



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (21st Century IDEA) Progress Report August 2024



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Message from the USDA Chief Information Officer



Over the past 5 years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made significant progress to upgrade, consolidate, or retire many of our public-facing websites as part of USDA's Web Modernization initiative. This Department-wide effort is driven by the Deputy Secretary, overseen by me in my role as the Chief Information Officer (CIO), and championed collaboratively by the Chief Customer Experience Officer (CXO) and the Office of Communications (OC) with the cooperation of USDA's Staff Offices and Agencies.

USDA's customer-focus and digital-first focus have come a long way since the Act was signed into Public Law on December 20, 2018. USDA has been recognized for the many great efforts we have undertaken as a department to implement the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (21st Century IDEA). This progress has only been possible through the commitment of each USDA agency to independently move in alignment with the USDA's overall strategy for web modernization.

Efforts to ensure smooth and seamless communications between citizens and the government must continue to evolve and keep up with changing technology and consumer preferences. Recognizing the ongoing work, this report documents the progress USDA has made over the past five years to better serve the American public, which is at the heart of what we do every day.

Gary Washington,
Chief Information Officer,
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Background on USDA Integrated Digital Experience Act Implementation

The 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (21st Century IDEA), or the Act, became law on December 20, 2018. Under the Act, federal agencies must provide the public a modernized and integrated digital experience, making it easier to access government information and services. Through the work of the 21st Century IDEA, USDA is striving to live up to President Lincoln’s description as the “People’s Department,” because the only way we can ensure that all Americans can receive our services, if they are first able to access the critical information about them. USDA is proud to be implementing these key requirements:

1. Website Modernization

- **Mobile-friendly and accessible websites:** All new and redesigned websites are made responsive and functional on mobile devices and made accessible to individuals with disabilities. These requirements were built into USDA’s Web Modernization process.
- **Consistent appearance and search function:** Public-facing websites must have a consistent look and feel, using the United States Web Design System. USDA developed a Digital Strategy Playbook that helps USDA design their websites with these standards. USDA utilizes GSA’s Search product across the board on public-facing websites.
- **Secure connection and user needs-driven design:** Digital products are provided through an industry-standard, secure connection and designed around user needs using data-driven analysis. Several partnerships with the USDA Office of Customer Experience and the Office of the Chief Information Officer help drive these design standards across the Department.
- **Continual testing and improvement:** Digital products are tested continually to ensure they meet user needs and are efficient and accurate. The USDA Web Modernization Initiative asked all USDA public-facing websites to improve and align with Department and Federal standards.
- **Digital-first approach:** Agencies should prioritize digital services and forms over in-person and paper-based services, making them available in a digital format to the greatest extent practical. This is a key priority at USDA through the FY2022-FY2066 USDA IT Strategic Plan and beyond.
- **Compliance with website standards:** Review, consolidate, and eliminate web content as necessary, ensuring compliance with website standards set by the Technology Transformation Services of the General Services Administration. USDA adheres to all Federal web standards as closely as possible.
- **Assure non-duplicative, review for consolidation or retirement:** Both public websites and intranets across USDA consistently work to comply with the above requirements and are reviewed regularly.

2. Digitization of Government Services and Forms

- Public facing applications and forms should be made digitally available.

3. Electronic Signatures

- Accelerate the use of electronic signatures.

4. Customer Experience

- Internal and external customer experience programs must be aligned.

5. Standardization

Through USDA's Web Modernization efforts over the last 5 years, USDA has worked with all digital partners to standardize the look and feel for our public-facing websites and established a common content management system and hosting solution. Prior to this effort, public-facing websites were hosted in separate environments and often had inconsistent look and feel and other web standards.

Prelude: USDA Efforts Prior to the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act

USDA began work to create Integrated Digital Experiences for citizens in 2017 with the development of [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov), a mobile device-friendly website designed to better serve America's farmers, ranchers, and foresters. Launched on February 1, 2018, [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) has become the one-stop website for the information, tools, and advice to meet the needs of the people who grow and produce our nation's fiber, food, flora, and fuel. The website consolidated 65 application forms and 20 different user flows, resulting in the first-time consolidation of applications from the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Risk Management Agency. As of the Fourth Quarter of FY 2020, [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) has helped make possible more than \$15.5 billion in distributed funding and more than 4.6 million customer interactions. The site has saved hundreds of thousands of hours for agricultural producers, who no longer have to travel to local USDA offices for routine transactions, and serves as an example of human-centered, customer-focused improvements.

Key Achievements 2019

Digital Assessment Report: To gain better understanding of customer behaviors and USDA digital landscape, the IT Modernization Customer Experience Center of Excellence (CX CoE) reviewed the Google Analytics data for the USDA domain. On March 26, 2019, USDA published these results in a Digital Assessment report. The report noted that agency sites have historically been created and maintained from inside USDA's 29 departments and staff offices, which led to some of the very challenges the 21st Century IDEA seeks to address. USDA conducted an inventory of public-facing websites (as defined by OMB) and found an initial inventory of 1632 domains, which was pared down to a list of 87 domains (*see Appendix B*).

