Consistent User Experience

Web Standard of the Government of the Northwest Territories

Version 1.1

Last Updated: February 14, 2014

Table of Contents

Version History

The versions of the standard and associated toolkit are numbered according to major and minor version. Major versions (e.g. version 1.0, 2.0, 3.0) involve mandatory changes to appearance or significant changes to technical and content standards. Minor versions (e.g. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) involve optional changes to appearance (such as more options, greater flexibility, clarification of ambiguities, etc…), minor changes to technical and content standards or simple fixes (spelling, grammar, bug fixes in the template, etc…).

The standard and associated resources will always be published in a permanently linkable manner – new versions will not overwrite old links, but rather will have new links. This allows developers to control when a new version is adopted.

Developers should always use the latest version of the standard when creating a new site or undertaking a major update of an existing site. Deadlines for the adoption of a particular version will be communicated by the Office of Corporate Communications and Protocol.

#	Date	Author	Notes
1.0	2014-02-03	Curtis Naphan	First published version with input from contractor
1.1	2014-02-14	Curtis Naphan, Erin Mohr	Reformatted standard document. Removed dependency on Twitter Bootstrap. Changed colour pairs to ensure WCAG AAA compliance. Changes to footer.

Introduction

Internet and web communications are a primary vehicle through which Northerners reach the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). It is the policy of the GNWT to ensure that the public is provided with timely, clear and accurate information about government's priorities, policies, programs and services. GNWT websites must be developed in a manner which informs Northerners, provides easy access to information and services encourages two-way communication and improves service performance.

The GNWT and its programs must be able to be easily identified in a clear and consistent way to the public, including websites. It is important to establish a visual consistency between websites in order to help ensure confidence in the information source. Finally, it helps the public in recognizing, accessing and assessing the facilities, programs, services and campaigns provided through the GNWT.

This web standard supports the GNWT's Service Innovation Strategy[1], which seeks to put more government services online. This strategy will improve the online service experience for citizens and helps build public trust in online services, especially those involving personal information and financial transactions.

This document outlines the various graphical, navigational, technical and content standards all that GNWT websites must follow. The degree to which the standards must be applied will vary. For instance, if:

Applicable Websites:

Sites owned by the GNWT (in terms of Intellectual Property)

Sites of GNWT departments, divisions, programs or initiatives

Sites of GNWT boards, agencies, councils or authorities

Sites of GNWT crown corporations

Sites recognizing the GNWT as a primary partner (e.g. by using the GNWT bear logo)

Sites using the gov.nt.ca domain name

Non-applicable websites:

Entities of other jurisdictions (e.g. www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca)

Websites where the GNWT is a secondary partner (e.g. www.spectacularnwt.com)

the website is of an arm's length entity whose appearance of independence from the government must be sustained (such as NWT Courts), or

where partnership recognition or equality makes the GNWT web standards inappropriate or impractical (such as the Protected Areas Strategy website), or

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[1] Read more at http://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/ocio/service-innovation/

there is an instance of a competitive marketplace (e.g. museums and heritage sites) and

there is a need to differentiate from public sector (for revenue generating purposes)

Then *some* of the visual standards and *all* technical and content standards shall be followed. Refer to **Section 2** for a full treatment of the applicability of the standard to various types of websites.

Overview of GNWT Web Standards

The following table is a summary of all standards defined by the Consistent User Experience.

Section	Standard
Visual Standards	1. Every GNWT website will use a common look and feel designed to provide a consistent user experience across GNWT sites. 2. Application of common look and feel will vary depending on the type of site.
Technical Standards	3. GNWT websites and web applications will be developed in such a way as to comply with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) information security management directives. 4. The gov.nt.ca domain name must be used for all GNWT websites. 5. Every page of every GNWT website must include a GNWT-wide search form. 6. GNWT websites must create pages that can be indexed properly by the main GNWT search engine. 7. Every GNWT website will have appropriate HTML titles, descriptions and metadata elements. 8. GNWT websites will adhere to the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and will work on a wide variety of browser platforms and access methods.
Content Standards	9. Every page will link to a standard disclaimer, copyright and privacy statements. 10. Every GNWT website will provide a page with basic contact information. 11. All GNWT departmental sites must include a Newsroom where news releases and other information are made available. 12. Content for employees and links to internal-facing websites are to be kept separate from public content and their audience must be clearly indicated. 13. GNWT websites will provide content in official languages in accordance with the applicable standard. 14. A consistent style will be adopted across all GNWT websites for links, lists and tables.

Part One: Visual Standards

1. Common Look and Feel

Every GNWT website will use a common look and feel designed to provide a consistent user experience across government sites.

1.1 Rationale

People should know that they are on a GNWT website, regardless of how they arrived or which department published it. A consistent look and feel ensures a consistent user experience across GNWT sites – a best practice for government sites. This helps build public trust in GNWT sites, which is especially important for online services and other sensitive transactions. A common look and feel makes sites easier to use, quicker to learn, easier to develop and promotes the GNWT brand.

1.2 Guidelines

The guidelines for this standard are organized into 4 sections: layout elements (global or site-wide standards), header elements, body elements and footer elements. Generally speaking, the layout, header and footer are tightly controlled, while the body is very flexible.

The degree of flexibility depends greatly on the type of site the standard is being applied to. For details on how to apply these rules to various types of websites, consult **Section 2**.

A toolkit has been developed and is accessible on the [Common Web SharePoint site](#)[2]. The toolkit contains resources to help developers adopt the Consistent User Experience within a broad range of development environments.

