



NETWORK FOR A HEALTHY CALIFORNIA

REGIONAL NETWORK WEBSITE GUIDELINES

May 2011



WEBSITE GUIDELINES

As part of the *Regional Network* Scope of Work (Regional Coordination and Training, Objective 4, Activity 3a-eiii), each *Regional Network* is required to host, support and update a regional website. The website should comply with the *Network for a Healthy California* Champions for Change Branding Guidelines (<http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/Library/download/pdfs/CFC%20Brand%20Manual.pdf>) and the *Regional Network* Website Guidelines.

Most *Regional Networks* have an existing website that will be revised or are currently developing a new website for this Scope of Work requirement. State staff provides the regions with suggestions for website design and usability guidelines, as well as requirements for content, “look and feel” and current United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and *Network for a Healthy California* attribution and acknowledgement statements.

These requirements are intended to promote accuracy, usability, accessibility, consistency and professionalism throughout the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)*. These requirements are not intended to prescribe a definitive template that will keep regions from developing their own unique sites. Rather, the goal is to promote quality websites that are generally consistent among all *Network* partners.

Please direct questions related to the *Regional Network* website to the assigned State Regional Program Manager (PM), who will connect Regional Contractors with a member of the State Information Technology (IT) staff as appropriate.

Note that the website must be approved by the assigned PM prior to the site going “live.” Therefore, it is strongly suggested that Regional Contractors remain in close communication with the PM throughout the development of the website. Regional Contractors are encouraged to discuss specific needs and concerns, especially if struggling to meet these guidelines. Notify the assigned PM when the website is “final” and ready for review, the website will be reviewed by the State PM and IT staff and Regional Contractors will receive feedback and approvals via email communication.

A. Web Credibility

1. Make it easy to verify the accuracy of the information on the site.
 - a. Build website credibility by providing third-party support (citations, references, source material) for the information presented, provide a link to this evidence.
2. Show that there is a real organization behind the site.
 - a. Showing that the website is for a legitimate organization will boost the site's credibility. The easiest way to do this is by listing a physical address.
3. Highlight the expertise in the host organization and in the content and services provided.
4. Show that honest and trustworthy people stand behind the site.
 - a. Show there are real people behind the site and in the organization and find a way to convey their trustworthiness through images or text (i.e. through employee bios).
5. Make it easy to contact the *Regional Network*.
 - a. Make the contact information clear: phone number, physical address, and email address.
6. Design the site so it looks professional (or is appropriate for its purpose).
 - a. People quickly evaluate a site by visual design alone. When designing the site, pay attention to layout, typography, images, consistency, and more. The visual design should match the site's purpose.
7. Make the site easy to use – and useful.
 - a. Sites win credibility by being both easy to use and useful. Some site operators forget about users when they cater to their own organization's ego or try to show the dazzling things they can do with web technology.
8. Update the site's content often (at least show it's been reviewed recently).
9. Avoid errors of all types, no matter how small they seem.
 - a. Typographical errors and broken links hurt a site's credibility more than most people imagine. It's also important to keep the site up and fully functional.

B. General Template Requirements

1. Websites must adhere to the *Network Branding Guidelines Manual*, particularly concerning logos, fonts, and “look and feel”.
2. The color version of the California Department of Public Health *Network for a Healthy California* logo (see Image 1) must be included on the home page of the website.
3. If the *Regional Network Contractor* has chosen to use the region-specific logo provided by the State, this should be incorporated into the banner/header that is present on each page of the website.
4. If the *Regional Network Contractor* has chosen not to use their region-specific logo, then the *Network for a Healthy California* logo (Image 1) should be incorporated into the banner/header that is present on each page of the website.



Image 1. California Department of
Public Health *Network* logo

Region-specific version available for
download at:
[http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/
Library/rn_logos.php](http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/Library/rn_logos.php)

5. Do not alter or modify the logos in any way
 - a. Do not change the color palette of any CDPH-provided logos, unless to black and white or gray scale, as directed by the Branding Guidelines Manual. If placing the logo on top of a color background, the logo should be black or reversed to white, again as detailed in the Branding Guidelines Manual.
 - b. Do not change the font.
 - c. Do not place logos on a busy background.
 - d. If adjusting the size of any logos, the proportions must remain the same but note the minimum size of the logo is 0.75 inches for all printed materials.
6. The following footer must be present on the home page of the website:

- a. USDA attribution language/Funding Acknowledgement:

English

This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* with funding from USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.

