Web Look and Feel Standard

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICE, DECEMBER 2016

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this *Web Look and Feel Standard* for the State of Vermont (SOV) is to establish the minimally acceptable components that every website or web application must include that is produced and maintained for the purpose of conducting official state business. The adoption of this standard will aid visitors in the identification of official state websites and promote a clear and consistent user experience across agencies, departments and programs.

To aid in the adoption of this standard, the state provides a free website template ('SOV Web Template') that is available for use by any state entity. The template provides a wide variety of tools and functionality that can be customized and 'mixed and matched' as needed, all within an overall design environment that provides a consistent look and feel for state websites. Further, the template provides a fully-supported Content Management System (CMS), with training and support from DII, as well as a secure hosting environment and software upgrades, all at no cost to the state agency, department or program. As such, all state entities are expected to use the SOV Web Template whenever possible.

All of the requirements set forth in this *Web Look and Feel Standard* are already built into the SOV Web Template, so template users need not concern themselves with this document.

The State does recognize there may be some cases where the SOV Web Template does not provide an adequate solution for the digital needs of a particular agency, department or program, and that the entity will need to create a custom website or web application outside of the state template. It is in these custom cases where state entities, and their web design/development contractors, need to pay particular attention to the requirements set forth in this document. This *Web Look and Feel Standard* should be part of any contract documents or Statements of Work with outside contractors, and adherence to these requirements should be part of the performance measures for these contractors.

This standard may be revised as needed to edit existing standards or to accommodate new conditions or technology.

All pixel dimensions in this document refer to when a website is viewed in a Chrome browser on a desktop computer screen at full screen width, which is 1200px wide.

STANDARDS

1.1. **Header:** The top of every page will be taken up by the site header, a sample of which appears below:

The required elements of the header include:
- A **top branding bar** (dark green, #003300), measuring 40 pixels high and running the full width of the screen.
- The **words "VERMONT OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITE"** in white text, all-caps, "Open-Sans" font, 12px, left-justified, set inside the dark green bar.
- The horizontal-arrangement of the **'Moon over the Mountains' logo** in white with a transparent background appearing within the bar, right-justified, at 200 pixels wide x 25 pixels high. This logo will be a live link that clicks through to the state web portal at http://www.vermont.gov.
- A **site owner identification area** just beneath the top branding bar, with background color #efefe3, and 8px of padding on all sides. This area contains, from left to right: the optional Agency/Department/Program Logo (1.2), the Site Byline and Name (1.3), and the Search Box and Contact Link (1.4).

Any requests for exceptions or modifications to the styling of the required elements in the header area will be considered at the discretion of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) and the Director of Web Services.

1.2. **Optional Agency/Department/Program Logo:** (not the 'Moon over the Mountains' logo, but another CMO-approved logo such as the ones used by VTrans or the Department of Fish & Wildlife). In the sample image above, the Vermont State Police logo is shown.

These logos can be a maximum of 80 pixels tall, with no padding or margin. (As noted earlier, these are the pixel dimensions when a site is viewed in a Chrome browser on a desktop computer screen at full screen width, which is 1200px wide.) This logo will be a live link back to the home page of the current site. If there is no agency, department or program logo, this space is not to be used for other graphics, and the Site Byline and Name (see 1.3 and image below) will be left-justified.

1.3.   **Site Byline and Name:** The title of every state website will consist of two parts:

- The **Site Byline** (i.e. the name of the agency or department that oversees the state entity or program maintaining the site), to appear as the top line, left-justified, in all-caps, "Open-Sans" font, 14px, font-weight normal; and,
- The **Site Name** (i.e. the name of the department or program responsible for the content on site), to appear on a separate line, left-justified in "Open Sans" font, 29px, font-weight bold.

In the sample image above, the Site Byline is "STATE OF VERMONT" and the Site Name is "Agency of Commerce and Community Development." Some additional examples of Site Byline / Site Name include:

STATE OF VERMONT / Labor Relations Board
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES / Department for Children and Families
AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES / Climate Change in Vermont
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY / Division of Fire Safety

Sites hosted as a partnership between a state and non-state organization should list both entities in the first line of the title. (e.g. DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS AND RECREATION & UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT EXTENSION / Vermont Forestry Resource).

1.4.   **Search Box and Contact Link:** The exact styling of a search box and a link to contact info is not dictated by the standard, but prominent secondary navigation must be included directly beneath the dark green branding bar (on the right side of the display area, underneath the 'Moon over the Mountains' logo and within the Site Owner Identification Area), in the form of a button, box or another visual element, to provide the user with:

- A search tool that allows a user to type in a search term to find content with the site; and,
- A link to where contact information for the site owner can be located.

The preferred styling for the Search and Contact buttons is shown in the examples above, sized at 85 pixels by 25 pixels, with white type identifying "Search" and "Contact," floating in the upper right corner. The colors of the buttons are not specified, but should match the color palette of the website.

1.5.   **About Us:** The exact styling or placement is not dictated by the standard, but a prominent link to "About Us" (or similar terminology) content is required on the home page. Such content will specify the relationship of the site owner to the State of Vermont.

