



Policy on

# Content and Presentation Design Standards

for

## Trinidad & Tobago Government Internet (Web) Presences

Version 1.0

December 2006

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## **1. Policy Name**

Policy on Content and Presentation Design Standards for Trinidad and Tobago Government Internet (Web) Presences.

## **2. Target Audience**

This Policy is targeted to the Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments, Communication Specialists, IT Professionals or any persons responsible for the design, development, maintenance and approval of web sites and portals for Ministries and agencies in the Public Service.

## **3. Scope of Application**

This Policy is applicable to Internet web sites and portals of:

- (i) All Government Ministries, agencies, departments and the Tobago House of Assembly,
- (ii) All statutory authorities.

The Ministry with the responsibility for the e-Government Portal will administer the requirements of this Policy. Any requests for exemptions or exceptions to this Policy should be forwarded to the Ministry with responsibility for the e-Government Portal in writing and be subject to Cabinet approval.

State owned companies may use this policy as guidelines for their content and presentation standards. Non Government Organisations are also not covered by this policy.

## **4. Policy Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to provide homogenous guidelines for the development of Trinidad and Tobago Government and statutory authority (TTGOV) web sites and portals to:

- (i) encourage enterprise wide, consistency of functionality of Internet web interfaces and end user experience;
- (ii) improve usability of web sites by the public;
- (iii) assure a seamless interaction of Ministry and statutory agency web sites and the e-Government Portal interface; and
- (iv) ensure standardization of software tools used with web sites.

## **5. Policy Objectives**

The following design standards are provided to ensure that visitors to Government of Trinidad and Tobago and statutory authority (TTGOV) web sites can:

- identify that they are visiting an official Government of Trinidad & Tobago web site; and
- identify the Ministry or public sector agency to which the web site belongs, and conduct routine tasks in similar ways on any given site (e.g., searching, locating contact information).

In order to achieve this, Government of Trinidad and Tobago (TTGOV) web sites must:

- convey a consistent, coherent, and positive image to the public; and
- increase visibility and enhance services through improved public recognition by linking services, programmes and products.

These standards will assist the Government of Trinidad & Tobago in presenting a common image and experience throughout the Portal and Ministry web sites, while respecting the autonomy of individual Ministries, their web sites and their diverse audiences and interests.

Subsequent policies will elaborate through technical standards relating to TTGOV web site functionality such issues as:

- (i) appropriate security standards (authentication requirements etc.) and
- (ii) meta data standards.

## 6. Policy Context

This Policy on Content and Presentation Design Standards shall be consistent with the general policy on presentation of government material and may be amended from time to time.

Any document published by the Government Printery or any other agency that is then displayed on a TTGOV web site remains the intellectual property of its authors and should be identified as such.

Legislation and guidelines relevant to this policy include:

Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
Communications Policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago  
Civil Service Act, No. 45 of 1979  
Freedom of Information Act, No. 26 of 1999  
Copyright Act, No 13 of 1997, as amended  
Exchequer and Audit Act, Ch. 69:01  
Trade Mark Act, No. 4 of 1997  
National Emblems (Regulation) Act, Ch. 19:04  
Standards Act, No. 38 of 1972  
Tobago House of Assembly Act, No. 37 of 1980  
E-Mail and Internet Acceptable Usage Policy  
National Policy on Persons with Disabilities  
Identity Guidelines of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago

## 7. Policy Maintenance History

Date	Change Details	Author	Version
Dec 2006		ICT Division	1.0

The ICT Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Unit of the ICT Division, Ministry of Public Administration and Information is responsible for this document.

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**The Effective Date of this Policy is the date of approval by the Cabinet.**

**For existing web presences as of October 1, 2006, compliance shall be no later than October 1, 2007**

## 8. Introduction

In line with its objectives outlined in the National ICT Strategy, *fastforward*, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is developing a central Portal for the dissemination of government information and provision of government services. This e-Government Portal is intended to provide a single point of entry for end user access to government information and services, whether delivered through electronic means or other channels.