Public Health Information System (PHIS) Exports Module: The PHIS Exports module from USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) went live in early 2019 and automated the previous paper-based export application, certification, and establishment of export eligibility processes for meat, poultry and processed egg products. The PHIS Exports module is now used by 149 countries and allows applicants from industry and brokers to submit their export applications through multiple methods and securely enables industry systems to connect to PHIS. Additionally, the approval of applications by FSIS inspection personnel was further automated and streamlined in 2021 by incorporating digital signatures.

Web Modernization: On May 7, 2019, the USDA Chief Information Officer initiated USDA's Web Modernization process in coordination with the leadership of the Office of Communications (OC) and the Office of Customer Experience (OCX). Working with the General Services Administration's IT Modernization

Centers of Excellence, USDA quickly agreed on a human-centered approach and launched an assessment of USDA's web presence using available analytics data and investigated how well key sites complied with the Act and Nielsen Norman Group Heuristic Guidelines. USDA also surveyed the USDA Digital Council to identify common modernization challenges and resources needed.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) eFile: In July 2019, APHIS, which is a part of the Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) mission area, went live with a pilot release of the [APHIS eFile](#) online system that digitized the processes to apply for and receive import, interstate movement, transit, release permits and apply for permit renewals and amendments, submit annual reports and receive regulatory guidance. The eFile system was fully completed to digitize the process to issue all permits electronically in December of 2022.

Web Modernization Engagement Completion Report: On August 13, 2019, the Web Modernization Engagement Completion Report was issued, bringing all USDA Web Managers and agency Chief Information Officers information about the 21st Century IDEA requirements and establishing a timeline for compliance.

USDA Digital Strategy Playbook: USDA launched the online [USDA Digital Strategy Playbook](#) to make it easier for UX designers and web managers to make and keep their websites focused on providing the best experiences to our customers. It outlines Federal Web standards, and the numerous mandates websites must follow and helps designers find resources and expert advice to meet those mandates – including a scorecard to measure compliance the 21st Century IDEA Act. The USDA Digital Strategy Playbook gives our agency staff a road map, guidelines, and tools to:

1. Better understand our customers;
2. Improve content discovery, delivery and quality;
3. Keep sites visually consistent;
4. Comply with multiple mandates.

There are seven criteria the USDA Digital Strategy Playbook outlines:

- **Research:** Designers should get a better understanding of what their customer needs. They can use this section to “learn about methods to gain insights into your customers and keep them at the center of your design and development efforts.”
- **Analytics:** Improve metrics to make better data-driven decisions. Designers should follow USDA's Google Analytics standards to fix common issues, improve site performance and generate more useful reports.
- **Content:** Make it easier for customers to find a website's content. This section is aimed at letting designers perform content audits, update content strategy and make content more findable with search engine optimization.
- **Accessibility:** Remove barriers to content and reach the widest possible audience. Designers should remove technological barriers through accessible and responsive web design.

- **Design and Brand:** Build a unique website for the agency that looks “USDA Official.” Designers can use this section to “create a visually distinctive website” that still meets USDA brand and visual design guidelines.
- **Development:** Designers can use this to better understand guidance and use code libraries to build and update their site.
- **Social Media:** This includes specific USDA guidance for managing social media channels to amplify the agency’s news, mission and goals.

Key Achievements 2020

USDA.gov Website Migration: The Office of Communications (OC) in partnership with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and under direction from the Deputy Secretary initiated the development and implementation of project plans for every agency and staff office to migrate all USDA.gov websites onto the Enterprise Web Application and Platform Services (eWAPS) platform. The eWAPS platform uses Drupal as a common content management system so agency communications/web technology is not siloed and is integrated across the Department, ensuring a consistent customer experience. Concurrently, the department initiated and began development/implementation of OneUSDA intranet to act as an integrated departmentwide news and information sharing platform for all USDA employees as outlined in a June 22, 2020, memo “USDA Website Modernization and Intranet Vision (*see Appendix C*). The progress of migrating all websites began in July 2020 and continues today with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024, with one caveat: if any of the USDA websites are currently the subject of a litigation hold, OCIO may be under an obligation to preserve the particular website in its current native format. OCIO will work with each agency to ensure regulatory compliance before migration.

IT Workforce Realignment: All General Series 2210 IT personnel were brought under the Office of the Chief Information Officer. This organizational realignment was designed to bring efficiencies to the Department and better serve all USDA Mission Areas and Staff Offices.

USDA Office of Customer Experience: In 2020, USDA appointed the first permanent Chief Customer Experience Officer and formally established the Office of Customer Experience (OCX). OCX leads USDA’s customer experience (CX) commitment and continues to collect and assess insights and feedback from their customers and employees to inform USDA strategy, policymaking, and track progress against outcomes.

AskUSDA Contact Center: In October 2020, USDA launched the [AskUSDA](#) Contact Center. The AskUSDA Contact Center serves as the “one front door” for phone, chat, and web inquiries, transforming how the public interacts with USDA and providing an enhanced experience for the public. Prior to the creation and implementation of AskUSDA, members of the public had to navigate dozens of phone numbers and had no chat function or online platform for self-service, creating frustrations and inefficiencies. AskUSDA was created to make USDA more responsive to the public by providing a single destination for phone, chat, and web inquiries. Whether it’s talking to a USDA representative via phone, chatting with a live agent on our

website, communicating with USDA via e-mail, or finding answers to customer inquiries through self-service, the public now has streamlined access to information about USDA's agencies and programs.

