

Government of Alberta Website Standards

Version 2.0

Approved May 2010 by PAB Executive Council

Archived

Archived

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
Table of Figures	v
Introduction	1
Part One: Visual Standards.....	5
1. Common Look and Navigation	5
1.1. Rationale	5
1.2. Guidelines.....	5
1.2.1. Common look and navigation.....	5
1.2.2. HTML/Red Dot standards	5
1.2.3. Corporate identity compliance.....	6
1.3. Common look and navigation elements.....	6
1.3.1. Header	6
1.3.2. Footer.....	8
1.3.3. Left sidebar modules	9
1.3.4. Navigation elements.....	13
1.3.5. Home page/landing page banner	15
1.3.6. Homepage containers.....	16
2. Application of common look and navigation for sites other than ministry sites	20
2.1. Rationale	20
2.2. Definitions.....	20
2.2.1. Government of Alberta websites.....	20
2.2.2. Ministry website	20
2.2.3. Program website.....	20
2.2.4. Promotional site.....	20
2.2.5. Application.....	20
2.2.6. Type 4 Agency site.....	20
2.2.7. Type 5 Agency site.....	20
2.2.8. Partner site	20
2.3. Guidelines.....	21
2.3.1. General.....	21
2.3.2. Ministry websites.....	21
2.3.3. Program websites	21
2.3.4. Promotional sites	21
2.3.5. Applications.....	21
2.3.6. Type 4 Agency sites	21
2.3.7. Type 5 Agency sites	21
2.3.8. Partner sites	21
Part Two: Technical Standards	25
3. Security standards.....	25
3.1. Rationale	25
3.2. Guidelines.....	25

4. Shared ICT platform specifications.....	25
4.1. Rationale.....	25
4.2. Guidelines.....	25
5. URLs and domain names.....	26
5.1. Rationale.....	26
5.2. Guidelines.....	26
5.2.1. General—Sub-domain names.....	26
5.2.2. General—Short form/tiny URLs or marketing URLs.....	26
5.2.3. URLs with “Alberta” in the program name.....	27
5.2.4. Using the “www” prefix.....	27
5.2.5. Full words, not acronyms.....	27
5.2.6. Exceptions.....	27
6. Search form.....	28
6.1. Rationale.....	28
6.2. Guidelines.....	28
6.2.1. All sites must have a search function.....	28
6.2.2. Links to search function.....	29
6.2.3. Help for searches.....	29
6.2.4. Other search engines.....	29
7. Metadata.....	29
7.1. Rationale.....	29
7.2. Guidelines.....	30
7.2.1. Title.....	30
7.2.2. Description.....	30
7.2.3. Keywords.....	31
7.2.4. Document metadata / document properties.....	31
7.2.5. Languages.....	32
7.2.6. Author.....	32
7.3. Search Engine Optimization best practices.....	32
7.3.1. Page naming.....	32
7.3.2. Body content.....	33
8. Page indexing.....	33
8.1. Rationale.....	33
8.2. Guidelines.....	33
8.2.1. Fixing broken links.....	33
8.2.2. Included sites.....	34
8.2.3. Compatible file types.....	34
8.2.4. Non-compatible file types.....	34
8.2.5. Indexing.....	35
8.2.6. Non-text elements.....	35
8.3. Best practices.....	35
9. Accessibility.....	36
9.1. Rationale.....	36
9.2. Guidelines.....	36
9.2.1. Web content accessibility.....	36

9.2.2. Browser compatibility	36
9.2.3. Assistive devices.....	36
9.3. Best practices.....	37
9.3.1. Perceivable.....	37
9.3.2. Operable.....	37
9.3.3. Understandable	37
9.3.4. Robust	37
Part Three: Content Standards	39
10. Copyright Notice and Terms of Use	39
10.1. Rationale	39
10.1.1. Copyright and Terms of Use.....	39
10.1.2. Disclaimer.....	39
10.2. Guidelines.....	40
10.2.1. Copyright requirements	40
10.2.2. Standard copyright notice.....	40
10.2.3. Copyright and Disclaimer.....	40
11. Privacy Statement and P3P Policy	41
11.1. Rationale	41
11.2. Guidelines.....	41
11.2.1. Privacy statements	41
11.2.2. P3P policy.....	42
12. Contact information and feedback mechanisms.....	42
12.1. Rationale	42
12.2. Guidelines.....	42
12.2.1. Link to contact information	42
12.2.2. Standard Contact Information.....	42
12.2.3. Standard Telephone Number Format.....	43
12.2.4. Questions and Comments	43
13. Newsroom.....	44
13.1. Rationale	44
13.2. Guidelines.....	44
13.2.1. Navigation to newsroom	44
13.2.2. Basic Newsroom.....	44
13.2.3. Enhanced Newsroom Content	45
14. Agencies listing.....	46
14.1. Rationale	46
14.2. Guidelines.....	47
14.2.1. Mandate and Roles documents and Codes of Conduct	47
14.2.2. Agency listings on ministry sites	47
15. Style, language guidelines and web writing practices	47
15.1. Rationale	47
15.2. Guidelines.....	47
15.2.1. Canadian Press style	47
15.2.2. Writing for the web	48
15.2.3. Plain language.....	48

16. Duplicate Web Content	49
16.1. Rationale	49
16.2. Guidelines	49
16.2.1. Do not duplicate content owned by another government ministry	49
16.2.2. Responsibility for content	49
16.2.3. Avoid duplicating content on your ministry-owned website(s)	50
17. Non-Government of Alberta content	50
17.1. Rationale	50
17.2. Guidelines	50
17.2.1. Content	50
17.2.2. Logos	51
17.2.3. Advertising	51
18. Uploaded documents	51
18.1. Rationale	51
18.2. Guidelines	51
18.2.1. Naming conventions	51
18.2.2. File naming for Search Engine Optimization	52
18.2.3. Document information and file properties	52
18.2.4. Large files should be optimized for online viewing	53
18.3. Best practices	53
18.3.1. Use a style sheet to build the document	53
Part Four: Social Media	55
19. Use of social media	55
19.1. Rationale	55
19.2. Guidelines	55
19.2.1. Follow policies and procedures	55
19.2.2. Terms of engagement	55
19.2.3. Content	55
20. Look and feel of social media	55
20.1. Rationale	55
20.2. Guidelines	55
20.2.1. Follow the visual identity standards	55
Appendix I: Tips at a glance	vii
Appendix II: References and Further Reading	xiii

Table of Figures

Figure 1: alberta.ca header6

Figure 2: ministry header6

Figure 3: program/service site header (incorrect)6

Figure 4: example of breadcrumb trail.....7

Figure 5: example of breadcrumb trail on program-specific site.....7

Figure 6: Text resizer8

Figure 7: website footer9

Figure 8: Alberta signature.....10

Figure 9: minister’s section example10

Figure 10: questions and comments module11

Figure 11: About Us module.....11

Figure 12: A Message from the Government of Alberta example.....11

Figure 13: Stay Connected module12

Figure 14: examples of buttons.....12

Figure 15: primary and secondary navigation.....14

Figure 16: examples of banners16

Figure 17: example feature boxes (two-column; single feature per box)17

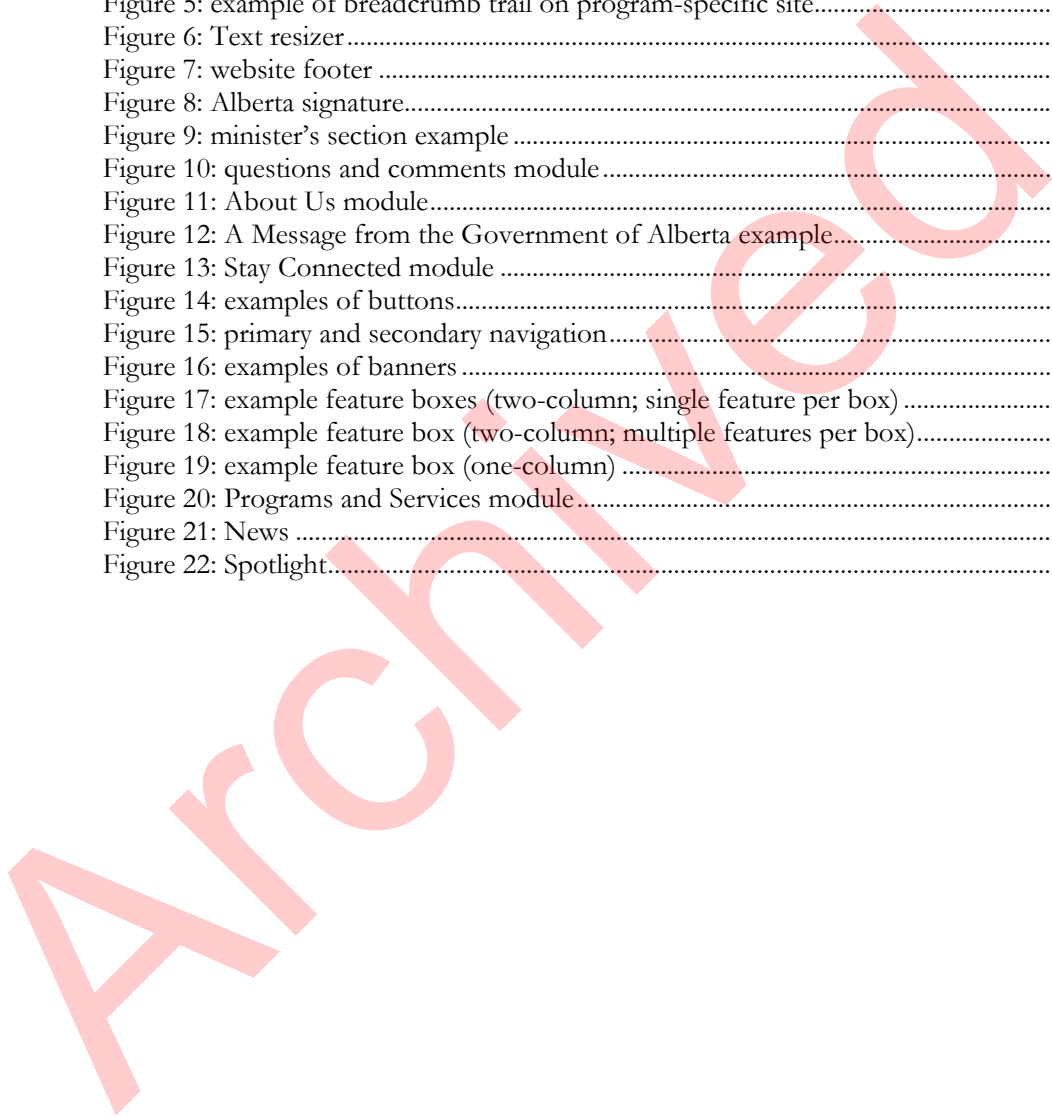
Figure 18: example feature box (two-column; multiple features per box).....17

Figure 19: example feature box (one-column)17

Figure 20: Programs and Services module.....18

Figure 21: News19

Figure 22: Spotlight.....19



Archived

Introduction

Internet and web communications are a primary vehicle through which Albertans reach their government. It is the policy of the government to ensure that the public is provided with timely, clear and accurate information about government's priorities, policies, programs and services.¹ Government of Alberta websites must be developed in a manner which informs Albertans, provides easy access to information and services, encourages two-way communications and improves service performance.

As well, the Government of Alberta and its programs must be identified in a clear and consistent way on communications with the public, including websites.^{2,3} More than half of Albertans turn to government websites as their first source of information. Ensuring that government websites establish a visual consistency is important because it helps to ensure confidence in the information source. It provides Albertans with evidence of the wide range of programs and services provided by their tax dollars. Finally, it helps the public in recognizing, accessing and assessing the facilities, programs, services and campaigns provided through the Government of Alberta.

This document outlines the various graphical, navigational, technical and content standards all Government of Alberta websites must follow. These standards apply to all websites which are:

- owned by the Government of Alberta
- represent a program or service of the Government of Alberta
- communicate initiatives of the Government of Alberta
- recognize the Government of Alberta as a primary partner

The degree to which the standards must be applied will vary. For instance, if

- the website is of an arm's length entity whose appearance of independence from the government must be sustained, or
- where partnership recognition or equality makes the Government of Alberta website standards inappropriate or impractical, or
- there is an instance of a competitive marketplace (e.g., Museums and heritage sites) and there is a need to differentiate from public sector (for revenue generating purposes),

then, some of the visual standards and all technical and content standards shall be followed.

For further details on technical implementation of these standards, please visit cgic.gov.ab.ca.

¹ Government of Alberta Communications Policy (2007), p. 2.

² Government of Alberta Communications Policy (2007), p. 2.

³ Government of Alberta Communications Policy (2007), p. 8.

Best Practices for planning and maintaining websites

Planning a website

Communication strategy

Communication and collaboration among ministries are key to ensuring that web content is not redundant. Towards this goal, develop and implement an effective communication strategy and keep up-to-date with web initiatives that are underway within the ministry as well as in other ministries.

Planning for the Web

Each ministry should develop its internal policies and guidelines to identify strategic goals and objectives for the website. These will help content developers provide relevant, useful and interesting information.

Preparing content

Ensure that information is as current as possible.

Ensure that information is concise and relevant to the end user.

Use a good web-writing style such as plain language.

Determine if documents have copyright or other restrictions limiting their use and, where applicable, negotiate for the assignment or license of copyright.

Communicate with the staff person who is responsible for reviewing and updating content on your ministry website. This person will know if information should be published on your site, or on that of another ministry.

Ensure that content fits within the ministry's missions and objectives, as well as within the ministry's web guidelines.

