<Version 2.December 2015>

WEB COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

Policies, procedures, and best practices

CLACKAMAS
C O U N T Y
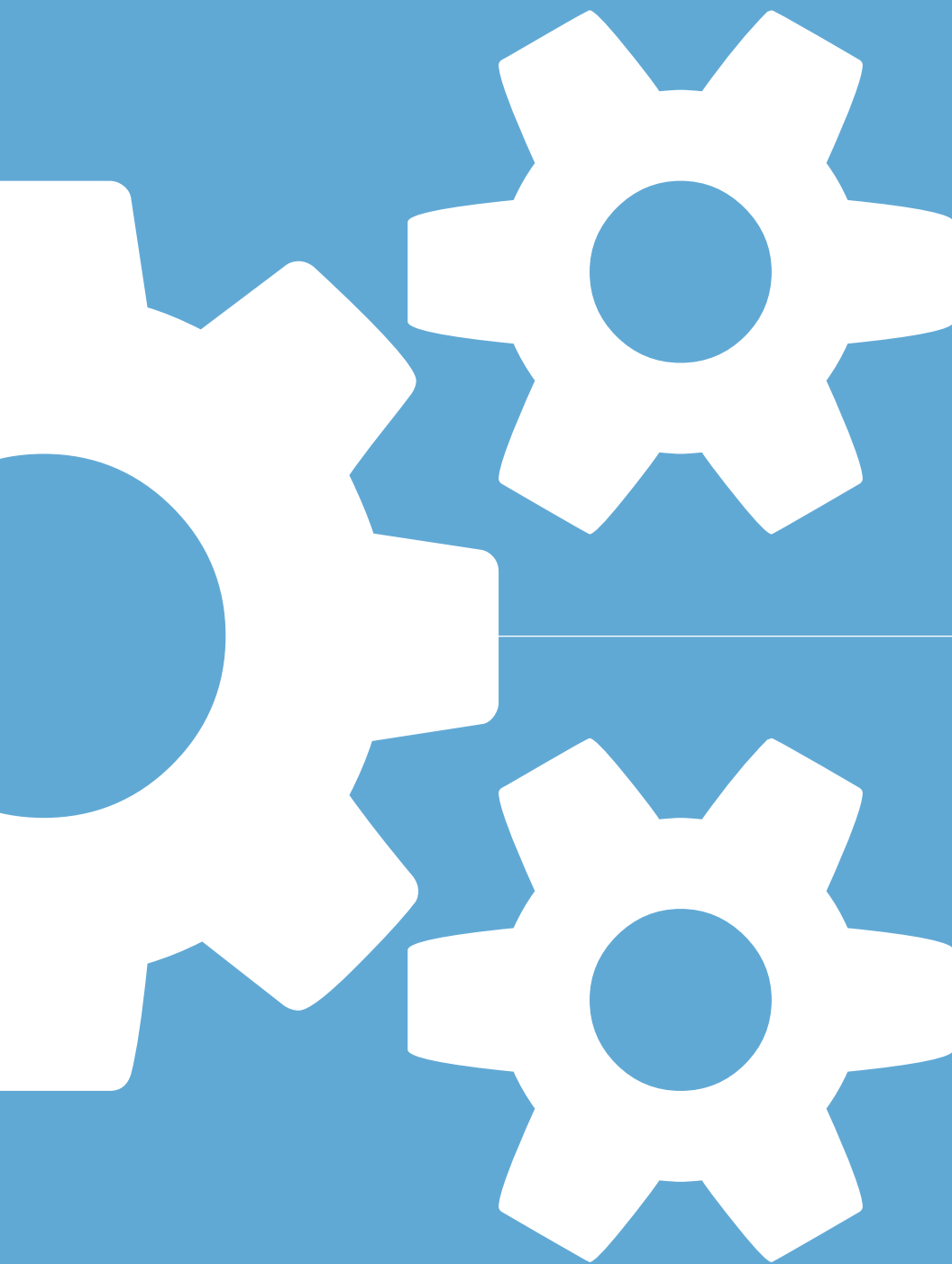
Web Governance Committee

Laurel Butman
Deputy County Administrator

Gary Schmidt
Director, Public & Government Affairs

Dave Cummings
Director, Technology Services

Dave DeVore
Assistant Director, Technology Services

Tim Heider
Public Affairs Manager, Public & Government Affairs

Welcome to our Web Communications Guide.

The Web Communications Guide is designed as a resource for Clackamas County employees to help ensure Clackamas County's website serves the public to the best of our collective abilities.

By following these policies, procedures, and best practices, we can be confident the county website is performing in an efficient manner, providing valuable, timely resources to the public, and offering a consistent user experience across multiple county webpages.

The Clackamas County website is one of our most valuable public resources. Thank you for helping us continually enhance the website for our visitors.

www.clackamas.us

Contents

If you have questions about the Web Communications Guide, please direct them to:

Ryan Johnson
Web Content Editor
Clackamas County Public & Government Affairs
503-742-5916
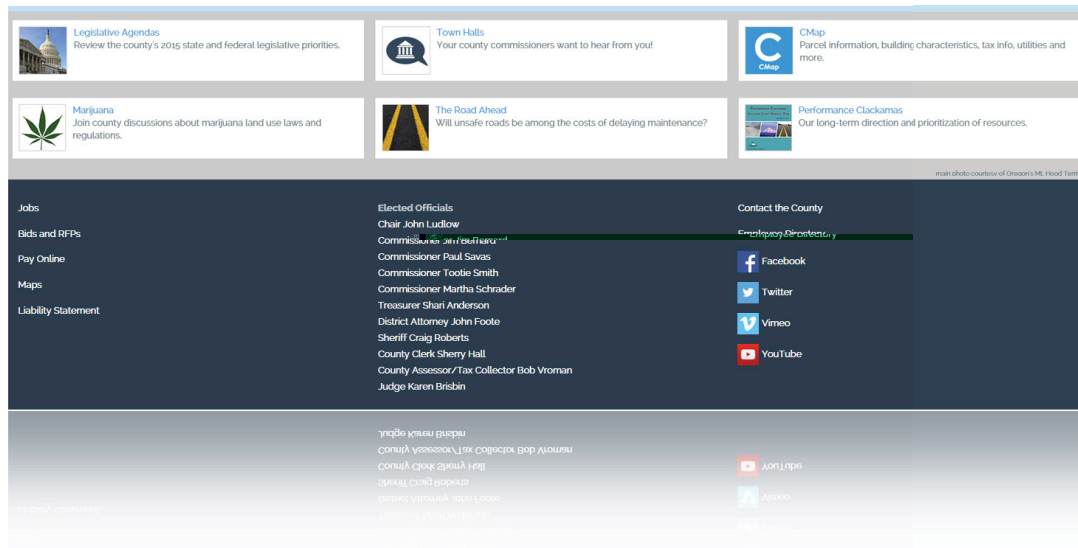rjohnson@clackamas.us

Our website | homepage
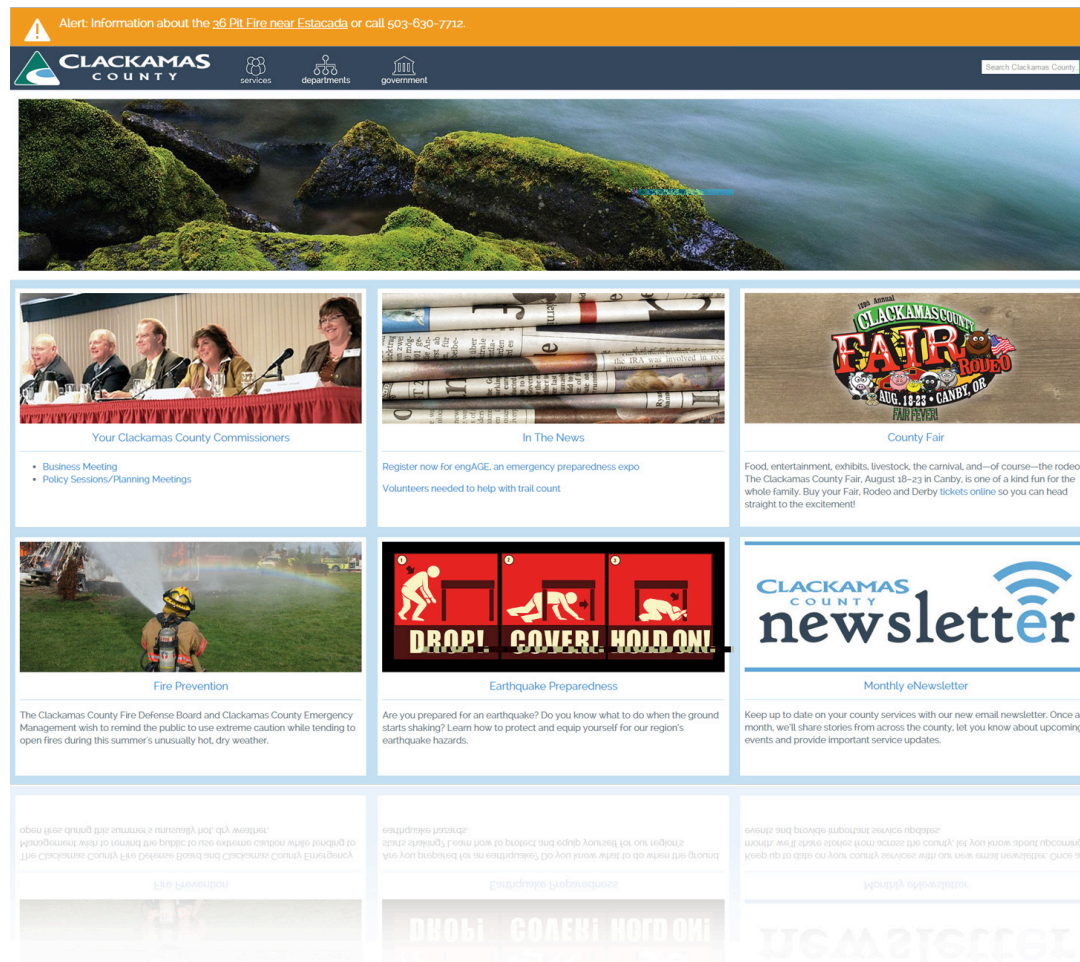
Alert banner

Header

Header image

Rotating features

Long-term initiatives; secondary features

Footer

Legislative Agendas
Review the county's 2015 state and federal legislative priorities.

Town Halls
Your county commissioners want to hear from you!

CMap
Parcel information, building characteristics, tax info, utilities and more.

Marijuana
Join county discussions about marijuana land use laws and regulations.

The Road Ahead
Will unsafe roads be among the costs of delaying maintenance?

Performance Clackamas
Our long-term direction and prioritization of resources.

main photo courtesy of Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory

Jobs

Bids and RFPs

Pay Online

Maps

Liability Statement

Elected Officials
Chair John Ludlow
Commissioner Jim Bernard
Commissioner Paul Savas
Commissioner Tootie Smith
Commissioner Martha Schrader
Treasurer Shari Anderson
District Attorney John Foote
Sheriff Craig Roberts
County Clerk Sherry Hall
County Assessor/Tax Collector Bob Vroman
Judge Karen Brisbin

Contact the County

Employee Directory

Facebook

Twitter

Vimeo

YouTube

Alert banner
For emergencies - appears on every page of website when activated

Header
Highest level navigation and search field - appears on every page

Header image
Rotating images that exemplify "Live, Work, and Play"

Rotating features
Priority events, initiatives, and news

Long-term initiatives; emerging priorities
Long-term priorities, policy initiatives, and other features

Footer
Frequently referenced information and social media - appears on every page

Our audience

Every decision we make regarding the website should be done with our audience in mind.

