

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY COMMITTEE
Citywide Web Content Policy

Policy Number: IT-006

Effective Date: March 27, 2013

Description: This policy covers minimum acceptable standards for content published on websites by the City of Los Angeles.

1. Overview

The City of Los Angeles (hereafter, known as “the City”) creates and uses websites as a method for making information and City services available to the City’s residents, the public and private sectors, visitors, and City employees. The content published on websites by the City are guided by this Website Content Policy. References to website content in this policy includes but may not be limited to published text, video, audio, photos, images ,maps and documents.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that acceptable standards are adhered to for information designed and developed by the City on any website.

City Departments, Elected Officials, as well as designated representatives will be responsible for determining those departmental bodies or individuals responsible for what information shall and shall not be placed on their respective websites based on this and the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, and will be responsible for adhering to the City’s website content standard.

It is the responsibility of the Department Heads and Elected Officials to ensure that departmental staff adheres to City website related policies.

3. Scope

This policy addresses the issues related to content managed by the City on websites delivered using various methods. These methods include:

- Utilizing City resources to create and host websites (City websites)
- Utilizing City resources to create websites, but non-City services to host websites (City websites)
- Utilizing non-City websites to publish content managed by the City (non-City websites hosting City-managed content)

All City employees and personnel authorized by the City to provide and publish content for websites in any of the methods above are required to follow this policy. Specific departments may have unique requirements not covered by this policy and are encouraged to develop additional policies to cover them.

4. Policy

City Department Heads and Elected Officials as well as designated representatives shall direct and govern the creation and publication of content for websites as detailed in this policy.

4.1. Advisory Responsibility. The City Attorney's Office is responsible for advising the City regarding legal questions that arise with regard to the content of their respective websites, including but not limited to privacy, copyright, and other intellectual property issues, helping City Departments comply with this Website Content Policy and assisting with any additional requirements or policies specific to a department.

4.2. Copyright-Protected and Trademark-Protected Material. Under U.S. Copyright law, copyright-protected materials may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published without the prior written permission of the owners of these materials. This also applies to trademarks, which can be a word, phrase, symbol or design, or a combination thereof, that identifies and distinguishes the source of the goods of one party from those of others (<http://www.uspto.gov/>). Those responsible for publishing content on City websites shall protect City materials and comply with laws in the use of third-party materials on City websites.

4.2.1. City Materials. To protect City materials, all pages of City websites and Non-City websites hosting City-managed content shall display a City of Los Angeles copyright statement and give proper trademark notice using either of the following:

Copyright 20__ City of Los Angeles, unless otherwise noted. All logos, names, insignias, etc. of City Departments, Elected Official Offices, and Commissions are trademarks of the City of Los Angeles. Unauthorized use prohibited.

Copyright 20__ City of Los Angeles, unless otherwise noted. All rights reserved. For licenses to use these materials or to report infringement, please contact the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, Intellectual Property Council, 200 North Main Street, City Hall East, Los Angeles, CA 90012, (213) 978-8100. All logos, names, insignias, etc. of City Departments, Elected Official Offices, and Commissions are trademarks of the City of Los Angeles. Unauthorized use prohibited.

4.2.2. Third-Party Materials. Those responsible for creating or publishing content on City websites must ensure proper clearance is obtained before using any third-party material on City websites. These include, but are not limited to, photos, videos, writings, maps, brand names, logos, and slogans.

4.3. Avoidance of Preferential Treatment. To preserve the public nature of the City's websites and to avoid any perception that the City endorses or provides favorable treatment to any private person or business enterprise (hereinafter collectively referred to as "vendor"), City websites or non-City websites hosting City-managed content shall not display vendor logos or names. For exceptions to this, Departments and Elected Official Offices must consult the City Attorney's Office.

Furthermore, when a City website or non-City website hosting City-managed content provides a link to a non-City website, then the disclaimer process referenced in part 4.8 shall be used as part of the link process.

4.4. Publication of Official Information. The City websites and non-City websites hosting City-managed content are for official use only. The development and use of City websites and non-City websites hosting City-managed content for personal gain and use is strictly prohibited. All information disseminated through these websites must be related to the official duties and responsibilities of employees and City departments.

