

to adapt to stakeholder needs. The eAuthentication service has also integrated with the GSA [Login.gov](#) service for use by public citizens, which allows citizens to use one account to access all government services that leverage [Login.gov](#).

MRP Recognized for Accessibility: The Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) mission area consisting of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) leads USDA and ranks amongst the highest organizations in government in terms of conformity and maturity as reported in the [GSA FY23 Governmentwide Section 508 Assessment](#).

Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM): The USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) released an improved [Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#) (PHZM) in November 2023, which is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a given location, in a digital-only format. The 2023 map incorporates data from 13,412 weather stations compared to the 7,983 that were used for the 2012 map. The revamped PHZM website has an interactive online map, a zip-code search tool, as well as downloadable national, regional, and state maps in varying resolutions and formats. The 2023 PHZM is also the first to include customizations for viewing on mobile devices, and website metrics indicate that over 70% of users accessed the PHZM website with a mobile device. Since November 2023, the PHZM website has had 6,702,690 page views coming from 3,291,212 users. Also, during that time, over 149 maps have been downloaded 1,337,754 times.

NIFA Web Modernization and Dashboards: USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) launched a major content audit for its public-facing website to remove outdated, duplicative, and irrelevant content. Since beginning the content audit, the web footprint has been decreased by around 50%, and NIFA is now focused on revamping the remaining content to ensure it is up to date and relevant to our user needs. NIFA also developed two public-facing dashboards. The [NIFA Grant Funding dashboard](#) provides an inside look into NIFA funding for competitive and capacity grants from fiscal year 2018 forward to help reduce barriers and increase access to data on federally funded programs. The [Application Status dashboard](#) allows users to look up the status of their grant applications for NIFA funding opportunities. This tool is an innovative way to ensure transparency and enhance the customer service experience.

TFAA Web System Modernization and Integration: In the Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (TFAA) Mission Area, the ongoing work between the Foreign Agricultural Service's (FAS) web team and FAS business owners has led to the integration of several external FAS systems into one website. These include the [International Office Directory](#) (which in addition to living on the FAS website, also populates international contact data on more than 100 country pages), the Freight Tender system (which help coordinate international food assistance deliveries, and which serves as an invaluable tool for auditing and demonstrating legal compliance), and most recently the [U.S. Market Development Cooperator directory](#) which launched in late May 2024. The integration of all of these systems made them accessible and mobile-friendly, brought them in compliance with U.S. Web Design standards, and allowed FAS to reduce the overall FAS external website footprint by retiring dated / duplicative systems, and the FAS web team was able to coordinate a refresh of the data in these systems for accuracy. The FAS website receives more than

1.1 million unique visitors per year. In addition to complying with USDA web modernization requirements and the IDEA, such integrations will also boost the profile of these applications and increase the return on investment for FAS. Recent application forms for FAS trade missions were completed using MS Forms through Microsoft 365. In the past, trade mission applications were paper-based and needed to be printed, filled out, and submitted via email. Now the whole process is digital. FAS conducts 4-6 trade missions a year leading as many as 40 agriculture-related businesses and representatives from state departments of agriculture on an international mission to connect U.S. sellers with overseas buyers.

Direct Loan Digital Tools: In December of 2023, the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Mission Area launched their [online application for Direct Loan customers](#). More than 26,000 customers who submit a Direct Loan application each year now can use an online, interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. Through a personalized dashboard, borrowers can track the progress of their loan application on [farmers.gov](#) or by completing FSA's Loan Assistance Tool at [farmers.gov/loan-assistance-tool](#). This tool is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, improve customer service, and expand credit access.

Conclusion- Looking Ahead to M-23-22

On September 22, 2023, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget released [M-23-22, "Delivering a Digital First Public Experience"](#), which provided guidance and assistance to Federal agencies on how to design and deliver websites and digital services to the public to continue implementing the IDEA Act, in addition to defining ongoing agency assessment and reporting requirements. USDA is a key partner for the immediate government-wide actions identified in the memorandum, including service as one of the inaugural agency co-chairs of the newly established [Digital Experience Council](#), which serves as the primary interagency advisory body for assisting in the government-wide implementation of the IDEA Act and related digital experience activities.

