

Usability Report

A Heuristic Review of [Site Name] with Special Consideration of the IDEA Act

[Month] 2019

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

[Agency NAME]

Completed by: [Team/Office Name]

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# Executive Summary

Use bullet points to explain:

* What site the review is for
* What team conducted the review (and when)
* Overall goal of review
* Results of the review
* Top-level recommendations

# Background & Methodology

## Background

We performed a heuristic evaluation and expert review of [site or application]. The framework for the review was based on the Heuristics established by Jakob Nielsen, coupled with the eight new standards outlined in the [21st Century IDEA Act](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5759/text). The goal of this review is to provide guidance and actionable recommendations for future development.

In this document we will be outlining our findings and recommendations: first, broadly, and then looking at specific sections or issues and related recommendations for change. Where possible, we have included images to illustrate the issue or recommendation we are noting.

## Methodology

During an expert review, a usability professional uses his/her knowledge of heuristic standards, coupled with their experience designing and testing websites and applications, to walk through a website in the shoes of a typical user. Exploring the design, layout, functionality, navigation, content and supporting documentation (if available), the reviewer will discover areas where a site or application diverges from established standards or hampers the user experience.

### The Heuristics

As part of our evaluation we have employed the [10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/), developed by Jakob Nielsen in 1994. Still the standard, Nielsen's general principles, or heuristics, for interaction design are broad rules of thumb and not specific rules or usability guidelines. For reference, the heuristics are:

#### Table 1: 10 Usability Heuristics

| Heuristic | Description |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Visibility of system status | The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time. |
| 1. Match between system and the real world | The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order. |
| 1. User control and freedom | Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo. |
| 1. Consistency and standards | Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. |
| 1. Error prevention | Even better than good error messages are a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action. |
| 1. Recognition rather than recall | Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate. |
| 1. Flexibility and efficiency of use | Accelerators—unseen by the novice user—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions. |
| 1. Aesthetic and minimalist design | Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility. |
| 1. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors | [Error messages](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/error-message-guidelines/) should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution. |
| 1. Help and documentation | Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large. |

### The 21st Century IDEA Act

The 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA Act) sets requirements for federal agency websites and digital services.

The IDEA standards require that a website or digital service:

* is accessible to individuals with disabilities
* has a consistent appearance
* does not duplicate any legacy websites (the legislation also requires agencies to ensure that legacy websites are regularly reviewed, removed, and consolidated)
* has a search function
* uses an industry standard secure connection
* “is designed around user needs with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions, using qualitative and quantitative data to determine user goals, needs, and behaviors, and continually test the website, web-based form, web-based application, or digital service to ensure that user needs are addressed;”
* allows for user customization; and
* is mobile-friendly

# Results

## The 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA Act)

### Compliance Overview

#### Table 2: The IDEA Act Standards Requirements for a Website or Digital Service

| Requirement | Compliant | Not Fully Compliant | Non-Compliant | Unable to Assess Currently |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accessible to individuals with disabilities |  |  |  |  |
| Consistent appearance |  |  |  |  |
| Does not duplicate any legacy websites (the legislation also requires agencies to ensure that legacy websites are regularly reviewed, removed, and consolidated) |  |  |  |  |
| Has a search function |  |  |  |  |
| Uses an industry standard secure connection |  |  |  |  |
| “is designed around user needs with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions, using qualitative and quantitative data to determine user goals, needs, and behaviors, and continually test the website, web-based form, web-based application, or digital service to ensure that user needs are addressed;” |  |  |  |  |
| allows for user customization; and |  |  |  |  |
| is mobile-friendly |  |  |  |  |

### IDEA Notes & Comments

#### Accessible to Individuals with Disabilities

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Consistent Appearance

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Does not duplicate any legacy websites (the legislation also requires agencies to ensure that legacy websites are regularly reviewed, removed, and consolidated)

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Search Function

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Industry Standard Secure Connection

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### “is designed around user needs with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions, using qualitative and quantitative data to determine user goals, needs, and behaviors, and continually test the website, web-based form, web-based application, or digital service to ensure that user needs are addressed;”

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Allows for User Customization

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Mobile-Friendly

We reviewed USDA.gov on an [insert mobile device and operating system info here: e.g. “iPhone 6 running iOS 12.1.4.”] The site appears to be responsively designed.

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

## Heuristic Evaluation/Expert Review

### Heuristic Overview

Although we are not adhering to a strict Heuristic review, we thought it might be helpful to provide an overall and subjective rating based on the Heuristics.

Note: these are purely subjective ratings based on review of the design, layout, functionality, navigation, content and supporting documentation of the site.

#### Table 3: Heuristic Ratings



| Heuristics | Rating | Description | Notes |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Visibility of system status |  | The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time. |  |
| 1. Match between system and the real world |  | The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order. |  |
| 1. User control and freedom |  | Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo. |  |
| 1. Consistency and standards |  | Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. |  |
| 1. Error prevention |  | Even better than good error messages are a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action. |  |
| 1. Recognition rather than recall |  | Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate. |  |
| 1. Flexibility and efficiency of use |  | Accelerators—unseen by the novice user—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions. |  |
| 1. Aesthetic and minimalist design |  | Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility. |  |
| 1. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors |  | [Error messages](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/error-message-guidelines/) should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution. |  |
| 1. Help and documentation |  | Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large. |  |
| Overall Average |  |  |  |

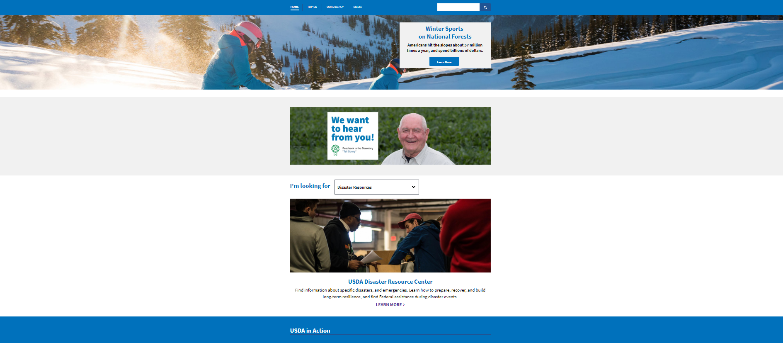


### Heuristic Evaluation/Expert Review Notes & Comments

#### Overall

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

#### Specific page notes (Example: USDA Homepage)



##### Figure X: USDA Home Page (1)

* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]
* [Insert observations here]

# Overview of Recommendations and Impact

We have included the perceived ‘Impact’ of implementing each recommendation (i.e. how resolving these issues might improve successful task completion and the user experience).

There are three levels of impact:

* **High –** may prevent the user from completing a task or accessing information
* **Moderate –** might cause the user difficulty but the task could be completed
* **Low –** minor problems that would not significantly affect task completion

Note: the recommendations are numbered based on their order in this report, not by priority.

#### Table 4: Recommendations

| # | Recommendation | Level of Impact |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. |  |  |
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