Web hosting company.

NASA's portal staff is a hybrid of education and science outreach experts, public affairs personnel and technical staff. A few of the people are full-time on the portal, but many have other duties. The portal's Editorial Board edits new Web content and develops standards for content and operations. An ad hoc group of Web managers has helped the agency meet various federal requirements including Section 508 tasks; this group may be formalized in the future.

The portal's technical staff consists mostly of vendors. The integrator and prime contractor is NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, with eTouch Systems of California as the prime subcontractor, which also developed the content management system. ETouch shares with JPL overall responsibility for the entire project, including the CMS, search, design and support for the editorial board. Hosting has been subcontracted to Sprint and caching services to Speedera networks (Hardy, 2003).

NASA is in the process of developing an intranet, which will be managed by the Chief Information Officer, with content provided from a variety of sources using a web services model. This intranet portal will host links to content and tools needed by NASA employees and contractors. A few small extranets, managed at the local level, also fall under the CIO.

Strategic planning is accomplished in the Exhibit 300 process, but Web activities appear only as part of other projects. Before 2003 the Web budget was funded at a low level, but new management brought new ideas, a new strategic planning approach, linking to enterprise architecture and strategic communication, which has attracted more funding for Web activities.

Notable Aspects of the NASA Web Site

- Ability to handle VERY high traffic volume
- Low bandwidth option (for users on modems)
- MyNASA
- Very new content to keep up with new data received and important news events

Best Practices in Web Management

- Very current NASA organization chart
- Visiting NASA (directions and other info)
- Dazzling imagery and good explanations (perhaps to excess)
- Channels for kids, students, teachers, and media
- En espanol



National Weather Service

Homepage URL	www.nws.gov
"About Us" URL	www.nws.noaa.gov/pa/aboutnws.html
Mission(s)	To provide weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas, for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national information database and infrastructure which can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community.
# of locations	170
# of employees	4,900
# of web pages	91,700
Annual budget	\$825M
Steps in developing their Web site	NWS took a big step when Executive management forced a redesign to a standard look and feel three years ago. NWS employees are very dedicated to the mission of saving life and property. This leads to a level of effort at the grassroots level to provide the best information possible on NWS Web sites for use by the local customer.
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: [none] ACIS score, first quarter 2004: [none] Recent Web awards: Webby 2003, Webby 2002

NWS Follow-up Interview

The Web presence is a very sensitive issue at the NWS. Powerful Public sector businesses are averse to any high profile Web presence, so NWS seeks to serve the public

Best Practices in Web Management

on the Web but keep a low profile and avoid conflict. Few strict Web policies exist in NWS, so they use those of their parent organizations, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of Commerce. NWS had a Web guidelines document, but it became outdated faster than they could keep it up. One NWS strength is the template for new Web pages that is well-accepted by content providers. Using the template, content providers can comply with all guidelines and standards without needing to know them.

The NWS Web Manager is in the Office of the CIO. NWS has a matrix type of organization, where people report up in a chain of command, but may work for others on projects totally outside their chain of command. The NWS Web manager has limited authority, but has influence, and can work with supervisors across the agency to “try” to enforce and control; informal communication across the agency helps this. Integrated working teams cross the stovepipes to coordinate and accomplish tasks.

NWS has a widely distributed Web infrastructure, and the Web manager believes it would be easier to manage if it were more centralized. NWS does no outsourcing. Many NWS scientists have good Web skills and enjoy participating in Web activities, thereby accomplishing Web tasks and enabling NWS to minimize full-time Web staff.

NWS has a very small Web staff (less than ten) mostly at headquarters level. About 70 or 80 other people are heavily involved in daily IT management, which includes Web operations. The approximately 300 or 400 content providers do mostly scientific work, but use a small percentage of their time to contribute Web content. A large number of NWS field people are involved in Web work and NWS experiences a 15 to 20 percent turnover in this staff every year. This creates a challenge in maintaining their Web content.

Intranet operations are very different. NWS has no complete intranet for all of NWS, although some offices and regions have their own. NWS has no centralized IT or HR operations. The Web Manager oversees only Internet work.