USDA continues to provide enhanced digital products and programs aligned with the IDEA Act. For example, in February 2024, most farm loan borrowers are able to make payments to their direct loans with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](#). Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay the more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year on average. Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA's farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities, giving farm loan employees more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.

USDA will continue to work across the Department to implement the requirements of the 21st Century IDEA act at scale to provide simple, seamless, and secure digital products and programs that offer a world class experience for the public.

Endnotes:

High-level data on how people interact with federal public websites and digital services is available at <https://analytics.usa.gov>. More detailed data, which can be filtered by agency and domain, and includes a listing of the most-viewed websites and digital services, and trend data—is available via an application programming interface (API) at <https://open.gsa.gov/api/dap/>.

Appendix A – Acronyms/Abbreviations

• 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience

Act: 21st Century IDEA

- **AMS:** Agricultural Marketing Service
- **APHIS:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- **ARS:** Agricultural Research Service
- **CCC:** Commodity Credit Corporation
- **CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations
- **CODEX:** U.S. Codex Office
- **EEO:** Equal Employment Opportunity
- **EO:** Executive Order
- **ERS:** Economic Research Service
- **FAS:** Foreign Agricultural Service
- **FFAS:** Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service
- **FNCS:** Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services
- **FNS:** Food and Nutrition Service
- **FPAC Business Center:** Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
- **FS:** Forest Service
- **FSA:** Farm Service Agency
- **FSIS:** Food Safety and Inspection Service
- **FY:** Fiscal Year
- **MOA / MOU:** Memorandum of Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding
- **MRP:** Marketing and Regulatory Programs
- **NAL:** National Agricultural Library
- **NARA:** National Archives and Records Administration
- **NASS:** National Agricultural Statistics Service
- **NFC:** National Finance Center
- **NIFA:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- **NRCS:** Natural Resources Conservation Service

- **NRE:** Natural Resources and the Environment
- **OALJ:** Office of Administrative Law Judges
- **OASCR:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.
- **OBPA:** Office of Budget and Program Analysis
- **OC:** Office of Communications
- **OCA:** Office of the Consumer Advisor
- **OCE:** Office of Community Engagement; Office of the Chief Economist
- **OCFO:** Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- **OCHRO:** Office of the Chief Human Resources Director
- **OCIO:** Office of the Chief Information Officer
- **OCR:** Office of Congressional Relations
- **OCS:** Office of the Chief Scientist
- **OCX:** Office of Customer Experience
- **OES:** Office of the Executive Secretariat
- **OGC:** Office of the General Counsel
- **OGE:** Office of Government Ethics
- **OHR:** Office of Human Resources
- **OHSE:** Office of Homeland Security and Emergency
- **OIG:** Office of Inspector General
- **OMB:** Office of Management and Budget
- **OPPE:** Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
- **OSDBU:** Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
- **OSEC:** Office of the Secretary
- **OTR:** Office of Tribal Relations
- **RBCS:** Rural Business Cooperative Service
- **RD:** Rural Development
- **REE:** Research, Education and Economics
- **RHS:** Rural Housing Service

- **RMA:** Risk Management Agency
- **RUS:** Rural Utilities Service
- **TFAA:** Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
- **U.S.C.:** United States Code
- **USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture
- **USDA DS:** United States Department of Agriculture Digital Service