4.5. Publication of Accurate Information. City websites and non-City websites hosting City-managed content shall contain content that is current and correct. To ensure this, effective content review processes shall be conducted by departments and elected offices for new and existing content on these websites.

4.6. Prohibition of Confidential Information. Private, confidential, or sensitive information shall not be posted on any City website or non-City website hosting City-managed content. Guidelines for the protection of private confidential information can be found in the City Privacy Policy (<http://disclaimer.lacity.org/privacy.htm>).

4.7. Prohibition of Campaign Information. Except as provided below, no City website or non-City website hosting City-managed content may be used for campaign-related purposes. Campaign-related purposes include but are not limited to, the following:

- Statements in support or opposition to any candidate or ballot measures;
- Requests for campaign funds or references to any solicitations of campaign funds;
- And references to the campaign schedule or activities of any candidate

The City Clerk's website may contain election related material including election and candidate information and election programming authorized pursuant to municipal access policy board guidelines. For general election information, the City websites and non-City websites hosting City-managed content may link directly to website of the City Clerk.

The City Ethics Commission's website may contain election and campaign related materials. City websites and non-City websites hosting City-managed content may link to the City Ethics Commission's website, unless doing so constitutes a misuse of city position or resources under Los Angeles Municipal Code section 49.5.5. The City Ethics Commission is available to provide guidance and assistance to City employees and officials in complying with Los Angeles Municipal Code section 49.5.5.

4.8. Non-City-Managed Content. The City shall link to non-City websites or utilize non-City services, such as social networking sites, for the purpose of official City business only as defined in Section 4.4. This may be done on City websites or non-City websites hosting City-managed content. This however may present non-City-managed content to users.

4.8.1. Non-City-managed Content Disclaimer. For every instance a City website may display non-City-managed content, or link to a website that may contain non-City-managed content, the following disclaimer shall be provided to the user to explain the City's position regarding non-City-managed content:

"The City of Los Angeles is not responsible for the content, nor endorses or supports any advertising that may be contained on the site. Neither is it responsible for the inability to use, or damages that may arise from the use of, the site and/or materials contained on the site."

The disclaimer shall be presented in a manner appropriate to the situation in which the non-City-managed content appears:

Linking to websites with no City-managed content. Precede the disclaimer with "You are about to access a site not managed by the City of Los Angeles" before asking the user if they wish to proceed to a website containing non-City-managed content.

Linking to non-City websites hosting City-managed content. Precede the disclaimer with “You are about to access a site that may contain content not managed by the City of Los Angeles” before asking the user if they wish to proceed to the non-City service.

Embedding non-City websites hosting City-managed content. Precede the disclaimer with “The City is utilizing a non-City service to deliver content on this page,” before providing a link to the disclaimer immediately below the embedded non-City website page. The link shall be labeled “Disclaimer”.

4.8.2. Non-City Website Link Priority. To encourage use and access of City resources and information, a priority should be set for linking to information published by the City. This shall be done by listing City websites or non-City websites hosting City-managed content above the related websites containing non-City-managed content.

4.8.3. City Website Priority. City websites are the primary and predominant source of City information online. Non-City websites hosting City-managed content shall, wherever possible, link and direct site visitors back to City websites.

The City also reserves the right to reject or remove any content on City-managed or Non-City websites hosting City-managed content websites that violates this policy.

4.9. Website Accessibility. Content on City websites shall be accessible and usable to as many citizens as possible. For non-City websites hosting City-managed content, website accessibility shall be provided to the farthest extent feasible to the City. Those Staff involved in preparing, creating, and editing information for City websites and non-City websites hosting City-managed content shall provide the necessary content required to ensure compliance with standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act available on www.section508.gov.

4.10. Website Disclaimer. Every page of a City website shall provide a link titled "Site Disclaimer" located in the footer area. The link shall point to a page containing the following site City of Los Angeles Website Disclaimer:

“The City of Los Angeles is neither responsible nor liable for any viruses or other contamination of your system nor for any delays, inaccuracies, errors or omissions arising out of your use of the Site or with respect to the material contained on the Site, including without limitation, any material posted on the Site. This site and all materials contained on it are distributed and transmitted "as is" without warranties of any kind, either express or implied, including without limitation, warranties of title or implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. The City of Los Angeles is not responsible for any special, indirect, incidental or consequential damages that may arise from the use of, or the inability to use, the site and/or the materials contained on the site whether the materials contained on the site are provided by the City of Los Angeles, or a third party.”