USDA Open Data Platform: To improve access to data and information, USDA launched its Open Data Platform in 2020 through an initiative led by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which is now part of USDA's enterprise data and analytics platform that includes several USDA Mission Areas and agencies. The Open Data Platform allows USDA to share data and insights through dashboards to the public and also to State and other Federal partners as needed. The Open Data Platform has received over 100,000 views in a month and helps USDA communicate important topics like APHIS' [Avian Influenza](#) dashboard or Rural Development's [Rural Data Gateway](#), the latter of which recently won the Federal CDO Council's [Distinguished Achievement in Federal Data](#) in 2024.

Key Achievements 2021

One USDA Intranet: In 2021, OC contracted a private software developer with Drupal expertise to further develop the OneUSDA intranet. Using Drupal as the content management system, this intranet acts as the centralized internal leadership communications and department messaging portal to all staff. As all other websites were being mandated to Drupal in 2020, it made sense for the Department to leverage the expected content manager skillset needed for all other USDA websites. All agencies were granted development access to the OneUSDA Drupal production environment and tasked with setting up top tier agency home pages and content by October 1, 2022, at which point OC began a OneUSDA relaunch campaign.

USDA.gov Redesign: In August 2021, OC secured funding to begin the redesign of the USDA.gov website as the existing version was already 4 years old and reaching the end of its service life. In Fiscal Year 2022, the funding and contract vehicle was in place and initial work began to meet the obligations under the 21st Century IDEA and leverage the resources already committed to rebuilding and refreshing the USDA.gov website. Design and user testing were completed for an on-time launch in the first quarter of FY 2024, but the launch was delayed due to the elimination of the funding necessary to maintain the system in the final FY 2024 Agriculture Appropriations Act. The website will now launch at the end of FY 2024.

Specialty Crops Integrated Operating Network (SCION): In July 2021, the Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) mission area consisting of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) launched the first iteration of [SCION](#), an automated business platform that provides specialty crops inspection and audit services as part of its web application and modernization efforts.

Agriculture Trade Licensing & Attestation Solution (ATLAS): In August 2021, AMS launched the first iteration of [ATLAS](#), which is an enterprise-wide portal enabling the secure exchange of data and documents needed for shipments to worldwide ports. These modernized electronic certification systems are used by

internal and external user to create, approve manage and transmit official documents and certificates around the U.S. and the world.

Key Achievements 2022

USDA CX Policy and IT Strategic Plan: In June 2022, OCX published [DR 1270-001, U.S. Department of Agriculture Customer Experience Policy](#), to set forth the policies, requirements, and responsibilities for USDA's CX program. Also in June 2022, OCIO issued the [USDA IT Strategic Plan](#) for FY22-26 that outlines the Department's strategic goals, objectives, and expected outcomes to implement a customer first model leveraging technologies that provide for simple, seamless, and secure digital services and offers a world class experience for the American public. The USDA IT Strategic plan identifies a number of key Technology Highlights across the Department that create and leverage innovative technology solutions based on customer needs to drastically improve the customer experience of all USDA stakeholders.

The Departmental Administration Information Technology Office (DAITO) Forms Application: DAITO implemented the DAITO Forms custom application on its DASO Now Platform for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) to include digitized forms and workflows for:

- USDA 1890 National Scholars Program
- USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program
- USDA E. Kiki De La Garza Fellowship (EKDLG)
- Civil Rights Performance Assessment (CRPA)
- Management Directive-715 (MD-715) -- Parts G and H.

These digital forms are regularly accessed by both the USDA and external users to facilitate an enhanced user experience, along with efficient workflows. Over the past two years 2,415 students have accessed USDA's 1890 National Scholars application resulting in an overall 1,715 scholarship applications being submitted to and processed by USDA in partnership with the nineteen 1890 land-grant universities.

Consolidating Web Modernization Business Lines: The President's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request included \$3.025 million for USDA to consolidate two Working Capital Fund business lines (USDA.gov and Intranet.USDA.gov) to appropriated funding instead of as a fee-for-service to various USDA agencies and staff offices. Core Communications was created in FY 2012 when the Office of Communication's appropriated Budget was no longer adequate to support the USDA.gov website and the growing need for digital tools to communicate with USDA's customers and clients. As mentioned previously, Core Communications created an Intranet business line in FY 2021 to enhance and maintain USDA's first enterprise-wide intranet, Intranet.usda.gov, which launched on December 16, 2020. This proposal would fund personnel who support USDA.gov and Intranet.USDA.gov including web editors, designers, social media managers and digital analytics, as well as development and hosting costs. Congress did not include these necessary funds in the final FY 2022 Agriculture Appropriations Act.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Digital Service Delivery: NASS released a modernized customer centric Respondent Portal integrated with login.gov that resulted in an 49% increase in web responses for the 2022 [Census of Agriculture](#). The portal allows users online access through personal computers, tablets, and mobile devices. Other key achievements from NASS include (1) developing a Questionnaire Design System that provides 99% of all NASS survey instruments online in addition to mailed paper copies; (2) developing a system to send data collection reminders or alerts via email or text with links that facilitate easier access to NASS web data collection instruments; and (3) achieved the Department's goal of moving its data collection systems and applications to the Cloud Environment. This migration helped to facilitate use of the most advanced technology to make data collection systems more flexible, dependable, and user-friendly.

