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State of Ohio  
**Administrative Policy**

Website Standardization

No:  
Information Technology  
**IT-08**

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Effective:  
January 28, 2021

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Issued By:

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## 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish website standardization, content management, and security requirements for State agency, board, and commission (agency/agencies) websites. The intent of these requirements is to create a degree of consistency and predictability among **public-facing web pages**, while still providing the flexibility to design secure web pages that fit the unique needs of State agencies.

The majority of the requirements outlined within this policy apply only to public-facing web pages. However, the following sections apply to public-facing web pages as well as agency web-facing applications: Section 2.11 Browser Compatibility, Section 2.12 **Transport Layer Security (TLS)** Certificates, Section 2.16 **Identification** and **Authentication**, and Section 2.17 Website and Web-Facing Application Security.

A glossary of terms found in this policy is located in Appendix A - Definitions. The first occurrence of a defined term is in **bold italics**.

## 2.0 Policy

Agencies shall align with the website design and content management standards defined by the **InnovateOhio Platform** team when developing and maintaining public-facing web pages on **state-controlled websites**.

2.1 **User Experience Digital Toolkit**: Agencies shall utilize the InnovateOhio Platform User Experience Digital Toolkit to design their public facing web pages. The toolkit includes the following:

- Style Guide (e.g., accessibility, color palette, typography, dependencies, etc.)
- User Interface Controls (e.g., ads grid, accordions, arrows and popovers, badges, breadcrumbs, buttons, card carousel, checkboxes, labels, left and main

navigation, maps, etc.)

- Content Components (e.g., charts, icons, lists, tables, etc.)
- Page Examples (e.g., form, landing, login, password reset, etc.)
- Layout (e.g., cards, dividers, form, grid system, etc.)
- Page Errors (e.g., 404 page, 500 page, etc.)

2.2 **Branding:** Each agency shall have both agency and Ohio.gov branding. This branding shall be consistent on all agency pages.

2.2.1 Branding shall comply with the style in effect on the [Ohio.gov home page](#).

2.2.2 Agencies are permitted to use their own logos and branding. Agencies with subordinate agencies shall use the subordinate agency brand in addition to a link to the agency home page.

2.2.3 Agency branding shall link to the home page of the agency's website. Subordinate agency branding shall link to the subordinate agency home page.

2.3 **Social Media:** Agencies with approved social media instances shall place icon links on their website (e.g., Twitter, YouTube, Facebook).

2.3.1 Third party tracking from social media links, for example, social network sharing buttons, widgets or plug-ins, shall not be permitted unless explicitly approved by the agency. If social media links are authorized by the agency to track user activities, then this shall be disclosed in the website privacy statement.

2.4 **Search Feature:** Each agency shall have a search feature available and when technically feasible, utilize the InnovateOhio Platform search engine.

2.4.1 The search feature shall have the capability to perform searches within the agency website.

2.4.2 The search bar appearance and functionality shall be consistent across all agency web pages.

2.5 **Navigation:** Each agency shall provide consistent navigation on each web page.

- 2.5.1 The primary navigation bar shall be implemented on all agency web pages.
  - 2.5.2 The primary navigation bar shall be populated with agency-specific links and shall remain consistent across all pages of a division or department.
  - 2.5.3 Primary and secondary navigation shall be text-based; images or other formats shall not be used.
  - 2.5.4 All images with hyperlink capability shall include an alternative text (alt text) description that conveys the action that will be initiated when the user clicks on the link (e.g., destination).
  - 2.5.5 Navigation within self-contained or embedded content, such as interactive animations, video, or data visualizations, is permitted but should only be used within the context of the component.
- 2.6 **Content Area Design:** The layout and organization of each web page content area shall remain primarily at the discretion of the agency, department, or division; agencies shall refer to the InnovateOhio Platform User Experience Digital Toolkit web page for content and user experience best practices.
- 2.7 **Website Content:** Agencies shall comply with the following website content requirements.
- 2.7.1 **Contact Page:** Each agency shall maintain an accurate contact page containing the following information:
    - 2.7.1.1 A general phone number that is answered by a person during business hours.
    - 2.7.1.2 A media relations phone number (if available).
    - 2.7.1.3 An e-mail address or submission form for general concerns.
    - 2.7.1.4 A physical mailing address.
    - 2.7.1.5 Contact pages shall be labeled "Contact."

