

From: [Lee, Jennifer Y.](#)
To: [Heiland-Luedtke, Jennifer](#)
Subject: RE: Informational interview request - web governance
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 2:34:00 PM

Hi Jenny – thank you for your time and participation in the stakeholder/SME research interviews. I’m sending along the notes (in red) that I took during our informational interview, to give you a chance to make sure I understood our conversation similarly. If you see anything you’d like to clarify or correct, you can do so in-line below with a reply email. I also highlighted one question to clarify something where my notes seemed unclear. If I don’t hear from you, I’ll assume I’ve captured things correctly.

Thanks again for your collaboration, as always.

Jennifer

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

Web requests

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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.

Could you validate the behind the scenes steps here?

1. A user submits a web request online system to Web Ops.
2. The ~~Web Governance Board~~ 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.)~~ {Correction: Depending on the administration selected by the requestor, the web request is ‘sent’ in the system to that administration’s web comms team.}

[JHL: Web requests (via the Web Ops form) for a VHA page or site goes to the VHA web comms inbox. VHA web comms reviews the request and details in the system; they will determine whether to approve or not for the web request to be built.

Public page/site request usually takes more direct communication with the VHA web comms team. They’ll consider several factors, such as: Is the request redundant? Are they using non-standard URL – like using all acronyms instead of plain language? It will often go back and forth with an office. The VHA web comms team will also ask about staffing commitment – do they have the resources for maintaining it? How long is your contract? For both TeamSite and non-TeamSite.

For SharePoint – approve; for Intranet – if it’s reasonable (nothing glaringly bad, duplicative, or wrong), will okay. The factors for approving internal things are generally more flexible, forgiving.

After building the page or site: Office comes back before publishing for launch approval; VHA web comms will review the pre-published site. They have 3 levels of issues they look for:

- 1/Show Stoppers – launch blockers
- 2/ Recommended changes
- 3/ Consider but okay if not.

Business must fix show stopper issues and then come back for approval. EX: broking links, images, 508 alt text/tags, non-compliant things. – Rare at this stage of the process, but sometimes.

When a business does a custom site/design: This Involves WGB or Gary Hicks in OPIA for awareness.

- E.g. Veterans Crisis Line site
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 - ES ECCO – for e.g. Veterans Health Library (VA and licensed info) -- for custom sites that have data, application, or system integrations – super hard approval process – different ATO – custom hosting, custom application – this use case is very rare.
3. ~~WGB~~ approves/rejects the request. [JHL: For VHA page or site, it's the VHA web comms team that approves/not.]
 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? [JHL: VHA web comms might reject for example if redundant (more common), no plan for maintaining it (less common)].

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?

[JHL: If file type invalid – like file name has & or other special characters, or invalid file type – we tell the business to fix it. If it's the 80+ files use case, we would advise them to try with 79 – fewer. (This is very rare.) Sometimes do it in batches when needed – like a big site that's publishing for the first time. Or Sometimes, they will just contact the CMS admin support – not because it's their job but bc they're super helpful and responsive and you don't need a ticket to get help from them. Brad, Sandeep, Brett – they are super nice and helpful.]

Why 80? [JHL: Don't know. Maybe old system issue?]

508 Compliance

- What steps, reviews, or support take place to ensure that web content and uploaded documents are 508-compliant before publication? [JHL: As part of the initial review before promotion/publishing, the VHA comms person will review all the pages; also the office ppl can reach out to the VHA comms team in advance for help. The VHA web comms team reserves the right to audit at any time on any VHA site. Uploaded documents depend on the 508 office scans – 508 reports are sent to the site owner.]
- What happens when non-508 compliant web pages or uploaded documents are discovered after publication? [JHL: Web comms tells the business to fix and points them to the 508 office website.]
- How do teams find out about non-compliant web pages/documents on the website? [JHL: 508 office scans. And additional tool: VHA uses Site Improve scans on VHA pages. Some teams can log in to the Site Improve account to see reports for their pages.]

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Other web standards

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

[JHL: audits – few times over the years, VHA web comms has done “digital checkups” ; sometimes focused – like just VAMCS or just a type of program – a subset of VHA sites. This was done usually when they had extra staff support like interns, detailees, contractors – when extra people are available.]

- 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)? [JHL: Not prevented automatically today. History: PDF checker from OIT – e.g., flagged noncompliant.]
- Are there other types of technical operations that help support or enforce compliance of web standards? [JHL: VHA’s Site Improve license and World Space 508 office scans. Would like something to do meta data scans.]

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404s, Redirect chains, URLs, meta properties [Did not have time to cover these – some addressed above]

- 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?)

Intranet vs. Public (external) content [Did not have time to cover these – some addressed above]

- 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 these – some addressed above]

JHL - General comments/concerns/observations:

- There are tech tools like broken link checkers that she has had at other institutions, but they're not available at or used at VA or by OIT. Wish there was more tech commitment and support with tools like these.
 - TeamSite administrative tool/dashboard that shows CMS users and site POCs works really well. Concerned that this will be lost or not available in Drupal. As web comms team, they really need to see who has what.
 - Ownership of sites: health care benefit hub is co-owned – this works today bc of the people and the positive relationship between VHA web comms and the VA.gov content team. Sometimes worries what could happen if the people on the teams change.
 - Concerned about broken fragmented user experience.
 - Digital skills throughout VA is a critical gap. Great need for more ppl w/expertise, more current digital skills.
 - Feels that what OCTO /DEPO has modernized is great but fragile bc it all relies on continued funding, people, and trust.
 - Governance today seems to work today bc of people committed to it vs. system level structures. ← Jenny: Did I capture this right? My notes got kind of messy at this point. Do you remember if you meant governance for VA in general or governance on the modernized pages/products?
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