Guidelines on Dissemination of Information through Government Websites

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I.   Introduction

The Government is committed to using information and communication technology in disseminating information and delivering services to the public, taking advantage of the Internet's ability to host a massive repository of dynamic information to be made available to everyone anywhere at any time. All Government bureaux and departments ("B/Ds") now have their own websites in traditional and simplified Chinese and English.

2.   Websites of B/Ds should provide relevant information in an efficient and effective manner and in a format that encourages access by the local and international communities. These guidelines serve as a practical guide for developing and revamping websites by B/Ds.

3.   Detailed technical notes issued by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") are available at the following location: https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/community/web_mobileapp_accessibility/doc/technical_notes.pdf

Other relevant guidelines can be located under the "Useful Links" section at **Annex**.

II.   Overall Strategies for Website Development

(A)   To Build Websites with Clear Objectives and a Client-centric Design

4.   A clear objective is vital for a well-structured website. With clear objectives, B/Ds can be more effective in identifying target groups of users and in designing content and presentation of their websites. The objectives of the website should be closely related to the missions and visions of B/Ds.

5.   The structure of websites should develop having regard to the needs of target users: a client-centric design. A thorough analysis will be needed to define clear objectives and understand the requirements of the target users in order to create client-centric websites. In addition to an initial analysis of requirements, ongoing traffic monitoring will ensure that websites continually meet the expectations of the target users (see also para. 15 below).

6.   The main topics in a client-centric website should be categorised in such a way that Internet users can generally locate the required information with ease. In most situations, such client-centric websites should be topic-based. Websites which categorise information simply according to the structure of B/Ds will turn Internet users away as it may take a lot of effort to locate the information wanted. The structure of B/Ds should best be shown in the organisation charts.

(B)   To Make Government Websites an Efficient Means of Disseminating Information

7.   B/Ds should make full use of their websites to disseminate information. Information dissemination on the Internet and in other media should generally be simultaneous. Major public announcements should be made available on the website as soon as possible.

8.   The following should, in particular, be observed in disseminating information on Government websites:

(a)   Uploading as many printed materials as possible on websites. Information in printed materials, such as reports, publicity leaflets, and consultation papers, is part of the useful information the general public is looking for in cyberspace. It should always be borne in mind during the preparatory stage of the materials that an Internet version is a required format. This helps to avoid problems in conversion of file formats at the later stage; and

(b)   Providing press releases on important issues on the websites of B/Ds. Press releases are an important information source carrying the most updated Government news. Via a computer system, all government press releases are automatically uploaded onto the Internet at   https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/ minutes after their

dissemination to the media. It is a convenient way for the public to look for specific press releases on the websites of B/Ds. This can be done simply by providing a press release web page on departmental websites and creating links to the press releases concerned.

(C)   Document Attachments

9.   When documents are uploaded to the websites, the file size should be indicated to give users an idea about the time required for downloading. Larger files may be cumbersome to download with slow Internet connections. It is useful to provide an email link or telephone contact to enable users to request a hard or soft copy of the document if required.

10.   Please refer to the Technical Notes on Website Development and Maintenance issued by the OGCIO at https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/community/web_mobileapp_accessibility/doc/technical_notes.pdf for other points to note.

(D)   To Promote Electronic Services to the Public

11.   To promote electronic services to the public, information about such services should prominently feature on the websites. A complete list of electronic services with a description of such services should be provided. The prerequisites for using the electronic services, e.g. digital certificate, PIN, browser version, should also be explicitly stated. Policy bureaux should also list electronic services provided by the departments under their purview.

III.   Review and Support for Government Websites

12.   B/Ds are advised to conduct annual reviews of their websites.

13.   Most Government websites are hosted in the Web Content Hosting ("WCH") Service of OGCIO with operation support from the Common Services Infrastructure ("CSI") Support Team. Services provided include:

(a)   Architectural design, development and enhancement of the website hosting platform;

(b)   Maintenance and daily operation support;

(c)   Hosting of Internet domain name records for Government websites through the Domain Name ("DN") Hosting Service;

(d)   Secure channels for content upload, i.e. secure file transfer protocol ("sFTP") or Web Content Upload System ("WCUS"); and

(e)   Testing environment before websites are launched, or website modifications are published.

The email contact of the CSI Support Team is csi_support_team@ogcio.gov.hk. Updated information is available in ITG InfoStation at https://www.itginfo.gov.hk and Central Cyber Government Office ("CCGO") at https://portal.ccgo.hksarg.