Who is our primary audience?
The residents and businesses of Clackamas County—our customers—are the primary audience for the county website. All web activity should be conducted to optimize their web experience.

When considering content management and other web-related decisions, we should consider:

→ How does this content serve our customers?

→ Is the format and placement of this content appropriate to the need and volume of our customers?

→ Is the website the best avenue to deliver this message or service?

Who are our secondary audiences?
Our secondary audiences include county partners, both public and private, county employees, prospective employees, the larger business community, the media, and others who visit our website.

In most cases, information and content specific to county staff will be housed on the intranet site (web1.clackamas.us), not on the county website.

What about special service districts?
Special service districts rely on their brand to communicate effectively with customers about their services. The county website will accommodate those brand needs to the extent possible within the context of a consistent county brand presence.

Writing for the web

Our objective is to provide the highest level of service to our customers. One way we can achieve this objective is to employ best practices when writing for the web.

What does our audience want most from our website?

Visitors to the county website don't usually want to read through a large amount of text to find information. When you write for the web, start with the question: what does my audience want to know?

Meet that need by being:
→ concise
→ specific
→ informative
→ clear and to the point

Edit your content to surface the information of key importance to your web users. We respect our website visitors by providing the information they need as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Where to publish

We have a website, so we should publish everything there, right?
Not necessarily. Think about the most effective and most efficient way to deliver your message. We have alternative platforms to get your message out, such as social media and GovDelivery, which may be more effective.

## Don't 'push' content at users, let them 'pull' it.

Publishing everything we produce can overwhelm both our search function and our users. In some cases, it may be best to allow users to request certain documents or other information via the website rather than automatically publish them, particularly if the information is only relevant to a small group. **Think of the website in terms of a phone rather than a file cabinet.** Try to anticipate the tasks your web visitor is trying to achieve and meet that need efficiently through your content and presentation.

Front-load
Put the most important information first.

Web-user eye-tracking studies show that people tend to 'read' a webpage in an 'F' shape pattern, looking across the top, then down the side, reading further across when they find what the need.
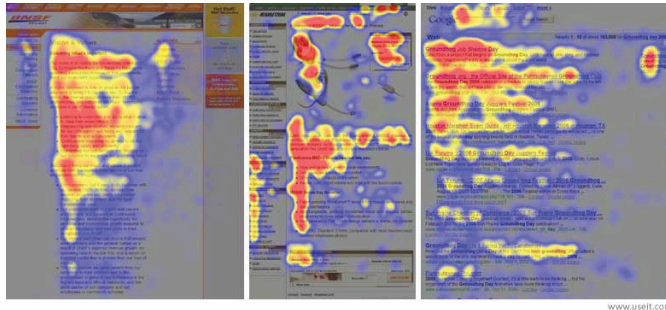
For this reason, put sub-headings, titles, and bullet points up front. Get to your point concisely and immediately.

Break up content into chunks
Use sub-headings, bullets, and short paragraphs to convey your message. This will allow users to review your content quickly and locate the information relevant to them.

Be consistent with tense and verb form when using bullets, with any common information in the preceding sentence.

Improper usage
Clackamas County is:
→ a great place to live
→ a great place to work
→ a great place to play

Proper usage
Clackamas County is a great place to:
→ live
→ work
→ play

Using links
Ensure ADA compliance and increase the readability of your web content by creating web links rather than listing URL addresses.

Improper usage

See our fee schedule at:
http://www.clackamas.us/engineering/
documents/tsdccompleterates.pdf

Proper usage
See our fee schedule.

For email addresses, use mailto: links rather than listing email addresses. If you do need to list the full email address, use the simpler version of the address:

Improper usage
contact@co.clackamas.or.us.

Proper usage
contact@clackamas.us

Avoid "click here" links.
Linked phrases such as click here and more information do not promote accessibility on our website. Use text that is descriptive of the content being linked to. For example:

Improper usage

Click here for a review of this week's board activity.

Proper usage
View a complete board recap from this week.

Avoid lengthy "Welcome" messages
Welcome messages and mission statements distract from the task-centered and service-related content on our web pages.

Mission statements are important for internal staff and the cohesion of an organization working toward a common goal, but the overwhelming majority of web visitors are not coming to our web pages to read mission statements.

Welcome messages and mission statements push down the content our web visitors are coming to our web pages to locate, particularly if they are using phones to access our pages. Even a relatively brief welcome message can push the most important content far down the screen on a phone.

When you write content for the web, consider what task your user is coming to your website to accomplish and provide opportunity to complete that task as early in the process as possible.

Remember your audience

Who are we writing this web content for? To help keep our audience in mind when writing for the web, Whitehorse productions developed user personas for the county during the reimagination of the county website. Personas are representative users who come to our site to complete a task. Keeping them in mind while authoring our web content helps us write more effectively for our audience. View our personas at: tinyurl.com/clackamas-personas

Read more about our web audience on .

Web writing resources

One of the most effective tools for improving your web writing is a free, online application
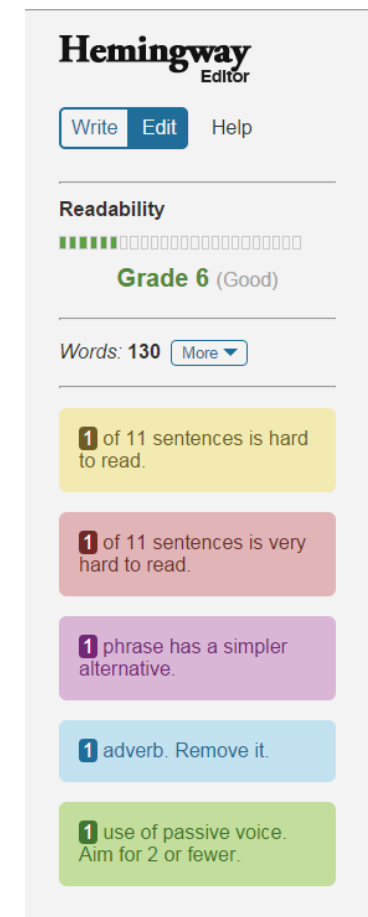
hemingwayapp.com

called Hemingway Editor. This easy-to-use tool will rate your content for readability and give you hints on how to improve your writing by using an active voice, avoiding adverbs, and simplifying your language.

