



## Digital Government Strategies: Good Practices



### Canada: Website Renewal Initiative

The OECD Council adopted on 15 July 2014 the Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies. The Recommendation provides a set of 12 principles structured around 3 pillars. The OECD Secretariat is developing a Digital Government Policy Toolkit to support OECD member countries and non-member adhering countries with the implementation of the Recommendation. This practice was submitted by the government of Canada to be considered as a good practice in the implementation of one or more of the principles contained in the Recommendation.

#### Description of the practice:

<b>Organisation:</b>	Website Renewal, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
<b>Name of the practice:</b>	Website Renewal Initiative
<b>Principles implemented:</b>	<p><u>Principle 1</u> – Ensure greater transparency, openness and inclusiveness of government processes and operations</p> <p><u>Principle 4</u> - Reflect a risk management approach to addressing digital security and privacy issues, and include the adoption of effective and appropriate security measures, so as to increase confidence on government services.</p> <p><u>Principle 7</u> - Establish effective organisational and governance frameworks to coordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government</p> <p><u>Principle 9</u> - Develop clear business cases to sustain the funding and focused implementation of digital technologies projects</p> <p><u>Principle 11</u> - Procure digital technologies based on assessment of existing assets</p>

**Description:** WRI will streamline the Government's web presence by making it easier for all Canadians to find and access information on the web through a single entry point. Canada.ca is designed to and managed to enhance the user experience, optimized for mobile use and supported by more efficient web publishing.



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an original business case was prepared and approved launching the WRI. It was ultimately approved by Cabinet after thorough validation within the public service, including approval from the GC Chief Information Officer (CIO) and TBS Head of Communications, as well as from Deputy Ministers and Ministers at TBS and Service Canada.

Following the completion of several procurements related WRI; the business case was updated to reflect more precise estimates for the original period as well as providing estimates of ongoing operational costs beyond the initial five-year period of operations.

The project is led by TBS, Service Canada (the department mandated to provide access the programs, services, and benefits of the GC and its many partners, whether online, by phone, or in person) and the Privy Council Office (the hub of non-partisan, public service support to the Prime Minister and Cabinet and its decision-making structures).

The Public Service Management Advisory Committee (PSMAC), which is co-chaired by TBS and Service Canada is responsible for direction-setting and strategic decision making in support of the web presence. The Privy Council Office (PCO) and select Departments are represented on this Deputy Minister (DM) Committee.

Within this structure, WRI operates within two governance stream: project and operations: Project governance is charged with defining and directing project activities, while operational governance supports the ongoing web management activities of Service Canada and departments and agencies. Both of these streams have strategic and tactical decision-making bodies that encompass membership from across the GC enterprise, with particular emphasis on key project stakeholders.

### Results

#### **Improved Web Services**

The GC is making it easier for Canadians to find and access government information and services online through the new Canada.ca. The Government is delivering web information that puts the needs of Canadians first. This means organization information based on topics and tasks for which Canadians and others look. Canada.ca is the single entry point into all government information and services and is accessible using any device – desktop, tablet, or smart phone.

Social media is an established way of communication with Canadians is being used more consistently to point users to information and to engage Canadians.

GC websites and social media accounts have been the subject of attacks from increasingly common and sophisticated malicious actors looking to do harm or embarrass official institutions. The Web Renewal Initiative provides a coordinated enterprise response to these risks, allowing the GC to strengthen its defence and response capabilities.



Centres of Expertise: To complement the standardized services being provided by the Principal Publisher, a limited number of institutions would be designated as Centres of Expertise to offer specialized Web services to be leveraged by other institutions on a cost recovery basis. Examples include mobile application development, Web application development, training, video captioning, and the development of accessible Web content. By implementing this approach, only a small number of institutions would need to develop skills in these specialized services, thereby reducing the overall cost to the GC by reducing the need and cost to create and maintain this expertise in all institutions.

This project will be subject to an internal audit and evaluation review. The performance measurement plan was already submitted and approved in principle.