Identify your target audience. By knowing who will be using the information, it is easier to keep relevancy in focus.

Obtain necessary departmental approvals before publishing content on your ministry website. Following standard approval processes will help filter out unnecessary or repetitive content.

Maintenance

Develop and implement a document tracking system that will help maintain regular review of web content, allowing for checks for relevancy of information.

Once the content is published, test the site to ensure that standards have been implemented and web pages are indexed properly. If the site can be successfully searched by other ministries, they will identify duplicate content more easily. Please note that a site cannot be searched before it is published to the Web.

Regularly review and update links to ensure that they work.

Remove old documents and pages when they are superseded or out of date.

Maintain old links. When a web page is removed, a page noting this fact should be posted at the original URL. When a web page is moved, a redirect to the new URL must be posted at the original URL. These notification/redirect pages should remain for at least six months.

Perform searches of similar sites, using the same titles and keywords that are in your document.

Respond to feedback and inquiries in a timely manner. Refer inquiries to appropriate departments.

Archived

An Overview of the Alberta government web standards

In the electronic version of this document, each standard in this table is a hyperlink to the corresponding section.

Section	Updated standard	
Visual Standards	1. Every Alberta Government website will use a common look and navigation designed to provide a consistent user experience across government sites.	
	2. Application of the common look and navigation will vary depending on the type of site.	
Technical Standards	3. Government of Alberta websites and web applications will be developed in such a way as to comply with the Corporate Information Security Office (CISO)	
	4. Websites and web applications to be hosted on the shared ICT platform must comply with the shared ICT platform specifications.	
	5. Every ministry website will provide local (site-only) and global (government-wide) search options. All ministries will use a common, simple search form that offers these two options.	
	6. Every Alberta Government web page will have appropriate HTML, title, description and keywords elements. Other meta elements are optional, but should be included.	
	7. Government of Alberta follows Dublin Core standards for document metadata. Metadata will be optimized for Google.	
	8. Ministries will produce their websites in a way that can be indexed by the main Government of Alberta search engine.	
	9. Government of Alberta websites will adhere to W3C WCAG guidelines and will work on multiple browser platforms, including mobile browsers.	
	Content Standards	10. Every Government of Alberta web page will link to a standard copyright notice and terms of use.
		11. Every Government of Alberta web page will link to a privacy statement and P3P policy detailing what personal information is being collected.
12. Every Alberta Government website will provide a page with basic contact information and a link to the Questions and Comments feedback form at alberta.ca/home/Feedback.cfm		
13. All government ministry websites must include a tab to a Newsroom where news releases and other information are made available.		
14. Ministries will list their affiliated agencies in a consistent manner.		
15. Content on Alberta government websites must present content in plain language and follow web writing best practices.		
16. Alberta Government websites must link to, not duplicate, content that is owned and managed by another Alberta government ministry.		
17. Government of Alberta websites must reflect government business, policies, programs and services. Government of Alberta websites must not endorse nor be perceived to endorse or promote non-government entities.		
18. Uploaded documents such as PDFs, MS Word documents and Exel spreadsheets should be converted into HTML pages whenever possible and only be used when absolutely necessary. When documents are posted in these formats, they should be built, named, and optimized with the web in mind.		
Social Media Standards		19. The Government of Alberta supports the use of social media for informational and promotional purposes.
	20. Social media usage and accounts will adhere to Government of Alberta corporate identity standards.	

Part One: Visual Standards

1. Common Look and Navigation

Every Alberta Government website will use a common look and navigation designed to provide a consistent user experience across government sites.

1.1. Rationale

People should know they are on a Government of Alberta website, regardless of how they got to a page or which ministry published it. A common look and feel ensures a consistent user experience across Government of Alberta websites—a best practice for government sites. It also ensures that people can easily identify web pages as part of the Government of Alberta network. These common elements demonstrate the “unity of purpose” identified as a goal in the Government of Alberta visual identity program and make it easier for people to navigate within and across ministry websites.

This document contains guidelines for the common look and feel that will be used on every Government of Alberta web page.

The design is flexible enough to meet the needs of both ministries and their audiences, and will lend credibility to the Government of Alberta’s presence on the web.

Under the leadership of the Public Affairs Bureau, the Cross Government Internet Committee will be responsible for the future development of the common look and navigation.

1.2. Guidelines

1.2.1. Common look and navigation

Every Government of Alberta website will use a common look and navigation. How the elements of the common look and navigation are applied depends on what type of site. See section 2—Application of common look and navigation for sites other than ministry sites for site types and element requirements.

Templates are available in two formats, which contain all required elements: a RedDot starter kit and an HTML starter kit. Common elements include: header, footer, left sidebar modules, tabbed navigation with contextual left navigation, a banner image, and a consistent layout for homepages.⁴

1.2.2. HTML/Red Dot standards

Use only the standard specifications outlined in either the HTML or RedDot starter kits.

⁴ Not all template variations are available as of May 2010.

1.2.3. Corporate identity compliance

The common look and navigation complies with the Government of Alberta corporate identity and Alberta brand with regards to choice of fonts, images, language, and other graphic elements.

1.3. Common look and navigation elements

1.3.1. Header

The header contains the following elements:

- Government of Alberta logo (mandatory)
- Ministry name (mandatory for ministry sites; optional for other sites)
- Utility navigation and search (mandatory)
- Breadcrumb navigation (mandatory)
- Text resizer (mandatory)

Site and/or program names may not appear in the header under the Government of Alberta Logo.

Header examples

Figure 1: alberta.ca header



Figure 2: ministry header



Figure 3: program/service site header (incorrect)



Other than the approved elements, no additional graphics or links should appear in or above the header.

1.3.1.1. Government of Alberta logo

Websites will include the Government of Alberta logo in the header. The logo will link to the site's homepage.

For information on the Government of Alberta logo and its use, visit corporateidentity.alberta.ca/.

1.3.1.2. Ministry name

Ministry websites must include the ministry name in the header. The ministry name will be hyperlinked to the ministry homepage. Websites for programs and services may opt to include the ministry name in the header. For cross-ministry initiatives, use only the Government of Alberta logo.

Ministry names should not include “Alberta,” “Ministry of” or “Department of” in their site names unless “Alberta” is part of their official name.

Example: Use “Energy” instead of “Ministry of Energy” or “Department of Energy”; however, “Service Alberta” is acceptable.

1.3.1.3. Utility navigation and search

Ministries will include utility hypertext navigation links to their “Contact Us” and “Using this site” pages in their header.

Ministries will include a search box in their header.

1.3.1.4. Breadcrumb navigation

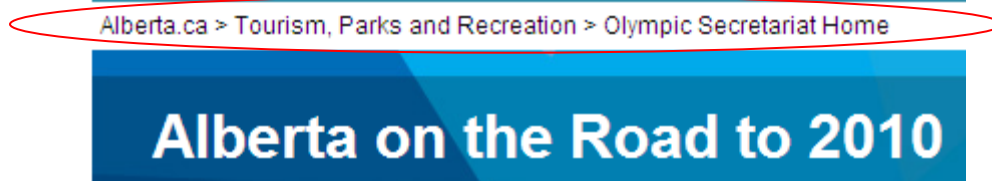
Ministries will include breadcrumb navigation below their common header. The breadcrumb Trail (referred to as the location bar) enables users to see where they are in terms of site hierarchy as they navigate deeper. It enables users to quickly navigate back to a page at a higher level.

On all ministry pages, the breadcrumb navigation will include at least two levels: the Alberta government and ministry homepages. “Alberta.ca” will be used to identify the Alberta government homepage. It will be hyperlinked to alberta.ca and will open in the same window. Ministries are encouraged to expand the breadcrumb to include more specific areas of their websites. On single-ministry, program-specific sites, ministries will include their ministry home page as the second level before the program-specific site home name link.

Figure 4: example of breadcrumb trail



Figure 5: example of breadcrumb trail on program-specific site



Include the current page in the breadcrumb trail to show users where they are in your website. The current page should not be a link.

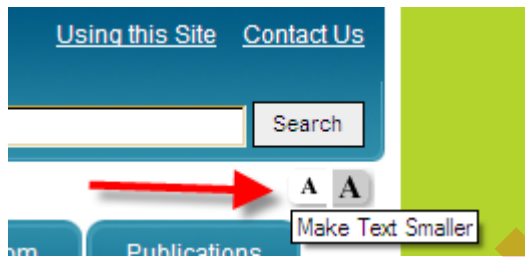
Abbreviations, acronyms and short forms of program names may be used within the breadcrumb navigation where appropriate; long names can make the breadcrumb trail unwieldy; abbreviate as necessary.

Test all links to ensure they work.

1.3.1.5. Text resizer

A standard text resizer will be used to allow users to adjust the size of the text on the webpage. See HTML and RedDot templates for details. Ensure that ALT tags/ToolTips are used to label the graphics “Make text smaller” and “Make text bigger.”

Figure 6: Text resizer



1.3.2. Footer

The footer will be located beneath the body of the page. It will contain the following elements:

- Utility navigation links to the following (**bold denotes mandatory**):

First Line:

- **Home** (link to the site’s home page)
- **Search** (link to the site’s search page)
- **Contact Us**
- **Using this Site**
- Site Map

Second line:

- **Government Ministries** (link to alberta.ca/home/ministries.cfm)
- **Alberta’s Brand** (link to albertabrand.com)
- **Minister’s Office Expenses** (mandatory for ministry sites only)
- **International Travel Expenses** (mandatory for ministry sites only)

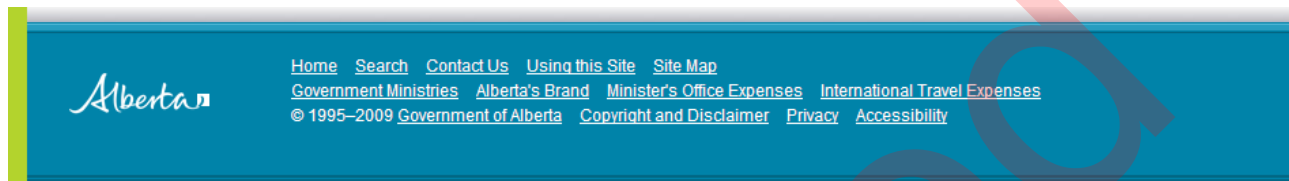
Third line:

- © 1995-2010 **Government of Alberta** (where the text “Government of Alberta” links to alberta.ca. See also Section 10—Copyright Notice and Terms of Use)

- **Copyright and Disclaimer**
- **Privacy**
- **Accessibility**
- The new Alberta signature (without the tagline). The ALT tag should be “Alberta. Freedom to Create. Spirit to Achieve.” It does not link to anything.

Footer example

Figure 7: website footer



No other text is required in the footer. However, sites may include additional hypertext navigation and information to the footer as necessary. Additional links should be inserted between the second and third lines of the standard footer. Non-ministry sites may omit the second line of footer navigation (see section 2—Application of common look and navigation for sites other than ministry sites).

Names of additional navigation links should be chosen carefully to make the functions of the links clear to end users.

1.3.3. Left sidebar modules

Several left sidebar modules have been developed to organize common information found on ministry websites. These modules include:

- Minister’s section
- Questions and comments
- About us
- Info 2 Know

1.3.3.1. Alberta Signature

Ministry and program sites

The Alberta signature with 1-line tagline will appear at the top of the left column on the site home page only. The ALT tag will be “Alberta. Freedom to Create. Spirit to Achieve.” It will not link to anything.

Figure 8: Alberta signature



1.3.3.2. Minister's section

Main ministry sites only

A module containing a photo of the Minister (170 × 100 px), links to a biography and contact information, a link to the mandate letter, and link to the minister's office and international travel expenses. Other text links may be added as necessary.

Figure 9: minister's section example



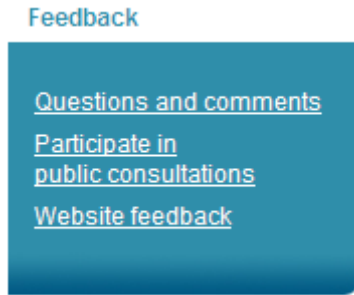
Crop the minister's official portrait to 170×100px, or clip out the background of the photo and use the grey background graphic provided in the HTML and RedDot starter kits.

1.3.3.3. Feedback

Mandatory on all sites

A module linking to the Government of Alberta comments and questions (formerly Alberta Connects). Ministries may also put links to consultations and web feedback in this box. The consultations should link to the main consultations page on alberta.ca and web feedback should link to the ministry's own webmaster feedback mechanism. If the ministry has other feedback mechanisms, these should be linked here.

Figure 10: questions and comments module

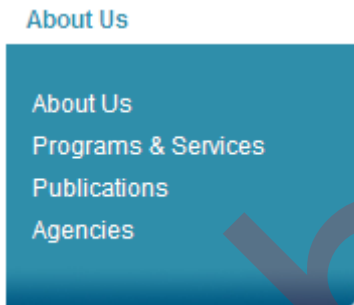


1.3.3.4. About Us

Mandatory, unless an About Us tab is used

A module containing the following links: Our Ministry, Publications, Programs and Services, and Agencies. Other links may be included.

Figure 11: About Us module



1.3.3.5. A message from the Government of Alberta

Optional

A module available for ministries with marketing initiatives and/or active advertising campaigns. Contains links directly to initiative pages, or can link to the "A message from the Government of Alberta" section on alberta.ca where other government advertising will be featured. Only used when there is active advertising.