USDA Digital Service: In December 2022, OCIO established the USDA Digital Service (USDA DS) and appointed the first Executive Director. USDA DS is a program designed to cultivate and grow a community of multidisciplinary teams to create human-centered solutions that deliver simple, seamless, and secure technology and customer experiences across USDA. The USDA DS is also responsible for helping to set the strategic direction and priorities for how USDA recruits, hires, and develops our IT workforce across the Department.

Key Achievements 2023

Web Talent Push: The President's Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request included \$1.626 million for USDA to allow OC to hire editors, designers and web developers to best serve USDA's customers and clients, with the remaining funds budgeted to reimburse USDA's Office of the Chief Information Officer for increased web hosting costs. Congress did not include these necessary funds in the final FY 2023 Agriculture Appropriations Act.

Web Modernization Milestones: As part of the work with OCIO and OC to consolidate many public-facing USDA websites to meet IDEA Act requirements, key improvements completed in 2023 include (1) migration of all Staff Office websites under the common usda.gov umbrella; (2) the retirement of 50 state websites for the Natural Resource Conservation Service and migration of all key content into nrca.usda.gov; and (3) the Forest Service effectively merging over 200 public facing websites into one.

USDA eAuthentication: The USDA eAuthentication service is USDA's Enterprise Single-Sign on solution that is integrated with over 700 web applications, and supports USDA employees and contractors, other federal agency partners, and public citizens that access USDA web applications. Over the past 5 years, the eAuthentication website has been updated to comply with the U.S. Web Design Standards and is now mobile friendly via an adaptive user interface with convenient layouts for mobile, tablet and desktop sized screens. With the addition of various Multi-Factor Authentication options to support different types of users, the USDA has taken a user-centric approach with eAuthentication's User Interface so that only the appropriate login options are provided to the user when they are prompted to authenticate. The eAuthentication service leverages an Agile Software Development Life Cycle process, as well as a continuous integration and continuous deployment model to ensure that new features are released quickly

to adapt to stakeholder needs. The eAuthentication service has also integrated with the GSA [Login.gov](#) service for use by public citizens, which allows citizens to use one account to access all government services that leverage [Login.gov](#).

MRP Recognized for Accessibility: The Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) mission area consisting of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) leads USDA and ranks amongst the highest organizations in government in terms of conformity and maturity as reported in the [GSA FY23 Governmentwide Section 508 Assessment](#).

Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM): The USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) released an improved [Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#) (PHZM) in November 2023, which is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a given location, in a digital-only format. The 2023 map incorporates data from 13,412 weather stations compared to the 7,983 that were used for the 2012 map. The revamped PHZM website has an interactive online map, a zip-code search tool, as well as downloadable national, regional, and state maps in varying resolutions and formats. The 2023 PHZM is also the first to include customizations for viewing on mobile devices, and website metrics indicate that over 70% of users accessed the PHZM website with a mobile device. Since November 2023, the PHZM website has had 6,702,690 page views coming from 3,291,212 users. Also, during that time, over 149 maps have been downloaded 1,337,754 times.

NIFA Web Modernization and Dashboards: USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) launched a major content audit for its public-facing website to remove outdated, duplicative, and irrelevant content. Since beginning the content audit, the web footprint has been decreased by around 50%, and NIFA is now focused on revamping the remaining content to ensure it is up to date and relevant to our user needs. NIFA also developed two public-facing dashboards. The [NIFA Grant Funding dashboard](#) provides an inside look into NIFA funding for competitive and capacity grants from fiscal year 2018 forward to help reduce barriers and increase access to data on federally funded programs. The [Application Status dashboard](#) allows users to look up the status of their grant applications for NIFA funding opportunities. This tool is an innovative way to ensure transparency and enhance the customer service experience.

TFAA Web System Modernization and Integration: In the Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs (TFAA) Mission Area, the ongoing work between the Foreign Agricultural Service's (FAS) web team and FAS business owners has led to the integration of several external FAS systems into one website. These include the [International Office Directory](#) (which in addition to living on the FAS website, also populates international contact data on more than 100 country pages), the Freight Tender system (which help coordinate international food assistance deliveries, and which serves as an invaluable tool for auditing and demonstrating legal compliance), and most recently the [U.S. Market Development Cooperator directory](#) which launched in late May 2024. The integration of all of these systems made them accessible and mobile-friendly, brought them in compliance with U.S. Web Design standards, and allowed FAS to reduce the overall FAS external website footprint by retiring dated / duplicative systems, and the FAS web team was able to coordinate a refresh of the data in these systems for accuracy. The FAS website receives more than

1.1 million unique visitors per year. In addition to complying with USDA web modernization requirements and the IDEA, such integrations will also boost the profile of these applications and increase the return on investment for FAS. Recent application forms for FAS trade missions were completed using MS Forms through Microsoft 365. In the past, trade mission applications were paper-based and needed to be printed, filled out, and submitted via email. Now the whole process is digital. FAS conducts 4-6 trade missions a year leading as many as 40 agriculture-related businesses and representatives from state departments of agriculture on an international mission to connect U.S. sellers with overseas buyers.

