

# Information Technology Policy

## *Design Standards Policy*

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ITP-SFT002

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**Category**  
Software

**Supersedes**  
None

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### 1. Purpose

This [Information Technology Policy \(ITP\)](#) establishes design standards for Commonwealth internal and public-facing websites, applications, and [digital content and services](#).

### 2. Scope

This ITP applies to all departments, offices, boards, commissions, and councils under the Governor's jurisdiction (hereinafter referred to as "agencies"). Agencies not under the Governor's jurisdiction are strongly encouraged to follow this ITP.

Third-party vendors, licensors, contractors, or suppliers shall meet the policy requirements of this ITP as outlined in the Responsibilities section.

### 3. Definitions

**Content Management Systems:** Systems that enable users to modify content on websites without the need for technical knowledge or changes to code.

**External Links:** Links to websites, applications, and digital content and services that are not under the management or control of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**Web Analytics:** The collection, analysis, and reporting of website data to better understand and optimize website usage and experience.

### 4. Policy

The formats and standards defined by this ITP will be followed when designing, developing, and implementing Commonwealth internal and public-facing websites, applications, and digital content and services.

In circumstances where adhering to this policy for externally facing application would void the warranty of a product or is not possible due to technical constraints of the

software in use, agencies should work to adhere to this policy as closely as possible without voiding warranty and within the capabilities of the tools in use.

Any Commonwealth public-facing websites, applications, and digital content and services that are new (i.e. being created for the first time) or undergoing a modernization shall adhere to the Design Standards as detailed at: [www.pa.gov/Design-standards/](http://www.pa.gov/Design-standards/)

Any existing public facing websites, applications, and digital content and services undergoing major enhancements shall take any reasonable steps possible to become more adherent to the Design Standards.

It is strongly encouraged that internal facing websites, applications, and digital content and services also adhere to the Design Standards, but adherence is not required. Internal products such as Microsoft Teams file sharing sites, Microsoft Sharepoint, Microsoft M365 Office Products and others may be used "as is" if they are internally facing.

#### **4.1 Content Management**

The pace of legal and regulation change at the Commonwealth is high, often prompting the need for changes to websites, applications, and other digital content. It is strongly recommended, but not required, that Content Management systems be put in place to allow for updating of language and content on Commonwealth systems without the need for code changes.

#### **4.2 Information Technology (IT) Accessibility Requirements**

All public-facing websites, applications, and other digital content and services shall adhere to the requirements specified in [ITP-ACC001, Information Technology Digital Accessibility Policy](#) and any other applicable federal and state regulations and laws.

#### **4.3 Commonwealth Language Access Framework**

All internal and public-facing websites, applications, and other digital content and services shall adhere to the requirements specified in the [Commonwealth Language Access Framework](#), as applicable.

#### **4.4 Commonwealth Branding Standard for Agencies**

In an effort to present constituents with a cohesive, Commonwealth-branded interface, design guidelines have been developed for use on Commonwealth websites, applications, and digital services. The guidelines help to deploy a branded and universal graphical user interface, while still allowing the agencies to maintain a degree of autonomy and creativity on agency websites, applications, and digital services. Agencies shall adhere to these specifications, which can be found in [Management Directive 205.40, Commonwealth Branding](#).

#### **4.5 Commonwealth Domain Names**

Agencies shall ensure that all new domain name requests for websites, applications, and digital services use the PA.GOV domain. Agencies shall not expand their use of services utilizing non-.PA.GOV domains. Refer to [ITP-NET005, Commonwealth External and Internal Domain Name Services \(DNS\)](#) for details.

#### **4.6 Acronyms and Terminology**

Agencies are encouraged to simplify and distinguish terms, where possible. It is recommended that acronyms be spelled out to reduce potential confusion

or lack of clarity for users not familiar with government organizations or services.

#### 4.7 Cookies

Persistent cookies shall not collect [Personally Identifiable Information \(PII\)](#). Refer to [ITP-SEC025, Proper Use and Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information \(PII\)](#) for additional information.