Voice and tone
We have a tendency to use a detached, impersonal and "governmental" tone here at the county. While we are obviously government, the tone of our web writing should be inviting, warm, and personal for our web customers.

Even if the services we are describing are regulatory or compliance-based, we can still convey them in a personal, friendly, and service-oriented way. For example, instead of "the department," use "we" or "us". Rather than a passive voice, such as "You will be notified in three days," say, "We will notify you in three days."

Our style guide
You can find the county style guide as appendix 1 of this document.

Our web font
Our web font is Raleway. This font should be used for all text on the county website.

Website management

This section defines the roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved with designing, managing and updating county websites. The recommended structure separates content updates from presentation issues or service changes.

County websites are created and managed by Technology Services and Public & Government Affairs, in consultation with county department representatives.

Technology Services is responsible for technical support, site and server maintenance, web and application development, and information architecture.

Public & Government Affairs is responsible for content review and management, department content support, policy compliance, and the overall effectiveness of web and digital communications.

The Web Governance Committee, comprised of senior staff from County Administration,

Public & Government Affairs, and Technology Services, advises on the management, policy direction, and ultimate disposition of the website and web-related assets.
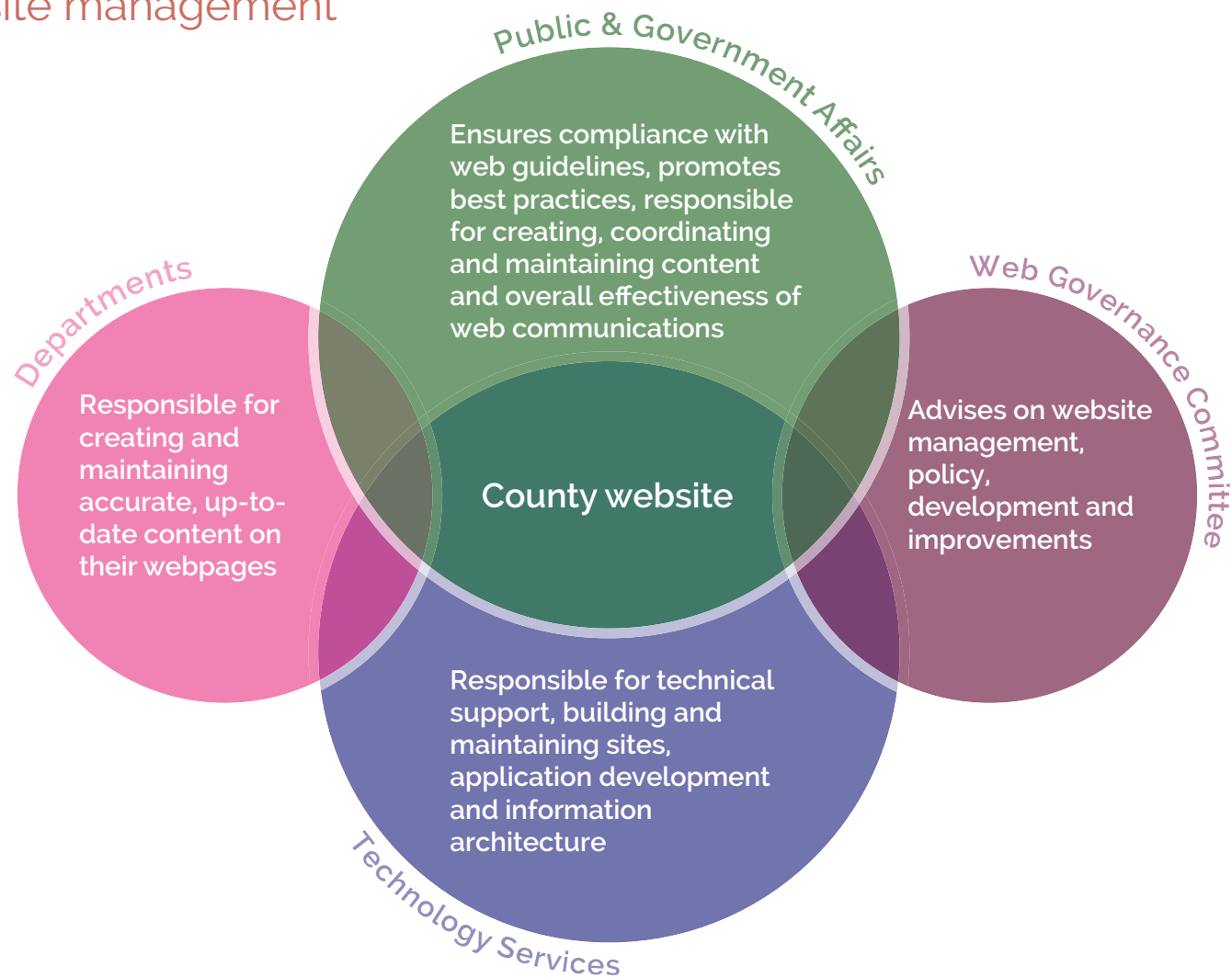
Contact