Spanish

Este material fue producido por la *Red para una California Saludable* del Departamento de Salud Pública de California con fondos de SNAP del USDA, conocido en California como CalFresh (antes conocido como Estampillas de Comida). Estas instituciones son proveedoras y empleadoras que ofrecen oportunidades equitativas. CalFresh ayuda a gente con bajos ingresos a comprar comida nutritiva para una mejor salud. Para información sobre CalFresh, llame al 1-888-9-COMIDA. Para información nutricional, visite www.campeonesdelcambio.net.

- b. Include a link to the State *Network's* website at: www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net. It may be included as a hyperlink in the USDA attribution language/Funding Acknowledgement above if preferable.
7. If the site uses trade, firm, or corporation names (i.e. Dole, Sunkist, etc.), include the following USDA disclaimer, as found on the USDA website (<http://ssldata.nrcs.usda.gov/disclaim.htm>):

“The use of trade, firm, or corporation names in this page and linked publications is for the information and convenience of the reader. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by the United States Department of Agriculture of any product or service to the exclusion of others that may be suitable.”

8. The *Regional Network* contract includes language indicating that the State of California has ownership of all works produced with contract funds, including websites. Therefore, the website cannot be copyrighted.

a. Non-university contracts: Refer to Exhibit D (F) of the contract

b. University contracts: Refer to Exhibit H

C. Template Requirements (Regional Collaborative pages)

1. To support the separate and independent activities of the Regional Collaboratives from the *Network*, these pages do not require the *Network for a Healthy California* logo.
2. A section/area of the Regional Collaborative home page (or a linked page) will identify the “sponsors” of the Regional Collaborative. Along with identifying the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the *Network for a Healthy California* please list other financial and non-financial sponsors of the Regional Collaborative.
3. Funding attribution and acknowledgement statements are required, with the caveat “Funded, in part” (see Section B6 of these guidelines for full statements).

D. Usability

1. Make sure the content is appropriate and easy to read. Materials should be written to a 5th grade reading level, whenever possible.
(See the *Network Writing Style Guide* at: [http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/Library/download/pdfs/Writing%20Style%20Guide%20\(CFC%20Brand%20Manual\).pdf](http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/Library/download/pdfs/Writing%20Style%20Guide%20(CFC%20Brand%20Manual).pdf) and the previously mentioned Branding Guidelines Manual).
2. User-friendly websites are easy to use and intuitive. The website should be easy for users to navigate.
3. Don't activate a link on the site until the linked document is available (even if an “under construction” notice is posted). Repeated “File Not Found” errors will discourage visitors to the site.
4. Assure that the website is consistent. Consistency is at the heart of a good web design and this applies not just to layout but to every aspect of a site. This includes consistency in color and position (i.e. location of navigation bars, logos, etc.).
5. Provide a link to a complete printable or downloadable document if there are web pages, documents, resources, or files that users will want to print or save in one operation. If users are likely to print one or more pages, develop pages with widths that print properly.
6. Provide a search option for each page.

E. Required Content

1. Content is the heart of a website. Keep users coming back by providing quality, updated content. Great graphics will not make up for poor content.
2. The content for the website should be focused on information pertinent to the goals and activities of the *Regional Network*. Required content areas include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Contact information (i.e., physical address, phone number, email address)
 - b. Goals and structure of the State and *Regional Network*.
 - c. Goals and structure of the State and Regional Campaigns and Programs.
 - (1) Regional Campaign and Program web pages should each include the following information:
 - (a) Overview (target population, activities, and materials, etc.)
 - (b) Events (should also be listed on the Regional Calendar)
 - (c) Special Initiatives
 - (d) Campaign or Program-specific "Contact Us" form
 - (e) Hyperlink to the State website relevant to each
 - (f) Forms (optional feature)
 - i. Include any downloadable forms for those campaigns or programs that request participation reports from partners (e.g., participation report for teachers to report their activities from the *School Idea & Resource Kit*)
 - d. Project summary (including contact information) for all *Network*-funded projects in the region (Local Incentive Awardees, Local Food and Nutrition Education Projects, *CalFresh* Outreach, Special Projects, etc.)
 - e. Physical Activity
 - (1) General information about physical activity integration.
 - (2) Resources (including contact information for the Physical Activity Specialist).
 - f. Nutrition Education Plan for *CalFresh* Offices (upon development and approval)