Toolkit Contents
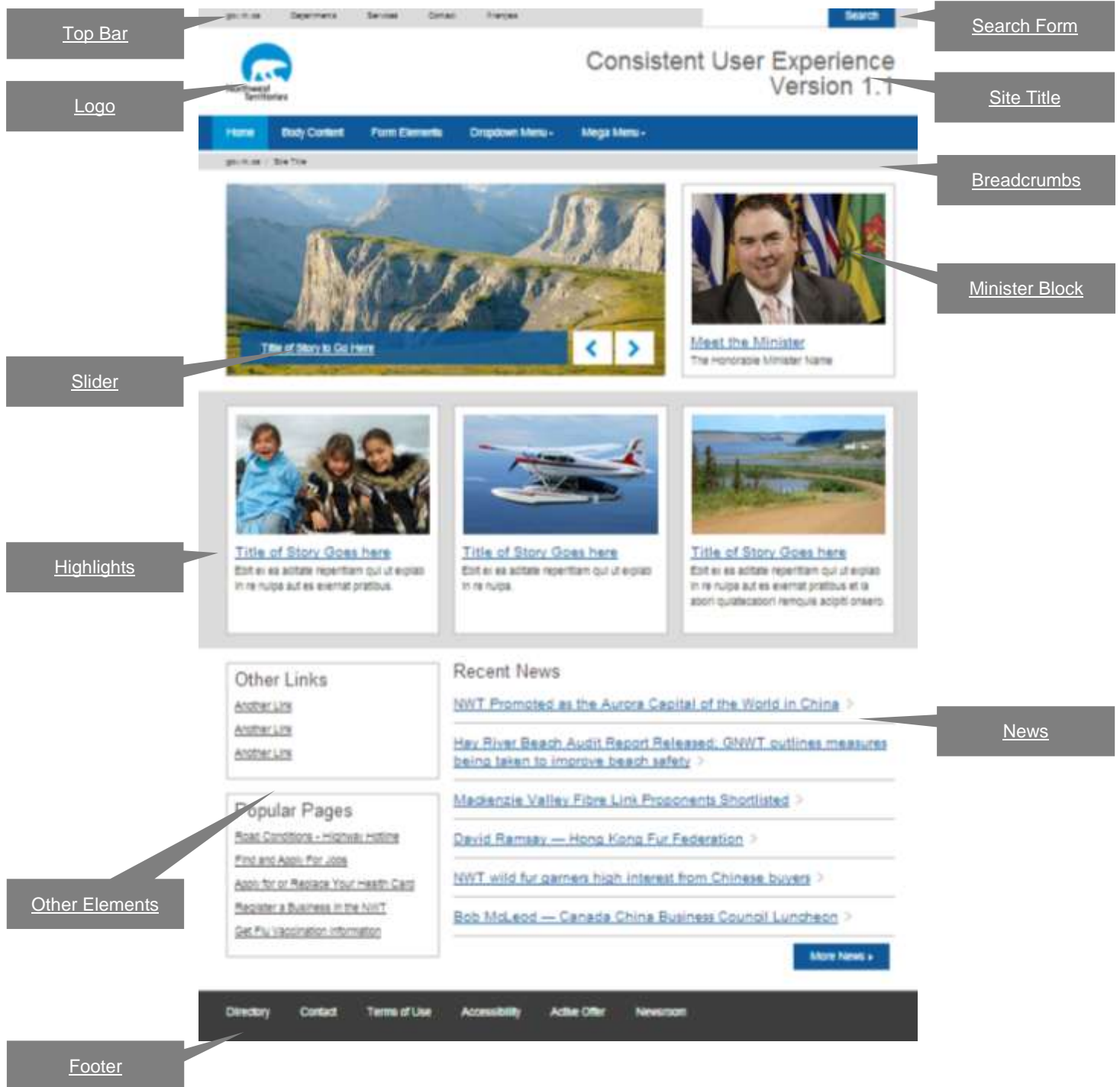
Adoption manual

Cascading stylesheets (CSS)

Graphic image documents

A standard icon set

Sample banners

HTML example

Dreamweaver template

Drupal 7 template

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2 http://our.gnwt.ca/dept/fin/ocio/web/toolkit

1.3 Layout Elements

Layout elements provide the fundamental structure of each page, as well as global rules such as font and colour. They are the building blocks of a consistent user experience. The typical homepage looks like:

Top Bar

Search Form

Logo

Site Title

Breadcrumbs

Minister Block

Slider

Highlights

News

Other Elements

Footer

1.3.1 Page Width

The "page," meaning the wrapper of the main site content, will be fixed-width and centered, and conform to a 960 pixel grid system, but be adaptable following responsive design methods, in order to adjust to varying screen sizes, both in portrait and landscape view.

1.3.2 Wireframe

GNWT websites should use a standard left navigation or a horizontal navigation wireframe. The standard left navigation wireframe places the navigation element to the left of the content element, and the horizontal navigation wireframe places the navigation element above the content element (see diagrams below).

The GNWT webpages follows a 3 column layout, with page elements having either 3 column, 2 or single column widths. The kit provided includes a version dependent on Twitter Bootstrap and a vanilla version with no dependencies.

Interior pages will feature a main section which will include a two-column wide content area, and a right-hand single-column width sidebar, for secondary menus and contextual blocks.