Public & Government Affairs
clackamas.us/pga
(503) 655-**8751**

Technology Services Call Center
clackamas.us/ts
(503) 655-**8346**

Website management

Public & Government Affairs

Ensures compliance with web guidelines, promotes best practices, responsible for creating, coordinating and maintaining content and overall effectiveness of web communications

Departments

Responsible for creating and maintaining accurate, up-to-date content on their webpages

Web Governance Committee

Advises on website management, policy, development and improvements

County website

Technology Services

Responsible for technical support, building and maintaining sites, application development and information architecture

Roles & responsibilities

Content contributors
Department staff, subject matter experts

Content managers
Department staff who coordinate web updates

Community Relations Specialist
PGA communicators assigned to support department communications

Technology Services
Web Development Team, software and hardware specialists

Web Content Editor
Ensures compliance with web guidelines, manages and reviews content, coordinates web updates with communicators

Public Affairs Manager
Oversees Web Content Editor, ensures strategic and effective delivery of web communications
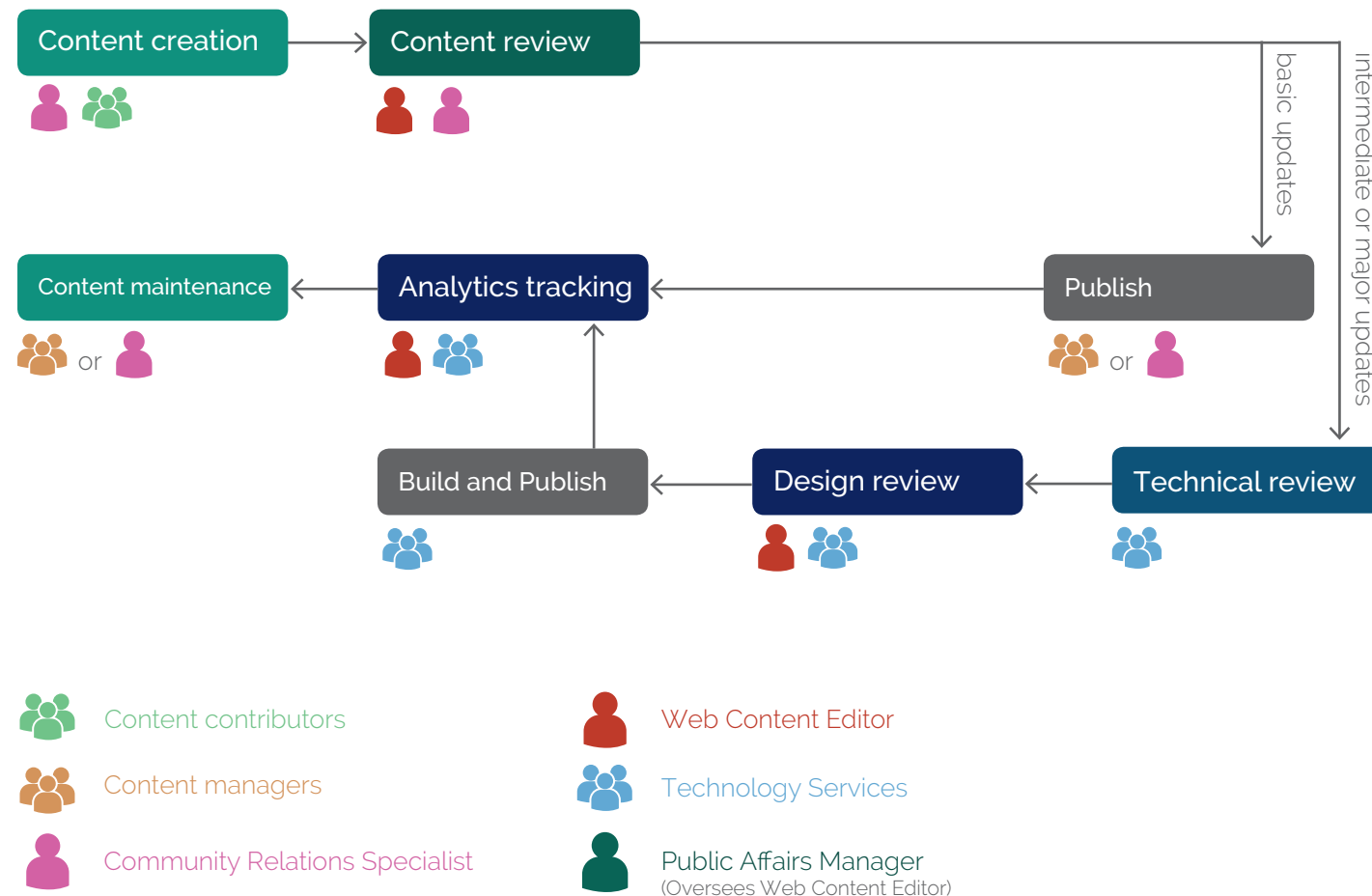
Communications support

Public & Government Affairs (PGA) promotes communication, cooperation and strong connections between county government and county residents, the business community and other government agencies. Feel free to contact PGA to learn more about obtaining communications support for your department.

clackamas.us/pga

Web communications workflow

This is the general web communications workflow. Additional steps may be required depending on content and technical needs. This workflow assumes consistent communication among county staff.

Legend:
- Content contributors
- Content managers
- Community Relations Specialist
- Web Content Editor
- Technology Services
- Public Affairs Manager (Oversees Web Content Editor)

Multimedia content

The effective use of multimedia (photos, graphics, videos, etc.) is extremely important when communicating with our audience via the website.

Images

Images on the website include photos, illustrations, diagrams, icons, buttons, and static maps. County departments are free to choose the images for their respective web pages as long as the images:

→ are relevant to page content

→ are not duplicative or excessive

→ are not inappropriate or offensive

→ are not copyrighted

→ only include individuals who have authorized the use of their image (if applicable)

→ have been credited to source (if applicable)

→ do not advertise a brand or service (some exceptions apply—consult with Public & Government Affairs).

