



***NETWORK FOR A HEALTHY
CALIFORNIA***

**LOCAL
INCENTIVE
AWARDEE
WEBSITE/
WEBPAGE
GUIDELINES**

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WEB SITE/WEBPAGE GUIDELINES

Many contractors have an existing website/webpage or are currently developing or planning on developing a new website/webpage. This section provides suggestions for website design and usability guidelines, as well as requirements for content, “look and feel” and USDA/Network attributions and acknowledgement.

These requirements are intended to promote accuracy, usability, accessibility, consistency and professionalism to the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)*. It is not the intent to prescribe a definitive template that will keep contractors from developing their own unique websites/webpages. Rather, it is the *Network’s* goal to have quality websites/webpages that are generally consistent across the region and with the State.

For technical questions related to contractor developed websites/webpages, contractors should contact the Manager of Information Technology (IT) and Systems Improvement Unit at the *Network* by calling the CPNS main line at (916) 449-5400 and their assigned Program Manager.

Please note that contractors must get approval for developing a website/webpage by their Program Manager. It is strongly suggested contractors keep in communication with their Program Manager during the development of a website/webpage. This communication will allow the contractor to discuss specific needs and concerns, for example, challenges in meeting the *Network* website/webpage guidelines. Upon the request of the contractor to their Program Manager, the website/webpage will be reviewed by the Program Manager and *Network* IT staff. Contractors will receive suggestions and approvals via email communication.

A. Build Web Credibility

1. Make it easy to verify the accuracy of the information on the website/webpage.
 - a. Website/webpage credibility can be built by providing third-party support (citations, references, source material) for the information presented, especially if there is evidence linked.
2. Show there is a real organization behind the website/webpage.
 - a. Showing that your website/webpage is for a legitimate organization will boost the website’s/webpage’s credibility. The easiest way to do this is by listing a physical address.
3. Highlight the expertise in the organization and in the content and services available.
4. Show that honest and trustworthy people stand behind the

website/webpage.

- a. Using images or text (i.e., employee bios) can show there are real people behind the website/webpage and in the organization and conveys trustworthiness.
5. Make it easy to contact the organization.
 - a. Making contact information clear, including phone number, physical address, and email address.
 6. Design a website/webpage so it looks professional (or is appropriate for your purpose).
 - a. People quickly evaluate a website/webpage by visual design alone. When designing the website/webpage, special attention should be applied to layout, typography, images, consistency, and more. The visual design should match the website's/webpage's purpose.
 7. Make the website/webpage easy to use – and useful.
 - a. Websites/webpages win credibility by being both easy to use and useful. Some website/webpage operators forget about users when they cater to their own company's ego or try to show the dazzling things they can do with web technology.
 8. Update the website's/webpage'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 website's/webpage's credibility more than most people imagine. It's also important to keep the website/webpage up and running.

B. General Template Requirements

1. The color version of the California Department of Public Health *Network for a Healthy California* logo (see Image 1) must be included.
2. If the contractor uses their overall agency's logo, it should be incorporated into the banner/header that is present on each page of the website/webpage.



Image 1: California Department of Public Health Nutrition Network logo

Available for download at:
<http://www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net>

3. Contractors are not permitted to alter or modify the *Network* logo in any way, specifically:
 - a. Changing the color palette of any *Network*-provided logo, unless to 100% black or grayscale. If placing the logo on top of a color background the logo should be black or reversed to white.
 - b. Changing the font.
 - c. Placing the logo on a busy background.
 - d. Changing the proportions of the logo. If the size of the logo is adjusted, then the proportions must remain the same.
4. The following footer must be present on the home page of the website/webpage:
 - a. USDA/Network attribution language/funding Acknowledgement:

“This material was funded by USDA’s Food Stamp Program through the California Department of Public Health’s *Network for a Healthy California*. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help buy nutritious foods for a better diet. For information on the Food Stamp Program, call 1-888-328-3483.”

Spanish: “Este material fue financiado por el Programa de Cupones para Alimentos del Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos, a través de la Red para una California Saludable

del Departamento de Salud Pública de California. Estas instituciones son proveedores y empleadores que ofrecen oportunidades equitativas. El Programa de Cupones para Alimentos ofrecen oportunidades equitativas. El Programa de Cupones para Alimentos ofrece asistencia nutricional para gente con bajos ingresos. Le puede ayudar a comprar comida nutritiva para una mayor alimentación. Para obtener más información llame al 1-888-328-3483.”

- b. A link to the *Network’s* website at: www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net. The link may be included as a hypertext in the USDA attribution above.
5. If the website/webpage uses trade, firm, or corporation names (i.e. Dole, Sunkist, etc.), the following USDA disclaimer must be included, as found on the USDA website (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/comm.html>):

“The use of trade, firm, or corporation names in this publication (or page) 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 or the Agricultural Research Service of any product or service to the exclusion of others that may be suitable.”
6. The LIA contract includes language that the State has ownership of all works produced with contract funds. Therefore, the website/webpage may not be copyrighted.
 - a. Non-university contractors should refer to Exhibit D (F) of the contract.
 - b. University contractors should refer to Exhibit H of their contract.

