

US EPA Microsite Guidance

June 17, 2015

Overview

Definition; Structure

The microsite format presents web content on a topic in a single, consolidated site with self-contained navigation. Content may come from across EPA. All content in the microsite is housed in the same physical location (i.e., a WebCMS folder published to one TSSMS/directory), with the same look and feel and area navigation. Microsites often include multimedia and social media outreach tools.

Microsite Goals

- Provide a unified location for information in a way that addresses the needs of the most significant audiences for that topic.
- Raise the most appropriate content for targeted audiences to a top level.
- Actively manage the content.

Principles

- An editor-in-chief (EIC) will be responsible for the development and active management of each microsite, including reviewing the metadata, managing and reviewing content, checking links, responding to comments/questions etc.
- The site will be actively managed and frequently updated using management procedures defined by the EIC and editorial board.
- Microsite development will include:
 - Reviewing content about a topic on existing sites to see if it needs to be rewritten to a specific audience, written more for the web, written in more plain language, etc.
 - Identifying information needed to meet the needs of top audiences
 - Conscious decision-making about how much to develop about each topic
 - Incorporating the use of statistics to make decisions
 - Removing duplicative or conflicting content on epa.gov
 - Creating a consolidated resource that, if appropriate, includes information from headquarters and Regional offices
- Once launched, microsite content will be regularly reviewed for currency, relevance, and removal, as appropriate
- EPA will promote microsites via multiple channels

Measures of Success

- Improved visitor experience, measured by ACSI scores and other feedback methods.
- Fewer broken internal links by using the Drupal WebCMS.

Goals of OneEPA Web

- Replace EPA-centric approach with visitor-centric approach. Help visitors accomplish what they want.
- Identify top audiences and their top tasks
- Develop content for those audiences and tasks
- Measurably improve user satisfaction
- Demonstrate “One EPA”

Microsite Development

Editor-in-Chief Responsibilities

- Identify the purpose for the site
- Identify 1-3 top audiences to properly focus content selection; for each of those audiences, identify the 1-3 top tasks they seek to accomplish when they come to epa.gov.
- Choose most relevant content for each audience's top tasks.¹
- Ensure that metadata for all content, no matter the file type, exists and is appropriate.
- Maintain and update the site, complete metadata review, manage and review content, review results of any usability testing, check links, respond to comments/questions, etc. using management procedures defined by the EIC and editorial board.
- Regularly evaluate content for usefulness and applicability to targeted audiences
- See "Qualifications and Responsibilities of OneEPA Web Editors-in-Chief" (<http://1.usa.gov/QIBCX4>) for more information

Work Products During Microsite Development

- List of top audiences and tasks
- Milestones / Production Schedule, including:
 - Content inventory and analysis, including:
 - analysis of statistics and usage of current content (e.g. heat maps and Maxamine reports)
 - content inventory spreadsheet (OEI)
 - Wireframes development
 - Determination of whether Office of Public Affairs (OPA) AA will need to review (contact Kathleen MacKinnon)
 - Content development, including:
 - Writing new content to address gaps in current content for top audiences
 - Adapting content for top audiences
 - Rewriting content for the web
 - Coding in CMS
 - Graphics development
 - Review, including any special approvals necessary for high-profile content
 - Launch date
 - Post-launch:
 - Analysis of statistics and usage of microsite (e.g. heat maps and Maxamine reports) (contact Sam Bronson so that your microsite receives its own web analytics report in Maxamine)
 - Search optimization (contact John Shirey)
 - Inclusion in A-Z Index (contact Christine Dibble)
 - Management schedule
 - Identification of development of social media and multimedia
 - Development of management procedures
- List of workgroup members, if applicable
- Statement of workgroup roles – who is an author? Who is an editor?
- Workgroup meeting schedule
- Description of post-launch management procedures

¹ See the Content Development Strategy (<http://1.usa.gov/XW9VZa>), section V, for details.

Requirements of a Microsite

A. Content Selection and Style

General

- Selected or created content that addresses the top tasks of top audiences and follows writing for the web principles (<http://1.usa.gov/TgEq4B>)

Multimedia Content

- Multimedia use is encouraged.
- All current graphic standards apply. Photographs should be:
 - used judiciously;
 - engaging; and
 - able to elucidate a purpose.
- Follow the Video Standards and Guidelines (<http://intranet.epa.gov/media/guidelines.html>)

Social Media Content

- Social media is encouraged for use on the microsite home page.
- Social media should be thought of strategically and holistically.
- Existing guidance should be followed for social media development
 - OPA / OWC needs to be involved from the beginning.
 - Follow the guidance at <http://blog.epa.gov/socialmedia/?cat=64>
- Create a common social media ID (for example, “usepagov”, “usepaclimatechange”) that is used across social media platforms. If you’re USEPALeader on Facebook, you should be USEPALeader on Twitter.