Figure 12: A Message from the Government of Alberta example

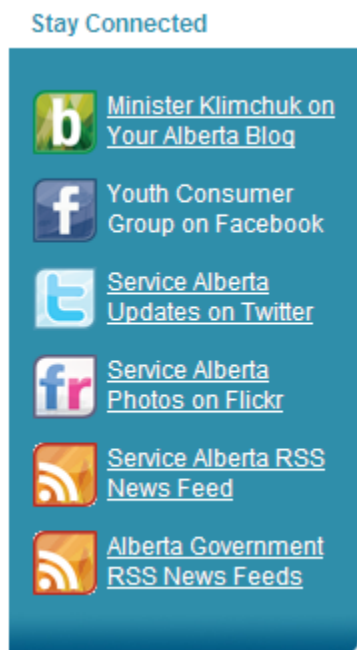


1.3.3.6. Stay Connected

Optional

A module for showcasing the social media in use for a ministry. See Part Four.

Figure 13: Stay Connected module



1.3.3.7. Buttons

Buttons appear under the left navigation modules. They should be used to highlight inside featured program pages or alerts. Design of buttons must follow the Government of Alberta corporate identity. A starting template is available, though buttons can vary in height, colour (within the brand palette), and background (e.g., brand graphics or solid).

Figure 14: examples of buttons



All buttons should be named according to the following convention and posted to the CGIC SharePoint site:

“Button-NameCamelCase”

Do not separate buttons with paragraphs (<p></p>). The style sheet will add space.

When designing buttons, try to use tone-on-tone colours that provide the greatest contrast for maximum legibility.

Always repeat text of the buttons in the <ALT> and <TITLE> tags.

Buttons should not compensate for weak structural navigation and site design. Do not over-use buttons.

1.3.4. Navigation elements

1.3.4.1. Structural navigation

Government of Alberta websites use structural navigation that is typically hierarchical based. The structural navigation elements are: primary navigation, secondary navigation, breadcrumb trail (see 1.3.1.4) and utility navigation.

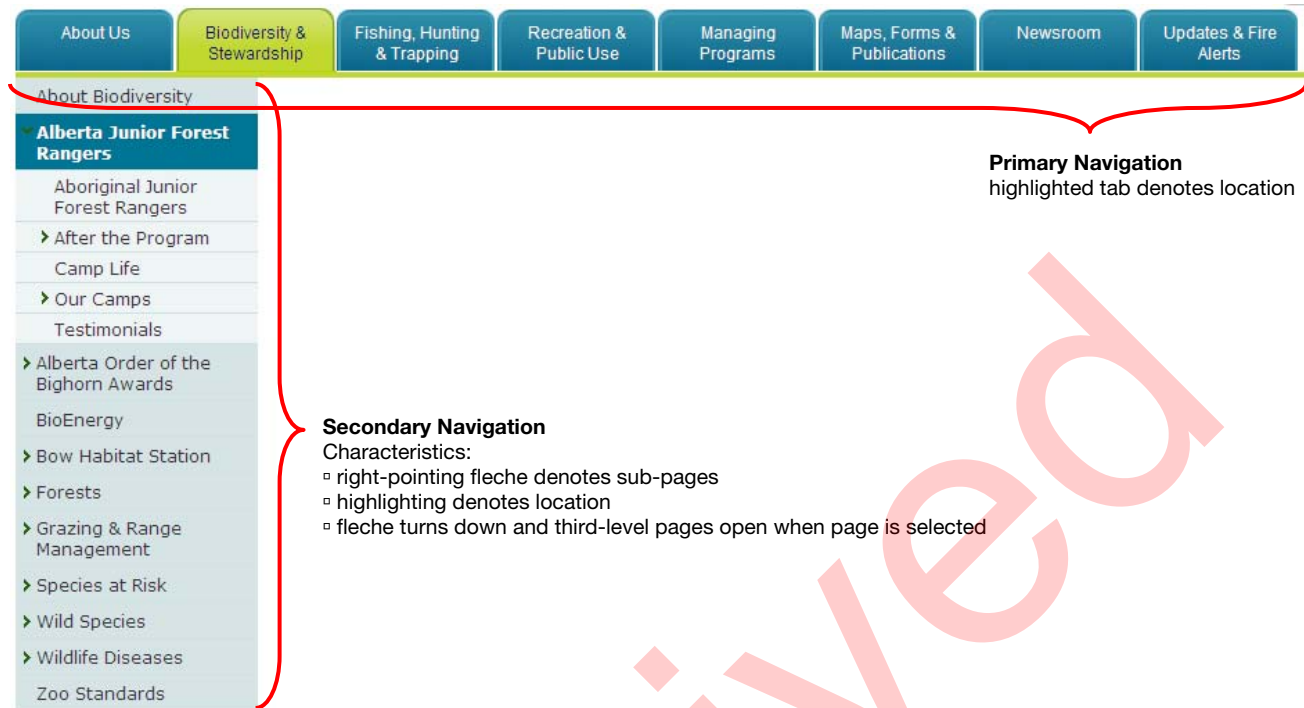
Primary Navigation is the main sections/topics that are displayed as “tabs” in the top horizontal menu.

Secondary Navigation is the menu (local navigation) within each tab displayed in the left column.

Best practice: Keep the structural navigation consistent.

Consistency helps build trust with users as they develop an understanding that the navigation is predictive and intuitive. The primary and secondary navigation menus should be “on-site” navigation within the hierarchical structure. There may be some exceptions, but these should be rare. Avoid links within the secondary navigation that suddenly take users to a completely different main section (tab) or that take users to a completely different website (off-site/external website). It is best to have a transition page that lists off-site links within the page body rather than having off-site links within the structural navigation.

Figure 15: primary and secondary navigation



1.3.4.2. Utility Navigation

Utility navigation typically refers to the links in the header and footer that are global (persistent throughout the site). See sections 1.3.1.3—Utility navigation and search and 1.3.2—Footer.

1.3.4.3. Consistent Labeling

Usability is enhanced by having consistent labeling (taxonomy) throughout the site between page titles and the structural navigation.

All of these elements should be consistent and display the same text:

- page title,
- menu label (primary or secondary navigation),
- breadcrumb trail label,
- browser bar title (located at the very top of the browser window)
- site map label (if a site map is available)


(Where possible avoid lengthy text for pages titles and menu labels, otherwise the navigation menu may display too long and become cumbersome.)

1.3.4.4. Additional Site Navigation Elements

Cross-links or Internal links take users to “on-site” web pages (usually same domain name/usually same user interface/same site owner). These links are typically found within the page body (copy) and take users to related pages within the same website. These links should contain consistent link labels that match the page title that they point to. Cross-links should be avoided within the structural navigation (primary and secondary menus).

External links take users to “off-site” websites (different domain name/different user interface/different site owner). Label non-government/off-site links to let people know when they are leaving the Government of Alberta domain. External links should be avoided within the structural navigation (primary and secondary menus).

Options for labeling include:

- Use of a visual icon: 
- Use of a “title” attribute within an anchor tag
- Use of text “External link” next to the link

Example: insert the phrase “External link” in parentheses to indicate links to content not provided by your website:

Government of Canada 
Government of Canada (External link)

For complete details on how to manage external links on Government of Alberta websites, visit internal.gov.ab.ca/pab/cgic/ and review the information under External Linking.

Links to documents (such as Word or PDF) should open a new browser window. Since these document pages do not have navigation, users will typically close the window after reading. If documents are opened in the same window, and the user closes the window, the entire website will also close which then annoys users.

1.3.4.5. Site Map

The Site Map is based on the structural/hierarchical navigation and may be generated automatically. It enables users to get a high-level view of the site content to quickly access specific content.

1.3.5. Home page/landing page banner

A template has been developed for a banner image that can be applied to homepages, or to main landing pages within websites. Ministries may choose appropriate images and text to create a banner image in a graphics program such as Photoshop. The template allows for customizable ALT text and links. The banner area can be used to identify a program- or service-specific site.

See help files on the banner image for more details.

Banner images must be 711px wide. Home page banners should be 178px tall. Banners used on inside pages can be shorter. Graphic design must follow the Government of Alberta corporate identity and brand guidelines.

Figure 16: examples of banners



1.3.6. Homepage containers

In order to achieve a balance of flexibility and consistency across ministry home pages, a standard homepage layout has been developed for Alberta government websites. This layout consists of several boxes (also referred to as containers) to organize similar content and maintain a clean, focused appearance on homepages.

1.3.6.1. Feature boxes

The homepage layout allows for one or two rows of two, equal-width, side-by-side feature boxes, or a single full-width feature box. These feature boxes may also be used for news and/or spotlight boxes, if preferred (see sections 1.3.6.3—News and 1.3.6.4—Spotlight). In this case, then, omit the news and/or spotlight boxes.

Figure 17: example feature boxes (two-column; single feature per box)

New Rules for Heat Sub-meters



The government has announced a new regulation for heat sub-meters used to bill tenants for the cost of heating their apartments.

[Read the news release](#)

[Read the tipsheet \(pdf\)](#)

Service Alberta on Facebook



[Alberta Youth Consumer Champions](#)

This Facebook group was created to help young Albertans become informed consumers.

Become a fan and get the latest updates.

Figure 18: example feature box (two-column; multiple features per box)

Features



[Alberta's Watchable Wildlife 2010 Calendar](#)
Dec 8, 2009



[Thinking of cutting a Christmas Tree? Make sure you have a permit!](#)
Nov 27, 2009

Christmas Tree Cutting



[Recreational Access Management Program](#)

[Feature Archives](#)

Figure 19: example feature box (one-column)

Building the Next Generation Economy...



Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan

The Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan will contribute \$500 to the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) of every child born to Alberta residents in 2005 and beyond.
[Read more...](#)

Feature boxes should contain an photo, or graphic icon (preferably 100 x 100 pixels, aligned left, with a green border) or video, and a brief text description or hyperlinks to relevant

information. Text should be short enough so it does not create unnecessary white space within the box.

1.3.6.2. Programs and Services

Albertans come to government websites primarily to access programs and services. Ministries will feature their most popular programs and services on the homepage using a “Programs and Services” box.

Content within the box can be grouped by subject. Text should link directly to information on ministry programs and services.

A text link at the bottom right corner of the box “View all government programs and services” will link directly to services.alberta.ca.

Figure 20: Programs and Services module

Programs and Services

About Us

Careers • Seasonal Employment • SRD
Contacts • Using this Site

Managing Programs

Fish & Wildlife Management • Forest
Management • Forest Pests • Lands • Mountain
Pine Beetle • Oil Sands • Preventing & Fighting
Wildfire • Provincial Grazing Reserves (PGRs) •
Timber Damage Assessment • Training

Biodiversity & Stewardship

About Biodiversity • Alberta Junior Forest
Rangers • Alberta Order of the Bighorn Awards •
BioEnergy • Bow Habitat Station • Forests •
Grazing & Range Management • Species at
Risk • Wild Species • Wildlife Diseases • Zoo
Standards

Maps, Forms & Publications

Air Photo Distribution Office • Education
Resources • Forms • Library Services • Maps •
Photos • Publications

Fishing, Hunting & Trapping

Aboriginal Rights & Responsibilities • Alberta
Regulations • Fish Management Zones • My Wild
Alberta • Recreational Access Management
Program • Recreational Fishing • Trapping

Newsroom

Minister’s Office • News Releases & Information
Bulletins • Site Archive

Recreation & Public Use

Alberta BearSmart • Alberta Wildlife Viewing
Guide • Cougars In Alberta • Coyotes In
Alberta • Recreation on Public Land • Tree
Cutting • Watchable Wildlife

Updates & Fire Alerts

Fire Hazard Forecasts • Fire Weather • Report a
Wildfire • Wildfire Status

1.3.6.3. News

Recent news (including news releases, information bulletins and other ministry news) can be featured in a News box on the homepage.

Include dates with your news items to ensure users know when the information was updated.

Consider adding a link “View all news” to connect directly to a complete listing of news.

News should be pulled automatically from the RSS feeds at alberta.ca/home/82.cfm, or updated manually. News releases, info bulletins and other ACN products should be linked to, not reposted.

Figure 21: News

News

[New Premier's award celebrates healthy food for Albertans](#) Dec 10, 2009

[Alberta's livestock industry receives competitive boost](#) Dec 09, 2009

[Streamlined Surface Rights Board improves dispute resolution process](#) Dec 09, 2009

[New traceability regulations come into effect March 1, 2010](#) Dec 09, 2009

[More than 700 seniors housing spaces to be built or upgraded](#) Dec 09, 2009

[More news >>](#)

1.3.6.4. Spotlight

Featured links and initiatives can be added to a spotlight box on the homepage.

Figure 22: Spotlight

Spotlight

[Housing Starts Here](#)

[H1N1 Preparations in Emergency Shelters](#)

[Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement Program](#)

[Core Need Income Thresholds for 2009-10](#)

[2008-09 Annual Report](#)

[Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness](#)

[Find Housing](#)

2. Application of common look and navigation for sites other than ministry sites

Application of the common look and navigation will vary depending on the type of site.

2.1. Rationale

The Government of Alberta is a large organization with diverse programs and services. Often, the public is unaware of the extent of these services or the expertise within Government departments. Branding all affiliated sites as Government of Alberta sites increases the understanding of the extent of Government of Alberta programs. The degree to which the common look and navigation is applied will depend on the type of site.

2.2. Definitions

2.2.1. Government of Alberta websites

Any website that any entity of the Government of Alberta has a role in planning, producing, or maintaining. See also the Introduction.

2.2.2. Ministry website

The main website for each Government of Alberta ministry.

2.2.3. Program website

A program website is the online presence for an ongoing program or service provided by a ministry or ministries. This includes type 1 and type 2 agencies as per the Government of Alberta corporate identity.