1.3.3 Colours

Website colours are meant to carry forward consistency with the GNWT Visual Identity Program, though the individual colours may vary slightly to accommodate the different needs of onscreen presentation. Hex colour code values are show below. Pantone or CMYK colors are not applicable to the web.
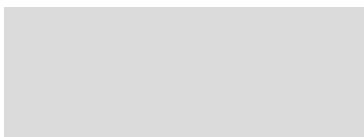
The primary web-safe colours for the GNWT website are:

Dark Blue
HEX #0F599A

Menu, links

Bear Blue
HEX #0190D2

Menu hover, link hover

Light Grey
HEX #DBDBDB

Alternate background

Mid Grey
HEX #BBBBBB

Lines, boxes

Dark Grey
HEX #3E3E3E

Text, headers

All sites must have a white background.

Arial will be the primary sans serif font family for all GNWT sites, and will be used for headings and body copy. A large font is used to establish a clear information hierarchy.

Heading 1 Sample <h1>

font-size: 36px; line-height: 36px; color: #3E3E3E;

Heading 2 Sample <h2>

font-size: 26px; color: #3E3E3E;

Heading 3 Sample <h3>

font-size: 20px; color: #3E3E3E;

Heading 4 Sample <h4>

font-size: 16px; color: #3E3E3E; font-weight: bold; font-style: italic;

Ensure high-contrast colours are always used for text and background. Use **dark gray** for most body text, limiting the use of coloured text for only titles, headlines, highlighted material or links.

Body Text Sample <p>

font-size: 16px; line-height: 1.5px; color: #3E3E3E;

All links not in a styled menu, such as body text, should be displayed in **dark blue** and underlined.

[Link Sample <a>](#)

font-size: 16px; color: # 0190D2; text-decoration: underline;

To denote a quotation or highlight text in a pullout, the text should be displayed *mid grey* and italics should be used.

Blockquote Sample

font-size: 16px; color: # 666666; text-decoration: italic;

1.3.5 Favicon

The "favicon" is the small icon associated with a bookmarked site or browser tab. Using a consistent favicon helps users identify official GNWT websites. The favicon for GNWT sites governed by the Visual Identity Program must be the GNWT bear logo provided in the toolkit.

1.4 Header Elements

The header is the horizontal band across the top of each page. The header is mandatory on all pages and there are only a few options for customization. The header typically looks like:
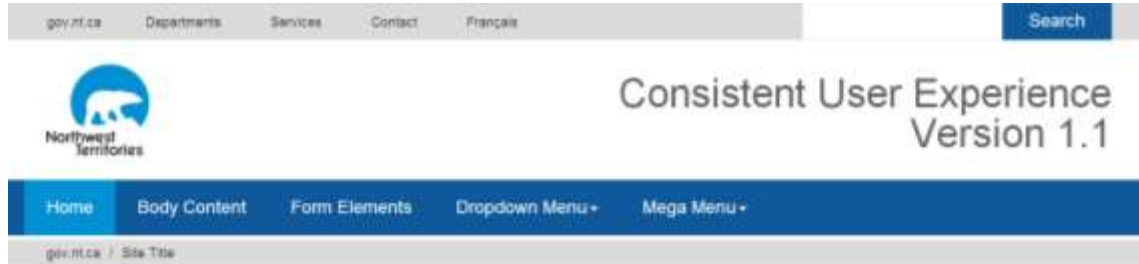
1.4.1 GNWT Top Bar

The top bar is a thin, full-screen bar that contains hyperlinks connecting the site to the broader GNWT network of sites. It also includes language-switching features. This banner must be built into every GNWT department, program and service page. It includes direct access to the main GNWT homepage and access to other department sites.

The first links is titled "gov.nt.ca" and links to the main GNWT website. The link must be highlighted with bold text and or a styled underline.

Link Text	Link URL	Exceptions
gov.nt.ca	http://gov.nt.ca	Arms-length sites may wish to replace this with a link to the site's homepage instead
Departments	http://gov.nt.ca/departments	None
Services	http://services.exec.gov.nt.ca/	None
Contact	Depends on site	None
Language toggle (see Section 13.2.1)	Depends on site	Omit if site is unilingual Use a link if 2 languages supported Use a dropdown box is 3+ languages supported

Example:

1.4.2 Search Tool

The search tool must enable visitors to search the content of the department's website or choose to search all GNWT websites. The search tool must always use the same graphic elements and be located in the GNWT top bar. For standards on how the search must work, see **Section 7**.

1.4.3 Header Logo

The header logo is typically the GNWT bear logo, with no departmental or program text. A scalable vector version of the logo is provided in the **toolkit**, along with a jpg and png version in standard dimensions. The additional text (department or program name) is poorly suited to the web, as it is too small to act as the site title.

An entity with a different official logo may choose to substitute the bear with their own logo.

The logo should link to the site's homepage and the alternate (alt) text should read "Logo of the Government of the Northwest Territories" or equivalent.

1.4.4 Site Name

Every website must include the site title across from the logo. To maintain separation between the logo and site title, the title must be right-aligned. The site title must be hyperlinked to the site's homepage. If the title is so long that it comes too close to the logo, the title can be split into two lines.

Do not include mottos, subtitles or anything other text in the site title. The site title should exclude the words "Department", "Program", "NWT" or equivalents, except where the word is part of the official name. Examples:

> » Department of Finance should be: Finance
> » NWT Species at Risk should be: Species at Risk
> » Choose NWT should be: Choose
> » Services TNO should be: Service TNO (because that's the official name)

1.4.5 Breadcrumbs

All websites must include breadcrumbs on all secondary pages. Breadcrumbs are a website navigation technique used to give the user a way to keep track of their location within each government website.