### Development

**Design:** 2013/October – First business case and initial launch of Canada.ca.

Iterative design requirements documentation – progressively elaborating the solution:

- User Experience Brief (initial launch of Canada.ca) – 2013/December
- Canada.ca Content and IA Specification v0.4 – 2014/July
- Canada.ca Content and IA Specification v0.5 – 2014/October
- Canada.ca Content and IA Specification v1.0 – 2015/January
- Canada.ca Content and IA Specification v1.1 – 2015/July

Leveraging the efforts made by the UK and Australian government, Canada was able to benefit from lessons learned and best practices of another national government. In addition, Canada has had a strong web communications and IT community that have worked well together in maintaining a federated internet domain through various major revisions to the look and feel of government websites. The community of web practitioners, and processes in place to discuss, plan and ultimately execute major change has been in place for some time. Leading departments, as well as strong central coordination from TBS and PCO, were able to set the course for the transformation and maintain momentum through the planning phases.

### **Testing:**

- Two rounds of tree testing with end users to validate the Canada.ca IA and navigation models:
  - Topic trees testing for each Canada.ca theme – 2014/July
  - GC-wide tree testing for high level navigation/IA – 2014/September
- Continuous quarterly rounds of usability testing to evaluate various aspects of the Canada.ca product design:
  - Round 1: 2014/September
  - Round 2: 2014/December



- Round 3: 2014/March
- Round 4: 2015/June
- Round 5: not yet complete
- Round 6: planning underway

Both tree testing and usability testing performed with participants drawn from the end-users of Canada.ca.

Various project streams (search, social media, web hosting) conducted different testing activities to validate solutions with users of Canada.ca and the government resources who would manage it in the background. Technical and usability testing was conducted throughout and various phases to keep the project on track and quality was assured. Further, rigorous security controls were in place to strengthen the solution and prevent negative effects of breaches, attacks or other failures. GC security and privacy experts lead accreditations and impact assessments to certify the technical components, and tabletop exercises were carried out to make sure that operational and management processes functioned to support them. Finally, pathfinder departments were onboarded to Canada.ca prior to the major migration to test code and ensure the reliability of the solutions and effectiveness of the migration and onboarding process.

The Canada.ca product design has been tested using the following methods:

- Moderated, task-based usability testing on large, medium and small-screen devices.
- Web-based tree testing using online tools (e.g. Treejack).
- Expert reviews according to standard UX heuristics.
- Analysis of web metrics data.

### **Implementation:**

Web Renewal project included an early launch and rapidly iterated product development for Canada.ca:

- Initial launch of Canada.ca: 2013/December
- Subsequent releases on a quarterly basis through project end

2014/March – Service Canada assumes Principal Publisher role for Canada.ca on departmental infrastructure until launch of the managed web service in Fall of 2015.

Implementation was supported by a unique Canadian technology from the firm Oproma. WRI gained access to the tool through the GC's [Build in Canada Innovation Program](#), which allows government departments to procure and test late-stage innovations, giving the government access to cutting edge technologies and the firm a strong early stage customer to validate the product. The tool is being used to crawl GC web domains to set a scope for the project and has also been used to script



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the migration of content from current infrastructure to new. This will save incredible resources by automating labour intensive processes.

In order to deliver the technology solution, agile development was employed with the vendors. Requirements were gathered through various GC-wide forums, and then a prioritized list of capabilities was created that the vendor could deliver when needed by the project.

From a management perspective, project ownership by all stakeholders was an important approach. Early phases of the project involved small taskings to all 91 departments in scope for WRI, getting them to perform content renovation or respond to surveys. While these provided useful accomplishments to advance the project, they also created buy-in and allowed the project to test engagement across the community. Departments that were not participating were discovered early and mitigations/interventions could take place before the full launch of Canada.ca. Similarly, the concept of theme leads was developed to spread out ownership of the site across the GC, so no one organization was seen as a gatekeeper.

Strong coordination was also critical. Underneath the governance structure for the project and web management in the GC, a number of working groups were struck to involve GC departments in various aspects of the project. Furthermore, project management offices for Service Canada, TBS and Adobe were in constant contact to orchestrate resources in the lead up to and post implementation.

Finally, the notion of phasing has been a helpful management technique to ensure that the project advances in a controlled manner. First, Service Canada launched Canada.ca with their own content. Eventually, a few pathfinder institutions began moving content onto an interim system, which allowed WRI to test migration processes. When the Adobe system goes live, that website will be transferred, using Oproma, and industry best practices are being employed to manage that activity. Following that, we will commence onboarding other departments based on an assessment of readiness that factors in departmental concerns, maturity and technical considerations with the websites in question. This will allow us to practice migration on easier cases before moving to more challenging ones.

Resources: This information is currently protected.