- (1) Local food security resources and partners.
- g. Regional Calendar
 - (1) Including *Regional Network* trainings and activities, media events, collaborative meetings.
 - (2) Link to *Network for a Healthy California* Master Calendar.
- h. Web-based, searchable Regional Directory for physical activity and nutrition education.
- i. Link to Regional Collaborative home page, which should include:
 - (1) Goals
 - (2) Nutrition Education Initiative descriptions and opportunities for involvement
 - (3) Other projects and activities
 - (4) Meeting schedule, upcoming agenda and past minutes
 - (5) Membership requirements
 - (6) Process to join the collaborative
 - (7) Overview of subcommittees
 - (8) Mini-Grant application process
 - (9) Current Mini-Grant awardees
 - (10) Contact information for Collaborative and subcommittee chair(s)
 - (11) Identification of Regional Collaborative sponsors
- j. Link to:
 - (1) *Network for a Healthy California* website
 - (2) The most current statewide *Network* Project Directory
 - (3) *Network* Statewide Collaborative information
 - (4) *Harvest of the Month* website
 - (5) Champions for Change consumer site
 - (6) *Network* Calendar of Events
 - (7) USDA Nutrition Education Resources
- k. Links to relevant and appropriate federal, state, regional and local resources and information.

3. Website counter, in which data is recorded in log files (the counter is not to be visible on the website).
4. Links to external sites should be relevant and used judiciously.
5. Web pages should be checked and updated regularly and should include “last updated” information.
6. If other pages are linked in the site, check them periodically to make sure they are still active and their content is still applicable.
7. Use of copyrighted materials should be properly acknowledged.
8. Try to keep total page size below 100k to minimize access time. People with slow network connections tend to get tired of waiting for large files and go somewhere else.
9. Any page that incorporates links to PDF files must use the Adobe Acrobat/ PDF file notice.
10. Include a warning if a link on the page will lead to a slow-loading document (i.e. files 1 or 2 MB and larger).

F. Prohibited Content

1. Promotional content is not allowed (i.e. ads, offers). The site may not contain:
 - a. Paid advertisements or paid sponsorships.
 - b. Pop-up advertisements.
 - c. Any commercial links.

G. Prioritizing Content

1. The most important content should be at the top of each page as in a newspaper (“above the fold”). Put the most important information on the page where it is visible before readers start to scroll (referred to as “above the scroll”).
2. Place important items consistently in the same locations and closer to the top of the page.
3. There should be one topic on each page unless two topics are closely related.
4. Repeat important links. Ensure that important content can be accessed from more than one link.

H. Writing for the Web

1. People rarely read web pages word by word; instead, they scan the page, picking out individual words and sentences. As a result, all web pages need to employ scannable text, using:
 - a. Highlighted key works (hypertext links serve as one form of highlighting; typeface variations and color are others)
 - b. Meaningful sub-headings (not “clever” ones)
 - c. Bulleted lists
 - d. One idea per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first words in the paragraph)
 - e. The inverted pyramid style of writing, starting with the conclusion
 - f. Half the word count (or less) generally found in conventional writing
2. Follow these general writing guidelines, as well:
 - a. Define acronyms and abbreviations; avoid jargon
 - b. Use abbreviations sparingly
 - c. Use familiar words
 - d. Make first sentences descriptive
 - e. Use active voice
 - f. Limit the number of words and sentences
 - g. Limit prose text on navigation pages
3. Many websites put up their print content in PDF or Word files, which are not user-friendly. Research shows that while PDF files may be good for printing, website visitors prefer to read HTML pages over PDF.