Appendix B – USDA Inventory of Public Facing Websites *

Owner	Public-Facing Website
Agricultural Research Service	https://www.ars-grin.gov
National Agricultural Library	https://www.lcacommons.gov
National Wildfire Coordinating Group	https://www.wildfire.gov
Recreation One Stop	https://ridb.recreation.gov
Rural Development	https://www.rural.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Discrimination Financial Assistance Program	https://www.22007apply.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Library Thesaurus	https://agclass.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- AgLab	https://aglab-prod.arsnet.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Ag Data Commons User Guide	https://data.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- NRCS Directives	https://directives.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- APHIS eFile	https://efile.aphis.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- FOIA Public Access Portal	https://efoia-pal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Northwest Irrigation and Soils Research Library	https://eprints.nwisrl.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Economic Research Service	https://www.ers.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Farm to School Census	https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Foreign Agricultural Service	https://www.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food Data Central	https://fdc.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food Buying Guide	https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Global Agricultural Information Network	https://gain.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- i5K Workspace	https://i5k.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- FAS International Production Assessment Division	https://ipad.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections	https://iwgsc.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- RD Lead-Based Compliance Key	https://leadpaint.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Long-Term Agroecosystem Research Network	https://ltar.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- AMS Market News	https://mymarketnews.ams.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board	https://nareeeab.ree.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Nematode Collection Database	https://nematode.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Nutrition Evidence Systematic Review	https://nesr.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Finance Center	https://nfc.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Service Center Locator	https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Organic Integrity Database	https://organic.ams.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Databases	https://phytochem.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Preservation Information Exchange	https://pix.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- USDA Plan Hardiness Zone Map	https://planhardiness.ars.usda.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture- PLANTS Database	https://plants.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- NRCS eDirectives	https://policy.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Statistics Service Respondent Portal	https://portal.agcounts.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Predictive Microbiology Information Portal	https://portal.errc.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Professional Standards Training Database	https://professionalstandards.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- RD/FSA Properties	https://properties.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool	https://pstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Housing Service Home Loans	https://pubmai.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Housing Service Home Loans	https://rdhomeloans.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Development Multi-Family Housing Rentals	https://rdmfhrentals.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Research, Education & Economics Information System	https://reeis.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Risk Management Agency	https://www.rma.usda.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Scientific Discoveries	https://scientificdiscoveries.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- SCINET	https://scinet.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Soil Data Access	https://sdmdataaccess.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Library Search	https://search.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- SNAP-Ed Connection	https://snaped.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- SNAP to Skills	https://snaptoskills.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Submit Your Manuscript	https://submit.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Tellus	https://tellus.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food Buying Guide	https://uatfoodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool	https://uatpstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- RD Management Interactive Network Connection	https://usdaminc.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- NAL Pomological Watercolors	https://usdawatercolors.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- U.S. National Arboretum	https://usna.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- GrainGenes	https://wheat.pw.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- WIC Breastfeeding Support	https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- WIC Works Resource System	https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Marketing Service	https://www.ams.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	https://www.aphis.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Research Service	https://www.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- eAuthentication	https://www.eauth.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Economic Research Service	https://www.ers.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Foreign Agricultural Service	https://www.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food and Nutrition Service	https://www.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Forest Service	https://www.fs.usda.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture- Farm Service Agency	https://www.fsa.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Library	https://www.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Institute of Food and Agriculture	https://www.nifa.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Natural Resources Conservation Service	https://www.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Development	https://www.rd.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Research, Education & Economics	https://www.ree.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture	https://www.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food and Agricultural Education Information System	https://www.faeis.cals.vt.edu
US Forest Service- Forests and Rangelands	https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov
US Forest Service	https://apps.fs.usda.gov
USDA - Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion- Dietary Guidelines for Americans	https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov
USDA - Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion- MyPlate.gov	https://www.myplate.gov
USDA Forest Service - Southwestern Region	https://www.bosque.gov
USDA, ARS, NAL- Federal Interagency Committee on Invasive Terrestrial Animals and Pathogens	https://www.itap.gov
USDA, Office of Communications- Farmers.gov	https://www.farmers.gov
USDA/ARS/NAL- National Invasive Species Information Center	https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov

** as of January 31, 2024*

Appendix C - 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act USDA Decision Memos



United States Department of
Agriculture Office of the Deputy
Secretary Washington, D.C. 20250