Images should be authentic and honest. We want our images to reflect the spirit of transparency the public expects from us. To that end, here are some best practices for using images on the county website.

1. Avoid stock images when possible

Stock images, while convenient, are inauthentic. Viewers can easily identify a stock image versus an authentic image. Sometimes using a stock image is unavoidable, but it's

best to limit their use whenever possible. Public & Government Affairs and Technology Services are available to help locate and process images.

2. Turn off the date stamp
Sometimes we forget to turn off that pesky date stamp in the bottom corner of the photo.

While the date stamp certainly lends itself to transparency, the resulting images become difficult to work with and lack a professional quality. Be sure to check the settings on your camera before you begin photographing.

3. Do not use images from the Internet
While you may find the perfect photo for your needs through an online search, it's probably copyrighted and lacks authenticity.

4. Do not use heavily modified images
Try to keep images consistent from page to page and avoid using elaborate image effects. Drop shadows, feathered edges, and collages can be distracting and visually overwhelming to website visitors.

Using "alt" text

Alt text (or "alt tag") is a text alternative to an image. Alt text essentially describes an image to users who cannot see the image because of vision impairment or blindness. Alt text is also used by search engines to index images in search results.

It is best to avoid using words such as "image" or "photo" in alt text. Use text that concisely and effectively describes what is actually conveyed in the image itself.

The county's policy is to always use alt text for images to ensure our web content is accessible to users.

5. Use consistent icon and button styles
Technology Services has created a series of icons and buttons for various purposes, including video, documents, ePayment, etc. If your department requires a custom icon or icon set, please submit a web services request form.

6. Use high quality images
Be sure to pay attention to the resolution of photographs (set camera to high quality), cropping, focus, lighting, and the relative size of the image on the page. If you need assistance with editing images, consult Public & Government Affairs or Technology Services for help preparing your images for the website.

7. Do not use animated images
Do not use flashing, blinking or other animated images such as animated GIFs, which can be very distracting and unprofessional. Exceptions may apply in some cases, such as animated charts and graphs. Public & Government Affairs and Technology Services

must approve the use of animation on the county website.

Video
Video is among the county's most compelling communication tools. Public & Government Affairs can help departments visually capture programs, initiatives, projects, and human interest stories to promote county services, share successes, and provide important information.

We encourage departments to use video to communicate programs and services. Video published to the county website:

→ Should be limited to five minutes except for County Commission meetings and events.

→ From external organizations must first be authorized by Public & Government Affairs.
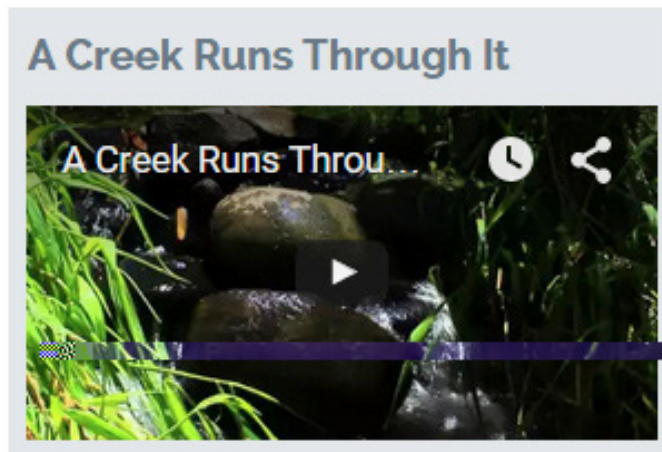
Metadata

So what is metadata anyway?

Metadata is information about web media, such as documents, images, and video, that informs search engines about what the content is. Search engines cannot "read" an image; there is no way for a search engine to know what an image conveys unless metadata tells it what the image is.

Metadata is especially important for images and other media files, but it is also vital to enhance the effectiveness of search for PDF documents.

It is the county's policy to use complete and accurate metadata for all web content.

→ Will be uploaded to YouTube and embedded on appropriate county webpage(s)—except County Commission meetings.

→ Should be accompanied by an image release for any individuals who appear in the video.

A Creek Runs Through It

Embedding content

As a general rule, the county does not permit embedding outside web content on the county website. YouTube and Vimeo are exceptions, as these video services are reliable and facilitate cross-platform and social media integration.

Embedded content—including video—must be approved by the web content editor and the web team at Technology Services.

Blogs
Blogs are not permitted unless approved by Public & Government Affairs.

Our web font
Our web font is Raleway. This font should be used for all text on the county website.

Approved colors for buttons, borders, etc.