2.2.4. Promotional site

A website for a short-term promotion, public service announcement, or instance where there is a competitive marketplace (e.g., museums and heritage sites) and there is a need to differentiate from public sector (for revenue generating purposes). This also includes type 3 agencies as per the Government of Alberta corporate identity.

2.2.5. Application

An application that runs in a web portal.

2.2.6. Type 4 Agency site

A website for an agency with its own identity, but that wants to identify as an Alberta brand ambassador.

2.2.7. Type 5 Agency site

A website for an entity whose appearance of independence from the government must be sustained (e.g., regulators, quasi-judicial entities).

2.2.8. Partner site

Sites where partnership recognition or equality makes the Government of Alberta website common look and navigation inappropriate or impractical.

2.3. Guidelines

2.3.1. General

In general, all technical standards should be applied, as these are based on industry best practices. Also, following the Government of Alberta's wireframe (placement of main elements) is recommended for all sites, as this wireframe is familiar and has been user-tested with successful results.

For detailed guidelines for each type of site, see the table on the following pages.

2.3.2. Ministry websites

Ministry websites apply all standards.

2.3.3. Program websites

Program websites apply all standards, though some sidebar and homepage elements may be omitted, and variations are permitted for the placement of the banner and primary navigation.

2.3.4. Promotional sites

Promotional websites must use the standard header and footer (with additional/different footer links in the second line). Use of the wireframe is recommended, as is use of brand visual identity guidelines.

2.3.5. Applications

Applications must use the standard header and footer (with reduced/omitted footer 2nd-line links). Use of the CSS is recommended but not necessary if the application does not permit it.

2.3.6. Type 4 Agency sites


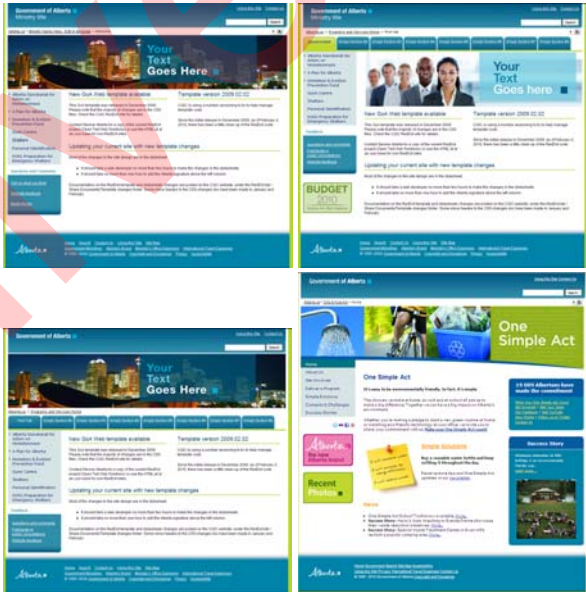
These sites use a modification of the standard footer only, though the cross-site links can be completely different. The footer must contain the words "An agency of the Government of Alberta" where the text "Government of Alberta" links to alberta.ca. Brand visual identity guidelines are strongly recommended.


2.3.7. Type 5 Agency sites

These sites are required only to include the words "An agency of the Government of Alberta" where the text "Government of Alberta" links to alberta.ca. Use of the wireframe is recommended.

2.3.8. Partner sites

The Government of Alberta logo should appear in the footer and link back to alberta.ca. If the partnership arrangement changes and the Government of Alberta becomes the site's sole owner, the site no longer qualifies as a partner site and one of the above categories' look and navigation must be applied.

		Types of sites	
		2.3.2 – Ministry websites	2.3.3 – Program websites
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ srd.alberta.ca ▫ finance.alberta.ca 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ alberta.ca ▫ programs.alberta.ca ▫ alis.alberta.ca ▫ Type 1 or 2 Agencies (see corporate identity standards) 	
Follow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ All standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ All standards mandatory except 1.3.3.1, 1.3.3.2, 1.3.3.4, 1.3.6.2, 1.3.6.3, and 1.3.6.4. Footer 2nd-line links optional. ▫ Permitted modifications to banners and location/use of primary navigation (see thumbnails). 	
Thumbnails			
Best practices	N/A	N/A	
Omit	N/A	<p>These can be omitted if not appropriate to the site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Minister’s section (1.3.3.2) ▫ Programs and Services (1.3.6.2) ▫ News (1.3.6.3) and Spotlight (1.3.6.4) ▫ Primary navigation 	

		Types of sites	
		2.3.4—Promotional sites	2.3.5—Applications
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all examples are currently compliant. ▫ alberta.ca/vancouver2010 ▫ www.b-free.ca ▫ Category 3 Agencies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ eninfo.gov.ab.ca/AirQuality/
Follow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ 1.3.1 ▫ 1.3.2 (modified 2nd-line links allowed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Part Two ▫ Part Three ▫ Part Four (if relevant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ 1.3.1 ▫ 1.3.2 (modified 2nd-line links allowed) ▫ Part Two
Thumbnails			
Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Follow the wireframe of Government of Alberta sites (i.e., element placement) ▫ Ensure method of primary/secondary navigation is clear and accessible 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Part Three (if relevant)
Omit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Left sidebar modules (1.3.3) ▫ Home page/landing page banner (1.3.5) ▫ Homepage containers (1.3.6) ▫ The cascading style sheet (CSS) for the template 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Part One (excluding 1.3.1 & 1.3.2) ▫ Part Four (unless relevant)

		Types of sites		
		2.3.6— Type 4 Agency sites	2.3.7— Type 5 Agency sites	2.3.8— Partner sites
Examples	□			
Follow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 1.3.2 (except cross-links; must state “An agency of the Government of Alberta” □ Part Two □ Part Three 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Part Four 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ footer must state “An agency of the Government of Alberta” □ Part Two □ Part Three 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The Government of Alberta logo should appear in the footer and link back to alberta.ca.
Thumbnails				
Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Follow the wireframe of Government of Alberta sites (i.e., element placement) □ Ensure method of primary/secondary navigation is clear and accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Wireframe (i.e., element placement) □ Ensure method of primary/secondary navigation is clear and accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Part Two □ Part Three □ Use of social media (section 19) 	
Omit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Part One (except 1.3.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Part One □ Part Four (unless relevant; then only Look and feel of social media (section 20)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Part One □ Look and feel of social media (section 20) 	

Part Two: Technical Standards

3. Security standards

Government of Alberta websites and web applications will be developed in such a way as to comply with the Corporate Information Security Office (CISO) information security management directives.

3.1. Rationale

The Government of Alberta has established the Information Security Management Directives. These directives are based on the international ISO 27000 standards, a comprehensive set of standards of best practices for information security management. Websites and web applications are included in the directives.

3.2. Guidelines

For the most current guidelines, consult the CISO website's [role-based summary](#) or [policy](#) for software developers.

4. Shared ICT platform specifications

Websites and web applications to be hosted on the shared ICT platform must comply with the shared ICT platform specifications.

4.1. Rationale

It is important to ensure that developers (including external vendors) understand Service Alberta's shared ICT environment and are building websites and applications compatible with that environment.

4.2. Guidelines

For the most current guidelines, consult the [Shared ICT Platform Specifications](#) document on [SHARP](#).

5. URLs and domain names⁵

The alberta.ca domain name must be included in all Government of Alberta publicly accessible websites that:

- are owned by the Government of Alberta,
- follow Government of Alberta “look and feel” standards,
- represent a program or initiative of the Government of Alberta,
- communicate initiatives of the Government of Alberta, or
- recognize the Government of Alberta as a primary partner

5.1. Rationale

The main search engine builds indexes of all web pages with the “Alberta.ca” and “.gov.ab.ca” domain names. This means that a person can easily search all Government of Alberta web servers from the search database. Use of the alberta.ca domain was first implemented in 2006. Effective F2010-11, all ministries should be using the “alberta.ca” as their primary domain (with “gov.ab.ca” used to redirect to the department’s primary “subdomain.alberta.ca.”)

5.2. Guidelines

5.2.1. General—Sub-domain names

The alberta.ca domain must be used for all government related ministry, program, service, communications initiative, or other government owned websites. In creating new URLs departments should be using the following convention for website domain names (known as sub-domain names):

- departmentname.alberta.ca for example: environment.alberta.ca
- programname.alberta.ca for example: jobs.alberta.ca

Sub-domain names should only be used when programs operate a separate website. They should not be used as redirects to point to program content that resides within a website.

5.2.2. General—Short form/tiny URLs or marketing URLs

Ministries may wish to support the marketing efforts of programs that produce posters, advertisements, publications or brochures that include website URLs by setting up short form URLs (a.k.a. marketing URLs). These are only necessary if the content resides deep within a website. A marketing URL uses the sub-domain name of the website and a short-form suffix that is descriptive for the program:

- subdomainname.alberta.ca/suffix

For example:

Site URL: landuse.alberta.ca/AlbertaLandStewardshipAct/Default.aspx

Marketing URL: landuse.alberta.ca/alsa

⁵ Excerpted from the [Government of Alberta Domain Name Policy](#). See cgic.gov.ab.ca for the full policy.

Any materials produced with a life span longer than 18 months must follow corporate identity guidelines and should use the main Government of Alberta domain name: alberta.ca.

Permanent signage must always use the Government of Alberta domain name: alberta.ca

Ministries should consider limiting the production of marketing materials that incorporate ministry subdomain names and marketing URLs six months prior to an election. Use the alberta.ca domain name in these instances.

5.2.3. URLs with “Alberta” in the program name

Websites that must follow common look and feel guidelines must also adhere to URL and domain name standards.

Previous to the 2006 re-org and full implementation of common look and feel, some ministries operated websites with “.ca” domain name extensions. These website domain names have been grandfathered. In these instances, program names included “Alberta”, so the alberta.ca extension was not required. For example:

- servicealberta.ca
- albertasupernet.ca
- learnalberta.ca

Going forward, any new websites designed in common look and feel must adhere to the domain name standards, using the alberta.ca domain name within their website name:

- subdomain.alberta.ca

There is no cost to ministries to set up sub-domain names. Contact the web services staff in your ministry to do this.

5.2.4. Using the “www” prefix

Websites should establish domain names that are accessible with AND without the “www” prefix. This is not possible when https (SSL/TLS) is used, so pick a single domain name in that case. Website redirection can be used to give the appearance of multiple names if necessary.

5.2.5. Full words, not acronyms

URLs for departments, programs or services should use complete words in URLs. Abbreviations and acronyms are to be used only if it is not possible to use complete words. If an abbreviation must be used, ensure it is the same as those used in other communications materials (e.g., AADAC)

5.2.6. Exceptions

Websites that do not need to follow the naming convention include:

- where partnership recognition makes the alberta.ca domain name inappropriate or impractical, or
 - applications
-

It is possible for the search engine to index government websites with other domain names. If you use another domain name, alert dutyweb@gov.ab.ca so that they can change the filter rule to allow your site to be indexed.

When the site is decommissioned, ensure it is removed from the search indexing.

If you use a URL other than “alberta.ca,” ensure that ownership of the domain is maintained for the life of any documents, websites, or collateral material that cite the non-alberta.ca URL.

Example: albertacanada.com

For help in assigning URLs, check with dutydns@gov.ab.ca.

Use free services that are available on the web to announce a new website to most other search facilities on the web.

6. Search form

Every ministry website will provide local (site-only) and global (government-wide) search options. All ministries will use a common, simple search form that offers these two options.

6.1. Rationale

Searching is an important method of finding information on the web. It is to your advantage and in the best interest of visitors to your website to provide an easy-to-use and accurate system for retrieval. A common Government of Alberta search form on your websites simplifies the task of locating information both within and across ministry websites.

In addition to enhancing the ease of use of government websites, a common search form also ensures that all ministries offer, as a minimum, site-only and government-wide searching.

The Government of Alberta currently uses the Google search appliance to search websites. For information on this product and how to optimize your department website for this search engine, visit: <https://extranet.gov.ab.ca/techinfo/interug/wwwsrch.html>.

6.2. Guidelines

6.2.1. All sites must have a search function.

Every Government of Alberta site must include a consistently placed link to a common search form that offers, as a minimum, site-only and government-wide search options.

The Government of Alberta search form is available in the HTML and RedDot starter kits.

Modify the search form template to refine the search, if required. Contact dutyweb@gov.ab.ca if you need help.

Once the search form is online, use it to query the search engine database to ensure that the form works.

Test all navigation links that connect to and from the search form to ensure that they work.

6.2.2. Links to search function

The following links to search must be on all sites:

- A search box in the header on every web page (see section 1.3.1.3—Utility navigation and search)
- A hypertext “Search” link in the footer of every web page (see section 1.3.2—Footer).

6.2.3. Help for searches

Government of Alberta websites will provide a link from the search form to a standard Help page that includes tips and techniques for searching. This link should point to alberta.ca/home/googlesearch/userhelp.cfm.

6.2.4. Other search engines

Ministries may use their own search engines on their websites—for example, database searches.

The common search form should still be used to ensure users are presented with a consistent, simple search interface across all government websites.

7. Metadata

Every Alberta Government web page will have appropriate HTML title, description and keywords elements. Other meta elements are optional, but should be included.

Government of Alberta follows Dublin Core standards for document metadata. Metadata will be optimized for Google.

7.1. Rationale

The standard process of publishing information on the web involves the conversion of electronic documents into HTML pages. These can be indexed and searched by web search engines, and linked to other documents on the web. For the current HTML standards, check w3.org.

Just as word processing programs have commands to format documents, HTML adds metatags—function-specific codes—to text and graphics. Effectiveness of searching can be greatly improved through the use of descriptive, consistent metadata. These elements can make it possible to search documents that are distributed across several ministry websites.