In pursuing the goal of online presentation of information, it is important to appreciate that the specific context of online viewing demands different approaches to layout and content from that of a "paper-based" document. Also, research into the nature of online viewing points to the need for a style of content presentation that allows for quick recognition by the user of important points within the body of text.

These differences must be appreciated and addressed in the design and layout of any TTGOV web site.

As the Trinidad and Tobago e-Government Portal design activity began, the Portal's conceptual design report noted that;

*"there is a growing number of ministries and agencies who are utilizing the Internet as an alternative service delivery channel, however, information, the level of client interactivity, layout, design, content, usability, functionality is highly varied."*

A major objective of the T&T e-Government Portal initiative is the establishment of a "Common Look and Feel" strategy to be used as an enterprise-wide standard in the Public Service. This strategy is based on an appropriate combination of several core design elements, namely:

1. Accessibility,
2. Navigation,
3. Usability
3. Format and Layout
4. Colour & Typography
5. Site Content.

Some of the common design concepts in this Policy are requirements for TTGOV web sites that will be included in e-Government Portal initiatives. Others are recommendations that are consistent with the principle of the enterprise-wide look and feel of TTGOV web sites and will improve their usability and accessibility.

## **9. CORE DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

### **9.1 Accessibility**

#### **Required**

All TTGOV web sites and their pages must incorporate text equivalents for non-textual elements, such as graphics, images, navigational aids, audio tracks, and video, to ensure universal accessibility goals are achieved.

### **9.2 Navigation**

#### **Required**

Every TTGOV web site must use consistently placed common navigation elements. See section 9.4 for guidelines on format and layout of these elements.

### **9.3 Usability**

#### **Required**

The Ministry/Agency must give evidence of having adequately:

- Defined the user;
- Identified and understood the needs of the user;
- Defined the service delivery goals of the agency;
- Set usability objectives;
- Identified design constraints; and
- Defined functionality specifications in order to address the goals of both audience (user) and agency.

### **9.4 Format and Layout.**

#### **Required**

All TTGOV web pages must include the common banner and menu bar, placed at the top of every web page, and the common footer at the bottom of every web page, to facilitate navigation through and between TTGOV sites.

#### **Required**

All TTGOV web pages must incorporate an institutional menu similar in design and placement to the common menu bar. The TTGOV menu bar options must appear and include: Home, Services, Language (for bilingual sites), FAQs, Help, Contact Us.

#### **Required**

All TTGOV web sites must utilise the header and footer designs provided by the agency or body responsible for the management of the e-Government portal and use a common TTGOV identifier. The identifier will have a consistent placement and size, and will be present on all pages.

The initial versions of the header and footer are provided in figs. 1 and 2; however, these designs may change as the country's e-Government programme matures.



Fig 1. TTGOV web site header



Fig 2. TTGOV web site footer



Fig 3. TTGOV logo

The colour of the (red) banner in the header may be altered to seamlessly match the palette of the web site.

#### **Recommended**

The web site may include a search bar in its banner that facilitates searches within the site for requested text.

### **9.4.1 Layout**

#### **Required**

Line lengths must be limited to ten to twelve words per line to increase legibility.

#### **Required**

If graphics are used for navigation, redundant text links must be included as an alternative for those users who cannot see graphics. The ALT attribute must be included for all graphics and image (IMG) maps.

#### **Recommended**

Graphic safe areas for layout for visibility without scrolling are:

for print: Max width – 560 pixels (19.76cm), Max height – 410 pixels (14.47cm)

for screens: Max width – 760 pixels (26.82cm), Max height – 410 pixels (14.47cm)

#### **Recommended**

Graphic bullets, icons and other visual markers should be applied sparingly.

#### **Recommended**

Consistency of layout for handling text and graphics should be applied across site's pages.

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Consistency of layout for handling text and graphics should be applied across site's pages.

**Recommended**

Where designs are based on complex tables, large graphics or technologies such as Macromedia Flash, these pages should be provided with an equivalent, accessible formatted version.

**Required**

All TTGOV web pages should conform to the generic layout illustrated in Fig. 4 below.

