Best Practices guide

For IN.Gov Webmasters

**The Goal of the IN.gov Webmaster Best Practices Guide**

The IN.gov Webmaster is responsible for maintaining and growing their website. It is more than just putting content on pages and letting it stand on its own. A webmaster must keep an eye on interactions to ensure the content is relevant and easily viewed without impediments to the visitor.

This is done through monitoring of all aspects of their website including content, analytical reports, and visitor traffic. It is important to identify issues and to adjust accordingly. The job of the webmaster, when done correctly, is crucial to an agency. A website is an invaluable vehicle to reach the citizens an agency supports as well as serve as a recruiting tool for potential employees.

This guide should be used by new and existing webmasters as a road map to fulfill the responsibilities of their position. Each agency is responsible for maintaining the quality of content within their sites. This is paramount for maintaining an effective web portal and ensuring information is timely and accurate.

This document is the product of the collaborative effort of the IN.gov User Council, IN.gov staff as well as other webmasters from various agencies. It is expected to evolve with time and serve as the source of knowledge for all webmasters of sites hosting within the IN.gov web portal.

Webmasters are encouraged to contact the IN.gov staff with comments and suggestions regarding content of this Best Practices Guide. With the assistance of all stakeholders we plan to continue to maintain the highest of quality across all affiliated websites.

The guide includes the following sections:

* Note to Agency Communications Directors and Executive Staff
* Webmaster Responsibilities
* Webmaster Support and Resources
* Applications Available for Agency Websites
* Helpful Information

**Note to Agency Communications Directors and Executive Staff**

The IN.gov Web Portal has been recognized nationally for providing an award-winning digital experience for its visitors. This is only possible through the continued partnership with each agency to include support of agency leadership.

We appreciate agencies doing their best to manage their websites with the resources available to them. It is important to continue moving forward by ensuring all websites within the portal are informative, accessible to all visitors and free of any impediments such as broken links and misspellings. In addition, page analytics should be used to create a meaningful website experience for the visitor. All of this can be done with the tools we provide at no additional costs to agencies. It just takes the effort of whoever performs the role of your agency’s webmaster.

By creating the Webmasters Best Practices Guide, we wanted to highlight the importance of the webmaster position by providing a baseline of activities to follow. Having a webmaster in your agency is vital for your communication efforts. This is especially true knowing that we are now living in a digital world where everything and everyone is connected to the internet. Again, we appreciate our continued partnership in making the visitor’s experience informative and enjoyable.

**Webmaster’s Responsibilities**

This section was developed with the assistance of a webmaster who has worked for two state agencies. Years of knowledge and experience were leveraged in the development of the list however the information provided should only be used as a baseline minimum of standards. Think of it as a basic template of work to be accomplished.

No two agencies are the same, so it is important to consult with your agency’s Communications Director or whoever is ultimately responsible for approval of website content. However, as webmaster, maintaining the quality of your agency’s website is now your responsibility.

The focus of an agency’s webmaster is to constantly improve and/or maintain the quality of your agency’s website. To do so we encourage every webmaster to take advantage of all the management tools made available to you. A full list is available within this document and is also published at IN.gov/INWP.

***Start:***

* Create a metric spreadsheet to track website performance of:
  + Google Analytics – Page Views/Unique visitors
  + Siteimprove – Broken Links and misspelling
  + GovDelivery Open and click rates on communications
* Form a team to do quarterly website content reviews (multiple teams for different programs)
* Join the Webmaster Mentor Program and set up an initial meeting with your mentor, decide how frequently you would like to meet
* Review all FAQs to make sure content is still accurate
* Use Siteimprove to clean all broken links and misspelling
* Use Google Analytics to and review the top 10-20 pages viewed on your website.
* Review online calendar. Make sure reoccurring events are accurate
* Develop or review the agencies communication strategy. What meetings must be posted? What events are longer pertinent?
* Review all GovDelivery content watches and subscribers. Is there a subscribed audience that the agency is not communicating to?