14.   In addition, OGCIO provides the following services for all Government websites hosted in WCH or externally:

(a)   Statistics on visitors to their websites (https://webstat.scig.hksarg/webstat/) (registration required and limited to webmasters only); and

(b)   GovHK search service for information on their websites (https://itginfo.ccgo.hksarg/content/ns/gsg-search.asp).

IV.   Content of Websites

(A)   Defining Web Content

15.   Developing client-centric content begins with ensuring that the content is aligned with the requirements of the target users and the site objectives. The following content categories are regarded as necessary for "best practice":

(a)   Providing a clear indication of the target users and the site objectives to allow a user to quickly determine if the site should be explored;

(b)   Providing a site map to outline the content of a website;

(c)   Providing report summaries, press releases and other "core" information with embedded links that allow users to easily navigate through the information;

(d)   Highlighting any recent updates or providing a "What's New" section for recently updated information to facilitate repeated users;

(e)   Providing links to related external sites and encouraging other sites to provide links to your site as far as B/Ds deem appropriate;

(f)   Providing an index of downloadable materials, such as reports, bibliographies, glossaries, and appendices of information;

(g)   Listing frequently asked questions to reduce the number of direct users' enquiries;

(h)   Providing contact information, including email, telephone number, fax number and mail address; and

(i)   Providing an interactive map for members of the public visiting with information about the locations of government offices, service centres, public counters or events.

16.   Government websites should be available in traditional and simplified Chinese and English and the writing style should be consistent with the language (i.e. avoid a direct translation). The use of jargon or abbreviations should be avoided.

(B) Information Categories and Suggested Content

17.   The information categories and their suggested content are as follows:

Information Category	**Suggested Content**
(a) Organisation details	• Organisation chart, including names of officers filling the directorate posts and telephone numbers of all posts shown in the chart. • Responsibilities of individual divisions.
(b) Vision, mission and value statement of the B/D	• Vision, mission and value statement of the B/D
(c) Public service	• Description of main services or functions of the organisation. • Information on services introduced or changed. User-friendly features include: ➢ A "how to" guide for accessing services; ➢ Key documents/ forms required for accessing services; and ➢ Online access to services.
(d) Performance pledges and success	• Statements of performance pledges. • Statistics measuring the fulfilment of pledges.
(e) List of records by category	• List of categorised records to which the public may have access to.
(f) List of available information	• Categorised list of information (either published or otherwise) made available, whether free or on payment. User-friendly features include: • Softcopy of documents available for

download; and

- Procedures and charges for accessing/ purchasing available information.

(g)	Access to information	- Description of the process for obtaining information.
		- Standard photocopying charges.
		- Application form for Access to Information.
		- Contact information of Access to Information Officer, including name, email, telephone number, fax number and mail address for related enquiries.
		- Code on access to information
(h)	Consultation papers	- Consultation papers in HTML format with internal links if feasible. (Note: Subsequent references to HTML in this document also apply to XHTML, and for simplicity's sake, "HTML" will be used as the abbreviated version.)
		- An audio version of the summary or the full text should be provided to allow users to choose their preferred media.
		- Softcopy of documents (e.g. PDF file) available for download. (Note: Please ensure all "track changes" features are removed for word processing document files.)
		- Feedback channel for collecting views on consultation papers, i.e. email access for submitting responses, and postal contact details.
(i)	Electronic services	- List of services that can be accessed online. Policy bureaux should also list electronic services provided by the departments under their purview.
(j)	Public forms	

(k)	Site objective	•	This provides Internet users with a concise description of the content of the site, enabling them to quickly assess the site's relevance to their needs.
(l)	Survey results and statistics of public interest		
(m)	Policies	•	e.g. Policy Objective.
(n)	Legislative Council papers	•	The documents should be uploaded after their release to the Legislative Council.
(o)	Notices	•	e.g. tender notices and recruitment advertisements.
(p)	Publications and papers	•	e.g. Annual reports, summaries of annual reports, reports, publicity leaflets, consultation papers, and fact sheets.
(q)	Information unique to the B/D	•	e.g. membership and terms of reference of advisory boards and committees related to the B/D.
(r)	Channels to access services (where and how)	•	e.g. the location of the venues via the interactive map to facilitate access.
(s)	Frequently asked questions	•	They should be categorised and indexed to facilitate easy access.
		•	They are valuable in reducing enquiries for frontline staff.
(t)	What's New section	•	This section should be frequently reviewed and updated to make sure it contains the most updated information.
		•	The section should not be maintained as an archive of information in chronological order. Such practice prompts users to doubt whether the websites are updated.
		•	A separate section of "What was new in (month)(year)" should meet the purpose. A "new" tag is useful to mark small updates

in a site map or web page.