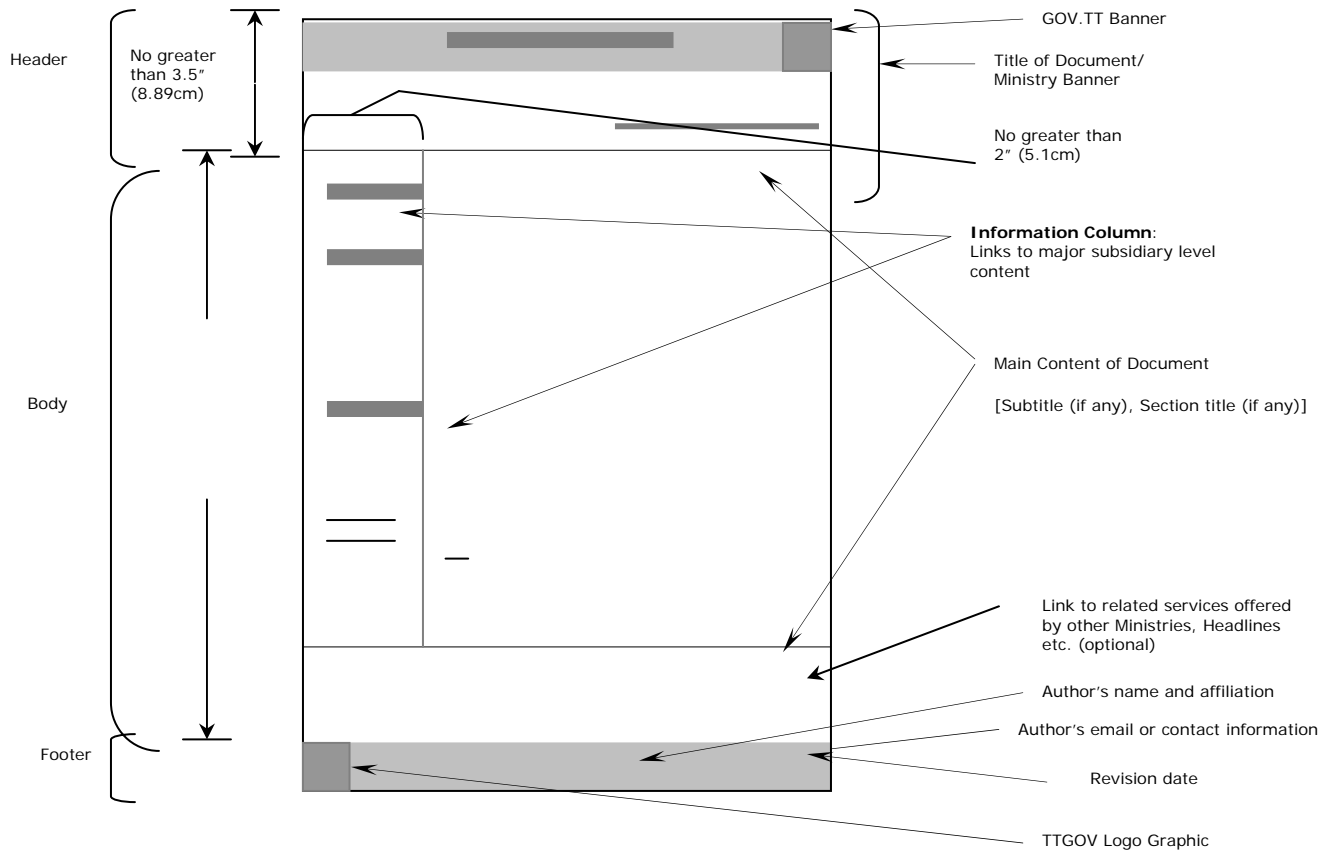


Fig 4. TTGOV Web page layout

**9.4.2 Scripts and Dynamic Pages**

**Required**

All applications of scripts or dynamic pages should accompany planning and testing on a variety of platforms and with different browsers, users at varying levels of ability, ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds

### 9.4.3 Graphics

#### **Recommended**

All graphics should be in JPEG or GIF format and optimized for transmission over a 56.6 k Baud modem.