C. Usability

1. The content is appropriate and easy to read. Materials should be written at the 5th grade reading level, whenever possible.
2. User-friendly websites/webpages are easy to use and intuitive. The website/webpage should be easy for users to navigate.
3. Links should not be activated until the linked document is available, even if there is an “under construction” notice. Repeated “File Not Found” errors will discourage visitors to the website/webpage.
4. The website/webpage is consistent. Consistency applies not just to layout but to every aspect of a website/webpage. This includes consistency in color and position (i.e. location of navigation bars, logos, etc.).

5. Links are provided to complete printable or downloadable document if there are webpages, 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, pages should be developed with widths that print properly.
6. Search options for each page are provided.

D. Content

1. General
 - a. Content is the heart of your website/webpage. If quality, updated content is provided, users will keep coming back. Great graphics will not make up for poor content.
 - b. The content for the website/webpage is focused on information pertinent to the goals and activities of the *Network*.
 - c. Links to external website/webpage is relevant and used judiciously.
 - d. Web pages are checked and updated regularly.
 - e. If links are provided to other webpages, they should be checked periodically to make sure they are still active and their content is still applicable.
 - f. Use of copyrighted materials is properly acknowledged.
 - g. Total page sizes are kept below 100k if possible to minimize access time. People with slow network connections tend to get tired of waiting for large files and go somewhere else.
 - h. Any page that incorporates links to PDF files must use the Adobe Acrobat/ PDF file notice.
 - i. A warning is included if a link on your page will lead to a slow-loading document (i.e. a files 1 or 2MB and larger).
2. Required content includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Contact information.
 - b. Narrative from *Network* Project Summary or other text that describes the contractor's *Network* project activities.
 - c. Calendar of events for the *Network* contract.

- d. Links to USDA, CPNS/*Network*, Harvest of the Month and *Regional Network* home pages.
 - e. Website usage statistics, in which usage data (e.g., hits, page views, etc.) is recorded in log files, but is not visible on the website/web page).
3. Optional Content
- a. Downloadable resources for FSNE target audiences.
 - b. General information and resources about physical activity.
 - c. Local food security resources.
4. Prohibited Content
- a. Promotional content is not allowed (i.e. ads, offers). This includes:
 - 1. paid advertisements or paid sponsorships;
 - 2. pop-up advertisements; and
 - 3. commercial links.
5. Prioritizing Content
- a. The most important content is at the top of the page as in a newspaper (“above the fold”) and located on the page where it is visible before the user starts to scroll (referred to as “above the scroll”).
 - b. Important items are placed consistently in the same locations and closer to the top of the page.
 - c. There is one topic on each page unless two topics are closely related.
 - d. Important links are repeated. Important content should be accessible from more than one link.

E. Writing for the Web

- 1. People rarely read webpages word by word; instead, they scan the page, picking out individual words and sentences. As a result, webpages need to employ scan able 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) is used than conventional writing.
2. The following general writing guidelines should be used as well:
 - a. Define acronyms and abbreviations and 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.
 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.

F. Readability

1. 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 without any readability problems for the user.
2. A font size is provided that is large enough for the average reader. Literature suggests that fonts smaller than 12-points elicits slower reading performance from users.

3. There is a good contrast between the text color and the background color, for example, black text on a white background.
4. There are not background images and colored backgrounds that make the page hard to read.
5. White space is used to break up content.
6. Gray text is dark enough to read.
7. Italics are used minimally.
8. Pages are not right justified unless necessary.
9. Animated (blinking or moving) objects and text are avoided when possible. 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, as discussed in Section K below.
10. All pages contain a date created and contact information.

G. Consistent Navigation on Every Page

1. Every page should have the same navigation buttons in the same order. When the user clicks on a button it can open into subsections.
2. A primary navigational system with a standard left-hand page location should be grouped by subject if the number of links exceeds six.
3. Sufficient cues are provided to clearly indicate to users that an item is clickable.
4. An indicator in the navigation button shows users what page they are on, because visitors want to know “Where am I?”, “Where can I go?” and “Where have I been?”

H. Page Titles and Navigation Buttons

1. Page titles are usually identical to navigation buttons. Page titles correspond closely to the content of the page. Headings are used that are unique from one another and conceptually related to the content they describe.

I. About Us and Contact Us Pages

1. It is important to have an About Us page and a link to it from your 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/webpage. 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 organization.
3. Every page should have a link to a Contact Us page.

J. Images

1. Images should be prepared (optimized) for your website. Resolutions matter on the web.
2. A high-resolution image will take longer to load (view). Since visitors like fast-loading sites, load time kept to 10 seconds or less if possible is best (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 relevant and appropriate to the content. Imagery should be in good taste and dignified.

K. Accessibility for People with Disabilities

1. Accessibility is required for all websites.
2. Minimal accessibility includes writing "alt tags." An "alt tag" can be viewed 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 visitors 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. (Additional information is available at: <http://news.com.com/2100-1038-5318568.html>).

L. Scrolling

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

M. Privacy Policy

1. If the website will be collecting personal information, a privacy policy must be provided that states:
 - a. Information 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.
 - d. The precautions used to secure consumers' personal information.

References/Resources:

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://www.webcredibility.org/guidelines/index.html>
- <http://customwebhelp.com/non-technical-website-guidelines.shtml>