- 2.8 **Privacy Notice:** Agency websites shall provide a hyperlink to a privacy notice on every web page. At a minimum, the privacy notice shall include the following elements:
- 2.8.1 **Type of information being collected:** The privacy notice shall describe the types of personal information the agency collects through the website and why it is necessary.
  - 2.8.2 **Methods for collecting personal information:** The privacy notice shall provide an explanation of how the user's personal information is collected, including directly, such as through web applications and online forms, and indirectly, such as through website usage analytical tools.
  - 2.8.3 **Use of collected personal information:** The privacy notice shall disclose how the agency uses personal information collected through the website, including secondary uses and public record requirements.
  - 2.8.4 **Inspection and dispute of personal information:** Agencies shall inform website users that they may have rights under ORC sections 149.43, 1347.08, 1347.09, and 1347.15 with respect to inspecting, obtaining, correcting, and disputing personal information the agency collects or maintains through the website.
  - 2.8.5 **Confidential Personal Information Policies:** Section 1347.15 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) requires each state agency to post on its' website the policies adopted in accordance with that law. The privacy notice shall have a section labeled "Confidential Personal Information." The section will include links to the agency's administrative rules, policies and procedures issued in accordance with ORC 1347.15. If an agency does not maintain any confidential personal information under ORC 1347.15, it shall include a statement to that fact instead.
  - 2.8.6 **Contact information:** Agencies shall provide website users with an agency point of contact who addresses privacy questions. The contact information shall include the mailing address and at least one of the following: a telephone number, e-mail address or contact form.
  - 2.8.7 **Privacy Notice Updates:** The privacy notice shall be kept up to date to accurately reflect agency information practices. The privacy notice shall display the latest revision date.

- 2.8.8 **Applicable Laws and Regulations:** Privacy notices shall be consistent with all applicable laws that regulate the collection, use and maintenance of personal information.
- 2.8.9 **Labeling:** Each agency's privacy notice link shall be labeled as "privacy" or "privacy notice." (Refer to the footer on [Ohio.gov](http://Ohio.gov) for an example of labeling.)
- 2.9 **Content Management:** Agencies shall keep content up to date. Agencies shall develop a process for selecting and training content coordinators who are responsible for maintaining agency website content.
- 2.10 **Mobile Ready:** Agencies shall utilize InnovateOhio Platform templates and components, available at [ux.ohio.gov](http://ux.ohio.gov), to ensure a responsive user experience on any device (e.g., mobile phones, tablets).
- 2.11 **Browser Compatibility:** Agency websites and web-facing applications shall render properly in the current, supported version of Chrome, Edge, Firefox, and Safari.
- 2.12 **Transport Layer Security (TLS) Certificates:** All publicly accessible, state-controlled websites and web-facing applications shall only provide information and services through a hypertext transfer protocol secure (https) connection, encrypted using TLS certificates.
- 2.12.1 TLS certificates may be obtained, renewed, and revoked using the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Office of Information Technology (OIT) [Digital Certificate Provisioning](#) service.
- 2.12.2 TLS certificates may also be obtained from an approved vendor.
- 2.12.3 Website sessions shall be encrypted using current, supported TLS protocols.
- 2.13 **Website Accessibility:** Agency websites shall comply with the accessibility requirements outlined in Ohio Administrative Policy IT-09, "Website Accessibility."