### 9.4.4 Multimedia

#### **Recommended**

Ministries and public sector agencies should choose only from the most commonly used cross-platform types of multimedia formats for delivery over the Internet.

## 9.5 Colour & Typography

### 9.5.1 Colour

#### **Required**

Content must be presented using darker colours over light backgrounds, characterised by simple designs, and faded colours. Such contrast will enhance readability.

In developing TTGov web sites, designers should consider the research that shows that popular meanings are associated with colour on western culture. Some of these findings are summarised below:

Red: Danger, excitement, fire, passion, blood, professionalism, credibility, fight or flight.

Purple: Wealth, royalty, sophistication, intelligence.

Blue: Quietness, serenity, truth, dignity, constancy, reliability, transparency, integrity, responsibility, power.

Black: Sophistication, elegance, power, rebellion.

White: Purity, cleanness, luminosity, vacuum.

Green: Nature, fresh, vegetation, health, money.

#### **Required**

All TTGOV web sites must use only standard 216 Web-safe colours for web site elements, including menu bars and navigation aids, typography and background, and for simple graphic components. Frames must only be used on TTGOV sites as an alternative format.

### 9.5.2 Typography

#### 9.5.2.1 Type fonts

##### **Recommended**

The suggested fonts for use in web pages include Verdana, Georgia, Trebuchet and Arial.

### **Recommended**

When a combination of *serif* and *sans serif* faces is selected, fonts should be compatible, with a combination of *serif* and *sans serif* type faces, and no more than two type faces should appear on a single page.

#### **9.5.2.2 Type size and settings**

### **Recommended**

To ensure scalability, relative units should be used to control the typography on web pages

### **Required**

Italicized text must be reserved for referencing conventions, foreign words and phrases.

### **Required**

Underlined text and coloured text (especially blue and violet) must be avoided on web pages to avoid confusion with hypertext links etc.

#### **9.5.3 Margins and Justification**

### **Recommended**

Margins should define the reading area of a web page by separating the main text from non-text elements, such as interface elements and other unrelated graphics

### **Recommended**

Text should be left justified, as this is the most legible option for web pages.

### **Recommended**

Web analyzer tools should be the standard means of collecting site usage data. Counters should not be used to perform this function.

### **Recommended**

All TTGOV institutions should apply HTML validators to existing Web sites to assess accessibility status and HTML validations should be applied to new TTGOV sites prior to posting.

### **Recommended**

All TTGOV Web sites should incorporate Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) or similarly sized tables to achieve consistent presentation of content.

## **9.6 Site Content**

### **Required**

Main or Home Page web content must primarily be programme or service-related and “client-centric”.

### **Required**

Web content must identify what programmes and services are available from the Ministry or agency.

Links or information presented should provide a basic level of understanding and knowledge regarding the available services.

Programme definition should include such information as:

- What the programme provides for the citizen, and
- Why the programme was developed.

### **Required**

Web content must identify who are the eligible customers or main targets of the programme and services.

For each programme or service, text should clearly explain which segment of the population is the target.

If there are similar programmes or services within the Ministry (or wider Government) that deal with other segments of the population, there should be clear links or guides to more information about these programmes or services

### **Required**

Web content must identify when and where the programme and services can be accessed.

For each programme or information set, there should be clear guidance (for all delivery channels) where the service may be accessed.

Such information should include:

- Address of points of access;
- What requirements are essential to access the services or the programme (e.g., conditions, required documentation); and
- What steps, including dealing with partnering agencies, the citizen must take to access the service or the programme.

### **Recommended**

Messages from the relevant Minister, Permanent Secretary or Agency Head should be placed in the prime area of content only on subsidiary pages levels of content.

## **9.6.1 Editorial Standards**

### **Recommended**

Three techniques are to employed to adapt existing text from the body of paper-based information currently available with Ministries and Agencies. They are:

1. Use objective or neutral language. Simply state facts rather than use emotive, exaggerated or flowery language.
2. Make the text easily reviewable. Use bullet points instead of lists within the body copy.
3. Make the text concise. Eliminate unnecessary information or the use of too many adjectives.