#### 4.8 Multimedia

Sound and video files, as well as streaming audio and video, may be added to websites, application, and digital services provided that:

- All multimedia files are developed in compliance with [ITP-ACC001, Information Technology Digital Accessibility Policy](#), which follows the latest version of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) by requiring closed captioning, or a transcript be associated with all internal and external Commonwealth-produced videos; and
- Users receiving complete file transmission instructions are notified of file size.

Streaming media requires higher bandwidth availability for satisfactory performance. Systems designing streaming media services shall collaborate with the Office of Administration, Office for Information Technology, Enterprise Technology Services Office (OA/IT/ETSO) during the design phase of the project so an impact analysis can be conducting and procurements made if required to enhance the Commonwealth IT infrastructure.

#### 4.9 Design Review

Agencies are responsible for conducting the following reviews:

- Verify with agency legal office the agency's right to use all software;
- Evaluate with agency legal office the potential liability associated with websites, applications, and digital content and services;
- Review content and branding (including all information, graphics, photographs, and text) with agency communication and digital directors. Communication and digital directors will consult with agency legal office where applicable;

All reviews should be conducted during the design phase of project implementations.

#### 4.10 Web Analytics

Agencies shall adhere to the product standards for web analytics tools detailed in [STD-SFT002B, Web Analytics Product Standards](#).

#### 4.11 External Linking

It is important that agencies that include External Links on their public-facing web pages, applications, and digital content and services take reasonable steps to:

- Evaluate those links and ensure the external websites, applications, and digital services are displayed in a way consistent with law and Commonwealth policy.
- Ensure external links are closely related to the subject matter of the web page, application, and digital service.
- Ensure that a pa.gov internet domain is not used to advertise for private

individuals, firms, or corporations.

- Ensure external links are checked for “breakage” (i.e., 404 Not Found Error) at reasonable intervals.

#### **4.12 Mobile App Stores**

All Commonwealth-owned mobile apps shall reside within the Commonwealth’s mobile app stores, including those developed for the Commonwealth by external third-party suppliers.

The Commonwealth established an Apple and Google Play store to provide a single online destination for citizens to have one location to download Commonwealth mobile apps. A single online destination enables citizens and businesses to locate mobile apps, even if they do not know which agency created them and helps to improve citizen experience with Commonwealth services.

The OA/IT maintains the mobile apps stores and associated store access rights for agencies to publish and maintain respective mobile apps.

The stores are subject to change control for granting access rights to Commonwealth employees or third-party external suppliers, and for publishing new mobile apps to the stores. The OA, in coordination with the Governor’s Office, reviews and approves change control requests to uphold service integrity and to ensure new mobile apps published to the stores are also added to the Commonwealth’s Mobile Apps website located at [www.pa.gov/apps](http://www.pa.gov/apps).

Agencies should contact EN-CoPAAppleStore@pa.gov to be onboarded to use the mobile app stores. As part of onboarding, consultation occurs to understand agency access requirements and available store permission roles. Once appropriate, individuals and permission roles are identified with the agency, change control occurs and individuals are provided access to the appropriate store(s) with proper permission roles needed to publish, administer, and manage their respective mobile app(s) within the store(s).

Changes to mobile app store terms and conditions are also subject to change control. When Apple or Google Play store terms and conditions are updated, they are first reviewed for form and legality by the Office of Chief Counsel for OA before the new terms and conditions are accepted within the stores.

## **5. Responsibilities**

### **5.1 Agencies shall:**

- Ensure websites, applications, and digital content and services maintained by agencies or by third-party vendors, licensors, or contractors on behalf of agencies adhere to the guidelines listed in this ITP.

### **5.2 Office of Administration, Office for Information Technology (OA/IT) shall:**

- In coordination with the Governor’s Office, maintain Design Standards.
- In coordination with the Governor’s Office and Office of General Counsel, maintain the Commonwealth’s Mobile App Stores following change control procedures.

### 5.3 Third-party vendors, licensors, contractors, or suppliers shall:

- Ensure website or application solutions provided to the Commonwealth comply with the requirements outlined in this ITP.