- 2.14 **Domain Name Standardization:** Each agency is required to have an Ohio.gov domain in accordance with the requirements outlined in Ohio Administrative Policy IT-06, "Ohio.gov Standardization & Registration of Internet **Domain Names.**"
- 2.15 **Website Standardization Requirement Guidance:** For additional website standardization requirement guidance, agencies shall refer to the InnovateOhio Platform User Experience Digital Toolkit web page, [ux.ohio.gov](http://ux.ohio.gov).
- 2.16 **Identification and Authentication:** Where identification and authentication are required for website functionality, agencies shall leverage InnovateOhio Platform solutions.
- 2.17 **Website and Web-Facing Application Security:** Agencies shall ensure that the following security requirements are satisfied when maintaining a public-facing website or web-facing application:
- 2.17.1 Information collected from users shall be encrypted in transit and at rest.
  - 2.17.2 Vulnerability scans shall be routinely conducted by the DAS Office of Information Security and Privacy (OISP) and the results communicated to system and business owners. Critical or high severity vulnerabilities shall be promptly remediated or mitigated.
  - 2.17.3 All public-facing websites or web-facing applications shall generate and store audit records.
    - 2.17.3.1 All audit records shall be stored for at least 30 days, longer if mandated by state or federal regulation, and on a system separate from the web host system.
  - 2.17.4 Where applicable, agencies shall ensure that public-facing websites and web-facing applications comply with the security and privacy requirements provided by regulating entities (e.g., Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS), IRS Publication 1075, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), etc.).
  - 2.17.5 Where collecting payment information, ensure compliance with

regulatory requirements (e.g., Payment Card Industry (PCI),  
National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA), etc.).

2.18 **InnovateOhio Platform Responsibilities**: The InnovateOhio Platform team shall:

- Oversee the State of Ohio’s digital presence and partner with agencies to ensure their websites align with statewide requirements;
- Maintain digital toolkit standards and resources;
- Support and provide agency’s with access to a website content management tool;
- Communicate any substantive changes in website standards or content management to agencies and content coordinators in a timely manner; and
- Work with the DAS OISP to institute denial of service protections.

**3.0 Authority**

ORC 125.02, 125.04, 125.041, 125.18

This state policy is applicable to all superintended agencies, boards, and commissions (agencies) as defined in Ohio Administrative Policy IT-01, “Authority of the State Chief Information Officer to Establish Ohio IT Policy.”

**4.0 Revision History**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>
03/03/2008	Original policy.
1/06/2012	Policy revised to reflect changes in Ohio’s website design requirements.
12/21/2012	Revised the policy to remove all Ohio.gov domain related requirements and replaced them with a reference to Ohio Administrative Policy IT-06, “Ohio.gov Standardization & Registration of Internet Domain Names.” This update transfers all Ohio.gov related requirements to one statewide policy. Also, transferred the policy content into a new State of Ohio Administrative Policy Template. Re-numbered policy to IT-08 to be consistent with new numbering format.
01/15/2020	Updated the policy to incorporate the InnovateOhio Platform tools, standards, and format. The policy was also modified to reflect the change in administration.

Date	Description of Change
03/06/2020	Updated the navigation requirements to reflect the current InnovateOhio Platform practice.
01/28/2021	Expanded the scope of the policy to all DAS OIT superintended agencies, boards, and commissions. Added TLS certificate requirements, website security requirements, and modified privacy notice and content management requirements. Updated the browser compatibility section. Updated the policy to align with current terminology and processes.
01/28/2023	Scheduled policy review.

## 5.0 Inquiries

Direct inquiries regarding website design requirements to:

InnovateOhio Platform Team  
Office of Information Technology  
Ohio Department of Administrative Services  
30 E Broad Street, 39<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

[Platform@InnovateOhio.gov](mailto:Platform@InnovateOhio.gov)

InnovateOhio Platform Team resources may be found online at <https://iop.ohio.gov> and <https://ux.ohio.gov>.

Direct inquiries about this policy to:

State IT Policy Manager  
Enterprise IT Architecture & Policy  
Office of Information Technology  
Ohio Department of Administrative Services  
30 East Broad Street, 39<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

1-614-466-6930 | [DAS.State.ITPolicy.Manager@das.ohio.gov](mailto:DAS.State.ITPolicy.Manager@das.ohio.gov)

State of Ohio Administrative Policies may be found online at <https://das.ohio.gov/Divisions/Administrative-Support/State-Administrative-Policy>.

