

DATE: April 22, 2008
TO: All Cabinet Secretaries, Public Information Officers, and Maryland State Web
Developers
FROM: Chief of Staff Michael Enright
RE: Agency website development

As many of you may know, the Governor's Office has begun a comprehensive review and revision of the Maryland Web Branding Guidelines. We expect these new guidelines to be released this spring, and have already met with your agency's Public Information Officers about this project.

We expect that these new standards will apply to ALL State web pages.

It has become increasingly evident that a number of agencies have deviated from the existing guidelines by developing websites that offer little or no resemblance to the statewide standards. Not only is the statewide branding absent, but inconsistency between sites from the same department has become increasingly noticeable. Our goal is to reduce fragmentation and disparity between sites by reversing this trend known as web sprawl.

For this reason, each agency should be responsible for maintaining only one website. All sub-units, divisions, and programs are to be incorporated within a single, visually unified site.

That the branding guidelines are in development should not be construed as a reason to delay the consolidation and reorganization of your department's online information. Until the new guidelines are released, agencies should continue to use the guidelines issued in 2004 for consistency.

These [guidelines](#) were designed to help Maryland achieve the following goals:

1. Reinforce Maryland's identity and made it clear to visitors that they are on an official Maryland State government Web site;
2. Provide continuity, consistency and integration of agency Web sites within the State Portal, Maryland.Gov, to support a "one government" approach;
3. Improve usability, accessibility and credibility of State government information published via the Web;
4. Ensure that critical State links are available from all agency Web sites as well as centralized access to key information

Inconsistent visual elements make web visiting difficult for visitors, who should not have to spend time re-orienting and wondering if, in fact, they are on a State of Maryland website. There are also cost-benefits to standardization since web developers and content managers should not be committing valuable time and resources re-creating new sites when they should, in fact, focus on one.

Frank Perrelli, of our office, is working with the Department of Information Technology to evaluate the State's online presence, and will be making time in the months ahead to meet with your representatives to identify improvements and upgrades.

Consistency and integration will be essential characteristics of the State's future web development, and I ask that you give your fullest accommodation to reining in web-sprawl now. He can be contacted with any questions at 410-974-5027 or fperrelli@gov.state.md.us .

Thank you for your attention in this matter and we look forward to sharing the new guidelines with you in the coming weeks.