Direct Loan Digital Tools: In December of 2023, the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Mission Area launched their [online application for Direct Loan customers](#). More than 26,000 customers who submit a Direct Loan application each year now can use an online, interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. Through a personalized dashboard, borrowers can track the progress of their loan application on [farmers.gov](#) or by completing FSA's Loan Assistance Tool at [farmers.gov/loan-assistance-tool](#). This tool is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, improve customer service, and expand credit access.

Conclusion- Looking Ahead to M-23-22

On September 22, 2023, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget released [M-23-22, "Delivering a Digital First Public Experience"](#), which provided guidance and assistance to Federal agencies on how to design and deliver websites and digital services to the public to continue implementing the IDEA Act, in addition to defining ongoing agency assessment and reporting requirements. USDA is a key partner for the immediate government-wide actions identified in the memorandum, including service as one of the inaugural agency co-chairs of the newly established [Digital Experience Council](#), which serves as the primary interagency advisory body for assisting in the government-wide implementation of the IDEA Act and related digital experience activities.

USDA continues to provide enhanced digital products and programs aligned with the IDEA Act. For example, in February 2024, most farm loan borrowers are able to make payments to their direct loans with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](#). Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay the more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year on average. Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA's farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities, giving farm loan employees more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.

USDA will continue to work across the Department to implement the requirements of the 21st Century IDEA act at scale to provide simple, seamless, and secure digital products and programs that offer a world class experience for the public.

Endnotes:

High-level data on how people interact with federal public websites and digital services is available at <https://analytics.usa.gov>. More detailed data, which can be filtered by agency and domain, and includes a listing of the most-viewed websites and digital services, and trend data—is available via an application programming interface (API) at <https://open.gsa.gov/api/dap/>.

Appendix A – Acronyms/Abbreviations

• 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience

Act: 21st Century IDEA

- **AMS:** Agricultural Marketing Service
- **APHIS:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- **ARS:** Agricultural Research Service
- **CCC:** Commodity Credit Corporation
- **CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations
- **CODEX:** U.S. Codex Office
- **EEO:** Equal Employment Opportunity
- **EO:** Executive Order
- **ERS:** Economic Research Service
- **FAS:** Foreign Agricultural Service
- **FFAS:** Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service
- **FNCS:** Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services
- **FNS:** Food and Nutrition Service
- **FPAC Business Center:** Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
- **FS:** Forest Service
- **FSA:** Farm Service Agency
- **FSIS:** Food Safety and Inspection Service
- **FY:** Fiscal Year
- **MOA / MOU:** Memorandum of Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding
- **MRP:** Marketing and Regulatory Programs
- **NAL:** National Agricultural Library
- **NARA:** National Archives and Records Administration
- **NASS:** National Agricultural Statistics Service
- **NFC:** National Finance Center
- **NIFA:** National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- **NRCS:** Natural Resources Conservation Service

- **NRE:** Natural Resources and the Environment
- **OALJ:** Office of Administrative Law Judges
- **OASCR:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.
- **OBPA:** Office of Budget and Program Analysis
- **OC:** Office of Communications
- **OCA:** Office of the Consumer Advisor
- **OCE:** Office of Community Engagement; Office of the Chief Economist
- **OCFO:** Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- **OCHRO:** Office of the Chief Human Resources Director
- **OCIO:** Office of the Chief Information Officer
- **OCR:** Office of Congressional Relations
- **OCS:** Office of the Chief Scientist
- **OCX:** Office of Customer Experience
- **OES:** Office of the Executive Secretariat
- **OGC:** Office of the General Counsel
- **OGE:** Office of Government Ethics
- **OHR:** Office of Human Resources
- **OHSE:** Office of Homeland Security and Emergency
- **OIG:** Office of Inspector General
- **OMB:** Office of Management and Budget
- **OPPE:** Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
- **OSDBU:** Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
- **OSEC:** Office of the Secretary
- **OTR:** Office of Tribal Relations
- **RBCS:** Rural Business Cooperative Service
- **RD:** Rural Development
- **REE:** Research, Education and Economics
- **RHS:** Rural Housing Service

- **RMA:** Risk Management Agency
- **RUS:** Rural Utilities Service
- **TFAA:** Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs
- **U.S.C.:** United States Code
- **USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture
- **USDA DS:** United States Department of Agriculture Digital Service