To obtain the Digital Certificate Provisioning Service, contact the:

Customer Service Center  
Office of Information Technology  
Ohio Department of Administrative Services  
1320 Arthur E. Adams Drive, Room 310



Columbus, Ohio 43221-3595

614-644-6860 | 877-644-6860 | [csc@ohio.gov](mailto:csc@ohio.gov)

## Appendix A - Definitions

- a. Authentication. Verifying the identity of a user, process, or device, often as a prerequisite to allowing access to resources in an information system.<sup>1</sup>
- b. Domain names. A domain name is used to locate computers on the Internet and to allow users to reach websites. Each domain name has at least two components, the top-level domain (TLD) name and the secondary level domain (SLD) name. In terms of Ohio.gov, “.gov” is the TLD and “Ohio” is the SLD. A third level domain may be added to further distinguish a SLD. For the purposes of this policy, agencies, boards, and commissions are required to have an Ohio.gov alias at the third level. Structurally, the domain name would conform to the following format: [Agency Name/Acronym].Ohio.gov. Refer to section 2.14, Domain Name Standardization, of this policy for specific domain name requirements.
- c. Identification. An act or process that presents an identifier to a system so that the system can recognize a system entity (e.g., user, process, or device) and distinguish that entity from all others.<sup>2</sup>
- d. InnovateOhio Platform: The InnovateOhio Platform (IOP) was established as a result of Governor Mike DeWine’s issuance of Executive Order 2019-15D Modernizing Information Technology Systems in State Agencies. The IOP provides integrated and scalable capabilities that enable state agencies to become more customer-centric and data-driven, delivering on Innovate Ohio’s vision to better serve Ohioans. The platform creates an integrated customer experience that brings higher-quality services to the public.
- e. Public-facing Web Pages. Public-facing web pages are web pages that are accessed via the World Wide Web by any Internet user throughout the world. Public-facing Web pages include information available to the general public, but do not include intranets, extranets, e-mail, or applications.
- f. State-controlled websites. Websites developed and maintained by Ohio agencies, or under contracts administered by Ohio agencies.
- g. Transport Layer Security (TLS). An authentication and encryption protocol widely

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<sup>1</sup> “NIST Special Publication 800-53 Revision 4, Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations,” U.S. Department of Commerce National Institute of Standards and Technology, April, 2013 <<http://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/SpecialPublications/NIST.SP.800-53r4.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> “CNSS Instruction No. 4009, National Information Assurance (IA) Glossary,” Committee on National Security Systems, 6 April 2015 < [http://www.ncsc.gov/publications/policy/docs/CNSSI\\_4009.pdf](http://www.ncsc.gov/publications/policy/docs/CNSSI_4009.pdf)>.

implemented in browsers and Web servers. HTTP traffic transmitted using TLS is known as HTTPS.<sup>3</sup>

## Appendix B - Resources

Document Name
<i>Executive Order 2019-14D Creating the InnovateOhio Advisory Board</i> <a href="https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/media/executive-orders/2019-14d">https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/media/executive-orders/2019-14d</a>
<i>Executive Order 2019-15D Modernizing Information Technology Systems in State Agencies</i> <a href="https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/media/executive-orders/2019-15d">https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/media/executive-orders/2019-15d</a>
<i>Additional Website standardization requirement guidance</i> <a href="https://innovateohio.gov/">https://innovateohio.gov/</a> and <a href="https://ux.ohio.gov">https://ux.ohio.gov</a>

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<sup>3</sup> Regenscheid, Andrew, Geoff Beier. NIST Interagency or Internal Report 7711, "NIST Security Best Practices for the Electronic Transmission of Election Materials for UOCAVA Voters," U.S. Information Technology Laboratory National Institute of Standards and Technology, September, 2011 <<https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/Legacy/IR/nistir7711.pdf>>.