***Weekly***:

* Check in with your supervisor and see if there are any tasks on deck, anything that is important happening related to the agency or that is expected
* Check in with people on your team for collaboration if needed
* Weeks vary depending on the "fires" and projects going on
* Run a Siteimprove Quality Assurance report for the whole site (spelling errors, broken links, etc.), can also be bi-weekly
* Review Funnelback to see where search term trends are, how to improve search results, also bi-weekly
* Adjust the online calendar

***Monthly***:

* Review Google Analytics, looking for trends and search trends, top access pages, follow through on the path users go on your website, get an idea of how to improve (i.e. not having to go through multiple pages to find things)
* Complete monthly media reports including the in.gov websites (Google Analytics data in report to share with senior staff, so they can see trends, point out improvements)
* Check in with your leadership "what lines of business will I regularly have to interact with on a monthly basis?"
* Attend the IN.gov User Council meeting (This is by invitation only after an agency requests membership. There is only one member per agency)
* Spend time to view the websites maintained by other agencies

***Quarterly***:

* Review Google Analytics trends between quarters
* Checking in with main lines of business (i.e., checking in with policy team to make sure everything is in order or needs updates or removed?)
* Monthly and quarterly tasks are similar
* Quarterly review between the agency webmaster and IN.gov team
* Participate in webmaster continuing education, whether it is formal or a free online class
* Review all FAQs to make sure content is accurate.
* Review section of the website to see for accuracy or relevancy

***Annual***:

* Create a yearly report from the different platforms (Siteimprove, GA, Funnelback)
* Create a "calendar" that allows for planning ahead for key months and points in the year (this is when this posting will happen)
  + Look at the previous quarterly reports for different trends in the different times of the year
* Entire site review, do things look consistent, meet the branding standards, revamps, etc.
* Meet with II for annual review of websites sites
* Plan to refresh content for the new year

**Webmaster Support and Resources**

***Webmaster Mentorship Program***

For all new webmasters to the IN.gov web portal, there is a mentorship program available to you. The mentor will be an experienced webmaster from another state agency and will be an informal resource for you whether you have a question about the CMS or need to know who to contact regarding a particular topic. Contact the IN.gov Team if interested.

***User Council***

We also encourage ALL webmasters to participate in the monthly IN.gov User Council meetings. You will meet webmasters from other agencies as well as participate in providing feedback and guidance to the IN.gov management team. Reach out to the IN.gov Team if interested. Full time membership is dependent on participation and availability.

***Teams' Webmaster Channel***

Keep in touch with other webmasters easily within the Webmaster Channel on Teams. Have a quick question about the CMR? Want to check with others to see if they have the same issue as you do before submitting a ticket? Or do you just have a quick question and am not sure who to email? The solution, go to the Teams' Webmaster Channel.

***IN.gov Team Resource Contact Information***

Whether you have been a webmaster with the state for a long period of time or you are new in this role, finding the right person or place to go to ask a question or find an answer can be cumbersome. Please feel free to reach out to Mike White and Natalie Galaviz with any questions regarding the IN.gov program, web portal, webmaster related topics and any other inquiries.

Mike White – [mwhite1@iot.in.gov](mailto:mwhite1@iot.in.gov) | (317) 649-5872

Natalie Galaviz – [ngalaviz@iot.in.gov](mailto:ngalaviz@iot.in.gov) | (317) 495-8013

**Applications Available for Agency Websites**:

***Access Indiana*** - A single sign-on authentication mechanism and Identity Provider for public online applications for the State of Indiana.

* Request access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/access-indiana>

***Application Development*** - The primary focus on application development has centered on development estimation, application design and coding, legacy application integration, code review and load testing. Our application developers benefit from code-sharing, technical experience, and best practices available in 23 NIC state portals.

* Accessible at: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/application-development/>

***Application Style Guide*** - This is a general style guide outlining the base styles for applications related to IN.gov and Indiana state government, broken up in to four sections for General Styles, Header, Typography, UI Elements.