On all department, program or service pages, the breadcrumb navigation must start with: the GNWT's and the department's homepage. "gov.nt.ca" must be used to identify the GNWT homepage and hyperlink to gov.nt.ca. The department's name must link back to the department's homepage.

Breadcrumbs typically look like:

gov.nt.ca / Site Title

1.4.6 Primary Navigation

Each website must have a consistent primary, text-based, top-level navigation across all pages. The primary navigation must be laid out horizontally and display all main sections of the website. The section titles should divide up the site into logical segments, which might be according to topics, audiences, sectors, features, etc… Dividing a site according to an organizational chart, such as by division, is not recommended.

The primary navigation cannot be more than one row tall. The primary menu is only for top-level items only. According to George A. Miller's studies humans' short term memory can retain only about 5-9 things at one time. This fact is often used as an argument for limiting the number of options in navigation menus to 7, and is known as the Seven, Plus or Minus 2 rule.

The primary navigation can be augmented with dropdown menus and super-menus where necessary. However, the top link should still be clickable. Note that dropdown menus can become confusing if they conflict with secondary navigational elements, so they should be used with great care.

When the user is currently on a page within a section, the section in the menu should be displayed with a highlighted "active" state to show the user where they are.

The first element of the primary navigation should be "Home", which links to the site root page.

The primary navigation should not contain external links, even to other GNWT sites.

Section names should use short, descriptive names. If absolutely necessary, section text can span two lines.

The "Contact" link is placed in the top bar and should not appear in the primary navigation.

The primary navigation typically looks like:

| Home | Body Content | Form Elements | Dropdown Menu ▾ | Mega Menu ▾ |

The dropdown menu typically looks like:

The dropdown mega-menu typically looks like:

1.5 Body Elements

1.5.1 Secondary Navigation

The secondary navigation is the text-based vertical menu within each section that shows an overview of the information found in the current section.

This navigation will assist users with their progression through the multiple levels of the content found within a section. The secondary navigation can have varying levels of depth and can expand to show child items. These levels can be indicated by bullets and font size. The child items can be hidden until the parent item is clicked or hovered over. The current page should always be visible and highlighted to show its "active" state. It is not recommended to nest links more than one level deep (i.e. the initial list of links, each with one set of child links).

Smashing Magazine's 30 Usability Issues to be Aware Of, explains the 3 Click Rule:

> *According to this rule users stop using the site if they aren't able to find the information or access the site feature within 3 mouse clicks. In other words, the rule emphasizes the importance of clear navigation, logical structure and easy-to-follow site hierarchy. In most situations the number of clicks is irrelevant; what is really important is that visitors always know where they are, where they were and where they can go next. Even 10 clicks are OK if users feel that they have a full understanding of how the system works.*

The secondary navigation menu, if used, must always be in the top-left corner of the first column of the wireframe. Other elements can occupy the space beneath the menu, if desired.

1.5.2 Banner Images and Sliders

Either a static banner image or a rotating slider can be used on main homepages to provide a visual focal point. The images used area can be used to highlight a program or service-specific site.

The landing page image/slideshow must span two of three columns. Sliders are recommended to have three items at a time.

Sliders must have buttons to allow for quick navigation and the convenience of finding a desired slide. The slideshow must start automatically but also allow for the user to click through manually. Controls should be placed directly over the slider at the bottom, or on either side (i.e. "Next" and "Previous").

If the slider requires a caption to go with it, the text must overlay on top of the image, on top of a transparency which will allow it be easy to read.

Content pages can also contain a static banner image. On content pages, banners should appear *beneath* the page title, not above.

Graphic design must follow the GNWT Visual Identity Program, where applicable.

The slider typically looks like:

1.5.3 Minister Block

The Minister block is an element used on department homepages to identify the department's minister. It contains the Minister's photo, as well as a link to their official Legislative Assembly page. Additional related links are possible. The Minister widget, if used, should be in the top-right of the last column of the homepage.

Instead of studio posed photos, a dynamic photo of the minister in a natural arrangement is preferred, and landscape dimensions work better for the web.

The Minister Block typically looks like:

1.5.4 Highlight Blocks

The highlight blocks are general purpose elements that can be used to promote an article, feature, initiative, program, website, etc… Unlike news and sliders, highlights are semi-permanent and not dynamically replaced with newer content. A highlight consists of an image, a title, a teaser and a link. They are always a single column in width, and thus a typical page allows for a maximum of three highlights horizontally.

Feature boxes should contain an image or graphic spanning the width of the block, with a height approximately two thirds of the width. The blurb should be limited to 150 characters. The title, image and "Read More" should link to the same address.

The highlights section typically looks like:

1.5.5 News Block

The news block is an element used to display a series of news articles, typically on the departmental homepage. It should occupy the right-most two columns. Each news item consists of just the item title only with a "More News" button in the bottom right of the block. The title link should point to the full article and a "More News" should all point to a page listing all articles.

It is recommended to display between three and five news items.

Other syndicated types of content (such as media advisories, emergency warnings, etc…) do not need to use the news widget.