Because Web activities are handled informally in NWS, there is little mention of Web activities in the agency’s annual planning process.

PMA and E-Gov have not affected NWS very much. They push their info out via the Web site; very little data comes back in. No data is received about individuals, so they have no Privacy Act concerns. The former CIO had started them working on customer relationship management(CRM), but the new CIO has not addressed this yet. NWS is experimenting with this technology, but is unsure if this will continue to be a priority. E-Gov has brought involvement in the Disaster Management program, which is affecting how NWS disseminates their information.

Notable Aspects of the NWS Web Site

- Maps of current weather watches, warnings, statements, and advisories
- Headline Archive
- NWS Weather Education

Best Practices in Web Management

- Navigation note on each page
- Pages dated at the bottom
- NWS local weather forecasts (by city or zip code)
- Past weather events
- Glossary



Social Security Administration

Homepage URL	www.ssa.gov
"About Us" URL	www.ssa.gov/agency-info.htm
Mission(s)	To advance the economic security of the nation's people through compassionate and vigilant leadership in shaping and managing America's Social Security programs.
# of locations	1270
# of employees	65,300
# of web pages	62,400
Annual budget	\$7.2B
Steps in developing their Web site	[Information was provided for this study but not for publication]
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 69 ACIS score, first quarter 2004: 76 Recent Web awards:

SSA Follow-up Interview

[Information was provided for this study but not for publication]

Notable Aspects of the SSA Web Site

- Feature buttons, including
 - Big Text
 - Spanish

Best Practices in Web Management

- Translator to convert any page into 15 languages
- Add this page to your favorites
- Email this page to a friend
- ENews, electronic newsletter available via free subscription
- Most popular baby names for every year
- Compliments/Suggestions/Complaints
- Congressional testimony by SSA officials
- Glossary of SSA terms
- History of SSA
- Kid's Pages
- SSA Office Locator (by zip code)
- Password Services
- Press Releases
- SSA Organizational Descriptions



United States Postal Service

Homepage URL	www.usps.com
"About Us" URL	www.usps.com/about/
Mission(s)	Universal access, universal service: [to provide] the same high level of service for every American regardless of geographic location. The Postal Service delivers everywhere, every day to everyone
# of locations	Approximately 37,000
# of employees	Approximately 780,300
# of web pages	Approximately 250,000
Annual budget	\$65B
Steps in developing their Web site	Developed a process around evolution of site design: 1. Developed effective measurement practices and methodologies. 2. Obtained backing and support from senior VP/CMO of the Marketing organization. 3. Managed content effectively. 4. Made small changes over time and measured their success.
Criteria for selection to	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 68

Best Practices in Web Management

this study	ACIS score, first quarter 2004: [none] Recent Web awards: E-Gov 2003
------------	---

USPS Follow-up Interview

The U.S. Postal Service operates as part government and part business. Web operations follow this model: the government provides the senior management and contractors comprise the workforce. USPS has moved toward strict standards for look and navigation. The Web site is operated by in-house content managers.

USPS Web infrastructure is centralized and hosted in Eagan, MN; a backup site exists in a different location. Outsourcing for staff is seen as an effective way to manage the infrastructure, but the hardware belongs to the Postal Service.

Management of intranet and extranet activities differ from USPS management of their Internet Web site. The intranet and extranets are managed by the IT organization, whereas the Internet is managed by the Marketing organization. The IT organization has a different methodology, direction, and process for managing the intranet and extranets.

USPS Web managers have trouble with their approach to the budget process. Web activities are not their own line items, but are part of every program's budget. This creates difficulties in planning and operating, since funding is uncertain.

PMA and E-Gov have not yet had much effect on USPS Web activities. USPS sticks to its core activity: delivering the mail. They had already begun Web-enabling postal functions based on the benefit to customers, which responds to goals of the PMA. USPS is very results oriented, with an internal performance measurement process very important and unique to them. USPS also participates in the reviews for the PMA scorecard.