- The section may also serve as an advance announcement for planned items, such as soon-to-be-released consultation papers.

(u)	Major press releases and speeches	• It is valuable to provide an archive of news-related information by date and topic. B/Ds should create an index page of the press releases with each item linked to individual press releases (see also paras. 7 to 8 above).
(v)	Events	• Providing event calendar, event descriptions and online registration for events (if feasible) is an inexpensive way to promote Government or social events to the general public.
(w)	Relevant external information	• e.g. Hong Kong Laws on the Internet.
(x)	Links to related Government departments	• Links to other departments and to related boards and committees (with regard to terms of reference and membership lists).
(y)	Links to related external sites	• Through the use of links to additional related external sites, the breadth of content can be easily expanded to better meet the content requirements of target users (see also para. 42 below).
		• Bearing in mind that the website addresses may change from time to time, the external links should be checked regularly to ensure that they still work.

V.   Editing Content for the Web

18.   Although basically, the content formats of printed and Internet versions look the same, B/Ds are reminded to pay attention to the following features of web pages and the expectations of Internet users in editing content for web pages:

(a)   An outstanding feature of web pages is the provision of hypertext links enabling users to skip "unnecessary" information and go direct to relevant information. Because of this, the structure of content on a web page may be quite different from conventional paper documents. It is useful to keep the main points on the first page, while keeping content of secondary importance on subsequent pages, which can easily be accessed by users via links.

(b)   Internet users, in general, do not expect to read lengthy documents on the computer screen. In editing web content, the paragraphs should be kept to a shorter length as far as practicable.

(c)   If a lengthy document is unavoidable, it is advisable to list the titles of the sections at the top of the page and provide links from titles to the relevant content underneath. Such practice enables Internet users to have an overview of a lengthy document and access the information they are interested in. The provision of navigation icons or text links such as "next", "previous", and "top" are good user-friendly features.

(d)   It is advisable to use a map to present information relating to location. It is recommended to use simple and concise symbols for the map features to facilitate public understanding.

VI.   Updating of Information

19.   It is the responsibility of B/Ds to ensure that information put on the Internet is up-to-date. B/Ds should determine, in respect of each document uploaded onto its websites, the frequency in respect of which the document should be updated.

20.   A work schedule containing a comprehensive list of updating frequencies, thus determined, should be compiled for follow-up by all staff involved in the updating of the websites. The work schedule should provide for the continuous updating of any information expected by the public to be 100% up-to-date. Examples of such information are organisation charts, holders of specific posts and telephone numbers. In general, B/Ds should review and update their websites **at least once a year**.

21.   B/Ds should post on each page a last revision date (修訂日期). The "What's New" section should be updated regularly. Some information may require less frequent updating (e.g. fact sheets). In that case, some form of indication, e.g. last review date (覆檢日期), should be included to show that the information is still up-to-date. Either "Last revision date" or "Last review date", whichever is later, is to be used on each page. Outdated web content should be removed from the website as soon as they are no longer applicable. Besides, for web pages dedicated to historical information, B/Ds should remark that the content will be displayed as it is and will not have further updates.

22.   There have been criticisms that the Government does not upload quickly enough onto its websites useful information relating to unexpected issues. Apart from the continuous updating of existing information, B/Ds should be prepared to respond efficiently to those issues by uploading necessary related information swiftly. Links to related websites should be checked frequently to make sure that they are valid. Similarly, all relevant hyperlinks should be updated before any removal of web pages, graphics files, topics, promotion icons etc., from the site. If there is any known external hyperlink pointing to these web pages, the webmasters of the "referring" websites should be informed of the update as well.

23.   If webmasters are planning to take down a website temporarily by removing the web pages in question, webmasters should post a maintenance page with relevant information like, reason for maintenance, time of resumption, etc., to inform users about the status.