The news widget typically looks like:
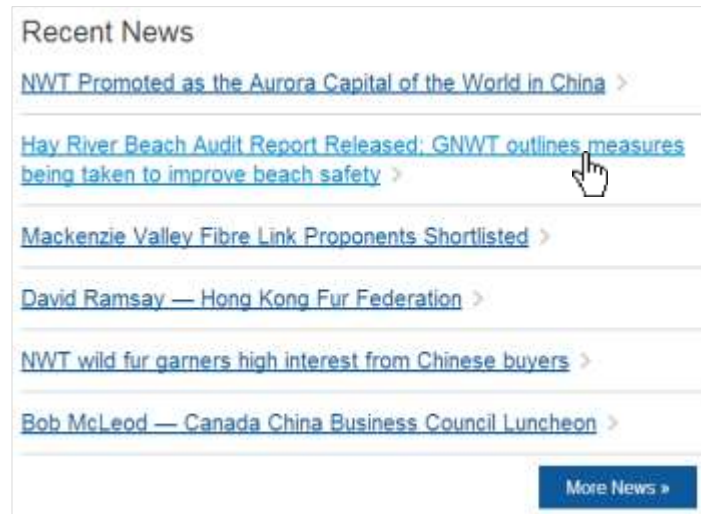
1.5.6 Social Media Bar

The social media bar allows users to quickly share a page on a variety of social networks. When used, it is located at the bottom of the page. It should only be used on relevant sub-pages, such as news pages, program pages and so on.

Flat icons should be used for social media brands, wherever possible.

1.5.7 Other Elements

Other elements can be created, such as Popular Links, Quick Links, Events and so on, using the basic styles provided, including the block outline, header, link and text styles. Example:
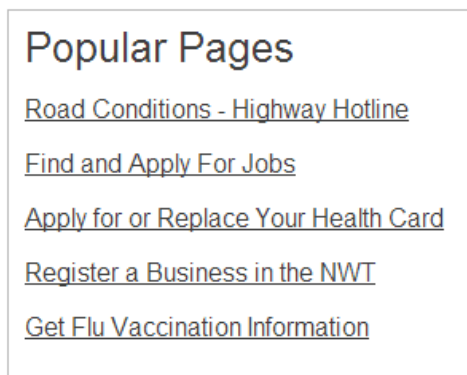
## 1.6 Footer Elements

The footer elements are all mandatory on all types of pages. The footer has two parts. The first part is a standard bar of links that are common to all sites. The second part is customizable by the site, and might include quick links, partner icons, award images, etc... The standard elements of the footer are:

Link Text	Link URL
Phone Directory	http://rdirectory.gov.nt.ca/rDirectory.aspx
Contact (see Section 10)	http://gov.nt.ca/contact or site-specific page
Terms of Use	http://gov.nt.ca/terms or site-specific page
Accessibility (see Section 8.2.2)	http://gov.nt.ca/accessibility or site-specific page
Active Offer (see Section 13)	http://gov.nt.ca/activeoffer or site-specific page
Newsroom (see Section 11)	http://gov.nt.ca/newsroom or site-specific page

The following elements should *not* appear in the customizable area of the footer:

- » A complete navigational structure
- » A "top" link that jumps to the top of the page
- » The search bar
- » The bear logo, unless it does not appear elsewhere
- » Dynamic content such as news

The footer typically looks like:
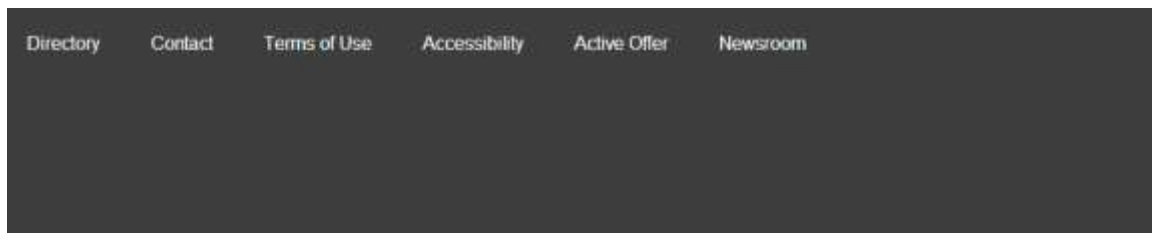
2. Variations for Different Sites

Application of common look and feel will vary depending on the type of site.

2.1 Rationale

The GNWT is a large organization with diverse programs and services. Often, the public is unaware of the extent of these services or the expertise within government departments. Branding all affiliated sites as GNWT sites increases the understanding of the extent of GNWT services. The degree to which the common look and feel is applied will depend on the type of site.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 GNWT Website

Any website that any entity of the GNWT has a role in planning, producing or maintaining. See also the Introduction.

2.2.2 Department Website

The main website for each GNWT department.

    e.g. www.iti.gov.nt.ca

2.2.3 Program Website

A program website is the online presence for an ongoing program or service provided by a department or departments. Divisions, boards, agencies, councils and authorities can also be classified here, unless they are considered an independent agency (see **Section 2.2.6**). Interdepartmental sites are included here. Sites dedicated to a specific function or service (like geomatics or camping registrations) are included here.

    e.g. www.nwtparks.ca, www.statsnwt.ca, www.nwtspeciesatrisk.com

2.2.4 Promotional Site

A website for a promotion, initiative, public service announcement, or instance where there is a competitive marketplace (e.g. museums and heritage sites) and there is a need to differentiate from the public sector.

    e.g. www.comemakeyourmark.ca, www.dontbeabutthead.ca, www.respectyourself.ca

2.2.5 Application

An application is an interactive website. Typically, this means the user can use a service online or perform a transaction online. This may involve personal information or payment transactions. Often, most of the pages of an application are protected through an authentication mechanism (i.e. login screen).

2.2.6 Independent Agency Site

A website for an entity whose appearance of independence from the government must be sustained (e.g. regulators, quasi-judicial entities). This classification should be used *exceptionally* and if there is no need for independence, the site should be classified as a Program website (see **Section 2.2.3** above).