* Style Guide: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/app-style-guide/>

***Browse Aloud*** - Is a free software that reads web pages out loud. It can help anyone who has difficulty reading on-line, including people with mild visual impairments, low literacy, English as a second language, or learning disabilities, such as dyslexia.

***Calendar*** - A unified master calendar of news releases and activities for the State of Indiana where the public can find the timeliest information available within the State. It also provides agencies the ability to syndicate/access views for only their agency calendar entries.

***Funnelback*** – All tool used for advanced search services for websites, intranets, directories, databases, and other digital assets. This includes search optimization, type ahead suggestions, keyword highlighting and organize search results in categories that can be filtered.

* Login: <https://admin.search.in.gov/d/auth/login>

***FAQs*** – Using the State Information Center, SIC, agencies can post FAQs to help citizens utilizing their pages find relevant information to them faster and easier with over 2.2 million interactions to date.

* FAQ submission: <https://soi.formstack.com/forms/faq_template>

***Google Analytics*** - Provides insight on what your most popular pages are, how long people are visiting your site, the number of downloads for documents, the type of browser being used, and so much more through user-friendly dashboards, historical data tables, real-time visitor activity. All with the ability to quickly generate reports that can be shared with non-Google Analytics users.

* Request access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/google-analytics-suggestionsrequests/>
* Request training: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/training/>

***GovDelivery*** - This allows IN.gov visitors to subscribe to email and text alerts for both agency web content updates and bulletin releases. The base service is provided to state agencies by the IN.gov Program at no cost. Agencies may opt-in to the GovDelivery Advanced Network which provides the agency with greater flexibility in developing its communications and subscriber networks and has been shown to increase organic subscriber growth at a $1,000 cost.

* + Request access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/statewide-solutions/govdelivery/>
  + Training access: <https://support.granicus.com/s/>

***GovLinks*** - Create short URLs that can be tracked to gauge their effectiveness. These links are then tracked in Siteimprove to track effectiveness and message reach per platform.

* + Request access: email Graig Lubsen, [glubsen@iot.in.gov](mailto:glubsen@iot.in.gov)
  + Additional documentation: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/govlinks/>

***Online Forms*** - IN.gov offers two online form services for agencies that are looking for a way to gather information from their visitors. These online forms can provide a way to quickly engage with your audience, collect data, process payments, and replace any legacy PDF or mail-in form

* Request form: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/online-forms/>

***Payment Processing*** - The payment processing services have been tailored for the unique requirements of Indiana and its governmental entities. From mitigating the PCI compliance burden for your agency by leveraging the enterprise Common Checkout Pages (CCP) module, to providing end-to-end encryption for your Point of Sale device transactions, Indiana Interactive has the solutions necessary to meet your payment processing needs.

* Request/inquiry form: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/billingpayment-processing/payment-processing/>

***Search Services*** - Advanced search services for websites, intranets, directories, databases, and other digital assets utilizing Funnelback. This tool allows for custom search and result page designs, type ahead suggestions, keyword highlighting as well as analytics and auditing tools for SEO, accessibility and content.

* Request access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/search-services/>

***Siteimprove*** - Siteimprove offers quality assurance to agencies through identifying spelling mistakes, accessibility problems and broken links as well as providing a complete overview of resources.

* Request access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/siteimprove-suggestionsrequests/>

***WebCMS*** - Where sites are created and maintained by Webmasters and others responsible for maintaining agency website pages. Currently using Reddot, IN.Gov will be transitioning to Squiz.

* + Request access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/statewide-solutions/content-management-system/>
  + Training resources: <https://cms.in.gov/cmsreference/>

***Teams*** - Microsoft’s product allows for IM chatting, virtual meetings, and the creation of channels where you can do both mentioned as well as load files for easier document sharing.

