

From: [Lee, Jennifer Y.](#)
To: [Hicks, Gary](#)
Subject: RE: Informational interview request - web governance
Date: Monday, June 21, 2021 4:23:00 PM

Thank you for your time last week, Gary. I'm sending along the notes (in red) that I took during our informational interview, to give you a chance to clarify, add, or correct anything I may have missed or misunderstood. If you see anything you'd like to clarify or correct, you can do so in-line below with a reply email. Thank you again for your collaboration.

Best,
Jennifer

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Lee, Jennifer Y.
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 4:52 PM
To: Lee, Jennifer Y.; Hicks, Gary
Subject: Informational interview request - web governance
When: Wednesday, June 16, 2021 2:00 PM-2:55 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada).
Where: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Hi Gary,
Thanks for participating in these interviews. I'm sending a list of questions in advance. You do NOT need to answer these beforehand. I just wanted to provide the list of Qs I have asked others in case that might be helpful to you to see in advance.

Not all of the questions may apply to your web comms team and that's okay; we'll capture that as well. I'd like to spend at least the last 15 minutes of our talk for you to freeform discuss anything you'd like to share regarding current web governance activities by your team – what works/doesn't, what's painful, anything that you feel is relevant but isn't captured by the set of standard user interview questions, and any other observations you wish to share.

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Jennifer Lee
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Digital Experience Product Office
Office of the CTO

Web requests

This is comprised of information from both Josh Tuscher on the Web Governance Board and Brad Smelley on the TeamSite Admin team, and they had slightly different understanding.

Background info from GH: Web Gov Board charter is very high level – i.e., setting standards,

documenting policies about standards; not so much about checking, enforcing, or remedying non-compliance.

- Example: wrong branding, bad template.
- Individuals on WGB may sometimes get involved with fixing broken links or non-compliant content, but they generally are doing so as people who care about the site experience (OR possibly as members of their administration's web comms team) , but not as an official or formal responsibility of the Web Gov Board.

Could you validate the behind the scenes steps here?

1. A user submits a web request to Web Ops.
2. The Web Governance Board [GH – clarification: Some members of the board receive the web request, not the whole Web Gov Board group] reviews the request. (WGB assumption by this step that business web comms has reviewed and approved the request details: site folder, URL, internet vs. intranet, etc.)
3. WGB approves/rejects the request.
4. Approved requests are then sent to TeamSite Admin, who implements the request according to the approved web request specs.
5. Approved requests automatically generates a record in the Web Registry, and an auto-generated email is sent to the business POC to verify the information.
6. What happens to requests that are not approved?

TeamSite publishing – when Web Ops review is triggered

Web Ops review is automatically triggered and final publishing step (on server) is paused in these scenarios:

- If there are changes to 80 files or more at once
- If there's an invalid file type

What are the steps that happen to resolve this trigger? N/A

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508 Compliance

- What steps, reviews, or support take place to ensure that web content and uploaded documents are 508-compliant before publication? GH – if not 508, OPIA (and staff offices) doesn't publish it; with rare exceptions, something very highly visible or tied to some kind of deadline may get published, but in those cases, it will be made compliant post-publication.
- What happens when non-508 compliant web pages or uploaded documents are discovered after publication? Take down if document is. Fix if important. Also: depends on the individual it comes to – some individuals are strict wrt 508; while other ppl may be more forgiving/flexible.
- How do teams find out about non-compliant web pages/documents on the website? Manual checks happen before publication because OPIA is responsible for OPIA and staff office pages.
 - But there's only 1 person – Josh – responsible for all the OPIA and staff offices in

addition to his other duties (govdelivery contracts, Vantage Point, etc.); therefore, somewhat burdensome/challenging. It's too much for 1 person. And technically not really his PD.

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Other web standards [Did not have time to cover this topic but somewhat touched upon with other questions.]

Are there any activities or processes that enforce various web standards set by the Web Governance Board?

- For instance, regarding URL standards – like not using underscores – is that manually enforced or automatically prevented (via error message or whatever if someone tries to publish a page with non-standard URL)? GH: applies standards during publication .
- Are there other types of technical operations that help support or enforce compliance of web standards?

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404s, Redirect chains, URLs, meta properties

GH: Usually prevented upstream – before publication -- for OPIA pages. When discovered, message to Josh and Michelle are the usual ways to remedy. Not sure if there's an automated scan or not. Believes outdated info is more common than tech problems like broken links.

- How are broken links and 404 pages identified? Is there a manual or automated process (tests/scans)? On what schedule does it occur, and what happens when broken links/404s are discovered?
- How is it determined that a redirect is needed? How are redirects requested? How are redirects implemented? How is it ensured that loops and excessive chains are prevented?
- How are standardized URL patterns and unique meta titles/meta descriptions enforced? (Is it baked into the frontend templates, in the Web Request form?)
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Intranet vs. Public (external) content [Did not have time to cover this topic.]

- Is there a team or a process that is responsible for ensuring that internal content (like internal meeting PPT decks, minutes, meeting videos, etc.) doesn't get published on the public website?
- What happens when teams publish content that belongs on the intranet on the public VA.gov Internet? Do people report that to Web Ops or to another group? What group is responsible for removing that content from the public site?

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Are the Web Ops web comms activities different for SharePoint vs. WordPress vs. TeamSite vs. custom-built sites? [Did not have time to cover this topic.]

