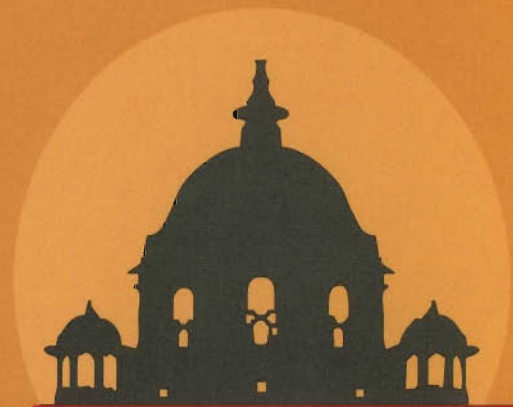# GUIDELINES FOR
INDIAN GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

MAKING GOVERNMENT WEBSPACE

Usable | Universally Accessible | User Friendly

Guidelines for Indian Government Websites

Rapid development of internet technology and the possibility to access the web through devices other than computers has unfolded the reach of web. With the increase in demand for Government information and services through web, it has become imperative for the Indian Government to effectively reach out to as many citizens as possible through their websites.

Establishing policies & practices for effective delivery of information & services through the websites has gained importance. This necessitated the development of Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW), with an aim to foster development of citizen centric and universally accessible websites.

Guidelines embrace the entire life cycle of website right from its conceptualization to design, development and its management. These Guidelines were made with an objective to promote development of Indian Government websites which are in concurrence with the principles of UUU Trilogy i.e.; Usable, User-Centric and Universally Accessible.

Guidelines advocate policies & procedures which should be implemented by all Government Departments for their web based initiatives. Guidelines are broadly categorized as Mandatory, Advisory and Voluntary. Mandatory guidelines are essential in nature and must be implemented for achieving compliance with GIGW.

Accessibility

Web accessibility denotes that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, interact and contribute through Web. Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive and neurological disabilities.

"The power of the web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect."
- Tim Berners-Lee

Government of India
Identifiers

This section promotes adoption of Guidelines for establishing an 'Identity' of the website. It mentors the approach and methodology to be adopted for ensuring the authenticity of the Government website. Key aspects in regards to Government of India Identifiers are mentioned below:-

- National Emblem of India must be displayed on the homepage of websites

- States, Public Sector Undertakings, Autonomous bodies may use their own emblem/official logo

- Complete Ownership information of the website must be displayed on each page of the website

- Guidelines mandate placement of a prominent link to the National Portal of India on the Home page of the website

Government Websites must be hosted on GOV.IN or NIC.IN domains as these domains are restricted for Government use. This shall add to the authenticity of the official status of the website.

Building
Confidence

Trust being an essential element for building relationship between the Government & citizens, is developed through implementation of various policies mentioned in the Guidelines. This section advises on the issues related to department's content usage policy, usage of externally linked websites, information collection policy and the terms and conditions of the use of the website. Policies to be formulated by the Government Departments include:-

- Copyright Policy
- Hyper Linking Policy
- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy

Scope & quality of
Content

Effective presence of the Website is determined by the way its content is written and packaged. Indian Government websites should be oriented towards their prospective audience and should categorize their content as suggested in the Guidelines. Scope of content section primarily deals with grouping of the content on the basis of its purpose & usage. While the entire genre of the content has been elaborated in the Guidelines, Departments may choose the elements as per their requirement.

The section on ensuring quality of content provides guidance on the following:-

- Key determinants for ensuring the quality of the content which include Content Authenticity, Accuracy and Currency

- Organizing, structuring and labeling the information within the website to enhance the ease of access to information

- Use of consistent nomenclature and terminologies

- Adherence to international conventions

- Maintenance and Management of multilingual versions of the website

- Formulation of policies for Content Moderation, Approval, Review and Archival for better maintenance and management of the website

Website
Design & Development

Good design enhances the user experience by not only making the content visually appealing but focuses on presenting the content in an intuitive manner that is easily understandable, navigable and searchable by the user. This section of the Guidelines covers various aspects involved in the design of the website. Aspects like page layout, graphics, typography, color, images, audio, video, animation, etc. have been meticulously covered in the Guidelines. In order to achieve a good user experience, Guidelines mandate:-

- Use of images in proper size, format along with meaningful alternate descriptions

- Ensuring proper contrast between text foreground and background for better legibility

- Proper captioning of audio and video to make them accessible

- Achieving a consistent navigation across the website

- Use of navigational aids such as Site search and sitemap to provide directions to the User

Website development also involves use of technologies and tools in order to ensure interoperability and universal accessibility of websites. Guidelines related to Website Development detail on the approach towards usage of markup language, cascading style sheet and scripting languages. It also provides information on various file formats to be used in the website.

W3C recommendations form a major part of this section and include the following:-

- Proper Use of markup languages for compatibility and uniformity across all browsers

- Use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) for controlling the presentation of the entire website and allowing global changes in presentation to be propagated conveniently

- Enabling the User to access the website through Keyboard i.e. making website operational through the keyboard without requiring the use of mouse

- Allow user to bypass repeated blocks of content on a webpage by using 'skip to main content' functionality

Website Security

Website security is an important aspect of the Guidelines. This section recommends the use of leading practices and takes into account risks and security threats associated with the application source code. It is advised that all Government websites must formulate a security policy and undergo Security audit prior to hosting the website.