24. Any outdated or obsolete web pages should be removed from the production site. If these "orphan" pages are still retained online, they may be accessible through the search results from search engines though no navigation path to the obsolete page is available. This may result in users getting incorrect or outdated information from the website. If the website is maintained and hosted by an external web-hosting company, the B/D concerned should ensure that all web pages are removed from the server of the company at the end of the service contract or upon contract termination, as appropriate. Any obsolete domain names should also be de-registered as soon as they are not applicable.

25. Any remark statements in the source of web pages or script used during the development process or revision marks in documents should be removed before the website goes into production. Any such information, if not removed, may open up opportunities for malicious attack. Test programmes or scripts should also be removed from the production site since malicious attackers may make use of any vulnerability in these test programmes or scripts to compromise the website.

Online Forms

26. Receipt of the online form should be acknowledged if reply email addresses are provided. It is also desirable to make clear to the users the expected response time of the requested service as well as the B/D's contact information for enquiries after the submission of the form.

VII. Ensuring Content Accessibility

27.   The usefulness of a website is largely enhanced if its messages can reach the widest possible audience. It is important to ensure that web content are delivered in an accessible form, taking into account the needs of persons with visual, mobility, hearing and cognitive impairments. In line with Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Government will take appropriate measures to promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet, to enable them to live independently and participate in all aspects of life.

28.   Some typical examples of web accessibility issues for persons with disabilities include —

- websites with non-text elements such as graphics, maps, pictures and images which cannot be transcribed into Braille or speech for the visually impaired;

- small text sizes and insufficient contrast between foreground and background colours may present difficulties for people with restricted vision and colour blindness;

- audio and visual content without text description may be difficult for those with hearing impairment to follow;

- people with mobility impairments may lack the dexterity or hand-eye coordination to use a mouse, and they have to rely on the keyboard or some form of assistance device; and

- people with cognitive or learning difficulties such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder require a logical order for content, simple and clear sentences, and graphical icons to aid navigation.

(A) Web Content Accessibility Standard

29.   To ensure web accessibility, Government adopts the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (Version 2.0) ("WCAG 2.0") promulgated by the World Wide Web Consortium ("W3C"). There are three levels of conformance —

- Level A provides basic accessibility for most Internet users;

- Level AA would generally enable persons with disabilities to use the website; and

- Level AAA provides the highest standards of accessibility.

Taking into account web impact and design, Level AA conformance should achieve the best balance for Government websites.

Nonetheless, B/Ds are encouraged to incorporate enhancements as necessary to further improve the quality of accessibility having regard to the target audience of their websites. With effect from 1 January 2013, all government websites, except archive materials, must validate W3C WCAG 2.0 Level AA conformance. Exceptions must be justified and explained on the website concerned.

WCAG 2.1, which extends WCAG 2.0, was promulgated by W3C in 2018. According to W3C's recommendation, WCAG 2.0 and WCAG 2.1 are both existing standards. WCAG 2.1 does not deprecate or supersede WCAG 2.0. It includes all success criteria in WCAG 2.0 with the additional 17 new success criteria to address more mobile accessibility and the needs of people with low vision and people with cognitive and learning disabilities. B/Ds are advised to adopt WCAG 2.1 Level AA standard, where appropriate, when carrying out major revamp for websites or development of new websites. For details of new success criteria, please refer to

https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/community/web_mobileapp_accessibility/promulgating_resources/handbook/doc/WCAG2-1_New_Success_Criteria_(Eng).pdf

The W3C WCAG 2.0 and WCAG 2.1 are based on four principles of accessibility, as follows —

(a) **Perceivable**: information and user controls must be presented to users in ways they can perceive;

(b) **Operable**: user control components and navigation must be operable by users;

(c) **Understandable**: information and the operation of the user interface must be understandable; and

(d) **Robust**: content must be robust enough for reliable interpretation by a wide variety of web browsers, media players, and assistive technologies.

There are elaborate guidelines and criteria under each of these four principles. The complete list is available at https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/. The following provides a gist of the key points.

Principle 1: Perceivable

(a) *Text Alternatives*: Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element. This enables visually impaired persons to use assistive technologies to read the text alternatives and hearing impaired persons to read the text alternatives to understand the audio content, e.g. text-based directions should be provided for interactive maps

used for showing directions to a location.

(b) ***Time-based Audio and Video Media***: Provide captions, transcripts and other alternatives for multimedia to enable understanding of the media content.

(c) ***Adaptable***: Create content that can be perceived in different ways and by assistive technologies without losing meaning, e.g. information conveyed through colours should also be available in the text to facilitate people with colourblindness.