Appendix B – USDA Inventory of Public Facing Websites *

Owner	Public-Facing Website
Agricultural Research Service	https://www.ars-grin.gov
National Agricultural Library	https://www.lcacommons.gov
National Wildfire Coordinating Group	https://www.wildfire.gov
Recreation One Stop	https://ridb.recreation.gov
Rural Development	https://www.rural.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Discrimination Financial Assistance Program	https://www.22007apply.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Library Thesaurus	https://agclass.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- AgLab	https://aglab-prod.arsnet.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Ag Data Commons User Guide	https://data.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- NRCS Directives	https://directives.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- APHIS eFile	https://efile.aphis.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- FOIA Public Access Portal	https://efoia-pal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Northwest Irrigation and Soils Research Library	https://eprints.nwisrl.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Economic Research Service	https://www.ers.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Farm to School Census	https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Foreign Agricultural Service	https://www.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food Data Central	https://fdc.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food Buying Guide	https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Global Agricultural Information Network	https://gain.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- i5K Workspace	https://i5k.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- FAS International Production Assessment Division	https://ipad.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections	https://iwgsc.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- RD Lead-Based Compliance Key	https://leadpaint.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Long-Term Agroecosystem Research Network	https://ltar.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- AMS Market News	https://mymarketnews.ams.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board	https://nareeeab.ree.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Nematode Collection Database	https://nematode.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Nutrition Evidence Systematic Review	https://nesr.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Finance Center	https://nfc.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Service Center Locator	https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Organic Integrity Database	https://organic.ams.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Databases	https://phytochem.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Preservation Information Exchange	https://pix.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- USDA Plan Hardiness Zone Map	https://planhardiness.ars.usda.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture- PLANTS Database	https://plants.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- NRCS eDirectives	https://policy.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Statistics Service Respondent Portal	https://portal.agcounts.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Predictive Microbiology Information Portal	https://portal.errc.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Professional Standards Training Database	https://professionalstandards.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- RD/FSA Properties	https://properties.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool	https://pstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Housing Service Home Loans	https://pubmai.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Housing Service Home Loans	https://rdhomeloans.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Development Multi-Family Housing Rentals	https://rdmfhrentals.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Research, Education & Economics Information System	https://reeis.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Risk Management Agency	https://www.rma.usda.gov/
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Scientific Discoveries	https://scientificdiscoveries.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- SCINET	https://scinet.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Soil Data Access	https://sdmdataaccess.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Library Search	https://search.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- SNAP-Ed Connection	https://snaped.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- SNAP to Skills	https://snaptoskills.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Submit Your Manuscript	https://submit.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Tellus	https://tellus.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food Buying Guide	https://uatfoodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool	https://uatpstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- RD Management Interactive Network Connection	https://usdaminc.sc.egov.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- NAL Pomological Watercolors	https://usdawatercolors.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- U.S. National Arboretum	https://usna.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- GrainGenes	https://wheat.pw.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- WIC Breastfeeding Support	https://wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- WIC Works Resource System	https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Marketing Service	https://www.ams.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	https://www.aphis.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Research Service	https://www.ars.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- eAuthentication	https://www.eauth.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Economic Research Service	https://www.ers.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Foreign Agricultural Service	https://www.fas.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food and Nutrition Service	https://www.fns.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Forest Service	https://www.fs.usda.gov

U.S. Department of Agriculture- Farm Service Agency	https://www.fsa.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Agricultural Library	https://www.nal.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Institute of Food and Agriculture	https://www.nifa.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Natural Resources Conservation Service	https://www.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Development	https://www.rd.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Research, Education & Economics	https://www.ree.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture	https://www.usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture- Food and Agricultural Education Information System	https://www.faeis.cals.vt.edu
US Forest Service- Forests and Rangelands	https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov
US Forest Service	https://apps.fs.usda.gov
USDA - Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion- Dietary Guidelines for Americans	https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov
USDA - Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion- MyPlate.gov	https://www.myplate.gov
USDA Forest Service - Southwestern Region	https://www.bosque.gov
USDA, ARS, NAL- Federal Interagency Committee on Invasive Terrestrial Animals and Pathogens	https://www.itap.gov
USDA, Office of Communications- Farmers.gov	https://www.farmers.gov
USDA/ARS/NAL- National Invasive Species Information Center	https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov

** as of January 31, 2024*

Appendix C - 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act USDA Decision Memos



United States Department of
Agriculture Office of the Deputy
Secretary Washington, D.C. 20250

TO: Subcabinet
FROM: Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky
SUBJECT: USDA Website Modernization and Intranet Vision
DATE: June 22, 2020

Over the last 3 years, USDA has remained dedicated to making the Department the most efficient, effective, customer focused agency in federal government. As part of our commitment to remain customer focused, USDA has more work to do when it comes to modernizing our web presence as our websites are often the first touchpoint our customers have with the Department. While USDA has made strides to comply with the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act \(IDEA\)](#) and launched the online USDA [Digital Strategy Playbook in 2019](#), additional website inconsistencies across the Department remain. For example, a recent review of USDA's web presence found:

- Over a thousand different domain names in use
- An inconsistent "look and feel"
- Multiple content management systems in use
- Improper and inconsistent branding
- Wide variations in primary responsibility of those managing websites and providing backend support services across the Department between Public Affairs, IT, or agency program areas

The fragmented and inconsistent nature of USDA's current website footprint has not only led to customer confusion but also to cyber security vulnerabilities across the Department that must be addressed.

For these reasons, this memo is to ask that all USDA Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices should formalize and finalize a project plan including a timeline, milestones, budget, and the identification of a Mission Area, Agency, or Office project manager to oversee execution of the project plan and modernize all websites by October 1, 2024. This will enable all Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices to comply and with USDA's Digital Strategy Playbook and migration to Drupal 8 on USDA's Enterprise Web Application Platform and Services (eWAPS). A template of a project timeline and an example timeline is attached, and agency's project plans are due to the Department by COB Friday, July 17, 2020 to Ryann DuRant at Ryann.DuRant@usda.gov. Mission Areas that house multiple agencies may submit one plan for their Mission Area's websites, but that plan should include timeline, milestones, and budget information for each agency's website. Additionally, Agencies who have multiple domains and sites may submit one plan for all their websites, so long as timeline, milestones, and budget information is included for each.