Because metadata is extracted from HTML documents by search engines in order to index web pages, it is best to prepare your site so that only the most relevant sections are indexed. As

a result, the HTML elements that are required for Government of Alberta websites are ranked according to the indexing requirements of your documents.

7.2. Guidelines

7.2.1. Title

All web pages must contain a `<TITLE>` in the `<HEAD>` section of the page. It should be a descriptive, subject-based title for that particular page, not the whole site in general. The contents of `<TITLE>` are presented in the Title section of search engine results—otherwise, the filename is used. Also, the title will appear in the list of visitors' bookmarks when they bookmark your website. Keep the title metadata to less than 70 characters. Example:

```
<TITLE>Guidelines for Government of Alberta Websites</TITLE>
```

The Government of Alberta RedDot template uses the body content page title as the meta tag title description.

Use relevant keywords that describe the page content, making it as meaningful as possible.

Do not use the same title for each page of your website. Whenever possible, HTML titles should be unique.

Example of main page title: `<TITLE>Main Page—Guidelines for Government of Alberta Websites</TITLE>`

Example of sub-page title: `<TITLE>How to use this document— Guidelines for Government of Alberta Websites</TITLE>`

Avoid using acronyms in web page titles. The results displayed by search engines may be meaningless to most people.

Example: `<TITLE>CGIC Guidelines</TITLE>`

Place organization name at the end of the page meta title. This ensures the page title is not cut off if too long.

7.2.2. Description

All web pages that you want the search engine to index should contain a `<DESCRIPTION>` metatag in the `<HEAD>` section of the document. If you have a number of similar documents, use the `<DESCRIPTION>` metatag only on the page that describes the collection of documents so that the search engine can locate the main page and its links.

The text in the `<DESCRIPTION>` metatag is intended as a short summary of your web page contents, and is presented in the Summary section of search engine results—otherwise, the `<TITLE>` is used. If you do not have these tags in your document, then the first few lines of your document are used for the summary. Example:

```
<META name="description" lang="en" content="These on-line Guidelines for Government of Alberta Websites offer steps, including tips and techniques that can help content developers and web administrators during the planning, production and maintenance stages of ministry web projects.">
```

Specifying the language using `“lang=“` within the `<DESCRIPTION>` metatag helps search engines present results based on the user's language preference.

Ensure that the <DESCRIPTION> metatag information is clear, as some search engines use it verbatim. Keep it to less than 160 characters total.

Because some search engines don't index metadata, the <BODY> content should also contain valid keywords and descriptions. Include these in text that is located close to the top of the page; some search engines assign greater relevancy to text located at the top of a page than to text located in the middle or at the bottom of the page.

Description metadata also applies to uploaded documents. See section 18—Uploaded documents.

7.2.3. Keywords

All web pages that you want the search engine to index should contain a <KEYWORDS> metatag in the <HEAD> section of the document. If you have a number of similar documents, use the <KEYWORDS> metatag only on the page that describes the collection of documents so that the search engine can locate the main page and its links. Use no more than 12 keywords, comma separated, that reflect the page content. Keep Example:

```
<META name="keywords" lang="eng" content="guidelines, techniques, tips, best, practices, tools, toolkit, toolbox, links, government of alberta, websites, ministry, ministries">
```

Specifying the language using "lang=" within the <KEYWORDS> metatag helps search engines present results based on the user's language preference.

Use the keyword metatag to provide nicknames, synonyms, acronyms or other words that could be used to search the site but may not actually be in the <BODY> text of the document.

By adding commonly misspelled words to the keyword list, you can help search engines to be more effective because many people misspell words when doing their searches.

Avoid using the same term too frequently in the keyword list because search engines may consider it a misuse of metatags and ignore your site.

Update keywords to reflect current issues and terms.

7.2.4. Document metadata / document properties

Government of Alberta follows Dublin Core standards for metadata on documents. The document properties of all downloadable documents from your site should have the document properties completed.

The document's metadata is read by the search engines and displayed in search results before the document text is. Populating document metadata controls what is displayed rather than leaving it to the search engine.

To add metadata to documents, select "Document Properties" from the File menu.

7.2.5. Languages

Specify the primary natural language that a page was written in, using the <LANG> attribute. Author-supplied language information can assist search engines in finding information.

Example:

```
<HTML lang="en">
```

Specify language variants of a document. If a document has been translated into other languages, you should use the <LINK> element to reference these. This allows a search engine to offer search results in the person's preferred language, regardless of how the query was written.

Example for a French language translation:

```
<LINK rel="alternate" type="text/html" href="mydoc-fr.html" hreflang="fr" lang="fr" title="Règles de présentation pour les sites web du Gouvernement de l'Alberta">
```

7.2.6. Author

Use <AUTHOR> metatags on web pages to facilitate error checking. The government's Linkbot software uses the <AUTHOR> metatag to identify web page owners in its reports.

The Author could be the name of the division, or the title of the staff member who is responsible for maintaining or updating the page's contents. It should not be the name of a staff member or of an external consultant. Example:

```
<META name="author" content="Government of Alberta, Ministry of Arts and Sciences, Secretariat, Chief Information Officer Branch">
```

7.3. Search Engine Optimization best practices⁶

Following are other best practices that, in addition to metadata, will increase the ease of searching for documents and files and their rank in a search engine.

7.3.1. Page naming

Search engines also use URL page names as part of ranking. Pages should be named and not system numbered. Use a static URL if possible.

Page names should use key words that reflect the page content and family of related content. Keep page names less than 28 characters if possible (not including period or suffix) for a total of about 32 characters with suffix.

It is best NOT to combine keywords as one word, such as "mypagecontent.html" as search engines will not be able to differentiate the keywords.

Separate keywords using a hyphen, not an underscore.⁷ For example "my-page-content.html" Google does not read underscores as separators and drops them, combining the two words together as one. Other search engines don't care.

Naming rules also apply to linked document file names.

⁶ Abridged from [Search Engine Optimization](#) on the cgic.gov.ab.ca.

⁷ See [youtube.com/user/GoogleWebmasterHelp#play/uploads/83/Q3SFVfDIS5k](https://www.youtube.com/user/GoogleWebmasterHelp#play/uploads/83/Q3SFVfDIS5k)

7.3.2. Body content

Body content is visible HTML text on a web page. Page body content needs to contain the same words used in the title, keywords, description, and page name.

Use keywords in secondary headings used to break content into smaller sections.
Semantically structure (or nest) headings by using the appropriate H1, H2, H3, H4, H5.

E.g.:

Main Heading (H1)
 Sub Heading (H2)
 Sub Sub Heading (H3)

And so on. Do not skip levels.

At the very least every page should have an h1 as the main title. This not only improves search engine accuracy, but also improves the user experience for those who use screen readers to navigate.

Avoid using images with text to convey your message. Search engine don't "see" text in images. If you must use images, ensure the ALT or Title description is completed properly.

8. Page indexing

Ministries will produce their websites in a way that can be indexed by the main Government of Alberta search engine.

8.1. Rationale

The search engine is an important tool for helping people locate information quickly and easily across internal and external ministry websites. The Government of Alberta uses Google search as its main search engine. Indexing, or the search engine's ability to locate information on each ministry website, is affected by a number of factors, including links, URLs, filenames, the type of software used to create the website, and the use of HTML metadata.

The following guidelines will help you ensure that your website content can be indexed and searched not only by the Government of Alberta's search engine, but by other search engines as well, ensuring repeated visits.

8.2. Guidelines

8.2.1. Fixing broken links

Ministries should regularly review and update the links on their web pages to ensure that they work.

Check the list of detected link errors published weekly at <https://webstats.gov.ab.ca/app/>. The Government of Alberta web server uses link validation software to crawl the Government of Alberta Website regularly and test documents that are linked off ministry web pages. It checks for missing and invalid link references and validates that graphics referred to in web pages actually exist. Direct any related questions to dutyweb@gov.ab.ca.

Websites that are hosted on the shared web servers housed at Service Alberta are automatically checked for link errors. If your website is not hosted by Service Alberta, use a free link validation software application to check the links on your site.

Some search engines give higher priority to web pages that are more frequently linked to on other pages. The more references to a specific page on other pages or sites, the more likely it will show up in a search.

8.2.2. Included sites

The Public Affairs Bureau will ensure that the Government of Alberta website provides a link to all ministry home pages in order for the Government of Alberta's search database to locate them. Links to websites can be added by request to intranetcomm@gov.ab.ca.

8.2.3. Compatible file types

Website content should be published only in file types accessible to the search engine. These are indexed by the main search engine, while unsupported file types are ignored.

Supported file types include⁸:

- text/html
- text/plain
- text/xml
- application/pdf
- application/postscript
- application/rtf
- application/msword
- application/wordperfect5.1
- application/vnd.ms-powerpoint
- application/vnd.ms-excel
- application/vnd.lotus-1-2-3
- application/vnd.lotus-wordpro
- application/vnd.lotus-freelance
- application/x-mspowerpoint
- application/x-msexcel
- application/x-dxf

The following file types are all treated as text/html:

- .cfm
- .asp
- .htm
- .html

The Government of Alberta search engine does not currently index all dynamically generated pages or pages that make use of on-line forms. If you plan to include these on your website, contact dutyweb@gov.ab.ca first to arrange for the search engine to index your documents.

8.2.4. Non-compatible file types

If you prepare a document using technologies that cannot be indexed by the search engine (for example, Flash, Shockwave or Java), or are not universally supported, provide alternative text content in an accessible format. See section 9—Accessibility.

⁸ For more information, see <https://extranet.gov.ab.ca/techinfo/interug/wwwgooglesearch.html#filter>.

8.2.5. Indexing

Prepare your site so that only the most relevant sections are indexed by search engines. As the search engine's index of pages grows, so does the number of results returned for most searches. Limiting the number of pages indexed by the search engine can help ensure that the most relevant pages rank highly in search results.

If you have a number of similar documents that are prefaced by a table of contents or introductory page, use the "robots.txt" file or <ROBOTS> metatag to instruct search engines to index only the page that describes the documents. For example, rather than indexing every news release on highway conditions, the search engine should index just the page that describes the news releases' content and links to them. The page that's indexed should have a meaningful title and meta-description, and a concise description of the content in its body.

Try to restrict each web page to one or two main ideas, in order to make information retrieval easier.

Do not index long pages that are not destination or content pages (i.e. site maps and other pages that might come back as false positives in search results).

8.2.6. Non-text elements

Provide a keyword-rich text equivalent for non-text elements such as photos, image maps and animations for the benefit of browsers without graphics capabilities. This includes using the <ALT>, <TITLE> or <LONGDESC> elements for images. Many search engines take into account the text within these tags when indexing your site. Example:

```
<IMG src="/images/environment_logo.gif" width="X" height="X" align="TOP/BOTTOM" alt="Alberta Environment Home Page" border="X" usemap="#X">
```

8.3. Best practices

Use current HTML/XHTML standards to prepare all web documents, while considering that they must be cross-browser and -platform compatible. Search engines will index HTML documents, as HTML is the standard "markup" language used by the Web.

For the current HTML/XHTML standards, check w3.org/.

A website will often be maintained by more than one person. It is therefore helpful to write markup language that is accessible to the next person who may have to update your pages. For example, use liberal line breaks and white space in the source documents.

When writing HTML, it is also helpful to include source code documentation in <COMMENTS> tags. Use it to describe the different document sections, or to provide specific instructions. Any text placed between the <!-- --> tags will be ignored by a web browser. For example:

```
<!-- Begin News Headlines -->
<P>Members of the public were delighted... </P>
<!-- End News Headlines -->
```

Use the free on-line HTML validation service located at: validator.w3.org/ and free CSS validation service located at: jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/ to check HTML/CSS documents for conformance to W3C HTML recommendations and other HTML/CSS standards.

Check finished HTML documents with a variety of text, and graphical browsers to ensure that people with a wide range of browser capabilities can access your website. Also consider testing on PDA/handheld devices.

9. Accessibility

Government of Alberta websites will adhere to W3C WCAG guidelines and will work on multiple browser platforms, including mobile browsers.

9.1. Rationale

The Government of Alberta has a responsibility to ensure that its web content is available to all Albertans, no matter how they need to or choose to access it.

9.2. Guidelines

9.2.1. Web content accessibility

The Government of Alberta will make every effort to make its websites accessible and easy to use for everyone, no matter which web browser users choose to use, and whether or not they have any disabilities.

Website must also conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0) of the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C). All pages should comply with AA success criteria.

9.2.2. Browser compatibility

Government of Alberta websites will work in the following browsers:

- Internet Explorer 6.0, 7.0 and 8.0 (Windows)
- Internet Explorer 5.1 and 5.2 (Mac)
- Netscape Navigator 7, 8 and 9 (Windows, Mac and Linux)
- Opera 7, 8 and 9 (Windows, Mac and Linux)
- Mozilla Firefox (All recent versions on Windows, Mac and Linux)
- Safari 1.2 and 2.0 (Mac)
- JAWS
- Any other web browser that understands valid XHTML and CSS.

Websites should use valid eXtensible HyperText Markup Language (XHTML) 1.0 Transitional and CSS 2.0.

9.2.3. Assistive devices

Websites should have **Skip to Navigation** and **Skip to Content** links on every page so that users can quickly move to important information if they are navigating by keyboard or assistive devices or on mobile technologies.

This also increases compatibility for mobile browsers.