Notable Aspects of the USPS Web Site

- Quick links for online services:
 - Find a zip code
 - Locate a post office
 - Track and confirm
 - Calculate postage
 - Change address
 - Find a form
 - Print a Shipping Label
 - Buy stamps
 - Purchase insurance
 - Request carrier pickup
 - Hold your mail while on vacation
- Lance Armstrong link to support a cure for cancer

Best Practices in Web Management



Homepage URL	www.firstgov.gov
"About Us" URL	firstgov.gov/About.shtml
Mission(s)	The primary mission of FirstGov is to serve the public and help them find the government information and services they need. FirstGov.gov is the official Web portal to all U.S. government on the Internet. It provides easy, secure access to millions of pages of reliable government information and services never before available from a single location.
# of locations	1
# of employees	FirstGov operates with a core staff of 15, including a Director of operations, Content Managers and IT Specialists. FirstGov receives additional support from the Federal Citizen Information Center, the Office of E-Gov solutions, and through a Web hosting contract with AT&T.
# of Web pages	477
Annual budget	\$9M (includes infrastructure and day-to-day operations)
Steps in developing their Web site	The FirstGov initiative was developed in several distinct stages. The earliest stage, sponsored by a White House Working Group during 1997 and 1998, was the creation of the U.S. NonProfit Gateway, a Web site that linked nonprofit organizations to resources throughout the Federal Government. To respond to demand for cross-agency Web services, the General Services Administration (GSA) agreed to develop and test a prototype system, with the working name WebGov, and to explore how to sustain the services. In the Spring of 2000, entrepreneur Eric Brewer offered to donate a powerful search engine to search all government sites. The President accepted the gift and announced FirstGov would be developed and launched in 90 days. GSA subsequently recruited the President's Management Council and the CIO Council to sponsor the initiative financially and to provide members to an interagency FirstGov Board. A small interagency team of U.S. government officials led by GSA was assembled to launch and implement FirstGov. FirstGov.gov was launched in September of 2000, 90 days after the President's announcement.
Criteria for selection to this study	Brown University, Center for Public Policy 2003 Web evaluation score: 84 ACSI score, first quarter 2004: 72 Recent Web awards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Innovations in American Government Award, 2003;

Best Practices in Web Management

	Ranked #1 in Web-Quality & E-Government Readiness - United Nations "World Public Sector Report 2003 - E-Government at the Crossroads"; Cited as "Model of Collaboration" by Center for Technology in Government at University at Albany, SUNY, 2004; PC Magazine's Top 100 Sites, 2004; See other awards: http://www.firstgov.gov/About/Awards.shtml
--	--

FirstGov Follow-up Interview

[NOTE: Because FirstGov is different from the other organizations in the study, the interview questions were different from those to the other respondents.]

FirstGov uses many approaches to partnering in its Web activities:

1. FirstGov has a network of content managers across government who help ensure their links are relevant and up-to-date. FirstGov performs a daily link check and address any problems discovered.
2. FirstGov has worked with experts to develop and implement a good information architecture and taxonomy.
3. FirstGov actively seeks feedback from many sources and uses it for Benchmarking and to improve the site: ACSI, usability studies, Federal Content Managers meetings and listserv, and other sources. To better meet customer information needs, they work closely with other "channels" within the Federal Citizen Information Center – phone, email, and publications – to stay informed about what citizens need across government.
4. FirstGov works with other GSA staff in the Office of Intergovernmental Solutions to collaborate with state and local governments. This helps ensure that FirstGov meets their needs for government information and that the public has easy access to state and local government information and services on FirstGov.
5. FirstGov also communicates with government staff in other countries, to more effectively benchmark FirstGov with international Web sites, such as government Web portals for Canada, Australia, and the UK.

FirstGov has a centralized content review staff located at GSA; there is no field staff. Technical staff is literally down the hall, but "connected" (GSA's Office of E-Gov Solutions). FirstGov has a centralized infrastructure, with contingency sites in other locations (hosted by ATT). FirstGov uses a commercial Portal software package, and they have recently implemented automated content management software.