Your project plan for your website modernization process should also include the prioritization of resources needed to migrate to Drupal 8 and to the eWAPS platform if your websites are not already on the common platform, the development of a clear governance structure, plan for content audits and clean up, and a review of policies and procedures to ensure USDA programs and information are easy for customers to find and use. It should also include the implementation of a constant process improvement program driven by data and analytics to continually improve the customer and user experience of USDA's digital tools.

Goals and Timeline of USDA Website Modernization

Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices should do the following:

- Send Website Modernization Project Plans to Ryann DuRant by July 17, 2020.
- Identify a project manager by July 17, 2020 who will lead their Mission Area, Agency, or Office's team by coordinating progress, executing the project plan, and working closely with the Department's Website Modernization Team.

- Conform to the “look and feel” and standards outlined in the USDA Digital Strategy Playbook by December 31, 2020.
- Initiate by October 1, 2021 the process of migrating all websites to the eWAPS platform and to the Drupal 8 content management system, with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024.
 - This limits duplicative website infrastructure, minimalizes cyber risk by having an enterprise level technology solution managed by the Department, and enhances our ability to coordinate on messaging in real-time, thus mitigating negative impacts on our internal and external customers.
- Ensure USDA compliance with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act on an ongoing basis.

The Department has implemented a team, led by the Office of Communications (OC), that consists of representatives from OC, Office of Customer Experience (OCX), and Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to assist Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices in the areas of content, customer experience, and development during the web modernization process and to ensure the Department maintains a OneUSDA vision of website modernization.

- To support the efforts of Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices, the Website Modernization Team will provide opportunities for additional training and communities of practice to share subject matter expertise and strategies.
- The Website Modernization Team will establish enterprise-level accountability for cross-Departmental, routine review of usability, usage, and content on sites.
- The Website Modernization Team will hold Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices accountable by conducting monthly check-ins to track progress in areas of content, analytics, accessibility, branding (where applicable), development, and customer experience. This information will also be tracked via the Quarterly Strategic Review (QSR) process with the Deputy Secretary.

One USDA Intranet

Through the web modernization process, many Agencies and Offices have already identified information currently housed on external-facing sites that is intended for internal-facing audiences only. As a part of an effort to streamline and improve USDA’s Internal Communications, the Department recognizes the need to have an effective and efficient mechanism to communicate important all-employee information. In conjunction with website modernization, the Department is developing an enterprise wide, One USDA Intranet to address these identified needs. Effective immediately, Agencies and Offices should not further invest in their individual intranets (excluding cybersecurity maintenance), or create new intranets, but may continue to use existing intranets until forthcoming direction from the Department.

The One USDA Intranet will be rolled out early this fall and will house links to commonly used employee information and resources including, but not limited to, WebTA, AgLearn, Employee Personnel Page (EPP), and dashboards. It will also include upcoming events, USDA resources, and news and information from the Office of the Secretary. Recognizing that several Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices have their own intranets, the Department will work to ensure those intranets are taken into consideration throughout this process.

Decommissioning USDA Connect

OCIO announced on March 18, 2020 the decommissioning of the USDA Connect due to competing toolsets within the Department and a vendor that was no longer able to support USDA securely. The decommission will be complete by September 30, 2020, and as a part of that process, OCIO has inventoried active customer communities to migrate to current landing zones including Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, and eventually, the One USDA Intranet. Mission areas, Agencies, and Offices using USDA Connect should ensure they are prepared for this decommissioning.

Questions?

Contact Ryann DuRant, Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Internal Communications, at ryann.durant@usda.gov.



**United States Department
of Agriculture**

Office of Communications

Office of the Chief
Information Officer

1400 Independence Avenue,
SW Washington, DC
20250-0801

DECISION MEMO FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

THROUGH:

Michael Amato
Director of Communications

**MICHAEL
AMATO**

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MICHAEL AMATO
Date: 2023.01.05
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Gary Washington
Chief Information Officer

**GARY
WASHINGTON**

Digitally signed by GARY
WASHINGTON
Date: 2023.01.05
13:59:30 -05'00'

FROM:

Michael Illenberg
Communications Manager
Print, Events, Editorial Review

**Michael G
Illenberg**

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Michael G Illenberg
Date: 2023.01.04
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SUBJECT:

Web Modernization and OneUSDA Intranet

ISSUE:

Recommit to the mandatory migration of all USDA websites to the Enterprise- Wide Application Platform and Services (EWAPS) and to the Drupal content management system, with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024, and recommit to the departmentwide adoption of the OneUSDA intranet as as part of USDA’s compliance with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act.

BACKGROUND:

In 2020, the Office of Communications (OC) in partnership with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) under direction from the Deputy Secretary initiated the development and implementation of project plans for every agency and staff office to migrate all USDA.gov websites onto the EWAPS platform using Drupal as a common content management system to ensure that agency communications/web technology was not siloed and was integrated across the Department to ensure a consistent customer experience. Concurrently, the department initiated and began development/implementation of OneUSDA intranet to act as an integrated departmentwide news and information sharing platform for all USDA employees as outlined in a June 22, 2020 memo “USDA Website Modernization and Intranet Vision (attached).