For those City websites incorporating the Google Translate feature the following disclaimer needs to be part of this page:

“Google Translate Disclaimer

Translation of pages on City of Los Angeles websites may be performed by Google TM Translate, a free third party service that the City does not control. This translation service is only provided as a convenience to assist web visitors in understanding information on this website in a language other than English. The translations are

made through automated computer translation software that may not give you an accurate or precise translation all the time. Some applications or services may not work as expected when translated. In addition, some files and other items may not translate or cannot be translated including but not limited to graphics, photos and documents. Anyone relying on information obtained from Google TM Translate does so at his or her own risk. The City of Los Angeles does not warrant or make any promises, assurances, or guarantees as to the accuracy of the translations provided by Google TM Translate. As such, the City of Los Angeles shall not and will not be liable for damages or losses of any kind arising out of, or in connection with, the use or performance of such information, including but not limited to, damages or losses caused by reliance upon the accuracy, reliability or timeliness of any such information, or damages incurred from the viewing, distributing, or copying of such materials. If you are concerned about the accuracy of the translation, please refer to the English edition of the website, which is the official version. Please click the following link if you have any questions or for more information about Google TM Translate: <http://translate.google.com/support/> “

5. Policy Enforcement

It is the responsibility of City Department Heads, Elected Officials and their designated representatives to verify City-managed content on their department's City websites to ensure compliance to this policy. They are also responsible to remove any sites from publication that violate this policy.

Appendix A. Guidelines for Content on City Websites

Below is a subset of guidelines taken from the 2nd Edition of the Research-Based Web Design and Usability Guidelines, provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services. These are the minimum set of guidelines, that should be applied to content on City of Los Angeles websites. It is important to note that this set of guidelines may be updated as needed so it is important to refer to the online version of this document to obtain the latest set of guidelines. More information about these guidelines and a complete set of guidelines can be found at Usability.gov.

1. Provide Useful Content

Guideline: Provide content that is engaging, relevant, and appropriate to the audience.

Comments: Content is the information provided on a Web site. Do not waste resources providing easy access and good usability to the wrong content. One study found that content is the most critical element of a Web site. Other studies have reported that content is more important than navigation, visual design, functionality, and interactivity.

2. Establish User Requirements

Guideline: Use all available resources to better understand users' requirements.

Comments: The greater the number of exchanges of information with potential users, the better the developers' understanding of the users' requirements. The more information that can be exchanged between developers and users, the higher the probability of having a successful Web site. These could include customer support lines, customer surveys and interviews, bulletin boards, sales people, user groups, trade show experiences, focus groups, etc. Successful projects require at least four (and average five) different sources of information. Do not rely too heavily on user intermediaries.

The information gathered from exchanges with users can be used to build 'use cases.' Use cases describe the things that users want and need the Web site to be able to do. In one study, when compared with traditional function-oriented analyses, use cases provided a specification that produced better user performance and higher user preferences.

3. Design for Working Memory Limitations

Guideline: Do not require users to remember information from place to place on a Web site.

Comments: Users can remember relatively few items of information for a relatively short period of time.

When users must remember information on one Web page for use on another page or another location on the same page, they can only remember about three or four items for a few seconds. If users must make comparisons, it is best to have the items being compared side-by-side so that users do not have to remember information.

4. Do Not Use Color Alone to Convey Information

Guideline: Ensure that all information conveyed with color is also available without color.

Comments: Never use color as the only indicator for critical activities. A percentage of users have difficulty discriminating colors. Most users with color deficiencies have difficulty seeing colors in the green portion of the spectrum.

To accommodate color-deficient users, designers should:

- Select color combinations that can be discriminated by users with color deficiencies;
- Use tools to see what Web pages will look like when seen by color deficient users;
- Ensure that the lightness contrast between foreground and background colors is high;
- Increase the lightness contrast between colors on either end of the spectrum (e.g., blues and reds); and
- Avoid combining light colors from either end of the spectrum with dark colors from the middle of the spectrum.