To maintain easy navigation as the Web site evolves, FirstGov keeps the "big buckets" in mind: Subject/Topic, Audience Channels, Location (one that they are looking to expand), and Organization (a government directory). The topics change based on customer feedback. FirstGov has won media attention for their Web design (including Frank, 2003).

There is no overall Federal intranet, but FirstGov does have a Federal Government user channel. FirstGov is an exclusively Internet operation.

Best Practices in Web Management

Strategic planning revolves around the budget cycle. They conduct quarterly reviews of strategic plans, goals, and measures. Web activities appear in several parts of the budget, including Federal Citizen Services and as part of overhead (like phones). FirstGov also has an internal improvement process that brings ideas and planning together. Networking with Canada and other countries and reviewing best practices also adds to the strategic planning process.

Performance measures are used to evaluate the success of this program. Positive media recognition, of course, and high-profile awards are an important measure of this high visibility program. The most important performance measures include:

- Marketing effectiveness (measured through the number of site visitors)
- Content based on customers' needs
- Citizen's ability to quickly locate information and services (measured through usability testing and customer feedback)
- Ability to successfully search (measured through Weblog analysis, customer surveys, feedback, etc.)
- Comprehensive, accurate, official, and timely information
- Responsiveness to customers' needs (respond to emails within 2 business days)
- Site availability and performance 24 X 7
- Customer satisfaction (measured through ACSI online survey)
- Reputation and third party validation
- Accessible to a diverse range of customers
- Compliant with Federal Web standards and policies

GSA, the host organization for FirstGov, has an internal annual performance review process.

Notable Aspects of the FirstGov Web Site

- Breadth of content -- easy access, one-stop shop for hundreds of official, authoritative government services and information sources
- Searches large selection of U.S. government information
- Channels for Citizens, Business and Nonprofits, Federal Employees, and Government-to-Government
- Links "Especially for Specific Audiences"
- Espanol and other languages
- Contact your government by email, phone, and in person
- Suggest a Link
- Locate In-Person Services Near You
- FirstGov Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Consumer Help
- Citizen Top Requests and Frequently Asked Questions
- Intergovernmental Collaboration

History of FirstGov

Best Practices in Web Management

The FirstGov initiative was developed in several distinct stages, each of which responded to an increasingly more ambitious set of user requirements. The earliest stage, sponsored by a White House Working Group during 1997-98, was the creation of the U.S. NonProfit Gateway, a Web site that linked nonprofit organizations to resources throughout the Federal Government, particularly information about grants. Once the site was launched and running, individual clusters within the larger nonprofit community quickly began requesting sub-gateways of their own – and in some cases separate, full-scale gateways (such as for environment, health, seniors, or communities). The organizers were faced with demand for at least a few hundred separate cross-agency Web services.

In order to respond, they needed to re-conceptualize and to develop a comprehensive government-wide strategy for gauging public demand, identifying appropriate Federal resources, and tailoring new Federal Web sites to match the unique needs of specific user groups and even individual citizens. In 1998, the General Services Administration (GSA) agreed to develop and test a prototype system, with the working name WebGov, and to explore how to sustain the services. In the spring of 2000, entrepreneur Eric Brewer offered to donate a powerful search engine to search all government sites. The President accepted the gift and announced FirstGov would be developed and launched in 90 days. GSA subsequently recruited the President's Management Council and the CIO Council to sponsor the initiative financially and to provide members to an interagency FirstGov Board. A small interagency team of U.S. Government officials led by GSA was assembled to launch and implement FirstGov. FirstGov.gov was launched in September of 2000, 90 days after the President's announcement.

In July 2002, GSA created the Office of Citizen Services and Communications to bring together the various channels that serve the public – Web site, telephone, publications and traditional media. FirstGov became part of the Federal Citizen Information Center, which also manages the National Contact Center (1-800-FED-INFO) and the consumer publication center in Pueblo, Colorado (<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov>). FirstGov Web site operations are directed by Beverly Godwin.