(d) ***Distinguishable***: Make it easier for users to see and hear content, e.g. for visual presentations, this involves providing a sufficient colour contrast between the content and its background; and for audio presentations, control of the background sound volume should be provided.

Principle 2: Operable

(e) ***Keyboard Accessible***: Make all functionality operable through a keyboard to facilitate persons who cannot use devices such as a mouse but can operate keyboards through assistive technologies.

(f) ***Enough Time***: Provide users with enough time to read and use the content.

(g) ***Seizures***: Do not create content that flashes more than thrice in one second, as this may trigger seizures for some users.

(h) ***Navigable***: Help users navigate, find content and keep track of their locations within the website to minimise the number of keystrokes required for locating the specific content they need.

Principle 3: Understandable

(i) ***Readable***: Make text content readable and understandable. Use proper grammar. Avoid unusual words, abbreviations, idioms, technical jargon or symbols which cannot be easily understood or identified by assistive technologies.

(j) ***Predictable***: Make content appear and operate in predictable ways.

(k) ***Input Assistance***: Help users avoid and correct mistakes, as persons with disabilities may have difficulties in creating error-free input. This can be achieved by, for example, pre-empting errors through proper design, ensuring errors are easily noticed by users, and helping users understand how to correct the errors.

Principle 4: Robust

(l) ***Compatible***: As technologies change quickly and some assistive

technology cannot always keep pace, maximise compatibility with all kinds and generations of common web browsers, media players and assistive technologies.

30.   The GovHK website serves as a very good reference on accessibility as its design takes into account the needs of users of assistive tools such as screen readers or screen magnifying software for visually impaired people. B/Ds are encouraged to make reference to the relevant design considerations of the GovHK webpage (https://www.gov.hk/en/about/accessibility/) and adopt relevant practices for their websites where appropriate.

(B)   Portable Document Format File

31.   It is important to ensure that PDF files are also accessible to assistive technologies, such as screen readers and magnifying software. B/Ds are advised to produce PDF files from a text-based source document so that they are readable by Braille devices used by people with visual impairment.

VIII. Presentation

32.   The presentation of a website includes the site design, the use of different content formats and the assurance of site visibility. Consistent website design through branding and navigation and site visibility should be ensured. Specific notes on producing and developing websites are provided in section IX.

(A)   Common Look and Feel for Government Websites

33.   In order to project the online brand image of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government ("HKSARG"), to improve the navigability and usability of Government websites and to provide a consistent and user-friendly experience to web users, the Government announced in March 2003 the adoption of Common Look and Feel ("CLF") for Government websites. For detailed specifications and guidelines on CLF, please see https://itginfo.ccgo.hksarg/content/clf/home.html (only for government internal access).

(B)   Ensuring Site Visibility to Potential Users

34.   A website needs to be visible to potential end users in order to be successful. Given the exponential growth in the number of websites and the diversity of potential users, techniques to ensure site visibility should be employed. Internally, the site should be configured to maximise its exposure in popular search engines. This requires the proper choice of metadata keywords and regular registration with the search engines.

(C)   Providing Interactive Content

35.   Providing interactive online services is a major trend in the delivery of public services. B/Ds should strengthen the interactive elements of their websites.

36.   Apart from electronic services, such as filing of forms, renewal of licences and payment of bills, Government websites can also be interactive in information dissemination. In general, an interactive website is a client-centric site allowing users to find out easily the particular piece of information they ask for instead of reading through the static information provided. There are various means to make a website interactive with the aid of new computer programmes. Some examples of interactive applications include those that allow users to set filters, those that present information according to users' preference (e.g. selecting the preferred sections only on a web page), and those that can notify users (say via email) of information they are interested in.

37.   While interactive content can improve upon traditional forms of "one-way" customer service, access to interactive content is dependent on the capabilities of the browser in use, and, therefore may not be accessible to all users. To ensure accessibility to web content, a site should always provide alternatives for interactive services, such as email links or phone numbers to make the service available through other non-interactive channels.

(D)   Use of Spatial Data

38.   On the basis of the Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology ("SCIT")'s mandate given for taking forward Common Spatial Data Infrastructure ("CSDI") on a mandatory approach, all B/Ds should progressively release spatial data in compliance with the CSDI standards, including geotagging of data, data specifications, metadata, open and machine-readable format and Application Programming Interface ("API"), under their purview free of charge and without any necessary restrictions on their use (e.g. restrictions on commercial use) to the public through the CSDI portal or Hong Kong GeoData Store (CSDI alpha version)(https://geodata.gov.hk/gs/), unless there are security, privacy on personal data, sensitivity, confidentiality, legislative and other policy concerns and/or operational reasons for not doing so. An interactive map should be employed where applicable, and links to Lands Department ("LandsD")'s Map API portal website were provided in the Annex.

