

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE WEBSITE STANDARDS



State of NH Website Standards

REVISION LOG

Date	Revision/Created by	Description
05/04/2004 OITSNHWS	Theresa Pare Curtis	Ver 1.0 created
06/07/2004 OITSNHWS	Priscilla Ziegler	Ver 2.0 created – reformatted and extracted Privacy Notice Policy, NH e-Government Branding Policy, Website Accessibility Policy, Website Accessibility Standards, Meta Tags for Electronic Document Management Standards, and Met Tags for Electronic Document Management Best Practices - made separate documents.
09/08/2004 SNHWSS	Priscilla Ziegler	Ver 3.0 created – proofing, template prepared
10/01/2004 SNHWSS	Priscilla Ziegler	Ver 4.0 created – based on PIB review and comments
04/15/2005	Mark Vernon	Reformatted and word-smithed.
05/11/2005	Mark Vernon	ITPRC review and “accepted” changes made.
06/02/2005	Mark Vernon	Based on feedback from WSD, final changes made and OK’ed by ITPRC.
06/06/2005	Mark Vernon	Approved by ITPRC and ready for CIO review
09/27/2005	Mark Vernon	Approved by Rick; marked “Final Draft” and ready for OIT Managers’ review for 12/01/2005 effective date.
11/22/2005	Mark Vernon	Made ‘final’ changes
12/26/2006	Leslie Williams	Changed footer from PIB to CIO Office
09/22/2008	Priscilla Ziegler	Updated for DoIT
11/24/2008	Priscilla Ziegler	Updated for Web Support Division
7/21/2010	Tom Gilligan	Ver 5.0 created – reformatted and enhanced standards and added a number of appendices for best practices
03/16/2015	Alan Volpe	Ver 6.0 created – Removed all Best Practices to its own document. Rewrote standards to better reflect latest technology updates and changes.

State of NH Website Standards

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose and Accountability3

Standards

Technology3

Accessibility.....4

Branding.....5

Functionality5

Organization6

Going “LIVE”6

State of NH Website Standards

1 Purpose and Accountability

To establish a common and uniform standard for all State of New Hampshire agencies regarding website technology, accessibility, branding, and functionality.

State law (1997, 2002:5) requires every State Department, Agency, Institution, Commission, and Board have a presence on the World Wide Web that is accessible from the State's official government portal (NH.gov) located at <http://www.nh.gov>.

These standards pertain to all executive branch department, agency, commission, program, and enterprise webpages and to the administrators of those pages.

It is the responsibility of each Agency/Department/Division/Bureau Chief or their designee to enforce these minimum standards. Employees who do not comply with this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Administrative Rules of the Division of Personnel.

Minimum standards relative to technology, accessibility, branding, and functionality are addressed in this document while the Best Practices are outlined in the document *Best Practices for State of New Hampshire Websites*.

2 STANDARDS

The State of NH has adopted the following standards for all State websites with the exception of State websites developed before the adoption of this Standards document.

Technology

Technology includes a description of software, hardware, environmental, and network considerations that must be addressed when developing, designing, and maintaining NH State websites.

Document Creation: State websites are to be developed with Adobe Dreamweaver utilizing a template-based approach as to easily facilitate site-wide edits. The templates will generally control the header, navigation, footer and any other elements that will be non-editable by CMS users. A sample template layout is available from the Web Content Management group (wcm@nh.gov).

Content Management: The content management tool available to agencies in order to update their websites themselves is Adobe Contribute.

DOCTYPE: All webpages must be declared and validate as XHTML 1.1 Strict or HTML5. Webpages declared as HTML5 must validate as HTML5 while still honoring all of the latest browser compatibility requirements. The current list of required browser compatibility is available by contacting the Web Content Management group (wcm@nh.gov).

CSS: All webpages must use external linked CSS 2.0 stylesheets for positioning and styling of XHTML elements with one possible exception. Webpages can use external CSS 3.0 stylesheets as long as they continue to honor all of the latest browser compatibility requirements. No inline styling or embedded styling is allowed. Multiple style sheets can be developed and categorized by purpose i.e. one main style sheet for the website, one for CMS control, one for printing, and possibly others to address specific devices or other needs.

Scripts: All scripts must be externally linked to the HTML page unless technically not possible. All scripts must be heavily commented with directions and information describing its use.

Browser Compatibility: Web Support Division regularly updates the list of browser compatibility requirements. These requirements are determined through combination of analytics of the entire NH.gov family of websites,

State of NH Website Standards

browser types available to NH State employees, and industry trends. Contact the Web Content Management group at wcm@nh.gov for a list of current browser compatibility requirements.

Monitor Specifications: State websites are optimized (through Responsive Design techniques) for up to 3 different monitor sizes (desktop, tablet, and phone). The exact dimensions of each of these three sizes are determined by the Web Content Management group based on web analytics of the NH.gov web environment and industry trends. Contact the Web Content Management group at wcm@nh.gov for the pixel measurements for each of the three monitor sizes.

Accessibility

Accessibility outlines the steps the State of New Hampshire is committed to taking to assure that electronic and information technology is available to the broadest audience including people with disabilities, language barriers and mobile technologies.

The web accessibility section contains standards not only for compliance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794d) but also standards to allow NH State websites to be usable by a broader audience. Specifically it contains standards to address disabilities, language barriers and mobile technologies. The Department of Information Technology (DoIT), Web Support Division (WSD) performs monthly monitoring of NH State websites for web accessibility compliance.

