

**SAM – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(California Department of Technology)**

**WEBSITE STANDARDS**  
(Revised 8/2018)

**5190.1**

As part of the Website Standards Policy, Agencies/state entities must incorporate the mandatory website elements identified in this section for all public-facing websites within the CA.GOV domain. These elements include the following requirements: design, accessibility, domain, profile, usability, security, and analytics. See [webstandards.ca.gov](http://webstandards.ca.gov) for standard and web template resources.

**Mandatory Website Elements:**

1. **Design:** Websites shall include a strong brand presence for the State of California and the Agency/state entity. The use of consistent design elements will help promote a standard look-and-feel while also improving the overall user experience.
  - a. **Header** – The header provides a consistent, seamless look-and-feel to the State’s web presence. Key elements of the header shall include:
    - i. **State Branding** – The CA.GOV logo shall be placed in the top left corner of the header area inside a horizontal band that is at least 40 pixels high. The CA.GOV logo must be at least 34 pixels high and contain a hyperlink to the CA.GOV web portal. A hypertext only link is not permitted in place of the hyperlinked graphic logo image.
    - ii. **Agency/state entity Branding** – An Agency/state entity logo must be used for identification. The logo must be clear and contain legible text. When an Agency/state entity logo is not available, the state seal should be used in its place followed by the Agency/state entity title.
    - iii. **Navigation** – Provide a direct link to the most utilized landing pages or services within the website. Ensure link names are clear and concise and accurately represent the destination content. Ensure that the primary and secondary navigational elements are consistent and provides navigation on all webpages throughout the website.
    - iv. **Search** – A search button or hyperlink must be present inside the main navigation or header area.
  - b. **Footer** – The footer must appear at the bottom of all Agency/state entity web pages. Key elements of the footer shall include:
    - i. Link to Agency/state entity’s Privacy Policy specific to the published website.
    - ii. Link to Agency/state entity’s Conditions of Use specific to the published website.

Contact information or link to contact information. Contact information must identify the name of the Agency/state entity that owns the website so there is no question as to which Agency/state entity the user may contact.

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- iii. Online Voter Registration hyperlink to the California Secretary of State's [Online Voter Registration webpage](#).
  - iv. Link to user visible sitemap which presents a systematic hierarchical view of the website. The sitemaps shall be made available to users and search engine crawlers. A user visible sitemap, which presents a systematic hierarchical view of the website, shall be linked in the footer section. A user visible sitemap does not need to contain every page on the website if there are a large number of resources, especially application generated dynamic pages. A system or XML sitemap shall be available and placed into the root folder of the website and should include all of the available links. Sitemaps shall regularly be updated when new pages are published. It is recommended that XML sitemaps be submitted to all major search engines.
  - v. Link to Website Accessibility Certification, see [SAM Section 4833.2](#).
- c. **Content Area** – The content area in the Agency/state entity's homepage provides a space for Agencies/state entities to include program specific content using a variety of elements and layouts. Key elements of the content area shall include:
- i. Agency/state entity's essential programs or digital service offerings targeting California residents, visitors, businesses, and government entities. Digital services include the delivery of digital information (e.g., data or content) and transactional services (e.g., online forms, benefits applications) across a variety of platforms, devices, and delivery mechanisms (e.g., websites, mobile applications, and social media).
  - ii. Link to current Governor's website.
2. **Accessibility:** Per [SAM Section 4833](#), all Agencies/entities are responsible for ensuring their public websites are accessible to people with disabilities. Key elements of web accessibility shall include:
- a. **IT Accessibility Guidelines** - All Agency/State entity websites must comply with web accessibility guidelines defined in [SIMM Section 25](#) IT Accessibility Resource Guide.
  - b. **Accessibility Page** – All Agency/state entity websites must include information regarding accessibility features and resources pertinent to the Agency/state entity website. See [webstandards.ca.gov](http://webstandards.ca.gov) for sample information.

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3. **CA.GOV Domain:** Per [SAM Section 5195](#), web domains occupying the CA.GOV domain zone must comply with domain name requirements, see [SIMM Section 40A](#) for additional information on naming conventions and protocols. Key elements of domain name policy compliance shall include:
  - a. **Domain Name Certification** - All entities that use the CA.GOV web domain are required to annually certify compliance with state and federal policy and guidelines and confirm that domain contact information is current through the CDT [Domain Name Request System](#).
  - b. **Agency/state Entity Profile** - All Agencies/state entities that use the CA.GOV domain are required to annually verify the accuracy of their Agency/state entity profile through the [CDT State Entity Profile Application](#). See [WebStandards.ca.gov](#) for additional information.
  
4. **Usability:** All public facing websites and digital services should be designed around user needs with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions. Agencies/state entities should use qualitative and quantitative data to determine user goals, needs, and behaviors, and continually test websites and digital services to ensure that user needs are addressed. Key elements of usability and user feedback shall include:
  - a. **Responsive Design** - Ensure public websites and digital services are readily available to users on various devices and platforms. Websites must leverage responsive and adaptive capabilities that allow users of mobile devices, of varying sizes, equivalent access to government information and services available to desktop devices.
  - b. **User Feedback** – Leverage user feedback and analytics to prioritize the modernization and optimization of legacy websites and digital services that are most frequently accessed by users.
  - c. **Usability Principles** - Leverage State web usability principles and standards featured at [WebStandards.ca.gov](#) and Federal principles featured at [usability.gov](#).
  
5. **Security:** Agencies/state entities must protect user privacy, data integrity and sensitive information. Key elements of website security shall include:

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6. **Transport Layer Security** - Websites shall, at minimum, use Transport Layer Security (TLS) certificates (formerly referred to as Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificates) that adhere to a minimum Secure Hash Algorithm (SHA) 2 and 2048-bit key encryption. At minimum the full Agency/state entity name shall be provided as the “unit” for TLS certificate purposes. The contact person(s) named in a TLS certificate must be consistent with the contact(s) registered for the domain. Agency/state entities shall verify contacts are consistent as part of the annual Domain Name Certification process, see SAM Section 5195.
  - a. **Extended Validation** - Websites that process, store or transmit financial transactions and/or Personal Information, as defined by Civil Code Section 1798.3, shall use an Extended Validation (EV) TLS certificate.
  
7. **Analytics:** Agencies/state entities must participate in statewide analytics by deploying the statewide analytics tracking code on all public-facing websites. Participation in statewide analytics does not preclude Agency/state entities from using other analytics programs. The statewide analytics tracking code is available at [WebStandards.ca.gov](http://WebStandards.ca.gov).

**Optional Website Elements:**

Agencies/state entities are encouraged, but not required, to include the following elements in the content area of their websites:

1. Governor’s picture/graphical banner near the top of the content area.
2. Agency Secretary and/or State Entity Director’s picture/banner (or equivalent).
3. Essential Services highlighting key information of importance to the Agency/state entity.
4. Tribal Liaison contact information on the contact page.
5. Small Business & Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) Advocate Information on the contact page if applicable.