> e.g. www.nwtcourts.ca

2.2.7 Partner Site

Sites where partnership recognition or equality makes the GNWT website common look and feel inappropriate or impractical.

2.3 Guidelines

2.3.1 General

In general, all technical standards should be applied, as these are based on industry best practices. Also, following the GNWT wireframe (placement of main elements) is recommended for all sites, as this wireframe is familiar and has been used successfully by many jurisdictions. Following content standards is also recommended, as most are simple best practices.

2.3.2 Department Websites

Department websites must apply all standards.

2.3.3 Program Websites

Program websites apply all standards, though some sidebar and homepage elements may be omitted, and variations are permitted for the placement of the banner and primary navigation.

2.3.4 Promotional Sites

Promotional websites can pick and choose which visual elements they adopt. Depending on the audience and purpose of the site, immediate identification with the GNWT can be a benefit or a hindrance. For sites where identification with the GNWT is not a hindrance to the purpose of the site, it is strongly recommended that the header, footer, colour palette and wireframe be adopted.

2.3.5 Applications

Applications must use the standard header and footer, if technically feasible. Use of wireframe and stylesheets are recommended, if technically feasible.
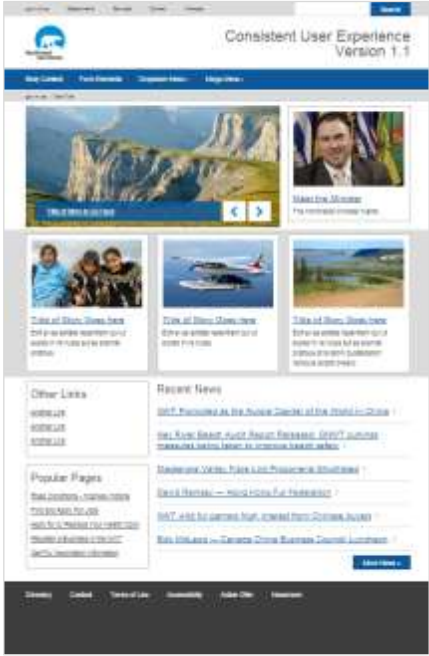
2.3.6 Independent Agency Site
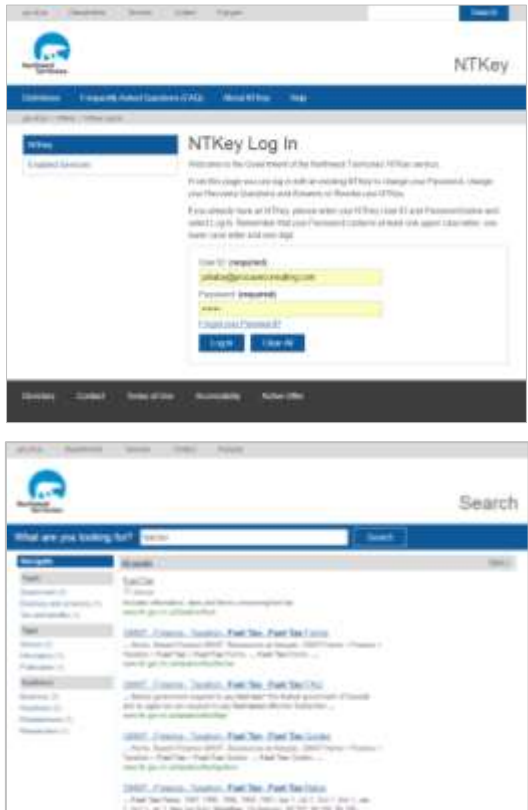
These sites are not required to use the common look and feel standards, although use of the wireframe is recommended. Such sites may still choose adapt the standard header and footer, replacing the GNWT logo, eliminating links to gov.nt.ca, and so on. This approach is preferred to discarding the entire standard altogether.

2.3.7 Partner Site

The GNWT logo should appear in the footer and link back to gov.nt.ca. If the partnership arrangement changes and the GNWT becomes the site's sole owner, the site no longer qualifies as a partner site and one of the above categories' look and feel must be applied.

2.4 Types of Sites

	Department Sites (Section 2.3.2)	Program Sites (Section 2.3.3)
Examples	www.gov.nt.ca www.pws.gov.nt.ca	www.speciesatrisk.com
Follow	All standards Minister on homepage (top-right)	All standards
Thumbnails		
Best Practices	Slider on homepage News on homepage	Slider or banner on homepage
Omit	N/A	Minister's Block (**Section 1.5.3**) News Block (**Section 1.5.5**) Other Elements (**Section 1.5.7**) Primary (**Section 1.4.6**) and Secondary Navigation (**Section 1.5.1**) Newsroom (**Section 11**)

	Promotional Sites (Section 2.3.4)	Applications (Section 2.3.5)
Examples	»	» DOT DMV Online Services, NTKey
Follow	» Technical and content standards » Visual standards are recommended but optional	» All standards » Visual standards are mandatory, except where technically infeasible
Thumbnails		
Best Practices	» Follow header and footer standards » Use three column layout where possible » Secondary navigation on left side	» Follow body standards if possible » Body can stretch to whole screen if needed » Primary navigation can include dynamic elements like e-commerce icons, totals, etc…
Omit		» Minister's Block (**Section 1.5.3**) » Newsroom (**Section 11**)

	Independent Agency Sites (Section 2.3.6)	Partner Sites (Section 2.3.7)
Examples	»	»
Follow	» Technical standards	» Technical standards
Thumbnails		
Best Practices	» Adopt as much of the visual standard as possible to aid users in using GNWT and independent sites » Content standards are generally good practices	» Include GNWT bear logo in footer according Visual Identity Program » Content standards are generally good practices
Omit	» GNWT Bear logo in header » Minister's Block (**Section 1.5.3**) » Newsroom (**Section 11**)	» GNWT Bear logo in header » Minister's Block (**Section 1.5.3**) » Newsroom (**Section 11**)

Part Two: Technical Standards

3. Security Standards

> *GNWT websites and web applications will be developed in such a way as to comply with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) information security management directives.*

3.1 Rationale

Websites and web applications are a common target for hackers and other threats. Private or sensitive information can be leaked through unsecure websites. A compromised website can be used as a staging ground for attacks on other areas of the GNWT network or on other networks.