GH General observations:

GH - 2 levels of approval or escalation, per the Charter - hierarchy of approval authority for web requests:

1/ Web comms teams from administrations.

2/ Then WGBBoard

3/ Then final say: Ass't secretaries of OIT and OPIA

Example: custom .net site – WGB recommended va.gov domain; issue escalated to Ass't Sec OPIA. Later flagged as non-compliant but already done – this is also not uncommon: businesses going around approval process - shouldn't but does happen.

There are 2 lanes or roles – IT + Comms (can be fuzzy some cases where individuals are on both sides/have dual roles as members of WGB and a VA web comms team – like JHL and Josh)

With the frequency of content updates that OPIA makes/manages – just not enough IT web support.

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From: Hicks, Gary <Gary.Hicks@va.gov>

Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 4:08 PM

To: Lee, Jennifer Y. <Jennifer.Lee27@va.gov>; Hollenbeck, Lisa A <Lisa.Hollenbeck2@va.gov>;

LaPaglia, James <James.LaPaglia@va.gov>

Cc: Tuscher, Joshua <Joshua.Tuscher@va.gov>

Subject: RE: Informational interview request - web governance

Jen,

Let's see if you and I can connect tomorrow. I should be free from 10 am to 2pm. Otherwise, I can be available all day Wednesday with the exception of 11-12pm for the IT Investment Board meeting.

Sincerely,

Gary Hicks

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From: Lee, Jennifer Y. <Jennifer.Lee27@va.gov>

Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 9:38 AM

To: Hollenbeck, Lisa A <Lisa.Hollenbeck2@va.gov>; LaPaglia, James <James.LaPaglia@va.gov>

Cc: Hicks, Gary <Gary.Hicks@va.gov>; Tuscher, Joshua <Joshua.Tuscher@va.gov>

Subject: RE: Informational interview request - web governance

Hi Lisa,

On Thursday's call, I will be sharing out WIP (work in progress) of research findings. I've yet to speak to representatives on web comms teams, so that'll be shared out later, I hope the following month's session if I'm invited.

I still think an info interview with someone in NCA web comms or digital media would be valuable. As I mention below, I've already had informational interviews with members of Web Ops, TeamSite administration, former Mobile Governance group, and the Web Governance Board (Josh and Michelle in fact).

According to the people who have already been interviewed, it sounds like the majority of the web governance implementation – i.e., making sure that standards are actually used on the website – falls on the business's web comms teams. Because of that, I wanted to make sure that I round out the discovery research with the perspectives of web comms representatives, whether at the

headquarter or field levels.

Let me know if this makes sense and if you, James, or another web comms team member at NCA would be available. I'm talking with folks at the VBA hq web comms team, so it would be nice to get NCA and VHA perspective into the mix as well.

Best,

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Digital Experience Product Office
Office of the CTO

From: Hollenbeck, Lisa A <Lisa.Hollenbeck2@va.gov>
Sent: Friday, June 11, 2021 2:31 PM
To: Lee, Jennifer Y. <Jennifer.Lee27@va.gov>; LaPaglia, James <James.LaPaglia@va.gov>; Hicks, Gary <Gary.Hicks@va.gov>; Tuschler, Joshua <Joshua.Tuschler@va.gov>
Subject: RE: Informational interview request - web governance

Hi Jennifer,

James and I are part of the VA Web Governance Board.

The VA Web Governance Board will be sending you an invite to the meeting next week on Thursday, June 17 at 1 pm, so you can learn how the VA has this set up. If you can't make this month's meeting, I'm sure we can get you on the next meeting.

Glad that we can save you some time, since there is no need to recreate the wheel for VA.gov when there is already an established VA-wide web governance strategy. You'll be able to get the complete information on what you need to get va.gov plugged in.

Thank you for reaching out. Look forward to having you join our meeting this month or in the near future.

Best regards,
Lisa Hollenbeck
Digital Services
National Cemetery Administration
Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovations
202-664-6892

From: Lee, Jennifer Y. <Jennifer.Lee27@va.gov>

Sent: Friday, June 11, 2021 1:30 PM

To: LaPaglia, James <James.LaPaglia@va.gov>; Hollenbeck, Lisa A <Lisa.Hollenbeck2@va.gov>

Subject: Informational interview request - web governance

Good afternoon James and Lisa,

I'm reaching out to you as part of my research into web governance practices at VA. I'm doing this discovery research as part of my responsibility for OCTO-DEPO vis-a-vis creating a governance strategy for the modernized VA.gov site.

Request:

Would you be open to a 1-hour informational interview with me – or alternatively, to assign someone on your digital media/web comms team for me to interview? I would also be open to being connected to a web comms team at the field or program office level to interview, if you're able to connect me to someone there.

Reason for request:

As part of the discovery research, I've interviewed people on various teams including the TeamSite administration IT team, members on the Web Governance Board, and the director of Web Ops. So far, everyone interviewed has said that ultimately web governance is the responsibility of the business's web comms teams. So I'd like to interview actual members of some web comms teams to get their input on what currently happens.

Goal/desired outcome:

I want to make sure that we understand what we're already doing, where we may have opportunities for reducing pain points, and even adapt good things that we may not be doing yet for the modernized VA.gov site. My ultimate goal is not to add more layers of red tape but to have the right balance of policy and actual technically implementable practices that results in the maximum good impact on actual Veteran experiences on the site.

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