**Diffusion and scaling:** Weekly sharing of results and related discussion with 13 federal departments, who manage 90% of overall Web traffic. Quarterly updates and sharing of results with GC-wide community of Web practitioners.

Training and partnering are being employed to transfer knowledge for how to design, implement and ultimately use the system. We are pursuing a strategy of train-the-trainer, where the vendor will work with key super-users who will then be responsible for bringing others up to speed. This training will be scheduled to align with departmental onboarding so they are given knowledge in concert with the solution's scaling.



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Regarding informing users of Canada.ca, a low key approach is being taken. A tremendous amount of background work has been done to update sites with the look and feel that will exist on the new Canada.ca, and URL and redirect strategies have been implemented to point people from where old content was housed to where new content will be. However, a central premise of the project is that user experience should not suffer as a result of the project. When WRI moves from the interim solution for Canada.ca to the managed web service, GC web visitors should not notice a difference. As more content is migrated, information will be easier to find and more accessible, and that is being ensured through rigorous testing of the site and web analytics tracking, which will allow web managers to refine their plans as Canada.ca grows to over 1 million web pages, hundreds of online applications, etc.

**Partnerships:** Private Sector, Public Sector Organisations

Partners: Leads: TBS, Service Canada, PCO

Private Sector suppliers: Adobe, Amazon, Akamai, Google, Hootsuite, Oproma

Lead public sector stakeholders: Theme lead departments including Canadian Heritage, Industry Canada, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada,

National Defence, Environment Canada, Health Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Public Safety Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, Transport Canada

Nature of partnership: In addition to the three lead departments on this initiative (TBS, Service Canada and the PCO), the GC has contracted with private sector suppliers to deliver an industry-leading web management platform that would be completely beyond the capability of any single GC department to procure or implement on their own. The GC has engaged with Adobe to provide the web management software, and they have in turn partnered with Amazon and Akamai for a resilient, secure and cost-effective infrastructure on which to host Canada.ca. Further users will be able to more easily find information through the GC's partnership with Google to provide a Hosted Internet Search Solution. And a partnership with Hootsuite will allow GC institutions to take advantage of enterprise class social media account management.

To further co-ordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within government. On Canada.ca we established the concept of theme leads. Theme lead departments, listed above, are normally large departments, and act as a lead for a content area, and provide support to smaller or less technically mature departments or organizations.



## Lessons learned

Focusing on change management practices was important. Active stakeholder engagement, strong governance tables and strategic partnerships is facilitating the transition.

Developing a repeatable process and tools managed by a central office is proving to reduce delivery time.

A flexible approach was helpful as the project moved forward. Certain risks materialized and other factors arose that required changing plans or the offering. Due to the pace of the project, systems had to be in place to quickly assess problems, formulate and approve responses, and communicate new direction throughout the enterprise. Consultation was important, but a fine balance between discussion and action was needed.

Conditions required: Central Agency, Senior Management and political support is very important. Understanding the benefits to individual departments and to Canada in general of an updated, user-centric web domain allowed many stakeholder groups to join in the initiative.

Having stakeholders accept the need for change generally allowed the project to gain a critical mass of supporters at the outset.

Solid partnerships with stakeholders and private sector suppliers were also an important condition for the project. All stakeholders were committed to project success because they understood the benefit that the collective would get, but also what individual benefits they would get.

A willingness to try something new was also important. This project represented the first implementation of a public cloud solution in the GC. While 5 or 10 years ago, many in the GC IT community thought there was no place for the public cloud in a government setting, the value offered by this solution was too much to ignore. As industry advanced and public sector thinking matured, the opportunity presented itself to achieve this project. Certain sceptics had to be convinced throughout the project, but generally, the consensus was that this new approach made sense.

Having a strong plan to set the course helped keep the initiative on track and keep the vision clear for all stakeholders. While agility was needed to address particular issues, such as new approaches needed for certain institutions, the overall strategy of creating a user-centric web domain was front and centre and completely accepted by GC leadership and others.

Having the time and space built into the plan to allow controlled failure was also critical. Pilot projects and pathfinders were employed to test approaches and technologies in a low risk, contained environment. This allowed the project to revise approaches and create mitigation plans for when the bulk of the migration and onboarding work was set to begin.



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Additional information: Ensuring that each institution remains accountable to publish their own content has assisted in obtaining client buy-in. Providing industry leading web development tools housed in a cloud has created excitement in the community and has assisted us in developing momentum.