* Request a channel: <https://ingov.sharepoint.com/sites/WorkSmart365/Lists/Office365GroupRequestForm/NewForm.aspx?Source=https%3a//ingov.sharepoint.com/sites/WorkSmart365/SitePages/Thankyouforyourrequest.aspx&RootFolder=/sites/WorkSmart365/Lists/Office365GroupRequestForm&web=1>

**Helpful Information:**

***New Project*** *-* If your agency is interested in developing a new online service, follow the link below.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/interactive-applications/new-project/>

***Standard Application Header Request*** - This form is for submitting requests regarding everything related to the Standard Application Header.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/interactive-applications/standard-application-header/>

***Agency Content/Graphics Requests*** - This is where an agency would request assistance with maintaining non-interactive portions of their web presence such as HTML, JavaScript, CSS, graphics, images, and simple email contact forms.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/agency-contentgraphic-requests/>

***IN.gov Homepage Promotional Items*** - Promote your agency campaign or event on the homepage of IN.gov. Requests will be reviewed and approved by the Users and Governance council members.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/ingov-homepage-promotional-items/>

***IN.gov Suggestion Box*** - If you have a suggestion that you feel can improve the IN.gov experience, this is a place where you can submit it for review.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/ingov-suggestion-box/>

***New Website or Website Redesign Request*** - As agency needs change over time, the IN.gov Program is available to assist with the development of new program/initiative websites and website redesigns. If your agency has a need for a new or improved website, please complete the following form in its entirety.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/new-website-or-website-redesign-request/>

***Web 2.0 Social Media Requests*** - If you are interested in implementing one or more of these services, please complete this form it its entirety.

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/web-content/social-media-requests/>

***Deactivate Website*** – If your agency no longer has a need for a specific webpage, please submit the following form for deactivation of the site.

* https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/interactive-applications/deactivation-request/

***Web/Email Address*** *-*This portion of the portal is utilized most by locals looking to host with IN.gov and host their MX records but also for the state to update existing IP addresses and create subdomain URLs. There are 10 links on the following site where these requests can be created and submitted:

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/webe-mail-addresses/>

***Statewide Solutions/Training*** *-*In the beginning portion of this document we discussed the services the IN.Gov program offers that webmasters can have access to enhance a user’s experience on an agency’s site as well as provide an additional tool set for a webmaster to accomplish this.

* + Solutions Access: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/statewide-solutions/>
  + Solutions Training: <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/training/>

***Record Transmittal Procedure*** - The Archives may only accept records that are scheduled for permanent retention. Prior to accepting a delivery, an agency representative (generally the Director or Records Coordinator) needs to complete and submit a State Form 48883 Request for Transmittal for each record series that will be sent. Please see the Record Coordinator’s Handbook for more detailed information.

* State Form 48883 and additional information can be found at: <https://www.in.gov/iara/2799.htm>
* Types of files accepted by the IARA: Paper, Network transfer, SFTP, Sync service (e.g. Syncplicity), Dropbox, Secure email, Removable media (e.g. USB)
  + For SFTP and network transfers, IARA can either pick up files from the sender or grant the sender access to a drop location. These details can be arranged with Electronic Records staff in advance of the transmittal. Records containing sensitive or confidential information (PII, HIPPA, etc.) should NEVER be submitted via unsecured email. Regardless of how they are delivered or their confidentiality, any encrypted or password-protected records submitted to the Archives MUST INCLUDE any applicable login credentials or other information needed to access and download the files

***General Inquiries*** *-* If you have questions, suggestions and/or are unable to find an appropriate category, please use the General Inquiry form:

* <https://www.in.gov/inwp/webmasters/general-inquiry/>

On behalf of everyone who supports the IN.gov web portal, we thank you for taking the time to view this document. We hope you find it useful as a baseline as you fulfil your role as an agency webmaster. Together we must strive to ensure all web content is relevant, informative, and free of any barriers that will hinder the end-user in their search for information. Please remember that maintaining the state’s web portal is a combined effort of all who are involved, including each agency communications director and webmasters, as well as IOT and NIC Indiana staff.

Best regards,

Indiana Office of Technology, IN.gov Web Portal