I. Readability

1. Assure that the layout design does not cause any readability problems.
 - a. One option is to use a “liquid” table design allowing the page to adjust automatically to the resolution of the user’s monitor or that of the user’s

browser window. This technique provides the user with acceptable page layout no matter the display technology that the user may employ.

- b. Fixed page widths can be designed to reduce readability problems for the user.
2. Provide a font size that is large enough for the average reader. Literature suggests that fonts smaller than 12-points elicit slower reading performance from users.
3. Provide a good contrast between the text color and the background color, for example, black text on a white background.
4. Avoid background images and colored backgrounds that make the page harder to read.
5. Use white space to break up content.
6. Check gray text to make sure it is dark enough to read.
7. Use *italics* minimally.
8. Do not right justify pages unless necessary.
9. Avoid using animated (blinking or moving) objects and text. These can be overwhelming and distracting to the professional content of the website and can affect page load time. They may also present significant barriers to access by individuals with disabilities (also see Section N).
10. Include the date created, last date updated, and contact information on each page.

J. Consistent Navigation on Every Page

1. Every page should have the same navigation buttons in the same order. When a button is clicked it can open into subsections.
2. A primary navigational system with a standard left-hand page location should be grouped by subject if the numbers of links exceed six.
3. Provide sufficient cues to clearly indicate to users that an item is clickable.
4. Visitors want to know “Where am I?”, “Where can I go?” and “Where have I been?” Add an indicator in the navigation button that shows what page is currently being viewed.

K. Page Titles and Navigation Buttons

1. Page titles should be identical to navigation buttons.

2. Select page titles that correspond closely to the content of the page. Use headings that are unique from one another and conceptually related to the content they describe.

L. About Us and Contact Us Pages

1. It is important to have an About Us page and a link to it from the home page. Trust and credibility are major issues on the web.
2. The Contact Us page is one of the most requested pages on a website. If visitors cannot locate this page or there is no physical address or phone number they can call, they may question whether or not this is a legitimate or reliable organization.
3. Every page should have a link to a Contact Us page.

M. Images

1. Images should be prepared (optimized) for the website. Resolutions matter on the web.
2. A high-resolution image will take longer to load (view). Since visitors like fast-loading sites, keep load time to 10 seconds or less if possible (realizing that load time varies depending upon the user's type of modem).
3. Photographs, charts and other visuals that are used throughout the website should be selected based on their relevance and appropriateness to the content. Imagery should be in good taste and dignified.

N. Accessibility for People with Disabilities

1. Accessibility is required for all websites.
2. Minimal accessibility includes writing "alt tags." Readers can see an "alt tag" by putting the mouse over an image and watching a text note pop up.
3. Following accessibility standards can be complex. Here are just a few examples:
 - a. Make tables understandable when read line by line
 - b. Allow readers to increase the size of the text on the page
 - c. Include text navigation links
4. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that private websites be accessible to blind and visually impaired Internet users. Non-compliance may result in fines. (For additional information, go to: <http://www.ada.gov/websites2.htm> and <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>)

O. Scrolling

1. Visitors are used to scrolling down a page (vertical scrolling). However, it is not user-friendly to scroll horizontally across the page. Design pages so that the content is visible without scrolling horizontally.

P. Privacy Policy

1. If the site will be collecting personal information, the Regional Contractor must provide a privacy policy that states:
 - a. What information is collected and how it is used;
 - b. Whether visitors' information is shared with third parties and whether they have a choice about how their information is used;
 - c. Whether visitors have access to their personal information and whether they can correct errors and
 - d. What precautions are used to secure consumers' personal information.

Resources (inclusion of these resources does not imply endorsement):

Lynch, Patrick J. & Horton, Sarah. Web Style Guide

- <http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html>

National Cancer Institute – Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines

- <http://usability.gov/guidelines/>

Nielsen, Jakob. How Users Read on the Web

- <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

Stanford Web Credibility Research:

- <http://credibility.stanford.edu/>
-