DISCUSSION:

While USDA has made strides to comply with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA) and launched the online USDA Digital Strategy Playbook in 2019, additional website inconsistencies across the Department remain. For example, a review of USDA's web presence found:

- Over a thousand different domain names in use
- An inconsistent "look and feel"
- Multiple content management systems in use
- Improper and inconsistent branding
- Wide variations in primary responsibility of those managing websites and providing backend support services across the Department between Public Affairs, IT, or agency program areas
- Duplication of outdated forms and content across multiple agencies' owned intranet websites and duplication of work to maintain the same content on the multiple intranet websites.

Website Modernization:

DAITO secured a five-year single award BPA with RIVA Solutions and U.Group, two premier web design, experience, and technology firms. This BPA, available through July 2025, serves to advance our digital transformation efforts, including migration of agency websites to an enterprise environment, and to meet the evolving customer experience demands of our diverse stakeholders.

This BPA provides quick and easy access to premiere Drupal developers who will develop robust and dynamic solutions for customer-centric experiences fulfilling broad policy initiatives and programs on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues.

Why use the BPA?

- Streamlined Approach
- Faster Delivery
- Respecting Agency Individuality
- Human-Centered Design
- Integrated Front and Back End Development

Task Areas:

- Web Development
- UI, UX, and Design
- DevOps
- System Administration
- Migration Support
- Information Architecture
- Search Engine Optimization
- Content Audit, Strategy, and Management
- Post-Production Activities
- Website Operations and Maintenance
- Business Analytics
- Business Intelligence

- Project Management

Since 2020, OC in partnership with OCIO has mandated the development and implementation of project plans to migrate all USDA websites to EWAPS and to place a hold on investing or developing agency owned intranet platforms.

The progress of migrating all websites began in July 2020 and continues today with the goal of completion by October 1, 2024. The Office of Communications has agencies and offices with tools, direction and/or guidance to address the inconsistent look and feel of webpages, branding and use of logos in the USDA Style Guide Digital Strategy Playbook.

Caveat: If any of the USDA websites are currently the subject of a litigation hold, OCIO may be under an obligation to preserve the particular website in its current native format. OCIO will work with each agency to ensure regulatory compliance before migration.

OneUSDA Intranet:

In 2021 OC contracted Bixal, a private software developer with Drupal expertise, to develop the OneUSDA intranet using Drupal as the content management system that would act as the centralized internal leadership communications and department messaging to all staff. As all other websites were being mandated to Drupal in 2020, it made sense for the Department to leverage the expected content manager skillset needed for all other USDA websites.

Concurrently, the Department adopted and began to broadly use new tools offered by Microsoft Office 365 (O365) including Microsoft Teams and SharePoint. In 2022, as USDA nears finalizing the OneUSDA intranet on the Drupal platform, Microsoft released its most current update which includes tools that offer website development capabilities that match and, in some cases, exceed the potential for Drupal. Some agencies ignored the direction from the former Deputy Secretary and began to utilize O365 and develop internal communications tools in that environment.

OneUSDA is the third time in the past 15 years that USDA has initiated the development of an intranet platform to be accessible by all staff and which would communicate common information. To abandon the OneUSDA project in favor of O365 tools, and once again, begin a new departmentwide effort to build OneUSDA in the O365 environment rather than Drupal, will delay this project another two to four years at a time when messaging about cultural change could not be more critical for the Department. It will cost the Department up to another \$1 million in development fees in addition to the loss of our nearly \$750,000 commitment into the current iteration. Inevitably, new IT technology will be introduced in the next few years and there will likely be another push to begin the cycle of developing a departmentwide intranet over again at that time with even more funds lost.

OC and OCIO OneUSDA intranet development capitalize on the opportunities offered by O365. The Department is currently rolling out OneUSDA as a communications platform only, with links to resources, collaboration tools and document management including tools offered by the O365 environment.

All agencies have been granted development access to the OneUSDA Drupal production environment and tasked with setting up top tier agency home pages and content by January 9, 2023 – at which point OC will host a OneUSDA relaunch campaign.


RECOMMENDATION:

Effective January 4, 2023 as Deputy Secretary, to comply with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act and consolidate our IT Services I reiterate and direct all agencies to migrate all websites to the eWAPS platform or Akamai.

Effective January 4, 2023, to comply with the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act and consolidate our IT Services I reiterate and direct all agencies and staff offices to adopt and develop OneUSDA intranet as the enterprise-wide solution for an employee news source with leadership internal communications content, employee event communications content and as an employee resource with links to employee tools and other web-based resources.

Effective January 4, 2023: I direct all agencies and staff offices cease all current expenditures on legacy intranets' development and cease continuation of the use of such intranets as the principal means of Agency internal mass communications as of the start of Fiscal year 2024. Agencies may continue the use of MS Teams for document management and team collaboration.

DECISION BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY:

Approved:	 Date: 2023.01.05 14:13:14 -06'00'
Disapproved:	
Discuss with me:	