XHTML strict and HTML5 code must be written in the following manner in order to be considered to be ADA compliant:

- All images used to convey meaning (photos, logos, illustrations, etc.) must use the <alt> tag to adequately describe the REASON for using the image.
- All multimedia elements must also have a text-based alternative that describes in detail what the purpose of the multimedia element is. An example would be a video file would also have a script or a detailed written description of the content of the video file.
- Color can never be used as the sole indicator of a potential action (such as indicating a link) or of a particular informational grouping or category (such as having all red text mean one thing and all green text mean another).
- Server-side image maps are not allowed.
- All main navigation (primary and secondary) must be linked using static <a> so as to be fully functional with scripting (Javascript, PHP, ASP.net, etc.) disabled.
- Column and row headers in tables must be identified by using the <th> tag.
- All table titles must use the <caption> tag when possible.
- All complex data tables must use the “summary” attribute when needed to describe the meaning behind the data in the table when possible.
- No frames are allowed. Iframes can only be used when there are no other options.
- All webpages must have a way of identifying itself to screen readers in the very beginning of the page’s code. This will include the name of the website and/or agency along with the tagline “An official State of New Hampshire government website”
- All webpages must have a mechanism for skipping over common elements that are on all webpages for that website. This would include banner elements and common navigation.
- All <script> tags must have a matching <noscript> tag with meaningful alternative content.
- All links must have meaningful link text that can be read by a screen reader and describe the content it links to. Do not use “Click Here”, “Next”, or “More” as these examples do not adequately describe the content it is linked to.
- All webpages must pass Validation Testing for WCAG 2.0 AA. All errors must be corrected and all warnings must be addressed as reasonably possible.

State of NH Website Standards

All webpages must follow these guidelines in order to be accessible to a broader audience.

- All webpages will have, available to the user, a language translation tool that can translate the webpages to all reasonably common languages.
- All State websites and webpages will be developed using Responsive Web Design (RWD) techniques to allow the reformatting of content to display properly on numerous devices. These devices include desktop computer, hardcopy (printer), tablets, and phone devices.
- All webpages must have a text enlarger tool available to the user on every page.

Branding

Branding encompasses the establishment of site architecture, navigation, layout, design elements, page elements, consistent terminology, usage, and grammar. Branding is pivotal to the State's goal of providing a consistent look and feel to the State's web presence.

All State of New Hampshire websites must establish a consistent visual and literal relationship to one another in order to create a sense of professionalism and instill credibility and reliability in the content of the website. This relationship is established through the use of consistent elements as well as the placement of these elements. The following website elements are branded by the State of New Hampshire and therefore cannot be altered or deviated from.

- A tagline stating “an official New Hampshire government website” will be visible in the top section of the website.
- A banner/header will be located at the top of the webpage and clearly state the website’s agency and/or program name as well as a depiction of the State’s Seal. The banner/header may also contain other graphical elements that are approved by the agency or program lead. The current layout for this banner/header is available from the Web Content Management group (wcm@nh.gov) in digital form.
- Navigation will be text-based and located along the left-hand side of the webpage. Centered navigation along the top (under the banner) may only be allowed in instances where a small website has enough page width to display all the navigation in one line across the page. Drop-down menus and Fly-out menus will not be allowed.
- A footer will be placed at the bottom of all webpages that will contain the State Seal; links to NH.gov homepage, privacy statement, and accessibility policy; as well as copyright information.

Functionality

Functionality issues include content organization, content presentation, usability, capability, schema, expandability, and extensibility

Architecture

The directory structure for all websites should contain the following folders and files:

- **css** - contains all style sheets for the website as well as a “graphics” folder for css-specific graphics.
- **scripts** - contains all scripts including javascript, actionsript, etc.
- **Templates** - contains all Dreamweaver template files
- **graphics** - contains all sitewide non-css graphics
- **navigation folders** - folders named after the primary, secondary, and possibly tertiary level of navigation. These folders will contain all pages except the Homepage.
- **Library** - contains all library elements and shared assets used by Dreamweaver and Contribute.
- **index.htm** - this is the only webpage that should reside at the root of the website directory.

Navigation

- All main-navigation will consist of text-based HTML links (<a> tags) that will bring a user to the destination page without the use of any scripting or dynamic programming.
- All other navigation (secondary, tertiary, etc.) will consist of either text-based or image-based links (<a> tags) that will bring a user to the destination page without the use of any scripting or dynamic programming.

State of NH Website Standards

- Every webpage is required to be either directly or indirectly linked to the website’s Home (or default) page
- A webpage cannot impede the ability of the Browser’s back button to work as it was intended.

Organization

File and folder naming conventions.

- File and folder names should be as short as possible while still maintaining readability. The names should remain clear, logical, and easily understood.
- File and folder names cannot contain any spaces, use of hyphens preferred.
- File names cannot contain any periods except before the 3 or 4 letter extension at the end of the name.
- Folder names cannot contain any periods.
- File and folder names cannot contain any special characters (ex. &^%\$#@)> Use only letters, numbers, hyphens, and underscores.
- Do not use overly general folder and file names (ex. file1.htm, photo2.gif, document.pdf). File and folder names should be logical or descriptive names of the contents of the file or folder.
- Files that are to be regularly overwritten should have a descriptive but generic name (ex. agenda.htm) so the name still applies as the file is regularly updated and overwritten.
- Do not use the website’s name or agency in the folder or file name (ex., department-of-tansportation-annual-report.pdf)
- Use only lowercase letters for all folder and file names. [although upper and lower case letters are generally allowed by servers, some web servers are case sensitive making it hard for CMS users to remember the case of the letters they used on a particular filename. Using only lowercase will minimize confusion and server issues.]
- All webpages will use the “.htm” extension

Going LIVE

Before any State website goes “LIVE” the following procedures must be completed:

- The website’s design and content is approved by the project’s stakeholders.
- The entire website and supporting files have gone through a Quality Assurance procedure including a multi-stage checklist completed by key members of the Web Content Management group.