Clackamas Blue
hex: #60a9d7
rgb: 96 169 215
cmyk: 56 15 0 6

Wisteria
hex: #8f44ad
rgb: 143 68 173
cmyk: 53 84 0 0

Carrot
hex: #e77e22
rgb: 231 126 34
cmyk: 6 61 100 0

Clackamas Green
hex: #0a7a69
rgb: 10 122 105
cmyk: 72 0 47 43

Pomegranate
hex: #bf3a26
rgb: 191 58 43
cmyk: 18 91 95 7

Pumpkin
hex: #d25400
rgb: 210 84 0
cmyk: 13 80 100 3

Peter River
hex: #3798dc
rgb: 55 152 220
cmyk: 71 28 0 0

Alizarin
hex: #e84c3d
rgb: 232 76 61
cmyk: 3 86 82 1

Wet asphalt
hex: #34495e
rgb: 52 73 94
cmyk: 83 66 43 29

Belize hole
hex: #2a80b8
rgb: 42 128 185
cmyk: 81 42 6 0

Green sea
hex: #17a086
rgb: 23 160 134
cmyk: 80 14 58 1

Midnight Blue
hex: #2de50
rgb: 45 62 80
cmyk: 84 69 47 39

Silver
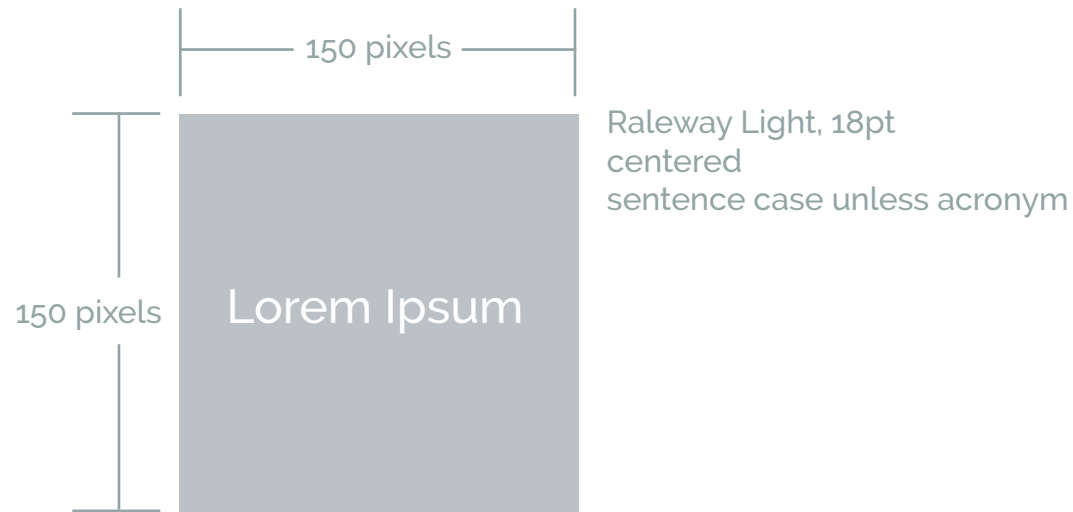hex: #95a4a7
rgb: 149 164 167
cmyk: 44 28 30 1

Emerald
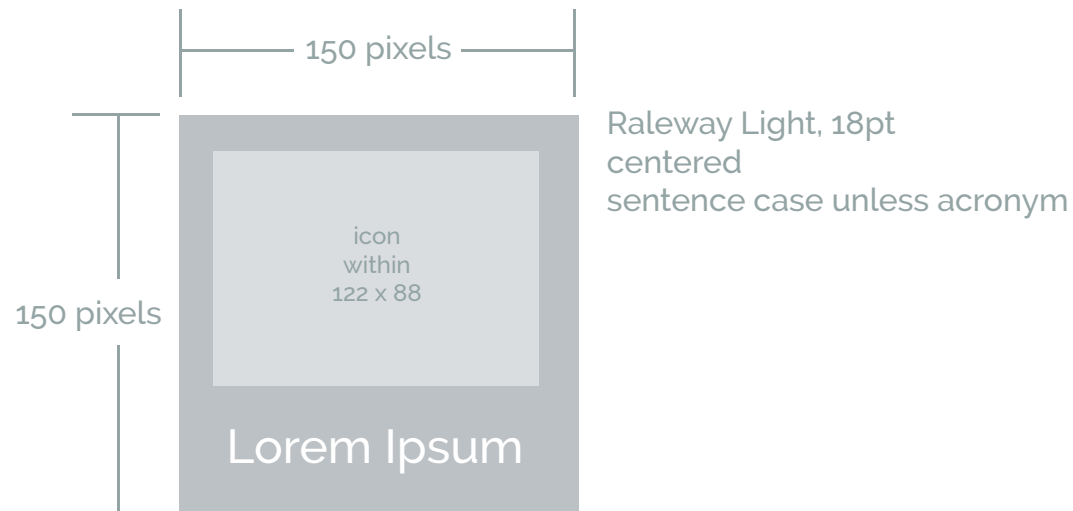hex: #2ecd71
rgb: 46 205 113
cmyk: 68 0 77 0
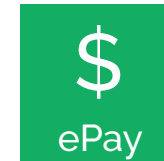
Concrete
hex: #7e8c8d
rgb: 126 140 141
cmyk: 54 37 40 4

Large Buttons

150 pixels

150 pixels
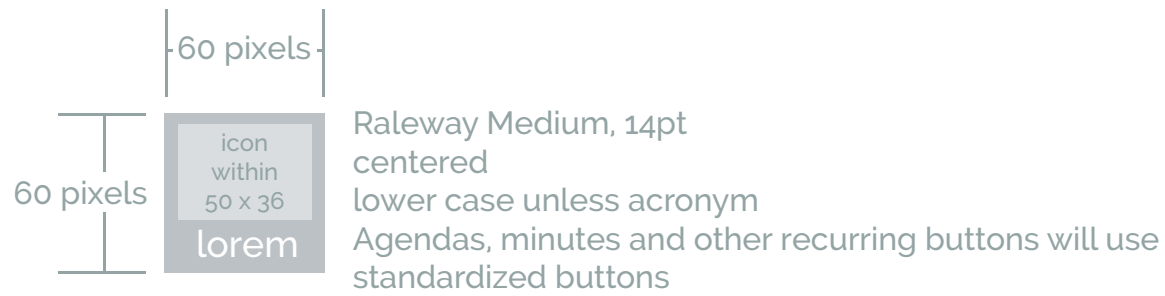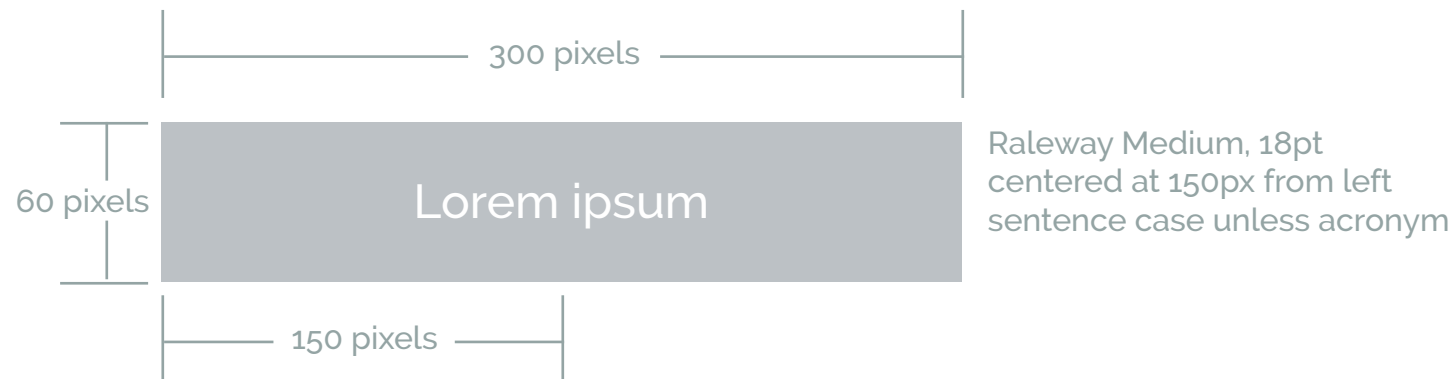
Lorem Ipsum