TO: Subcabinet
FROM: Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky
SUBJECT: USDA Website Modernization and Intranet Vision
DATE: June 22, 2020

Over the last 3 years, USDA has remained dedicated to making the Department the most efficient, effective, customer focused agency in federal government. As part of our commitment to remain customer focused, USDA has more work to do when it comes to modernizing our web presence as our websites are often the first touchpoint our customers have with the Department. While USDA has made strides to comply with the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act \(IDEA\)](#) and launched the online USDA [Digital Strategy Playbook in 2019](#), additional website inconsistencies across the Department remain. For example, a recent review of USDA's web presence found:

- Over a thousand different domain names in use
- An inconsistent "look and feel"
- Multiple content management systems in use
- Improper and inconsistent branding
- Wide variations in primary responsibility of those managing websites and providing backend support services across the Department between Public Affairs, IT, or agency program areas

The fragmented and inconsistent nature of USDA's current website footprint has not only led to customer confusion but also to cyber security vulnerabilities across the Department that must be addressed.

For these reasons, this memo is to ask that all USDA Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices should formalize and finalize a project plan including a timeline, milestones, budget, and the identification of a Mission Area, Agency, or Office project manager to oversee execution of the project plan and modernize all websites by October 1, 2024. This will enable all Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices to comply and with USDA's Digital Strategy Playbook and migration to Drupal 8 on USDA's Enterprise Web Application Platform and Services (eWAPS). A template of a project timeline and an example timeline is attached, and agency's project plans are due to the Department by COB Friday, July 17, 2020 to Ryann DuRant at Ryann.DuRant@usda.gov. Mission Areas that house multiple agencies may submit one plan for their Mission Area's websites, but that plan should include timeline, milestones, and budget information for each agency's website. Additionally, Agencies who have multiple domains and sites may submit one plan for all their websites, so long as timeline, milestones, and budget information is included for each.

Your project plan for your website modernization process should also include the prioritization of resources needed to migrate to Drupal 8 and to the eWAPS platform if your websites are not already on the common platform, the development of a clear governance structure, plan for content audits and clean up, and a review of policies and procedures to ensure USDA programs and information are easy for customers to find and use. It should also include the implementation of a constant process improvement program driven by data and analytics to continually improve the customer and user experience of USDA's digital tools.

Goals and Timeline of USDA Website Modernization

Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices should do the following:

- Send Website Modernization Project Plans to Ryann DuRant by July 17, 2020.
- Identify a project manager by July 17, 2020 who will lead their Mission Area, Agency, or Office's team by coordinating progress, executing the project plan, and working closely with the Department's Website Modernization Team.

- Conform to the “look and feel” and standards outlined in the USDA Digital Strategy Playbook by December 31, 2020.
- Initiate by October 1, 2021 the process of migrating all websites to the eWAPS platform and to the Drupal 8 content management system, with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024.
 - This limits duplicative website infrastructure, minimalizes cyber risk by having an enterprise level technology solution managed by the Department, and enhances our ability to coordinate on messaging in real-time, thus mitigating negative impacts on our internal and external customers.
- Ensure USDA compliance with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act on an ongoing basis.

The Department has implemented a team, led by the Office of Communications (OC), that consists of representatives from OC, Office of Customer Experience (OCX), and Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to assist Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices in the areas of content, customer experience, and development during the web modernization process and to ensure the Department maintains a OneUSDA vision of website modernization.

- To support the efforts of Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices, the Website Modernization Team will provide opportunities for additional training and communities of practice to share subject matter expertise and strategies.
- The Website Modernization Team will establish enterprise-level accountability for cross-Departmental, routine review of usability, usage, and content on sites.
- The Website Modernization Team will hold Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices accountable by conducting monthly check-ins to track progress in areas of content, analytics, accessibility, branding (where applicable), development, and customer experience. This information will also be tracked via the Quarterly Strategic Review (QSR) process with the Deputy Secretary.