Website
Hosting & Promotion

Web applications/ websites/ portals are hosted on special purpose servers in a Data Centre. Hosting infrastructure plays a crucial role in the performance, availability and accessibility of websites. Hence it is imperative to review hosting server infrastructure as well as facilities at the Data Centres. This section details the kinds of facilities and services that the Department should expect from their hosting service providers.

Website promotion deals with enhancing the reach of the website. Web being a medium of mass information dissemination, with the exponential growth in the number of websites, the question of visibility on the web has assumed critical significance. The ultimate aim of any Government website is to provide information and services to as many citizens as possible. For this purpose a conscious and concentrated effort has to be made to increase the reach of the website through website promotion strategy.

To relate to an effective promotion strategy this section provides guidelines on:-

- Approach towards Search Engine registration and optimization

- Using public messages, stationery, press releases, tender notifications and Government advertisement as a means to promote the website

Compliance Matrix

Government Departments must ensure compliance with the GIGW while developing /re-designing their websites, portals and web based applications.

A collection of all the 115 Mandatory guidelines has been included in the form of a checklist as a part of the document for ready reference. This will help departments easily evaluate their level of compliance with the Guidelines.

Website
Management

Management of websites requires a blend of technical and managerial skills. This section provides an insight to the best practices for the management of websites. One of the crucial aspects in Website Management is appointment of Web Information Manager.

Web Information Manager

Government Departments must nominate a senior officer as Web Information Manager who shall be responsible for ensuring successful implementation & management of citizen centric website.

Web Information Manager may be supported by a team of professionals, details for which can be referred in the Guidelines.

Guidelines advocate formulation of different website policies to give a clear roadmap to management team and help them in taking important decisions. The policies to be formulated address legal issues, content life cycle, strategy & operations.

Website Policies

Guidelines stress on the availability of different website policies. The policies to be formulated are:

- Copyright Policy
- Hyper linking Policy
- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Content Contribution, Moderation and Approval Policy (CMAP)
- Content Review Policy (CRP)
- Content Archival Policy (CAP)
- Website Security Policy
- Website Monitoring Policy
- Contingency Management

Consultancy Services

We provide Consulting Services to Government Departments for website development projects. We help Departments architect their solutions through our spectrum of services backed by the longstanding experience of our team in design, development and management of number of successful web projects.

The following services are provided to help in achieving a citizen centric and universally accessible website.

- Compliance related advisory services in the form of compliance assessment reports / recommendations both for existing websites and websites that are under development

- Web development related advisory services spanning all the phases of website lifecycle right from conceptualization to launch

- Website promotion and search engine optimization

You can contact our experts who will support you in your website related projects.

Guidelines were released in Feb 2009 at the 12th National Conference on e Governance in GOA

Capacity Building

Success of these guidelines depend on their effective implementation which includes plans for developing programs related to training and sensitization of the departments in the adoption and implementation of these guidelines. In view of this NIC is holding training workshops for departments on these guidelines.

Trainings are conducted at three levels

Leadership Level:
The target audiences for this exercise are members at the top management level. The duration of this training is half day. The training will focus on Overview of Guidelines for Indian Government Websites and Website Management.

Intermediate Level:
The target audiences for this session are the Team Leads or middle management level. The duration of this training is one day. The training will focus on Design and Development of websites.

Execution Level:
The target audiences for this session are members of execution team, web managers and other implementation related resources. The duration of this training is two days. The training will focus on Design, Development, Website Promotion, Website Management and Compliance Matrix. Day 1 and first half of Day 2 shall be theory session while second half of Day 2 shall include hands on training related to use of testing tools etc.

Compliant Websites

National Portal of India

http://india.gov.in

Department of Information Technology

http://mit.gov.in

Cabinet Secretariat

http://cabsec.nic.in

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

http://socialjustice.nic.in

And Many More

Guidelines Website

To take this initiative further a website http://guidelines.gov.in has been developed where the user can have access to the following :

- Full text of the Guidelines for Indian Government Websites

- Latest updates

- Communications of Government in regards to GIGW

- Resource, tools, tips & tricks to help in achiving compliance
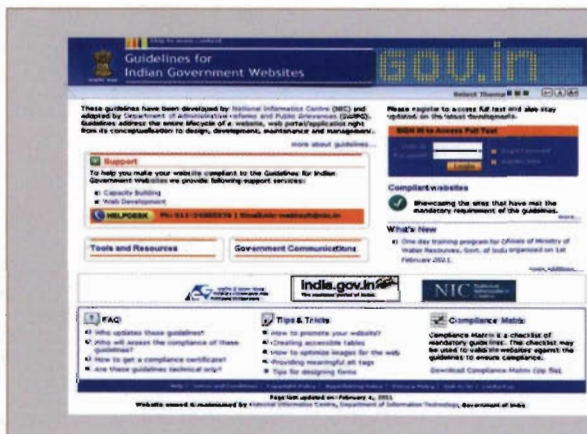
Your feedback is important to Us

We would also like you to share your experiences gained while implementing these guidelines. Registered user can give their feedback & suggestions through the website. We shall consider your suggestions and feedbacks while revising the Guidelines.

Helplines

E mail : webguidelines@nic.in

Phone : 91-11-24305378

Quality Certification

Standardization, Testing & Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate under the Department of Information Technology has launched a website quality certification scheme based on the compliance to the guidelines.
The details of the scheme are available at :
http://www.stqc.nic.in

Prepared by

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Government of India