B. Required Content Elements

- The content elements numbered below are required unless it doesn’t make sense to include them.
- You are of course free to include any other appropriate content.
- Each of the required kinds of content listed below must be linked to from the home page or must appear on the home page. Location on the home page of the links or content is flexible.

1) Learn About [Topic Name]

- This is basic information about a topic. It should summarize:
 - What is the issue?
 - Why should you care?
 - What is EPA doing about it? (e.g., regulations, partnerships, outreach, enforcement, research, grants)
 - What can you (as a person or as an organization) do about it?
- “What you can do” and “What EPA is doing” content must be linked to from the home page or must appear on the home page.
- Graphic- and multimedia-rich content encouraged.
- “Learn about” content should not be presented in a question-and-answer format and should not duplicate FAQ content.

2) Science and Technology Content

- A page, or part of a page, that synthesizes what EPA is doing scientifically.
- Using the phrase "science and technology" is recommended when appropriate. It's acceptable to use other phrases to describe your science and technology content.

3) Laws and Regulations Content

- Content about laws and regulations must follow the guidelines set forth in "Creating and Editing Regulation Pages" (<http://www2.epa.gov/drupaltraining/creating-and-editing-regulation-pages>) and should follow the Regulatory Template Web Standard (<http://www2.epa.gov/webguide/web-standard-regulatory-template>).
- "Laws and regs" content specific to a topic should be housed in a microsite rather than in epa.gov/lawsregs.

4) Geographical Content

- The best geographical information should be displayed at the most local level available (like state, zip, county); it must be prominently displayed.
- Geographical information is required if it is available.
- Geographical information can be displayed as links off a state-by-state map or as a Google, Bing or similar map (examples: map of EPA Puget Sound funding (<http://1.usa.gov/cwZLvr>); map of New Bedford Harbor cleanup areas (<http://www2.epa.gov/new-bedford-harbor/map-cleanup-areas>)). Use of Region-by-Region maps is discouraged.
- If a microsite about a particular geographic area (Puget Sound; Libby MT; Gowanus Canal; Atlanta) exists, all geographic content should reside there. For example, information about lead in drinking water in the District of Columbia should reside in a D.C. microsite if it exists. If not, that information could reside in the lead microsite until a D.C. microsite is created.
 - Exception: content currently stored in a major database (for example, a database of all National Priority List (NPL) sites) should remain in that database, and you should link to it.
- Integrate with existing geographically-built databases
 - For geographical data, as yet not web-enabled, integrate whenever possible with existing databases like My Environment (<http://www.epa.gov/myenvironment/>), Enviromapper (<http://www.epa.gov/emefdata/em4ef.home>) or Cleanups in My Community (1.usa.gov/1fk0Fk4).
 - Consider working with the My Environment team (contact Kim Balassiano) to create queries specific to the microsite topic. For example, for the lead microsite, create a query in My Environment where the visitor can, with one click, be taken to a nationwide view of facilities that emit lead into the environment; the visitor could then zoom into his local area.
- Geographical data and content is important.
 - Each microsite workgroup should form a small sub-group about how to present geographical information. The sub-group should determine:
 - 1) what is wanted,
 - 2) which raw data is available, and
 - 3) how to display it.

5) Recent Additions/Newsroom Content

- Recent additions are items that are new to the website.
 - New publications
 - New content
 - Has to include "This Site" in the label, i.e. "Recent Additions to this Site" or "What's New on This Site"

- Newsroom content is related to what EPA (and closely related organizations, if appropriate) is doing. Information that does not bear a strong nexus to EPA should not be included in the newsroom.
- Send Carlton Burns the URL where your Recent Additions content resides so that he can have ASRC librarians automate information from that URL to the Agency-wide Recent Additions page.

6) Frequent Questions Content

- This is not an HTML page. It is an automated display.
- Use RightNow/Parature technology.
 - If a topic already uses RightNow/Parature technology (e.g. climate change program's use at <http://bit.ly/10YHYOC>), continue to use it.
 - If a topic does not use RightNow/Parature technology, then FAQs should be incorporated into the public access FAQs database (<http://bit.ly/QICKKO>).
 - Search and review any existing questions related to your topic
- Contact Marlyn Aguilar to add new frequent questions for your topic to the system

7) Contact Us Links

- Contact us links (top and bottom). These links go to a page with a contact form.²
- OPA/OWC requires that the EIC or a designee respond within one business day of receiving questions. At a minimum, acknowledge that the question has been received and give an estimate of when we will provide an answer.