Raleway Light, 18pt
centered
sentence case unless acronym

Human
Resources

Large Buttons w/ Icon

150 pixels

150 pixels

icon
within
122 x 88

Lorem Ipsum

Raleway Light, 18pt
centered
sentence case unless acronym

Commute
Options

Small Buttons

60 pixels

60 pixels

icon
within
50 x 36
lorem

Raleway Medium, 14pt
centered
lower case unless acronym
Agendas, minutes and other recurring buttons will use
standardized buttons

send tip

$

ePay

Wide Button

300 pixels

60 pixels

Lorem ipsum

Raleway Medium, 18pt
centered at 150px from left
sentence case unless acronym

150 pixels

Wide Button w/ Icon and Description

300 pixels

| icon within 50 x 50 | **Lorem ipsum** Cras aliquam massa ullamcorper sapien |

60 pixels

180 pixels

Raleway Medium, 18pt
Raleway Light, 13pt
centered at 180px from left
sentence case unless acrony

Public Land Corners

Employment Lands
Shovel-ready sites for businesses

Download the application!

?

Consultation
Talk with a professional

Documents

We produce hundreds of documents every week here at Clackamas County, including County Commission meeting packets, agendas, ordinances, permits, applications, bids, RFPs, tables, flyers—the list goes on and on.

Because of the importance of documents to our work, we will always need sound document management and support to enhance the public's ability to locate and interact with the documents they need.

To this end, here are some key points to remember about documents on the web:

→ Microsoft Word documents should rarely, if ever, be posted to the website because of compatibility and formatting problems. Contact Public & Government Affairs or Technology Services if you need assistance converting a Word document to PDF.

→ Scanned documents are **photographs** of the original document, which means the text is neither selectable nor readable by a search engine or audio screen reader. This means they are extremely difficult to search for and **should rarely if ever be used** on the website. Because scanned documents are not accessible to screen readers, they are **not** compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In the rare case a scanned document must be used on the website, it should be processed with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to create selectable text.

→ Documents are difficult to read on a mobile device such as a phone or tablet. Ask yourself if a document format, such as PDF, is the best format for your content on the web. For example, an event flyer may be good for posting in the elevator or coffee shop, but converting the flyer to a web page is more accessible to web visitors and often improves the chances your content will be found by search.

Remember that most PDF documents are meant to be printed or viewed at 8.5" x 11", but people increasingly access web content on their phones, which have much smaller displays than a piece of letter-sized paper.

→ Maintain your documents and webpages! Out-of-date information can be very confusing to the public. Create a schedule for updating information and for removing or replacing documents that are no longer relevant.

Fit for the web?

Keep in mind nearly every county department posts numerous documents to the website. The more documents on the website, the more difficult it can be for the public to find what they are seeking.

Before automatically posting a document to the website, ask yourself if there are other avenues to convey the information, such as GovDelivery or social media. If the document is relevant to only a small segment of the public, perhaps making the document available by request is the best approach. Our goal is to maximize the public's ability to find the information that is most important to them.

URL Addresses

All of the county's official web communication, information, and resources should originate from www.clackamas.us.

Occasionally, departments have unique communication needs to support an initiative or project. In rare cases, custom domains can be procured and used to support these unique situations.

Public & Government Affairs and Technology Services approve requests for new domains based on the need for a custom URL and the strategic deployment of digital communications assets.

Redirect URLs
Redirecting one URL to another can be a handy way to convey visitors to an updated webpage location, however, redirects can create big problems if not used sparingly and wisely. Requests for redirected URLs will only be considered if there is a compelling reason to do so. Requests to redirect one page to another, either from one county

page to another or from a county page to an outside page, must be approved by Public & Government Affairs and Technology Services.

Referencing a URL
When writing a URL, use the shortest version possible. For example, instead of http://www.clackamas.us/pga, use clackamas.us/pga.

References:
Government Digital Service Content style guide. GOV.UK, 2014. Web. https://www.gov.uk/design-principles/style-guide/writing-for-the-web

Clackamas County: Writing for the Web Best Practices. White Horse Productions. 2014.

Jakob Nielsen. How little do users read?. Nielsen Norman Group. 2008. Web. http://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-little-do-users-read/

www.useit.com/alertbox/percent-text-read.html

Icons from www.flaticon.com

Public & Government Affairs is available to support your department with the implementation of this guide.

Together, we can ensure the county's website is providing the maximum benefit to our customers.

Our policies and procedures, like the website itself, will continue to evolve as technology and our county services advance to meet the changing needs of our customers.

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