One USDA Intranet

Through the web modernization process, many Agencies and Offices have already identified information currently housed on external-facing sites that is intended for internal-facing audiences only. As a part of an effort to streamline and improve USDA’s Internal Communications, the Department recognizes the need to have an effective and efficient mechanism to communicate important all-employee information. In conjunction with website modernization, the Department is developing an enterprise wide, One USDA Intranet to address these identified needs. Effective immediately, Agencies and Offices should not further invest in their individual intranets (excluding cybersecurity maintenance), or create new intranets, but may continue to use existing intranets until forthcoming direction from the Department.

The One USDA Intranet will be rolled out early this fall and will house links to commonly used employee information and resources including, but not limited to, WebTA, AgLearn, Employee Personnel Page (EPP), and dashboards. It will also include upcoming events, USDA resources, and news and information from the Office of the Secretary. Recognizing that several Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices have their own intranets, the Department will work to ensure those intranets are taken into consideration throughout this process.

Decommissioning USDA Connect

OCIO announced on March 18, 2020 the decommissioning of the USDA Connect due to competing toolsets within the Department and a vendor that was no longer able to support USDA securely. The decommission will be complete by September 30, 2020, and as a part of that process, OCIO has inventoried active customer communities to migrate to current landing zones including Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, and eventually, the One USDA Intranet. Mission areas, Agencies, and Offices using USDA Connect should ensure they are prepared for this decommissioning.

Questions?

Contact Ryann DuRant, Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Internal Communications, at ryann.durant@usda.gov.



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Office of the Chief Information Officer

1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250-0801

DECISION MEMO FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

THROUGH:

Michael Amato
Director of Communications

MICHAEL AMATO

Digitally signed by MICHAEL AMATO
Date: 2023.01.05 14:32:31 -05'00'

Gary Washington
Chief Information Officer

GARY WASHINGTON

Digitally signed by GARY WASHINGTON
Date: 2023.01.05 13:59:30 -05'00'

FROM:

Michael Illenberg
Communications Manager
Print, Events, Editorial Review

Michael G Illenberg

Digitally signed by Michael G Illenberg
Date: 2023.01.04 13:48:30 -05'00'

SUBJECT:

Web Modernization and OneUSDA Intranet

ISSUE:

Recommit to the mandatory migration of all USDA websites to the Enterprise- Wide Application Platform and Services (EWAPS) and to the Drupal content management system, with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024, and recommit to the departmentwide adoption of the OneUSDA intranet as as part of USDA’s compliance with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act.

BACKGROUND:

In 2020, the Office of Communications (OC) in partnership with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) under direction from the Deputy Secretary initiated the development and implementation of project plans for every agency and staff office to migrate all USDA.gov websites onto the EWAPS platform using Drupal as a common content management system to ensure that agency communications/web technology was not siloed and was integrated across the Department to ensure a consistent customer experience. Concurrently, the department initiated and began development/implementation of OneUSDA intranet to act as an integrated departmentwide news and information sharing platform for all USDA employees as outlined in a June 22, 2020 memo “USDA Website Modernization and Intranet Vision (attached).

DISCUSSION:

While USDA has made strides to comply with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA) and launched the online USDA Digital Strategy Playbook in 2019, additional website inconsistencies across the Department remain. For example, a review of USDA's web presence found:

- Over a thousand different domain names in use
- An inconsistent "look and feel"
- Multiple content management systems in use
- Improper and inconsistent branding
- Wide variations in primary responsibility of those managing websites and providing backend support services across the Department between Public Affairs, IT, or agency program areas
- Duplication of outdated forms and content across multiple agencies' owned intranet websites and duplication of work to maintain the same content on the multiple intranet websites.

Website Modernization:

DAITO secured a five-year single award BPA with RIVA Solutions and U.Group, two premier web design, experience, and technology firms. This BPA, available through July 2025, serves to advance our digital transformation efforts, including migration of agency websites to an enterprise environment, and to meet the evolving customer experience demands of our diverse stakeholders.