IX. Specific Notes on Producing and Developing Websites

1. Statements for collecting personal data online

39.   There is increasing concern on the part of Internet users about the collection of their personal data without their knowledge when they are browsing Government websites. To address this concern and to secure users' confidence when accessing Government websites, B/Ds should include in their websites a prominent hotlink to their Privacy Policy Statement whenever personal data are collected. The statements should explicitly state whether "cookies" will be used to collect personal data of users. Policies on how the personal data are handled, including the purposes for which such data will be used following collection; the types of organisations to whom such data may be disclosed, etc., should also be included. Details about Personal Information Collection Statement and the Privacy Policy Statement can be found on the website of the Privacy Commissioner's Office at https://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/publications/files/pic_pps_e.pdf.

40.   Even if the website does not collect personal data, Internet users may be concerned that the website could be collecting personally identifiable information about them without their knowledge. To allay such fears, the website needs to publish a privacy policy statement that explicitly states that no such information is collected.

41.   The privacy policy statement should be on a page separate from the "Important Notices". B/Ds can make reference to the privacy policy of GovHK (https://www.gov.hk/en/about/privacy.htm). The privacy policy statement should also include a security statement. For example, if an online service uses encryption for the transmission of sensitive data, include information on this in the statements.

2. Links to other websites

42.   To boost visits to Government websites, it is advisable to accept the creation of links from other websites, provided such links will not degrade the public image of B/Ds or involve commercial gains. As for building up links from Government websites to other websites, B/Ds should be discreet and consider whether it may wrongly imply a closer relationship with certain organisations, especially those commercial ones. In addition, a conscious policy is needed as more requests from similar sites may arise. When linking to non-government websites, it is advisable to display a disclaimer notice before the links are entered or clarify in the "Important Notices" section that the links are for users' convenience and that the information provided is the responsibility of that external source.

3. Links to Brand Hong Kong logo

43.   B/Ds should also include a Brand Hong Kong logo with a hyperlink to its websites (https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/) to promote the visual identity of Hong Kong. The application guidelines of the Brand are available on the website.

4. Use of national and regional flags and emblems and national anthem

44.   If national and regional flags and emblems and the national anthem are used in the website design, please ensure compliance with the specifications set out in law. More details about the proper use of national and regional flags and emblems are available at the national and regional flags and emblems website at https://www.protocol.gov.hk/en/flags.html. For details about the proper use of the national anthem, information is available at https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/national_anthem.htm.

45.   For the use of other flags and logos which have protocol implications, the Director of Protocol should be consulted.

5. Disclaimer

46.   A disclaimer should contain the following general clauses and essential elements:

(a)   The information provided on the website is for reference only;

(b)   The Government gives no express or implied warranty to the accuracy of the information provided on the websites;

(c)   Should there be links from other websites to the Government website, or if the present Government website will provide links to third parties' websites, the Government will not be responsible for the content of such websites;

(d)   The current website may contain information provided by other parties, and the Government has not approved nor endorsed the accuracy of such information;

(e)   Express denial of responsibility and liability for any loss or damage arising from contract, tort or any cause in connection with the Government website; and

(f)   Users/information seekers are encouraged to verify the authenticity of the information or seek independent advice before relying on the information.

6. Social media platforms, chat rooms and discussion groups

47.   Although providing chat rooms and discussion groups or including social media platforms may invite constructive ideas and create an open discussion atmosphere among members of the public, it could also become a medium for the dissemination of obscene and indecent messages, foul words or even libellous statements. Such objectionable materials may be harmful to young users. Although B/Ds could filter out a list of objectionable wordings, it is by no means exhaustive. It is the responsibility of B/Ds to monitor their social media platforms, chat rooms and discussion groups very closely to prevent the dissemination of any objectionable materials on their websites. It is not advisable to leave social media platforms, chat rooms and discussion groups unattended. The rules for posting should be clearly stated, and there must be arrangements to delete postings which contravene the rules promptly. Before providing chat service on the websites, B/Ds should therefore balance the benefits that it can bring against the possible negative impact on the management of the websites.