9.3. Best practices

In December 2008, W3C published the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0). The guidelines are organized into four design principles of Web accessibility. Each principle has guidelines, and each guideline has testable success criteria at level A, AA, or AAA. The basis for determining conformance to the WCAG 2.0 are the success criteria. Below is the outline for WCAG 2.0. Each entry is a link back to the source document.

9.3.1. [Perceivable](#)

9.3.1.1. [Provide text alternatives for any non-text content so that it can be changed into other forms people need, such as large print, Braille, speech, symbols or simpler language.](#)

9.3.1.2. [Provide alternatives for time-based media.](#)

9.3.1.3. [Create content that can be presented in different ways \(for example simpler layout\) without losing information or structure.](#)

9.3.1.4. [Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background.](#)

9.3.2. [Operable](#)

9.3.2.1. [Make all functionality available from a keyboard.](#)

9.3.2.2. [Provide users enough time to read and use content.](#)

9.3.2.3. [Do not design content in a way that is known to cause seizures.](#)

9.3.2.4. [Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are.](#)

9.3.3. [Understandable](#)

9.3.3.1. [Make text content readable and understandable.](#)

9.3.3.2. [Make Web pages appear and operate in predictable ways.](#)

9.3.3.3. [Help users avoid and correct mistakes.](#)

9.3.4. [Robust](#)

9.3.4.1. [Maximize compatibility with current and future user agents, including assistive technologies.](#)

Archived

Part Three: Content Standards

10. Copyright Notice and Terms of Use

Every Government of Alberta web page will link to a standard copyright notice and terms of use.

10.1. Rationale

Government of Alberta websites provide an opportunity for ministries and related agencies to disseminate a wide range of materials to Albertans and other communities. It is therefore important to provide direct access on government web pages to statements about the rights, responsibilities and legal obligations of both the information providers and the end-users, with respect to the information that is published on those pages.

This can be accomplished in the form of links to standard government copyright, disclaimer and privacy statements. Using these common notices will make it clear that copyright and other laws apply to all government web pages. As well, people will easily identify information on ministry websites as belonging to the Government of Alberta.

As copyright requirements may vary from one web document to another, the government bodies responsible for each website must determine the appropriate use of materials published on their sites. The standard statements that are provided in these guidelines cover the minimum legal requirements; ministries and agencies may expand on these to model their own statements after seeking proper counsel from their legal departments or Alberta Justice.

Note: These guidelines do not apply to Crown corporations, who must obtain their own legal advice on the rights, responsibilities and legal obligations that apply to the content on their websites.

10.1.1. Copyright and Terms of Use

The copyright and terms of use statement provides information about content ownership. The accompanying permission statement provides conditions under which information on the site may be reproduced and redistributed, where applicable; if permission is required, it tells you how to obtain it. Using these statements on your website makes information more accessible, rather than restricting its use, and facilitates the dissemination of resources.

10.1.2. Disclaimer

The disclaimer statement informs people that while every effort is made to keep the information on Government of Alberta websites up to date, there may be instances where information is not as current as it can possibly be.

As well, when information provided by external sources is published, or linked to, on a government website, a liability disclaimer helps to protect the rights of the original source.

In certain situations, the courts have imposed a duty on entities (i.e. the Crown) which give advice, to make sure that they take reasonable care to ensure the advice they provide is accurate. If this care is not taken, then the recipient of the advice can sue and may get damages. The recipient does have to show that his or her reliance on the advice was reasonable.

The purpose of the disclaimer is to provide some protection to the Crown in the event of a lawsuit. While most ministries keep their websites current, there are often situations where websites cannot be updated or the information that they provide is speculative (such as price forecasts for commodities like oil and gas). The disclaimer lets people know that they should not rely on the website as their sole source of information.

10.2. Guidelines

10.2.1. Copyright requirements

Ministries and agencies should determine the copyright requirements of web documents before publishing them on their sites.

Seek counsel from your legal department or Alberta Justice, Civil Law, to determine the copyright status of documents, graphics, databases and other material hosted on your website.

10.2.2. Standard copyright notice

Every Government of Alberta webpage must include a standard copyright notice that is linked to site-specific “Copyright and disclaimer” document

Test all navigation links that connect to and from the “Copyright and Disclaimer” and “Privacy Statement” web pages, to ensure that they work.

10.2.3. Copyright and Disclaimer

The standard Copyright Notice will be located in the website footer (see section 1.3.2—Footer).

Where externally sourced information, i.e., third-party information, is published on your website, either as an excerpt or in its entirety, a liability disclaimer should be directly attached to the document and a copyright notice posted below it in the following format:

Copyright © [date] [author/owner].

If the document is published on the originator’s (the author or organization responsible for its contents) website, include an external link to the originator’s website where the document is posted rather than publishing the document on your ministry’s website (see Section 16—Duplicate Web Content).

The standard “Copyright and Disclaimer” document that is linked to from the Copyright Notice should reflect the copyright requirements of the web document, and will be based on a common, government-wide format.

If the standard statements provided in these guidelines do not apply to your site, or to a particular web page, contact your legal department or Alberta Justice, Civil Law, for help in developing statements that meet your needs.

When the conditions that govern the use of the contents of a web page differ from the standard copyright and disclaimer statements used on your ministry’s website, post a “caution” notice on the web page. For example, if you are providing a link to a page that has highly restricted copyright, post a notice beside the link as well as on the actual document or web page being accessed.

11. Privacy Statement and P3P Policy

Every Government of Alberta web page will link to a privacy statement and P3P policy detailing what personal information is being collected.

11.1. Rationale

All websites collect a certain amount of information about their users as part of their regular operation. This information, along with other information users may provide through a site, may be used to personally identify users. It's important that all Alberta government websites include a privacy statement and a P3P policy that clearly details what personal information is collected, how it is used, and that the information is collected in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP).

Note: The following guidelines do not include a standard privacy statement, but instead point to the resources and contact information that can assist you when developing a statement for your ministry website.

11.2. Guidelines

11.2.1. Privacy statements

Every Government of Alberta webpage must include a "Privacy" link that points to site-specific privacy statement documents.

Every Government of Alberta web page must include a link to a site-specific privacy statement in the footer.

To develop a privacy statement for your website, use the Guide to Developing Privacy Statements for Government of Alberta Websites published by the Information Management, Access and Privacy Branch of Service Alberta.
(foip.gov.ab.ca/resources/publications/PrivacyStatementsGuide.cfm)

For further information on privacy statements, contact your organization's FOIP coordinator. You may also contact the FOIP Help Desk at foiphelpdesk@gov.ab.ca, or phone 780-422-2657 (Toll-free dial 310-0000).

It is especially important that, when collecting any personal information through your website, you ensure compliance with the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) guidelines are followed. The Act is published on-line at: foip.gov.ab.ca/legislation/index.cfm .

Test all navigation links that connect to and from the "Privacy Statement" web pages, to ensure that they work.

Privacy statements should be reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance with FOIP.

11.2.2. P3P policy

Every Government of Alberta website must incorporate a P3P Policy (Platform for Privacy Preferences). P3P policies are an automated way to present your privacy policy, which is interpreted by the web browser when a user arrives at your site. The elements of your written policy must be reflected and consistent with your P3P policy.

The W3C P3P Project: (w3.org/P3P/) provides very detailed information on P3P and provides links to software available for developing P3P files.

Validate your P3P files using the W3C P3P Validator w3.org/P3P/validator.html

12. Contact information and feedback mechanisms

Every Alberta Government website will provide a page with basic contact information and a link to the Questions and Comments feedback form at alberta.ca/home/Feedback.cfm.

12.1. Rationale

Maintaining an ongoing dialogue between the government and Albertans is essential to providing quality services. Towards this goal, the Government of Alberta's communication system allows people to access government information, ask questions and provide feedback through the Internet, email and toll-free phone lines.

By including basic contact information (including email, telephone and fax numbers, and at least one mailing address) on your ministry website, you can help users decide on the method of communication that will best serve their needs. Providing this information in a standard way will make Government of Alberta websites easier to use. The use of common, consistently placed links will allow people to find the information, no matter which page or government site they're on.

12.2. Guidelines

12.2.1. Link to contact information

Every Government of Alberta website must include a consistently placed link to a page with basic contact information (see section 1.3.3.3—Feedback).

The “Contact Us” link will be located in the header and footer of every webpage.

12.2.2. Standard Contact Information

The standard contact information on websites will include the following basic information:

- Ministry/agency contact information:
 - email address
 - information line number and hours of operation
 - Alberta Connects toll-free number (310-0000)
 - fax number
-

- at least one mailing address

12.2.3. Standard Telephone Number Format

The Government of Alberta uses Canadian Press style for displaying phone numbers on government print and online materials.

Under this standard, phone numbers should appear as follows:

- Insert a hyphen between the first three digits and the last four digits. Examples:

780-427-1000
310-0000
Call toll-free, 1-800-642-3853

As a best practice, personal email addresses as contacts should be avoided. Instead, aliases should be used – for example: myministryhelp@gov.ab.ca. Where necessary, ensure that any contact person whose email address is listed is aware of the link and approves of it.

Provide additional contact information on the web page as required by your ministry or agency. Optional items may include:

- name and title of contact person—consider linking the staff member name to their contact information in the Government of Alberta Telephone Directory as staff have the ability to update their contact info directly at alberta.ca/home/159.cfm
- email address for submitting technical comments
- additional mailing addresses (i.e., regional offices)
- drop-in address
- link to the questions and comments form

To add a contact information webpage to your site, use either the HTML or RedDot templates, which provide the required contact information.

Test all navigation links that connect to and from the contact information page, to ensure that they work.

12.2.4. Questions and Comments

Formerly *Alberta Connects*, the Questions and Comments page found at alberta.ca/home/Feedback.cfm allows citizens to provide comments or ask questions on any topic. Submissions are routed to and responded to by the pertinent ministry Communications shop.

Should your ministry wish to add a Subject Area to the drop-down menu found on this webpage, use the form to submit your request.

- Use category “Website Feedback”
 - Subject: “New Category requested for Alberta Connects”
-

13. Newsroom

All government ministry websites must include a tab to a Newsroom where news releases and other information are made available.

13.1. Rationale

While the Newsroom is open to the public, the information is targeted at the news media for use in reporting on government activities. Over 50 per cent of media visit corporate sites looking for information. Having the information they are looking for in a consistent place will improve usability.

13.2. Guidelines


13.2.1. Navigation to newsroom

Every ministry website should include a Newsroom tab.

Consistency in naming and link placement will help individuals looking through the various ministry websites find this information.

13.2.2. Basic Newsroom


Basic content which each department should make available includes:

- **News releases.** Any news items publically distributed through ACN should be available from the Newsroom homepage. This is easily facilitated through RSS feeds made available by PAB: alberta.ca/acn/rssministry.cfm
 - Also include a link to your ministry RSS feed using the RSS  icon and feeds available at: alberta.ca/home/82.cfm
- **Minister.** This page should contain:
 - A link to the minister's biography available on Legislative Assembly's website.
 - Minister's official photo available on Premier's Team page: premier.alberta.ca/team/
 - A link to the minister's mandate letter available on Premier's Team page premier.alberta.ca/team/
- **Parliamentary Assistants (if applicable)** This page should contain:
 - A link to the parliamentary assistant's biography available on Legislative Assembly's website.
 - Parliamentary assistant's official photo available on Premier's Team page: premier.alberta.ca/team/
 - A link to the parliamentary assistant's mandate letter available on Premier's Team page premier.alberta.ca/team/
- **Events.** Provide some basic information about events occurring/upcoming in the ministry. This can include special weeks and announcements that may be of interest to media.
- **Facts & Statistics.** Links to key ministry facts and statistics available on your website.

- **Useful Websites/Publications.** Links to additional websites or publications which are of importance to ministry business.
- **Spokesperson.** Provide name/contact information for ministry spokesperson(s)

Ministry newsrooms should also include a link to the Government of Alberta Newsroom at newsroom.alberta.ca to subscribe to receive Government of Alberta news via email or RSS.

Basic newsroom

Ministry header	
Minister	<p>Newsroom</p> <p>News releases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use Government of Alberta RSS feed to populate news items <p> Subscribe to (ministry name) news</p> <p>Visit newsroom.alberta.ca to subscribe to Government of Alberta news via email or RSS.</p>
Parliamentary Assistant	
Events	
Facts & Statistics	
Useful websites/publications	
Spokespersons	

13.2.3. Enhanced Newsroom Content


If your ministry captures additional media from events, you should add additional links to these items on your Newsroom page. An enhanced Newsroom site could include:

- **Speeches.** Text from speeches delivered by the minister/parliamentary assistant at government events.
- **Photos.** Photos (thumbnails and high resolution) from ministry events.
 - Post a short caption of what the event is and who is in the photo. If media use the image, they will have the correct information.
 - Ensure you have permission from those in the photo to use it for Internet distribution.
 - High-resolution images should only be provided if the Government of Alberta holds copyright to the photos, or if appropriate permissions have been obtained.
 - Post an acceptable use statement for use of the photos. See: alberta.ca/home/884.cfm
- **Audio/Video.** Audio/video clips from ministry events.
 - Post a short caption of what the event is and who is in the video. If media use the clip, they will have the correct information.
 - Ensure you have permission from those in the clip to use it for Internet distribution.
 - Post an acceptable use statement for use of the clips. See: alberta.ca/home/884.cfm
 - Popular audio formats include .mp3 for audio and .wmv or .mp4 for video.

- **Social media.** If your ministry is using social media, place links/widgets in the newsroom.
 - Embed widgets and/or links to ministry- or program-affiliated social media pages.
 - If Flickr and YouTube are used to host photos, audio and video, then the “Photos” and “Audio/Video” sections can be replaced.
 - Use the official social media graphics on the CGIC site.