3.2 Guidelines

The development of websites should be conducted in accordance with good project management and systems implementation methodology, such as the GNWT Systems Implementation Methodology. Two key steps related to the development of websites are:

Threat Risk Assessment (TRA), which helps you to identify the threats that exist for your
website and how you plan to deal with them; and,
Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), which helps you identify how the website will collect, use
and disclose private information.

OCIO staff members are available to help you conduct these exercises. Visit the GNWT Information Security website for more information.

The OCIO also promotes the use of the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP), as a general resource for web application development. The materials produced by OWASP can be used as a basis for developing a testing strategy. For instance, their "Top 10 Vulnerabilities" report can be used as a starting point for a Threat Risk Assessment.

4. URLs and Domain Names

> *The gov.nt.ca domain name must be used for all GNWT websites.*

4.1 Rationale

Research shows that the URL has a strong influence on brand recognition and trust. Users are more likely to click on search results that look official. The domain name of the GNWT is gov.nt.ca. Deviating from this domain name adds unnecessary costs, takes longer to set up, requires annual administration and reduces the strength of the GNWT brand domain name. Users cannot distinguish between government services and private sector services simply by the URL, which leads to lower site visits and potential confusion.

4.2 Guidelines

The gov.nt.ca domain name should be used for all GNWT websites, except where the appearance of independence must be sustained (see **Section 2.2.6 Independent Agency Sites**) or where the GNWT is not the dominant partner (see **Section 2.2.7 Partner Sites**). Prior to 2014, many GNWT websites had their own ".com" and ".ca" URLs. These websites have been grandfathered in. All new websites must follow this standard and existing websites should be retrofitted to adopt the standard at the next logical opportunity.

4.2.1 Creating Sub-domains

Departments, boards, agencies and crown corporations should use a sub-domain under gov.nt.ca (called a 2nd level sub-domain).

    www.departmentname.gov.nt.ca   Example: www.finance.gov.nt.ca

Programs, promotional sites, applications and other sites should use a 3rd-level sub-domain under the responsible department.

    programname.departmentname.gov.nt.ca   Example: tolling.dot.gov.nt.ca

4.2.2 Non-departmental 3rd-level Sub-domains

In rare cases, it is appropriate for non-departmental sites to use a 3rd-level sub-domain, which is typically reserved for departments. Appropriate cases include programs with unique ministerial reporting relationships (e.g. seniors), programs jointly run by more than one department, or corporate initiatives and bodies. All of these domain names are the responsibility of the Press Secretary whose permission must be obtained before one is created.

4.2.3 Non-English Domain Names

The language of the URL should target the primary language of the target demographic. Thus, most URLs in the GNWT should be English. Exceptions would be when the program or service specifically targets other language groups. Hyphenations of multiple languages or different URLs for different languages are not recommended.

4.2.4 Using the "www" Prefix

The standard URL for 2nd and 3rd-level domain names (i.e. departmental sites) must be configured to start with "www". For usability, sites must be configured to work without the "www", as this is very common practice and is expected by users. Where a site's URL must be publicized, it is preferable to include the "www".

4.2.5 Full Words, not Abbreviations

Abbreviations for departments and programs should be avoided, except where the full name is too long for a URL or where the acronym is very well recognized in other media. Acronyms and abbreviations are acceptable if the site title contains multiple words or if the title is over 15 characters.

> Example of bad acronym: fin.gov.nt.ca instead of finance.gov.nt.ca
> - o "fin" is not well recognized and "finance" is not too long
>
> Example of good acronym: ece.gov.nt.ca instead of educationcultureandemployment.gov.nt.ca
> - o "ece" is well recognized and the full name is too long
> - o ece, hss, dot, iti, daair, hr, maca, pws, enr are all acceptable acronyms

4.2.6 The Use of nt.ca

nt.ca is a domain name controlled by the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) and is available to anyone who wishes to use it, public or private sector. nt.ca indicates that the site is territorially located in the Northwest Territories but, unlike gov.nt.ca, is no mark of confidence or trust. However, it is appropriate to use in some cases and preferable to .ca or .com domain names. Appropriate cases are sites for arms-length entities that operate within the Northwest Territories, such as boards, NGOs, airports, crown corporations, aboriginal governments, partner sites, joint GNWT-federal sites, GNWT campaign sites, and so on. Inappropriate cases would be GNWT departments, divisions or programs.

4.2.7 Exceptions for Promotional Sites

Promotional sites (see **Section 2.2.4**) may sometimes require a URL outside of the gov.nt.ca domain, whether for marketing or partnership purposes. Exceptions for promotional sites should only be considered after exhausting every possibility within the gov.nt.ca domain. Appropriate

example might be for sites targeting a Southern audience. However, the domain name should still end in ".ca" - never ".com" or others.