7. Selecting contractors

48.   B/Ds may consider setting up a selection panel for choosing a suitable contractor for designing websites. The panel should draw up a marking scheme to select the contractor that is likely able to produce web pages at a reasonable production cost and of the required quality. The selection criteria should include design concepts to meet the requirements, relevant experience in designing websites and a dedicated production team for the project. Generally speaking, B/Ds should:

(a)   Prepare an invitation brief that clearly states the services required;

(b)   Invite prospective contractors to present their design ideas and show relevant web pages before the selection panel; and

(c)   Conduct thorough discussion at the panel according to the marking scheme.

The selection should follow procedures in the procurement of services, and assistance from Supplies Officers would be useful.

X. Management of Government Websites

(A) Establishment of Working Group

49. Well-organised management of a website is one important factor contributing to its success. B/Ds are encouraged to set up a working group to contribute ideas on the content and to monitor the updating of the website.

(B) Duties of Working Group

50. The working group should meet regularly to deal with the following:

    (a)   Identifying the target users;

    (b)   Assessing the overall effectiveness of the websites;

    (c)   Considering new interactive services and information;

    (d)   Collecting and analysing users' feedback;

    (e)   Ensuring timely updating; and

    (f)   Developing an overall identity and specific themes and topics.

(C) Responding to Users' Feedback and Analysing Traffic Information

51. Users' feedback and traffic information provide site management with the information required for maintaining user relationships, ensuring that the site remains client-centric and technically efficient and can support management decisions.

52. For websites that have not adopted CLF, the email address should be placed on the index page unless a page on Comments and Feedback is available. A form-type or mail-to-type interface should be incorporated. B/Ds with technically complex web pages may wish to provide different email addresses for email from the public seeking information and communication of a technical nature intended for their webmasters. The full email addresses should be explicitly stated to facilitate users who wish to send messages via their own email application at a later time. B/Ds should implement measures to prevent the harvesting of email addresses by spammers, e.g. using JavaScript to compose the email addresses for display and invoking the mail-to features, while facilitating the visual-impaired users to read the email addresses.

53.   Capturing traffic statistics is essential for maintaining an up-to-date site that continually meets the needs of the users. The collection and analysis of these statistics would, among others, help:

(a)   Identify the most frequently accessed files and/or pages for consideration of additional information on the subject(s); and

(b)   Update users' profiles to draw up more client-centric content.

XI.   Adoption of Latest Technologies

(A)   Mobile Technology

54.   With the increasing popularity of using mobile devices (such as tablets, smartphones, etc.) to access the Internet, B/Ds have to adopt mobile-friendly designs in developing their websites to provide a consistent user experience across the desktop and mobile platforms.

(B)   Interactive Map

55.   Using interactive maps is apparently a common behaviour in today's society. B/Ds should consider including interactive map elements on their websites for better presentation of the information relating to location. It is recommended to consider adopting LandsD's Map API without any subscription costs for maintaining the services and using the standardised presentation of digital maps of the Hong Kong territory among B/Ds websites.

XII.   Copyright Issues on the Internet

56.   B/Ds are reminded to observe copyright issues on the Internet and may approach the Intellectual Properties Department for advice.

Useful Links

Detailed technical guidelines on various aspects of website development and maintenance are available through the following links. Webmasters should make reference to the requirements for developing, managing and maintaining their websites.

(a)   Technical Notes on Website Development and Maintenance
      https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/community/web_mobileapp_accessibility/doc/technical_notes.pdf

(b)   Flags, Emblems and Anthem
      https://www.protocol.gov.hk/en/flags.html
      https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/national_anthem.htm

(c)   GovHK
      https://www.gov.hk/en/about/accessibility/
      https://www.gov.hk/en/residents/onlineservices/
      https://www.gov.hk/en/about/privacy.htm

(d)   Guidelines for use of BrandHK
      https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/BrandHongKong/BrandGuidelines.html

(e)   Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview
      https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php

(f)   LandsD Map API portal website
      https://api.portal.hkmapservice.gov.hk/

(g)   CSDI portal or Hong Kong GeoData Store (CSDI alpha version)
      https://geodata.gov.hk/gs/

The following links are only for government internal access −

(h)   Common Look and Feel (CLF)
      https://itginfo.ccgo.hksarg/content/clf/home.html

(i)   GovHK
      https://itginfo.ccgo.hksarg/content/ns/index.asp