

**P O L I C Y   N O T I C E****To:** All Departments**No.:** 07-02**Issued:** January 23, 2007**Expires:** January 19, 2008**From:** eServices Director**Subject:** Web Site Development Guidelines**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish web site development expectations for all agencies, departments, boards, and commissions within the Executive Branch of the State of California. All State of California web sites should maintain a common look and feel and a common navigational framework. The goal of this policy is to allow the public, businesses, and visitors to easily access all information on any State developed web site.

**II. POLICY STATEMENT**

All State of California web sites subject to this policy will present a common look-and-feel that clearly indicates to visitors that they are accessing an official State of California web site. All sites will conform to design, usability, and accessibility standards within the policy and associated resources. To assist agencies, in this effort, a Webmaster's Toolbox "WebTools" has been created, and may be viewed at [www.webtools.ca.gov](http://www.webtools.ca.gov).

**III. SCOPE**

This policy is intended for all web authors, web application developers, content contributors, and contractors creating or maintaining web pages for the Executive Branch of the State of California.

**IV. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. **eServices Office** – Responsible for developing, publishing, and maintaining web policies, standards, and guidelines. Provides assistance to State agencies in complying with the standards.

- B. **Chief Information Officer (CIO)** – Directs the formulation of policies, guidelines, and standards.
- C. **Department of Technology Services** – Responsible for the procurement of information technology and related goods and services for the State portal.
- D. **Portal Governing Board** – Approves policies, standards, and guidelines recommended by the Chief Information Officer for use by State agencies within the Executive Branch.
- E. **State Agencies** – Responsible for ensuring that web pages adhere to the template requirements.

## V. POLICY

Effective November 1, 2007, all California departments and agencies reporting to the Governor are requested to comply with ca.gov design, accessibility, and usability standards and best practices. The standards below bring together a wide array of research and studies, including recommendations made by the State CIO; the Information Organization, Usability, Content and Currency, and Accessibility Working Group (IOUCA); and various interagency committees and boards. To implement the ca.gov standards, departments and agencies must adhere to the following:

### A. Design

The new CA.GOV design has been created following usability guidelines to create a strong brand presence for the State of California. At the same time, the design provides flexibility for State agencies to create their brand identity alongside the California brand.

The ca.gov standards require use of the standard template as contained in the on-line WebTools ([www.webtools.ca.gov](http://www.webtools.ca.gov)). WebTools defines guidelines and standards for look, feel, and navigation to promote consistency while also improving the overall user experience. These standards are provided to facilitate the creation of consistent, recognizable and usable page layouts on all California web sites.

Key components of the design include:

1. **Navigation** – Tabbed navigation with a rollover effect has been developed for the design. Agencies can choose colors from a color palette.
2. **Header** – The header is important to the State’s goal of providing a consistent, seamless look-and-feel to the State’s web presence. Key

elements of the header include the ca.gov logo, agency branding, skip-to-navigation, and search box.

3. **Agency Content Area** – Agencies are free to use this area as they feel appropriate, within the constraints of California’s web standards. However, they must include:
  - a. Governor’s picture at the top of the content area.
  - b. Amber Alert’s banner and link to CHP’s website.
  - c. Flex Your Power banner and link to its site.  
([http://www.fypower.org/briefing\\_room/banners.html](http://www.fypower.org/briefing_room/banners.html)).
4. **Footer** – The footer must appear at the bottom of all State web pages, and the color scheme must correspond to the logo and the navigation. The footer includes such information as links to the policies of ca.gov, contact information, and other information.
5. **Overall Design** – The layout of the page must follow the template. Agencies can choose from a palette of ten predefined colors within the color palette. The variety of colors in the palette allows agencies the ability the distinguish themselves, while at the same time, being cohesive with the overall ca.gov brand. Each color combination was carefully selected, and has been tested for accessibility and contrast, and the colors should not be modified. The logo, navigation, and footer must use the same color scheme.

#### [CA.GOV Design](#)

### **B. Separation of Presentation and Content**

The ca.gov standards require the use of Cascading Style Sheets to apply style, formatting, and positioning to web pages. In addition to Cascading Style Sheets, departments with large or complex websites may opt to use Cascading Style Sheets in conjunction with master templates and/or a content management system to further separate HTML design elements from content for ease of maintenance and to simplify web authoring.

The State has developed ready-to-use templates that use Cascading Style Sheets to improve consistency across departments, lessen the burden on department resources, and help address the issue of varying skill sets across department web developers. These templates are available in WebTools located at [www.webtools.ca.gov](http://www.webtools.ca.gov).

#### [California Separation of Presentation and Content Standard](#)

### **C. Accessibility**

State Web sites must meet both the Web accessibility standards in California Government Code 11135, which adopted the Section 508 standards issued by the United States Access Board, and the Priority 1 and 2 level checkpoints of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 (WCAG 1.0 “AA” Conformance Level) developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). In addition, State agencies subject to this policy must:

1. Avoid using small images or text as links.
2. Avoid using frames.
3. If a downloadable document cannot be provided in an accessible electronic format, provide information on how to request an alternate format.
4. Provide contact information.
5. Test for accessibility.

These additions increase the level of accessibility and empowerment to a web site visitor or employee with a disability without difficulty or major expense.

State agencies subject to this policy must take reasonable steps to design and develop web sites that are accessible to people with disabilities as well as those without disabilities. Web page developers, designers, programmers, and content providers should become familiar with the standards and guidelines for achieving universal Web accessibility and should apply these principles in designing and creating any official state web sites.

[California Accessibility Standard](#)

### **D. Usability**

All State web sites must practice good usability principles, and must adhere to California’s usability standards for web site development. The purpose of usability is to design websites that allow visitors to the site to complete a task, solve a problem, express an opinion, or find an answer to a question quickly and easily. Poor web page design leads to wasted time, reduced productivity, increased frustration, loss of confidence, inaccuracies, and loss of repeat visits.

[California Usability Standard](#)

## **VI. EXCEPTIONS**

This policy applies to all State agencies, departments, boards, and commissions within the Executive Branch that report to the Governor, with the following

exceptions:

- A. Web-enabled custom applications are exempt, however, they must meet California's accessibility standards.
- B. Internal intranet sites.
- C. Other exceptions may be allowed on an individual basis and with written approval of the eServices Office. Requests for exemption will be approved in special instances where there is clear evidence of a genuine inability to meet the requirements, or there is legislative mandate or some other reason. Written exemption requests should be sent to:

eServices Office  
1651 Alhambra Blvd., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95816

NOTE: Please contact the eServices Office prior to submitting an exemption.

## VII. RESOURCES

- A. **eServices Office** – Provides information and resources for State webmasters including links to standards and policies, frequently asked questions, current projects, and upcoming and past events and meetings. [www.eservices.ca.gov](http://www.eservices.ca.gov)
- B. **Internet Development Forum** – An on-line forum to share ideas and deal with issues webmasters face everyday. <http://webdev.ca.gov>
- C. **State Chief Information Officer** – Links to portal information and documents. [www.cio.ca.gov](http://www.cio.ca.gov)
- D. **WebTools** – Provides necessary tools, resources, and implementation guidelines to implement the State standards for usability, accessibility, and separation of presentation. [www.webtools.ca.gov](http://www.webtools.ca.gov)

## VIII. INQUIRIES

- A. Questions regarding this policy may be directed to the eServices Office at [info@eservices.ca.gov](mailto:info@eservices.ca.gov) or 916-739-7969.

/s/ ANDREW ARMANI  
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