This BPA provides quick and easy access to premiere Drupal developers who will develop robust and dynamic solutions for customer-centric experiences fulfilling broad policy initiatives and programs on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues.

Why use the BPA?

- Streamlined Approach
- Faster Delivery
- Respecting Agency Individuality
- Human-Centered Design
- Integrated Front and Back End Development

Task Areas:

- Web Development
- UI, UX, and Design
- DevOps
- System Administration
- Migration Support
- Information Architecture
- Search Engine Optimization
- Content Audit, Strategy, and Management
- Post-Production Activities
- Website Operations and Maintenance
- Business Analytics
- Business Intelligence

- Project Management

Since 2020, OC in partnership with OCIO has mandated the development and implementation of project plans to migrate all USDA websites to EWAPS and to place a hold on investing or developing agency owned intranet platforms.

The progress of migrating all websites began in July 2020 and continues today with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024. The Office of Communications has agencies and offices with tools, direction and/or guidance to address the inconsistent look and feel of webpages, branding and use of logos in the USDA Style Guide Digital Strategy Playbook.

Caveat: If any of the USDA websites are currently the subject of a litigation hold, OCIO may be under an obligation to preserve the particular website in its current native format. OCIO will work with each agency to ensure regulatory compliance before migration.

OneUSDA Intranet:

In 2021 OC contracted Bixal, a private software developer with Drupal expertise, to develop the OneUSDA intranet using Drupal as the content management system that would act as the centralized internal leadership communications and department messaging to all staff. As all other websites were being mandated to Drupal in 2020, it made sense for the Department to leverage the expected content manager skillset needed for all other USDA websites.

Concurrently, the Department adopted and began to broadly use new tools offered by Microsoft Office 365 (O365) including Microsoft Teams and SharePoint. In 2022, as USDA nears finalizing the OneUSDA intranet on the Drupal platform, Microsoft released its most current update which includes tools that offer website development capabilities that match and, in some cases, exceed the potential for Drupal. Some agencies ignored the direction from the former Deputy Secretary and began to utilize O365 and develop internal communications tools in that environment.

OneUSDA is the third time in the past 15 years that USDA has initiated the development of an intranet platform to be accessible by all staff and which would communicate common information. To abandon the OneUSDA project in favor of O365 tools, and once again, begin a new departmentwide effort to build OneUSDA in the O365 environment rather than Drupal, will delay this project another two to four years at a time when messaging about cultural change could not be more critical for the Department. It will cost the Department up to another \$1 million in development fees in addition to the loss of our nearly \$750,000 commitment into the current iteration. Inevitably, new IT technology will be introduced in the next few years and there will likely be another push to begin the cycle of developing a departmentwide intranet over again at that time with even more funds lost.

OC and OCIO OneUSDA intranet development capitalize on the opportunities offered by O365. The Department is currently rolling out OneUSDA as a communications platform only, with links to resources, collaboration tools and document management including tools offered by the O365 environment.

All agencies have been granted development access to the OneUSDA Drupal production environment and tasked with setting up top tier agency home pages and content by January 9, 2023 – at which point OC will host a OneUSDA relaunch campaign.


RECOMMENDATION:

Effective January 4, 2023 as Deputy Secretary, to comply with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act and consolidate our IT Services I reiterate and direct all agencies to migrate all websites to the eWAPS platform or Akamai.

Effective January 4, 2023, to comply with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act and consolidate our IT Services I reiterate and direct all agencies and staff offices to adopt and develop OneUSDA intranet as the enterprise-wide solution for an employee news source with leadership internal communications content, employee event communications content and as an employee resource with links to employee tools and other web-based resources.

Effective January 4, 2023: I direct all agencies and staff offices cease all current expenditures on legacy intranets' development and cease continuation of the use of such intranets as the principal means of Agency internal mass communications as of the start of Fiscal year 2024. Agencies may continue the use of MS Teams for document management and team collaboration.

DECISION BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY:

Approved:	 Date: 2023.01.05 14:13:14 -06'00'
Disapproved:	
Discuss with me:	