## 6. Related ITPs/Other References

- Definitions of associated terms of this policy are published on the Office of Administration's public portal: <http://www.oa.pa.gov/Policies/Pages/Glossary.aspx>
- Commonwealth policies, including Executive Orders, Management Directives, and IT Policies are published on the Office of Administration's public portal: <http://www.oa.pa.gov/Policies/Pages/default.aspx>
- [\*Management Directive 205.34 Amended, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy\*](#)
- [\*Management Directive 205.40, Commonwealth Branding\*](#)
- [\*Management Directive 210.5, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania State Records Management Program\*](#)
- [\*ITP-ACC001, Information Technology Digital Accessibility Policy\*](#)
- [\*ITP-NET005, Commonwealth External and Internal Domain Name Services \(DNS\)\*](#)
- [\*ITP-PRV001 COPA Electronic Information Privacy Policy\*](#)
- [\*ITP-SEC019, Policy and Procedures for Protecting Commonwealth Electronic Data\*](#)
- [\*ITP SEC025, Proper Use and Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information \(PII\)\*](#)
- [\*ITP-SFT000, Systems Development Life Cycle \(SDLC\) Policy\*](#)
- [\*Commonwealth Language Access Framework\*](#) (Commonwealth authorized personnel only. For information contact: [RA-ITCentral@pa.gov](mailto:RA-ITCentral@pa.gov))
- Commonwealth Mobile Apps website: [www.pa.gov/apps](http://www.pa.gov/apps)
- Pennsylvania Design Standards: <https://www.pa.gov/design-standards>

## 7. Authority

- [\*Executive Order 2016-06, Enterprise Information Technology Governance\*](#)
- [\*Executive Order 2016-07 Amended, Open Data, Data Management, and Data Governance\*](#)
- [\*Executive Order 2019-04, Establishing a "Citizen-First" Government and Promoting Customer Service Transformation\*](#)

## 8. Publication Version Control

It is the [Authorized User's](#) responsibility to ensure they have the latest version of this publication, which appears on <https://itcentral.pa.gov> for Commonwealth personnel and on the Office of Administration public portal: <http://www.oa.pa.gov/Policies/Pages/default.aspx>. Questions regarding this publication shall be directed to [RA-ITCentral@pa.gov](mailto:RA-ITCentral@pa.gov).

## 9. Exemption from this Policy

In the event an agency chooses to seek an exemption from the guidance within this ITP, a request for a policy waiver shall be submitted via the enterprise IT policy waiver process. Refer to [\*ITP-BUS004 IT Policy Waiver Review Process\*](#) for guidance.

This chart contains a history of this publication’s revisions. Redline documents detail the revisions and are available to Commonwealth users only.

Version	Date	Purpose of Revision	Redline Link
Original	02/22/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base document</li> <li>• Moved to Software domain from Application, including ITP number.</li> <li>• Change</li> <li>• Replaces ITP-APP005 <i>Commonwealth of PA Website Standards</i>, ITP- APP007 <i>Commonwealth of PA External Website Linking Policy</i>, TP- APP029 <i>Portal Technology Standards</i>, ITP-APP039 <i>Web Analytics Policy</i></li> </ul>	N/A
Revision	04/01/2020	Revised ITP title, replaced “Website” with “Design” Removed outdated design guidance throughout Added OPD-SFT002A Design Standards requirement	N/A
Revision	04/08/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarified the purpose of the policy.</li> <li>• Added third parties to scope.</li> <li>• Clarified throughout the document that the policy is applicable to websites, applications, and digital content and services rather than just website.</li> <li>• Added a section regarding mobile app stores.</li> <li>• Updated responsibilities</li> <li>• Updated and added reference</li> </ul>	N/A
Revision	01/04/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated title.</li> <li>• Updated scope section to reference the responsibilities section for third parties.</li> <li>• Added/updated definitions.</li> <li>• Added guidance for instances where adhering to the policy voids a product warranty or is not possible due to technical constraints.</li> <li>• Clarified when the Design Standards need to be adhered to for internal vs external website, application, and content.</li> <li>• Removed content that is already duplicated in the design standards on the pa.gov website.</li> <li>• Moved web analytics product standards to a new STD document.</li> <li>• Added guidance for onboarding agencies to the Commonwealth mobile app stores.</li> <li>• Other clarifications and general policy language updates.</li> <li>• Updated responsibilities</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Revised IT Policy Redline &lt;01/04/2024&gt;</a>