1.6.   **Footer:** The footer will appear at the bottom of the display area on all pages contained in a particular site. The required elements of the footer include:

- A **bottom banner** (dark green, #003300), measuring 35 pixels high and running the full width of the screen.
- The **words "Copyright © [current year] State of Vermont. All rights reserved. Accessibility Policy + Privacy Policy"** in white text, "Open-Sans" font, 14px size, center-justified, will appear inside the dark green banner and provide live links to the State of Vermont Accessibility Policy and Privacy Policy. A sample appears below:

1.7. **Primary Navigation:** The primary reason for creating a *Web Look and Feel Standard* was to ensure that users have a consistent experience when navigating state websites produced by different agencies and departments. It is therefore essential that navigation functions similarly on all state sites. As such, left-hand navigation will be the standard for the main (primary) navigation on all state websites.

The primary navigation lists the top level categories into which site content is divided and should remain consistent on all pages within a web site. Sections of the primary navigation may expand on click to show deeper levels of navigation.

Additional primary navigation standards include:

- Navigation links will be presented in non-graphic text (text characters with a font applied, as opposed to characters that are part of a graphic element).
- Links in the primary navigation cannot include links to external sites (i.e. links that would take the user away from the current site). Any links to external sites need to either be included as part of interior pages or within secondary navigation.
- All page-based content that exists on the website must be linked somewhere within the primary navigation.

If the functionality of the website requires the full width of the display, or the functionality would be otherwise severely diminished, top navigation may be considered for primary navigation at the discretion of the Chief Marketing Officer and the Director of Web Services.

1.8. **Type:** Sans-serif fonts are recommended for all body text. The preferred typefaces are Open-Sans, Lato or Verdana at a font size of 16px. Header text must be noticeably larger than body text. At a minimum, every state website will use a font size set to 1em and a weight of 'normal' for body text.

1.9. **Colors:** A standard set of 10 color palettes was developed and incorporated into the current (2015) version of the SOV Web Template to supplement the color guidance provided by the *State of Vermont Brand Standards and Style Guide*. The color values from the Brand Standards and the SOV Web Template color palettes are included on

the chart in Appendix A and together constitute the preferred colors to be used for design elements (buttons, widgets, etc.), page headers and any prominent areas of color on state websites. Accent colors may not be used for text. These color values have been tested for readability and will provide a visual consistency to the majority of state websites built within the SOV Web Template. Slight variations or alternative colors may be considered at the discretion of the Chief Marketing Officer and the Director of Web Services.

1.10. **Readability:** Background colors can easily render a web page unreadable by some members of the user population. Therefore, background colors will be avoided. The main content area must have a white background with the body text displayed as black text in most cases.

1.11. **Logos:** Official agency, departmental or program logos may be displayed on all site pages in the header (see section 1.1). These may not be displayed anywhere else on the site except in the body section where appropriate. Partner or sponsor logos should be displayed only in the body section.

1.12. **ALT tags**: All images and graphic elements must include detailed information in the ALT attribute to provide users who may not be able to see images on web pages with a description of the image or graphic.

1.13. **Tables:** Tables may only be used to display tabular data and may not to be used simply as a formatting tool. All tables must include column and row headers, and headers must be visually distinct from the table data. Tables must include the attribute role="presentation" in the table tag.

1.14. **Links:** Active links used to navigate to additional content must behave consistently and must be displayed in a way that provides visual distinction. The standards regarding links include:

- Inline links (links within the body copy) must incorporate **two visual cues** to distinguish the link from the rest of the body text. The preferred style is to apply an underline and a contrasting color.
- Links to external sites (web pages not part of the current site) and documents (PDFs, Word documents, etc.) should open in a new browser window.
- Link titles should be descriptive of the action that will happen when the user activates the link, e.g. 'Download grant application or 'Read more about the grant program.' Using terms such as 'Click here' or 'PDF' for link titles is not acceptable as the titles provide no information to users utilizing screen readers or other assistive technology as to what content will be accessed or where the link will go if clicked.

1.15. **PDFs:** All PDFs must be tagged to be accessible by screen readers. To accomplish this, you can either enable the 'Document structure tags' option in Word or Excel when you are choosing your PDF options; or you can use the 'Make Accessible' plug-in for Adobe Acrobat (available in Acrobat Pro).

1.16. **IFrames:** Inline Frames (iframes) may be used in the body of a site, but not in any of the navigation areas. If iframes are used, they must be accompanied by an alternate text link to the content contained in the frame to accommodate users utilizing screen readers.

1.17. **Responsive Design:** All state websites must utilize responsive design techniques to re-stack and re-size navigation, body areas and all content automatically in accordance with the display size of the viewing device (e.g. desktop, tablet or mobile). It is acceptable for menus to collapse into a menu button that a user must click to open, but these menu buttons must appear and stick at the top or bottom of a tablet or mobile screen.

VERMONT

STATE OF VERMONT

APPENDIX A: Brand Color Palette Swatches

PRIMARY COLORS

(ADAPTED FROM STATE OF VERMONT BRAND STANDARDS)

#00853F	#00674E	#174A7C	#46166B	#7C0040

#4B721D	#4F8ABE	#4FB3CF	#8A1F03

(ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FROM STATE OF VERMONT WEB TEMPLATE)

#003300	#276230	#36625F	#447375	#384975	#8B2929

#205027	#3E6839	#4E8248	#384975	#5B6A91	#B85423

#332D31	#787276

ACCENT COLORS

(ADAPTED FROM STATE OF VERMONT BRAND STANDARDS)

#A49400	#C1CD23	#E86D1F	#F3901D	#FBB034	#A2958A

(ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FROM STATE OF VERMONT WEB TEMPLATE)

#83A244	#70989A	#818DAB	#9C575A