If your ministry has additional information to add to the Newsroom, you can expand the left-hand navigation to accommodate this. Some departments make feature articles or newsletters available in their newsrooms.

Enhanced Newsroom

Ministry header		
Minister	Newsroom News releases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use Government of Alberta RSS feed to populate news items ▪  Subscribe to (ministry name) news ▪ Visit newsroom.alberta.ca to subscribe to Government of Alberta news via email or RSS. 	Social media widgets
Parliamentary Assistant		
Speeches		
Photos		
Audio/Video		
Events		
Facts & Statistics		
Useful websites/publications		
Spokespersons		

Program sites without an adequate news presence should link to their ministry/ies newsroom, or use RSS to display program-specific news.

14. Agencies listing

Ministries will list their affiliated agencies in a consistent manner.

14.1. Rationale

The **Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act** requires that all of Alberta’s public sector agencies work towards greater accountability and transparency. This includes easy, consistent access to agency information online.

14.2. Guidelines

14.2.1. Mandate and Roles documents and Codes of Conduct

The Agency Governance Secretariat will post the Mandate and Roles document and Code of Conduct for each agency, or link to the pages for the documents on the agency or department website.

This information is posted at alberta.ca/ags. As the act comes into effect, responsibility for posting this content will shift to the ministries.

14.2.2. Agency listings on ministry sites

The “About Us” sidebar module or an “About Us” tab must have a link to an “Agencies” page. Ministries must include the following text⁹ on this page:

Agencies are established by the provincial government to fulfill a range of services and functions including health care, social services, post secondary education, regulatory oversight, adjudicative decisions and advice to the government and select corporate enterprises. Agencies are directly responsible to a minister and along with the related department, form the ministry.

Learn more about agencies at [link to alberta.ca/ags].

Agencies responsible to the Minister of [Ministry name]:

[List agencies with links to mandate and roles documents, codes of conduct and agency website (if it exists)]

15. Style, language guidelines and web writing practices

Content on Alberta government websites must present content in plain language and follow web writing best practices.

15.1. Rationale

Plain language and web writing best practices ensure that online content is clear and easily understood by most readers.

15.2. Guidelines

15.2.1. Canadian Press style

The Government of Alberta external communications standard is Canadian Press (CP) style. Most Canadian media follow CP, and it is a writing style that most Albertans will be familiar with from their local newspapers. CP style includes using Canadian spelling.

Unless your department has an in-house style guide that specifically requires a different approach, follow CP Caps and Spelling rules for spelling and Caps and Spelling and the CP Stylebook for capitalization. Example:

Provincial Court of Alberta, but youth court
Environment Minister Firstname Lastname, but the environment minister

⁹ As the act comes into effect, responsibility for posting this content will shift to the ministries. Therefore, while this currently duplicates information on alberta.ca/ags, this will not be the case in perpetuity (30 March 2010).

The CP Stylebook also has a number of other helpful sections including commonly confused words, technical terms and metric conversion information.

15.2.2. Writing for the web

Write web content using established web writing practices.

People read differently on the web than they do on paper. Users tend to scan, rather than read word-for-word. They may also not read an entire page before moving on to something else. This requires a different approach to writing and presenting content.

Put the most important information at the top, with the supporting information appearing further down the page (inverted pyramid style).

Make your text scannable:

- use bulleted lists and clear headlines and subheads
- highlight keywords or phrases by bolding them (use this technique sparingly)

Remember that readers may not come through your site in a linear way. Define acronyms and unusual terms on every page they appear on — or better yet, avoid them entirely.

Be concise. This includes using shorter sentences and paragraphs, as well as reducing the overall number of words. Jakob Nielsen recommends cutting the word count of conventional writing in half (useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html).

Write in plain, simple language (see below).

15.2.3. Plain language

Write in plain, simple language to ensure your message reaches the greatest number of readers. Write to your audience, but keep in mind that, as government, other people outside of your target group may also be accessing your pages.

Consider this: Is the information on your site clear enough that an immigrant whose first language isn't English can understand it? What about seniors?

Also, keep in mind that nearly half of Canadians function at the two lowest reading levels (Level 3 is considered to be the minimum desired level of literacy skills – what would be needed to complete high school and enter college). Source: Literacy Alberta/Statistics Canada (2005)

Minimize the use of acronyms and jargon.

Examples:

surplus instead of *economic cushion*
school instead of *educational institution*
Cabinet Policy Committee instead of *CPC*

Wherever possible choose short, simple words over longer, more complex ones

Example:

use instead of *utilize*
show instead of *demonstrate*
consider instead of *take into consideration*

CP Caps and Spelling has a list of plain words that may help reduce the “governmentese.”

Write in the active voice.

Active: *Minister Jones reviewed the report.*
 Passive: *The report was reviewed by Minister Jones.*

16. Duplicate Web Content

Alberta Government websites must link to, not duplicate, content that is owned and managed by another Alberta government ministry.

16.1. Rationale

Government of Alberta websites form a communication system that allows ministries to disseminate information on their programs and services to the widest audience possible. Towards making the system as user-friendly as possible, web administrators and content developers should take measures to avoid the duplication of effort across ministries. Less duplication of content improves searching and indexing, and makes information easier to update, and facilitates shared visits and increased traffic among all Government of Alberta websites. It also means that people are less likely to find inconsistent or conflicting information on ministry websites, helping them to quickly and effectively find what they are looking for.

16.2. Guidelines¹⁰

16.2.1. Do not duplicate content owned by another government ministry

Ensure that the content you plan to publish is owned and managed by your ministry.

16.2.2. Responsibility for content

If the content you wish to provide to your website visitors is the responsibility of another ministry and is published on their website, provide a short summary of the content and a link to that web page rather than duplicating the content. Example:

- Instead of publishing a Government of Alberta news release on your website, include a link to the corresponding item on the News section of the Government of Alberta website at: alberta.ca/home/news. This site can also be searched for past news releases, Orders in Council and major announcements dating from 1995 to present.
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is responsible for providing information to users of off-highway vehicles related to use on Recreation on Public Land. Additional information provided by the Government of Alberta includes Snowmobile and ATV safety. Rather than recreating this info, SRD links to the Alberta Transportation Traffic

¹⁰ See [Content Duplication – Discussion Paper](#) on cgic.gov.ab.ca.

Safety in Alberta website, where snowmobile and ATV vehicle safety information is posted.

If the content you need to supply is a cross-ministry initiative, determine which ministry is the lead ministry responsible for posting the content and have the other ministries agree to link to it from their sites.

If you must duplicate content, you must obtain permission from the owner of the content and set-up a review schedule to verify accuracy of content duplicated, on an on-going basis.

16.2.3. Avoid duplicating content on your ministry-owned website(s)

Content duplication should be avoided in almost all instances (even within your own site) because:

- It helps to ensure the accuracy, consistency and credibility of information posted to your site(s) – visitors will be less likely to find contradictory information
- Client satisfaction is increased when visitors have less information to wade through to find what they are looking for
- Fewer instances of content duplication requires fewer updates, freeing up staff and budget resources
- Less maintenance makes it easier to manage and maintain content
- Cross linking encourages greater visitor use of your site, or shared traffic between sites that your ministry owns

17. Non-Government of Alberta content

Government of Alberta websites must reflect government business, policies, programs and services. Government of Alberta websites must not endorse nor be perceived to endorse or promote non-government entities.

17.1. Rationale

Government of Alberta websites exist to represent the policies and work of the government on behalf of the citizens of Alberta.

17.2. Guidelines

17.2.1. Content

Documents/content owned/produced solely by non-Government of Alberta organizations should not be posted on Alberta government websites.

Where available, ministries may link to these other resources on the website where the resource is.

17.2.2. Logos

Logos other than that of the Government of Alberta must not appear on Government of Alberta Websites.

Exceptions to this are the same as those detailed in section 2—Application of common look and navigation for sites other than ministry sites.

17.2.3. Advertising

Government of Alberta sites do not permit outside advertising.

Advertising of Government of Alberta programs, services, and public service campaigns is permitted.

18. Uploaded documents

Uploaded documents such as PDFs, MS Word documents and Exel spreadsheets should be converted into HTML pages whenever possible and only be used when absolutely necessary. When documents are posted in these formats, they should be built, named, and optimized with the web in mind.

18.1. Rationale

While ideally, all website content should be contained on web pages, sometimes it is not feasible to do this (e.g., Annual Reports, Business Plans, other long documents, print-ready samples and posters, etc.). These documents should still be functional in an online environment. This adds to the overall usability of the website.

18.2. Guidelines

18.2.1. Naming conventions

Documents should be named as plainly as possible and file names should emulate the title of the document

File names should emulate **the title** as it appears on the front page of the document - exceptionally long document titles may need to be shortened (words in the document title removed) or abbreviated, but never use acronyms *only* or generic titles *only*.

Where historic statistics or archives are not required, only the most current version of a document should be posted on the website and reside on the web server. If a document needs to be replaced, consider naming it the same as the previous version in order to overwrite previous versions of itself. If the file name of a document changes - ensure that you instruct the webmaster to delete the old version of the document from the web server.

To overwrite documents - file names would not contain:

- Dates* (e.g., Filename-September2009.pdf)
 - Version numbers (e.g., Filename-v2.pdf)
 - Other distinguishing information (e.g., Filename-final-FINAL-approved.pdf)
-

When document file names include dates¹¹, they should not contain:

- Version numbers (e.g., Filename-v2.pdf)
- Other distinguishing information (e.g., Filename-final-FINAL-approved.pdf)

Documents posted to ministry websites should NEVER contain Action Request (AR) numbers either within the document or as part of the file name.

18.2.2. File naming for Search Engine Optimization

To improve search results:

- Use hyphens (not underscores)
- Optimal file name length is 30 characters, to do this:
 - Use a combination of camel case (capitalize each word, no spaces) and hyphens
 - Remove unnecessary words: “a”, “the”, “and”, “for”

Using acronyms or a category name at the front of a file name groups like-documents together on the web server and may also support search results.

For example:

Name of document	File name before	File name after
Alberta BearSmart – Bears and Residents	Residents.pdf	AlbertaBearSmart-Residents.pdf
Alberta BearSmart – Bears and Hunters	Hunters.pdf	AlbertaBearSmart-Hunters.pdf
Chronic Wasting Disease in Wild Deer in Alberta since Sept 2005	New map.pdf	CWD-inWildDeer-Map-2005-09.pdf
Government of Alberta’s Policy and Regulations Regarding Inter/Intra-basin Water Movement in Alberta	Information_about_inteintra-basis_water_movement_for_AFMRT.pdf	AlbertaPolicyRegs-InterIntraWaterMovement-Jul08.pdf

18.2.3. Document information and file properties

Documents posted to Alberta government websites should include a publish date and ministry owner/authorship information (within the document):

- Documents produced by Government of Alberta employees should identify the Government of Alberta or the ministry as the document author / copyright owner. This information should appear on the document as well as in metadata properties.
- Documents developed by contractors on contract to the Government of Alberta should identify Government of Alberta or the ministry as either the document author / copyright owner. This information should appear on the document as well as in metadata properties

¹¹ Following the filing naming conventions as set by your web services team.

- Documents produced and co-authored by ministries and stakeholders should identify all parties as authors of the document. This information should appear on the document as well as in metadata properties.

Document metadata property fields should be completed.

This ensures that search engines can find them.

18.2.4. Large files should be optimized for online viewing

Multiple-page documents must have internal bookmarks so that navigation within the document is possible.

18.3. Best practices

18.3.1. Use a style sheet to build the document

When preparing documents in MS Word, use styles such as Heading 1, Heading 2 and Text or Normal to change the formatting of the text. When a style sheet is used a table of contents with automatic hyperlinks can be generated. If the document is then converted to a PDF, all the headings automatically convert to bookmarks.

Archived

Archived

Part Four: Social Media

19. Use of social media

The Government of Alberta supports the use of social media for informational and promotional purposes.

19.1. Rationale

According to the Premier, “If we’re going to get the ... message out there ..., we’re going to have to use the same media.” Social media is here to stay.

19.2. Guidelines

19.2.1. Follow policies and procedures

Government of Alberta social media accounts will follow the Government of Alberta social media policy and procedures.

These are available on the CGIC website at cgic.gov.ab.ca.

19.2.2. Terms of engagement

Websites with feedback publishing capability or links to third-party social media sites must include a terms of engagement/comment policy.

19.2.3. Content

Social media sites must adhere to content duplication best practices and guidelines. Use Social Media to promote, interact, inform and drive traffic to ministry sites - do **not** repost content already contained on ministry sites to Social Media sites.

20. Look and feel of social media

Social media usage and accounts will adhere to Government of Alberta corporate identity standards.

20.1. Rationale

As the Government of Alberta establishes a presence on third-party sites not controlled or owned by the government, it is still important that people recognize they are on a page or “channel” managed by the Government of Alberta.

20.2. Guidelines

20.2.1. Follow the visual identity standards.

Social media visual identity standards are detailed in section 16 of the Government of Alberta corporate identity standards. Application of these standards will vary according to the parameters set out in section 2—Application of common look and navigation for sites other than ministry sites. There are standard backgrounds, avatars, and channel colours for each of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other online sites where profile customization is possible.

For information on the visual identity standards, visit corporateidentity.alberta.ca.