### **9.6.1.1 Levels of Text to be Displayed**

#### **Recommended**

The content should be presented in three levels as follows:

1. A short, easily reviewed headline
2. An intermediate précis
3. The full document or a link to the entire document

### **9.6.1.2 Reviewing the Page Text**

#### **Recommended**

Subheadings should be included to add landmarks to direct the reader through content.

#### **Recommended**

To facilitate text being scanned/reviewed easily when displayed, the following should be considered;

- Highlight words using hypertext links, typeface variations ((bold, colour, etc.)
- Meaningful sub-headings
- Bulleted lists
- One major idea per paragraph
- Use half the word count or less than that of conventional writing for print
- In framing the text, one should start with the conclusion, ensuring inclusion of the critical or salient information (the “Who”, “What”, “Where”, “When” and “Why”) at the beginning of the text body, with other main points following.

#### **Recommended**

Where acronyms are used, the full name or phrase should be written the first time it is used and followed immediately with the acronym in parentheses. This applies for each page on which the acronym appears.

#### **Required**

Every acronym should be clearly defined on every page using the acronym.

### **9.6.2 Privacy Statement and Terms of Use**

#### **Required**

Every TTGOV web page must link to a privacy statement that details what personal information is being collected and the use that will be made of the information. Every TTGOV web page must link to a standard copyright notice and terms of use.

### 9.6.2.1 Copyright and Currency

#### Required

All pages within a TTGOV web site must have a date indicator to signal to users that they have reached the end of that page and to signify the currency of the content.

The following Copyright/Permission text must be included within the Privacy Statement and Terms of Use link at the bottom of all TTGOV Web pages:

(a) Copyright © [date] Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

or

(b) Copyright © [date] [Institution]

#### Recommended

All page currency indicators should use the ISO standard for all-numeric date display (YYYY-MM-DD) and use one of the following formats: Date published, Date modified, or Last updated.

#### Recommended

All TTGOV web sites should provide users with a means of contacting institutions/individuals via electronic mail and other alternative contact options.

### 9.6.3 Language options

#### Required

Language buttons on Welcome pages must be displayed in the manner indicated to ensure visual equality and continuity.

### 9.6.4 External Content and Links

#### Recommended

TTGOV web sites and applications may link to third party sites, provided that information or services contained in those sites is deemed relevant to support the user in conducting and completing transactions or provides additional content valuable to the user by:

- Expanding business and citizen access to government services and government information;
- Offering an easy and convenient process for citizens, businesses and international audience to conduct transactions with government online;
- Accelerating the development and delivery of an increased volume of high quality online government services;
- Improving the level of customer service from government;
- Extending electronic government services to stakeholders

#### **9.6.4.1 Collaborative Arrangements**

##### **Required**

TTGOV organizations must ensure that web sites that represent a collaborative arrangement acknowledge their participation by displaying an identifier that achieves a visual presence and balance between the government and its partners.

##### **Required**

Sites not under the explicit control of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago must open in a new and separate browser window.

##### **Required**

Links from public Internet sites to private Intranet or Extranet sites must not be available to the public, unless authorized by the ministry's information systems director or equivalent authority.

##### **Required**

Where externally sourced information, i.e., third-party information, is hosted on the institutional web site, a liability disclaimer must be directly attached to the externally sourced information and must describe the type of information to which the disclaimer applies, e.g., databases or documents.

##### **Recommended**

Where appropriate, TTGOV institutions are encouraged to use lists of links rather than embedded or contextual links. This method of displaying information improves the overall accessibility of the page.

A 'links page' or page with a separate list of links must provide a link to a liability disclaimer.

#### **9.6.5 Domain Names**

##### **Required**

All TTGOV institutions identified in section 3 must register their gov.tt domain names using at least one of the two following domain name conventions.

A name that represents the institution's primary purpose,

e.g., news.gov.tt or planning.gov.tt

Acronyms or names,

e.g., pai.gov.tt or attorneygeneral.gov.tt