5. Create a Positive First Impression of Your Site

Guideline: Treat your homepage as the key to conveying the quality of your site.

Comments: In terms of conveying quality, the homepage is probably the most important page on a Web site. One study found that when asked to find high quality Web sites, about half of the time participants looked only at the homepage. You will not get a second chance to make a good first impression on a user.

6. Use Clear Category Labels

Guideline: Ensure that category labels, including links, clearly reflect the information and items contained within the category.

Comments: Category titles must be understood by typical users. Users will likely have difficulty understanding vague, generalized link labels, but will find specific, detailed links, and descriptors easier to use.

7. Use Descriptive Headings Liberally

Guideline: Use descriptive headings liberally throughout a Web site.

Comments: Well-written headings are an important tool for helping users scan quickly. Headings should conceptually relate to the information or functions that follow them.

Headings should provide strong cues that orient users and inform them about page organization and structure. Headings also help classify information on a page. Each heading should be helpful in finding the desired target.

The ability to scan quickly is particularly important for older adults because they tend to stop scanning and start reading more frequently. If headings are not descriptive or plentiful enough, the user may start reading in places that do not offer the information they are seeking, thereby slowing them down unnecessarily.

8. Use Meaningful Link Labels

Guideline: Use link labels and concepts that are meaningful, understandable, and easily differentiated by users rather than designers.

Comments: To avoid user confusion, use link labels that clearly differentiate one link from another. Users should be able to look at each link and learn something about the link's destination. Using terms like 'Click Here' can be counterproductive.

Clear labeling is especially important as users navigate down through the available links. The more decisions that users are required to make concerning links, the more opportunities they have to make a wrong decision.

9. Use Video, Animation, and Audio Meaningfully

Guideline: Use video, animation, and audio only when they help to convey, or are supportive of, the Web site's message or other content.

Comments: Multimedia elements (such as video, animation, and audio) can easily capture the attention of users; therefore, it is important to have clear and useful reasons for using multimedia to avoid unnecessarily distracting users. Some multimedia elements may take a long time to download, so it is important that they be worth the wait.

Used productively, multimedia can add great value to a site's content and help direct users' attention to the most important information and in the order that it is most useful.

10. Use Mixed Case with Prose

Guideline: Display continuous (prose) text using mixed upper- and lowercase letters.

Comments: Reading text is easier when capitalization is used conventionally to start sentences and to indicate proper nouns and acronyms. If an item is intended to attract the user's attention, display the item in all uppercase, bold, or italics. Do not use these

methods for showing emphasis for more than one or two words or a short phrase because they slow reading performance when used for extended prose.

11. Organize Information Clearly

Guideline: Organize information at each level of the Web site so that it shows a clear and logical structure to typical users.

Comments: Designers should present information in a structure that reflects user needs and the site's goals. Information should be well-organized at the Web site level, page level, and paragraph or list level.

Good Web site and page design enables users to understand the nature of the site's organizational relationships and will support users in locating information efficiently. A clear, logical structure will reduce the chances of users becoming bored, disinterested, or frustrated.

12. Facilitate Scanning

Guideline: Structure each content page to facilitate scanning: use clear, well-located headings; short phrases and sentences; and small readable paragraphs.

Comments: Web sites that are optimized for scanning can help users find desired information. Users that scan generally read headings, but do not read full text prose—this results in users missing information when a page contains dense text.

Studies report that about eighty percent of users scan any new page. Only sixteen percent read each word. Users spend about twelve percent of their time trying to locate desired information on a page.

To facilitate the finding of information, place important headings high in the center section of a page. Users tend to scan until they find something interesting and then they read. Designers should help users ignore large chunks of the page in a single glance.

13. Group Related Elements

Guideline: Group all related information and functions in order to decrease time spent searching or scanning.

Comments: All information related to one topic should be grouped together. This minimizes the need for users to search or scan the site for related information. Users will consider items that are placed in close spatial proximity to belong together conceptually. Text items that share the same background color typically will be seen as being related to each other.