Archived

Appendix I: Tips at a glance

- ✓ For information on the Government of Alberta logo and its use, visit corporateidentity.alberta.ca/. ----- 7
- ✓ Ministry names should not include “Alberta,” “Ministry of” or “Department of” in their site names unless “Alberta” is part of their official name. ----- 7
- ✓ Include the current page in the breadcrumb trail to show users where they are in your website. The current page should not be a link. ----- 8
- ✓ Abbreviations, acronyms and short forms of program names may be used within the breadcrumb navigation where appropriate; long names can make the breadcrumb trail unwieldy; abbreviate as necessary. ----- 8
- ✓ Test all links to ensure they work.----- 8
- ✓ Names of additional navigation links should be chosen carefully to make the functions of the links clear to end users. ----- 9
- ✓ Crop the minister’s official portrait to 170×100px, or clip out the background of the photo and use the grey background graphic provided in the HTML and RedDot starter kits. -----10
- ✓ Do not separate buttons with paragraphs (<p></p>). The style sheet will add space. ---13
- ✓ When designing buttons, try to use tone-on-tone colours that provide the greatest contrast for maximum legibility.----- 13
- ✓ Always repeat text of the buttons in the <ALT> and <TITLE> tags. ----- 13
- ✓ Buttons should not compensate for weak structural navigation and site design. Do not over-use buttons.----- 13
- ✓ Best practice: Keep the structural navigation consistent. ----- 13
- ✓ Include dates with your news items to ensure users know when the information was updated.----- 18
- ✓ Consider adding a link “View all news” to connect directly to a complete listing of news.18
- ✓ News should be pulled automatically from the RSS feeds at alberta.ca/home/82.cfm, or updated manually. News releases, info bulletins and other ACN products should be linked to, not reposted. ----- 19
- ✓ Any materials produced with a life span longer than 18 months must follow corporate identity guidelines and should use the main Government of Alberta domain name: alberta.ca. -----27

- ✓ Permanent signage must always use the Government of Alberta domain name:
alberta.ca-----27
 - ✓ Ministries should consider limiting the production of marketing materials that incorporate ministry subdomain names and marketing URLs six months prior to an election. Use the alberta.ca domain name in these instances. -----27
 - ✓ It is possible for the search engine to index government websites with other domain names. If you use another domain name, alert dutyweb@gov.ab.ca so that they can change the filter rule to allow your site to be indexed. -----28
 - ✓ When the site is decommissioned, ensure it is removed from the search indexing.-----28
 - ✓ If you use a URL other than “alberta.ca,” ensure that ownership of the domain is maintained for the life of any documents, websites, or collateral material that cite the non-alberta.ca URL. -----28
 - ✓ For help in assigning URLs, check with dutydns@gov.ab.ca.-----28
 - ✓ Use free services that are available on the web to announce a new website to most other search facilities on the web. -----28
 - ✓ Modify the search form template to refine the search, if required. Contact dutyweb@gov.ab.ca if you need help.-----28
 - ✓ Once the search form is online, use it to query the search engine database to ensure that the form works. -----29
 - ✓ Test all navigation links that connect to and from the search form to ensure that they work. -----29
 - ✓ The common search form should still be used to ensure users are presented with a consistent, simple search interface across all government websites. -----29
 - ✓ Use relevant keywords that describe the page content, making it as meaningful as possible.-----30
 - ✓ Do not use the same title for each page of your website. Whenever possible, HTML titles should be unique.-----30
 - ✓ Avoid using acronyms in web page titles. The results displayed by search engines may be meaningless to most people. -----30
 - ✓ Place organization name at the end of the page meta title. This ensures the page title is not cut off if too long. -----30
 - ✓ Specifying the language using “lang=“ within the <DESCRIPTION> metatag helps search engines present results based on the user’s language preference. -----30
-

- ✓ Ensure that the <DESCRIPTION> metatag information is clear, as some search engines use it verbatim. Keep it to less than 160 characters total.-----31
 - ✓ Specifying the language using "lang=" within the <KEYWORDS> metatag helps search engines present results based on the user's language preference.-----31
 - ✓ Use the keyword metatag to provide nicknames, synonyms, acronyms or other words that could be used to search the site but may not actually be in the <BODY> text of the document. -----31
 - ✓ By adding commonly misspelled words to the keyword list, you can help search engines to be more effective because many people misspell words when doing their searches. ---31
 - ✓ Avoid using the same term too frequently in the keyword list because search engines may consider it a misuse of metatags and ignore your site.-----31
 - ✓ Update keywords to reflect current issues and terms.-----31
 - ✓ To add metadata to documents, select "Document Properties" from the File menu.-----31
 - ✓ Specify language variants of a document. If a document has been translated into other languages, you should use the <LINK> element to reference these. This allows a search engine to offer search results in the person's preferred language, regardless of how the query was written.-----32
 - ✓ Separate keywords using a hyphen, not an underscore. For example "my-page-content.html" Google does not read underscores as separators and drops them, combining the two words together as one. Other search engines don't care.-----32
 - ✓ Use keywords in secondary headings used to break content into smaller sections. -----33
 - ✓ Semantically structure (or nest) headings by using the appropriate H1,H2, H3, H4, H5. E.g.:
 - Main Heading (H1)
 - Sub Heading (H2)
 - Sub Sub Heading (H3)And so on. Do not skip levels. -----33
 - ✓ At the very least every page should have an h1 as the main title. This not only improves search engine accuracy, but also improves the user experience for those who use screen readers to navigate. -----33
 - ✓ Avoid using images with text to convey your message. Search engine don't "see" text in images. If you must use images, ensure the ALT or Title description is completed properly. -----33
 - ✓ Check the list of detected link errors published weekly at <https://webstats.gov.ab.ca/app/>. The Government of Alberta web server uses link validation software to crawl the Government of Alberta Website regularly and test documents that are linked off ministry web pages. It checks for missing and invalid link
-

references and validates that graphics referred to in web pages actually exist. Direct any related questions to dutyweb@gov.ab.ca.-----33

- ✓ Websites that are hosted on the shared web servers housed at Service Alberta are automatically checked for link errors. If your website is not hosted by Service Alberta, use a free link validation software application to check the links on your site. -----34
 - ✓ Some search engines give higher priority to web pages that are more frequently linked to on other pages. The more references to a specific page on other pages or sites, the more likely it will show up in a search. -----34
 - ✓ If you have a number of similar documents that are prefaced by a table of contents or introductory page, use the “robots.txt” file or <ROBOTS> metatag to instruct search engines to index only the page that describes the documents. For example, rather than indexing every news release on highway conditions, the search engine should index just the page that describes the news releases’ content and links to them. The page that’s indexed should have a meaningful title and meta-description, and a concise description of the content in its body. -----35
 - ✓ Try to restrict each web page to one or two main ideas, in order to make information retrieval easier. -----35
 - ✓ Do not index long pages that are not destination or content pages (i.e. site maps and other pages that might come back as false positives in search results).-----35
 - ✓ A website will often be maintained by more than one person. It is therefore helpful to write markup language that is accessible to the next person who may have to update your pages. For example, use liberal line breaks and white space in the source documents. -----35
 - ✓ Use the free on-line HTML validation service located at: validator.w3.org/ and free CSS validation service located at: jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/ to check HTML/CSS documents for conformance to W3C HTML recommendations and other HTML/CSS standards. -----36
 - ✓ Check finished HTML documents with a variety of text, and graphical browsers to ensure that people with a wide range of browser capabilities can access your website. Also consider testing on PDA/handheld devices. -----36
 - ✓ Seek counsel from your legal department or Alberta Justice, Civil Law, to determine the copyright status of documents, graphics, databases and other material hosted on your website. -----40
 - ✓ Test all navigation links that connect to and from the “Copyright and Disclaimer” and “Privacy Statement” web pages, to ensure that they work. -----40
 - ✓ If the document is published on the originator’s (the author or organization responsible for its contents) website, include an external link to the originator’s website where the document is posted rather than publishing the document on your ministry’s website (see Section 16—Duplicate Web Content. -----40
-

- ✓ When the conditions that govern the use of the contents of a web page differ from the standard copyright and disclaimer statements used on your ministry’s website, post a “caution” notice on the web page. For example, if you are providing a link to a page that has highly restricted copyright, post a notice beside the link as well as on the actual document or web page being accessed. -----40

 - ✓ To develop a privacy statement for your website, use the Guide to Developing Privacy Statements for Government of Alberta Websites published by the Information Management, Access and Privacy Branch of Service Alberta.
 (foip.gov.ab.ca/resources/publications/PrivacyStatementsGuide.cfm)-----41

 - ✓ It is especially important that, when collecting any personal information through your website, you ensure compliance with the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) guidelines are followed. The Act is published on-line at: foip.gov.ab.ca/legislation/index.cfm .-----41

 - ✓ Test all navigation links that connect to and from the “Privacy Statement” web pages, to ensure that they work.-----41

 - ✓ Privacy statements should be reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance with FOIP. -----41

 - ✓ The W3C P3P Project: (w3.org/P3P/) provides very detailed information on P3P and provides links to software available for developing P3P files. -----42

 - ✓ Validate your P3P files using the W3C P3P Validator w3.org/P3P/validator.html -----42

 - ✓ As a best practice, personal email addresses as contacts should be avoided. Instead, aliases should be used – for example: myministryhelp@gov.ab.ca. Where necessary, ensure that any contact person whose email address is listed is aware of the link and approves of it. -----43

 - ✓ To add a contact information webpage to your site, use either the HTML or RedDot templates, which provide the required contact information. -----43

 - ✓ Test all navigation links that connect to and from the contact information page, to ensure that they work.-----43

 - ✓ Program sites without an adequate news presence should link to their ministry/ie’s newsroom, or use RSS to display program-specific news. -----46

 - ✓ Put the most important information at the top, with the supporting information appearing further down the page (inverted pyramid style).-----48

 - ✓ Make your text scannable:
 - use bulleted lists and clear headlines and subheads
 - highlight keywords or phrases by bolding them (use this technique sparingly)-----48

 - ✓ Remember that readers may not come through your site in a linear way. Define acronyms and unusual terms on every page they appear on — or better yet, avoid them entirely.-----48
-

- ✓ Be concise. This includes using shorter sentences and paragraphs, as well as reducing the overall number of words. Jakob Nielsen recommends cutting the word count of conventional writing in half (useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html).-----48
- ✓ Write in plain, simple language (see below).-----48
- ✓ Minimize the use of acronyms and jargon. -----48
- ✓ Wherever possible choose short, simple words over longer, more complex ones -----48
- ✓ Write in the active voice.-----49
- ✓ Using acronyms or a category name at the front of a file name groups like-documents together on the web server and may also support search results. -----52
- ✓ For information on the visual identity standards, visit corporateidentity.alberta.ca. -----56

Archived

Appendix II: References and Further Reading

Planning

Jesse James Garrett. *The Elements of User Experience: User-Centered Design for the Web*.
jig.net/elements/.

Appearance

Common Look and Navigation

Ipsos Reid Public Affairs. *Public Affairs Bureau: Government of Alberta Website Evaluation*.

Summary

(<https://saportal.gov.ab.ca/sites/webnstuff/cgic/Research/GOAWebsiteEvaluation2008/Summary.doc>) and Report

(<https://saportal.gov.ab.ca/sites/webnstuff/cgic/Research/GOAWebsiteEvaluation2008/Report.ppt>).

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Common Look and Feel for the Internet*.

tbs-sct.gc.ca/clf-nsi/index_e.asp

Yale Web Style Guide, 2nd Edition. webstyleguide.com/

Searching

Government of Alberta Web Search Facilities.

<https://extranet.gov.ab.ca/techinfo/interug/wwwsrch.html>

Controlling External Indexing of a Website

Government of Canada. Government of Canada Internet Guide:

tbs-sct.gc.ca/ig-gi/index_e.asp

Searchenginewatch.com. searchenginewatch.com/

W3C, HTML Validation Service. validator.w3.org/

Required HTML Metadata

Government of Canada, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. *Common Look and Feel for the Internet*. 2001. tbs-sct.gc.ca/clf-nsi/index_e.asp

Government of Canada Metadata Implementation Guide for Web Resources, 3rd Edition, July 2004. collectionscanada.ca/6/37/s37-4016-e.html

Dublin Core Metadata Initiative. dublincore.org/

Accessibility

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. w3.org/WAI/

Cross Government Internet Committee Accessibility Working Group Report.

<https://saportal.gov.ab.ca/sites/webnstuff/cgic/Documents/AccessibilitySIGFinalReport.pdf>.

W3C Platform for Privacy Preferences Initiative. w3.org/P3P/

Content

Copyright Notice and Terms of Use

Government of Canada, Industry Canada, The Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) Website, Important Notices and CIPO Privacy Statement pages.
strategis.ic.gc.ca/sc_mrksv/cipo/welcome/welcom-e.html

Government of Canada Website, Important Notices page. canada.gc.ca/copyright_e.html

Information Management and Privacy Branch, Alberta Government Services. Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). foip.gov.ab.ca/

Information Management and Privacy Branch, Alberta Government Services. Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy: Guide to Developing Privacy Statements for Government of Alberta Websites . May 2001.
im.gov.ab.ca/publications/pdf/ManagingWebContentGuide.pdf

Avoiding Duplicate Web Content

Avoiding Duplicate Web Content - Cross Government Internet Committee Website Content Duplication Discussion Paper.
<https://saportal.gov.ab.ca/sites/webnstuff/cgic/Documents/ContentDuplication.pdf>

Information Management and Privacy Branch, Alberta Government Services: Managing Web Content: *Applying the Information Framework to Web Resources, March 2004*

Government of Alberta. Government of Alberta Plain Language Guidelines and Style Guide.
internal.gov.ab.ca/pab/internet/plain.html

Lynch, Patrick J. and Sarah Horton. *Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Websites*. Yale University Press, 1999.