Content that Should Not be Included in a Microsite

- **Spanish Content:** All Spanish language content will go into the Espanol microsite. Contact Lina Younes and Reggie Washington to get content added to that microsite.
- **QuickFinder:** There will no longer be a Quickfinder on the home page. The homepage itself should be a "Quickfinder" – all top links should be available on it.
- **Top Tasks Box:** Do not list top tasks in a top right-side box on the home page. The important tasks for the identified audiences will be reachable via links in the main body of the home page.

C. Look and Feel / Navigation

Home Pages

- **Templates:** Home pages' look and feel will be selected from basic layouts (one-, two- and four-column) available in the WebCMS.
- **Banners:**
 - Banners should relate to the topic.
 - Banners should be 676px wide x 210px high.
 - Use only GIF (.gif), JPEG (.jpg, .jpeg), or PNG (.png) formats.
 - Banner file sizes should be kept below 75K to minimize download times.

² EPA standards still apply. Each microsite needs a contact us form. See: <http://www2.epa.gov/webguide/web-standard-contact-us-page-and-links> . The Web CMS automatically generates a "thank you for submitting your comment" page.

- Banners must include text that explains the relationship between what is shown in the banner, and the microsite topic. The banner image itself should include empty alternative text (alt=""), so people with visual disabilities will not hear redundant information.
 - Web visitors must be able to understand which text in the banner is linked text.
 - Rotating banners are permitted but note that news-related banners are difficult to maintain.
- **Home page content area:**
 - The content below the banners should not be displayed in the same way content on a resource directory hub page is displayed. Do not make your home page look like a resource directory with a banner on top of it.
 - Generally, links in the content area on the home page should go to other information in the same microsite, rather than to other EPA sites or to external content. External links and links to other EPA sites should be displayed in right-side boxes or on internal pages.
 - If you have multimedia and social media outreach tools, display them on the home page.
 - Dropdown menus in the content area should be limited. The global navigation on the top of each page will be in dropdowns, so additional dropdowns may be overwhelming for visitors.

Pages Other Than the Home Page (Basic Pages)

- **Templates:** These pages use the basic template in the WebCMS (110 basic template in the CMS).
- **Left sidebars:** There is a left sidebar.
 - It must be the same on all pages of the microsite.
 - All linked text in the sidebar must point to other pages in the same microsite. There are two exceptions:
 - A link to a parent/umbrella site may be included. For example, a site on Pesticides Registration can include a link to Pesticides. Links to a parent/umbrella site should be the top link in the left sidebar.
 - A link with the link text "Frequent Questions" can go to an appropriate place in the Frequent Questions Database (<http://publicaccess.supportportal.com/ics/support/splash.asp>).
 - Left sidebars should include the following links, unless one or more of these types of content is not appropriate for the identified top audiences:
 - Learn about [Topic Name]
 - Science and Technology
 - Laws and Regulations
 - Frequent Questions
 - What EPA is Doing
 - What You Can Do
 - The sidebar should not contain
 - Newsroom
 - Recent Additions
 - Contact Us, or a term that could be confused with a link to the Contact Us page, like "Contacts"
- **Navigation:**
 - **Navigation menus:** Do not use navigation menus other than the left sidebar. Do not use right-side boxes for navigation menus.
 - **Tabs:**

- A topic page within your site may include tabs as long as each tab is related to the overall page topic, and to each of the other tabbed topics, providing a complete set of information on the page topic in a single spot. For example, on a page "Environmental Education Grants", tabs called "Grant Opportunities," "How to Apply," "Tips for Grant Applicants" etc. all relate to each other and to the page topic.
 - If you have seven or more tabs, you should consider making the topic a web area of its own rather than including it in the microsite you are currently developing.
- **In-line links:** Limit inline links (i.e., links in the middle of a paragraph). Most links should be below or to the right of the related content so that:
 - You can provide your viewers with more context.
 - Viewers and screen readers can scan linked content more easily.

D. Review

- If the microsite subject is primarily within the purview of one AAship or Region, then the Web Content Coordinator and Communications Director or Public Affairs Director for that AAship or Region should review. Once that review is complete, the
- OEI reviews to ensure the appropriateness of metadata and to ensure that the templates are being used correctly.
- The OneEPA Web Executive Editor-in-Chief for the site reviews to ensure that the site
 - follows the requirements set forth in this document and
 - meets the needs of the identified top audiences
- The OPA Associate Administrator will require review of selected topics. OPA/OWC will determine whether the OPA AA requires review. Please build in time for this review in the event it is required.