4.2.8 Registering Domain Names

All domain names that point to a GNWT server must be registered by the Technology Service Centre (TSC). This ensures that the government is charged correctly and that the domain name can always be administered. Domain requests and changes must be made through a service call submitted to the TSC Service Desk.

4.2.9 Readable URLs

Wherever possible, URLs should be permanent and human-readable. Dashes or underscores should take the place of spaces. This ensures the URL will work even if the database is re-created and keys are reset, and it improves search engine performance. Users are more likely to favour URLs that make sense to them.

Bad URLs	Good URLs
» /node/13665/ » /forms/index.php?id=9845	» /news/get-your-flu-shot » /forms/change-your-address

5. Search Form

Every page of every GNWT website must include a GNWT-wide search form.

5.1 Rationale

Many users prefer to perform several successive searches rather than navigate a menu structure. Therefore, it is important to ensure that all our pages provide ready access to the GNWT enterprise search function.

5.2 Guidelines

5.2.1 Primary Search Engine

The primary GNWT search engine is the Google Search Appliance (GSA) hosted and supported by the TSC. The search form located on every page must invoke the standard GSA search without any narrowing parameters.

Searching from any given page should bring the user to the following URL where "X" is the search keyword typed in by the user.

English:

```
http://google.gov.nt.ca/search?q=X&client=GNWT_MAIN&output=xml_no
_dtd&proxystylesheet=GNWT_MAIN&site=All_GNWT&getfields=*
```

French:

```
http://google.gov.nt.ca/search?q=X&client=GNWT_MAIN_FR&output=xml
_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=GNWT_MAIN_FR&site=All_GNWT&getfields=*
```

The template provided in the toolkit has a functioning search form that ought to be copied.

5.2.2 Specific Site Collections

If a site requires it, the default search behaviour can be limited to a certain collection. A collection is a list of URLs, which are configured in the search appliance. This can be appropriate for very large or specialized sites, but is not required. To limit the search to a particular collection, replace "site=All_GNWT" in the URL above with "site=X" where X is the name of the collection. When searching on a specific collection, the user will be given the option to broader their search to the entire GNWT.

6. Site Indexing

> *GNWT websites must create pages that can be indexed properly by the main GNWT search engine.*

6.1 Rationale

The GNWT enterprise search engine is an important tool for helping people to quickly and easily locate information across GNWT websites. The GNWT uses the Google Search Appliance (GSA) as its main enterprise search engine.

6.2 Guidelines

6.2.1 Included Sites

All GNWT websites must be crawled by the GNWT enterprise search engine. Even independent agencies are encouraged to register their sites to be crawled, as inclusion in search results does not signify a loss of independence. Ensuring a new site is included by the GNWT search engine is an important step in launching an new site.

To find out more about adding sites to be index, read the article on the Common Web Intranet site.

6.2.2 Excluding Low Value Content

To maximize the effectiveness of search results, the header, menu and footer of pages should be excluded from the search engine crawler. This greatly improves the relevancy of search results and the text snippets. To exclude sections of a webpage from the GNWT search engine crawler, use the googleoff/googleon tags. [Read more](#) about the use of these tags in the Google Search Appliance documentation. Typical example:

<!--googleoff: index-->

```
        This text will be excluded from indexing but <a
        href="follow.htm">any links</a> will be followed.
```

<!--googleon: index-->

Webmasters can also mark certain links (and even whole pages) as "nofollow" to prevent the search engine from indexing too many low value pages. For instance, lists of events, publications, news, etc… are not good search results, so limiting the indexing of them can improve search results. Typical example:

```
<a href="/publications?sort=desc" rel="nofollow">Sort
Descending</a>
```

7. Metadata

Every GNWT website will have appropriate HTML titles, descriptions and metadata elements.

7.1 Rationale

Effectiveness of searching and browsing can be improved through the use of descriptive, consistent metadata. These elements make it possible to search documents that are distributed across many websites with minimal central control. Metadata powers the service-oriented search and browse features of gov.nt.ca. All GNWT websites, even independent agencies, are encouraged to follow this metadata standard.

7.2 Guidelines

7.2.1 Title

All webpages must contain a <TITLE> in the <HEAD> section of the page. It should be a descriptive, subject-based title for that particular page, not the whole site in general. The contents

of <TITLE> are presented in the Title section of the search engine results - otherwise, the file name is used. Also, the title will appear in the list of the visitor's bookmarks and in the browser tab for the page.

Keep the title to less than 70 characters.

Do not use the same title for each page of your website. Whenever possible, HTML titles should be unique.

Avoid using acronyms in webpage titles. The results displayed by search engines may be meaningless to most people.

Place organization name at the end of the title. This ensures the page title is not cut off if too long.

7.2.2 File Names

Webpage file names should be static and chosen manually, if possible. Avoid generic names (index.htm) for all pages, as well as system-generated names (?id=999). This applies to documents, as well. Most modern web content management systems use mechanisms to convert dynamic content into statically-named pages.

7.2.3 Metadata

The GNWT enterprise search engine, as well as many features of gov.nt.ca, are greatly enhanced by the use of HTML metadata. The GNWT standard HTML metadata are based on the [Dublin Core Metadata Initiative](#) - a standard used by many jurisdictions for their websites. The following metadata tags are mandatory on all pages of all GNWT websites.

Field Name	Content	Usage (if given)
dcterms.title	The title of the page. Can be same as <title>. No reference to site or organization.	Used by flagship site to provide short, clean title for page. Service pages especially must have a good, short title.
dcterms.description	The description of the contents of the page. Limit to 160 characters.	Used by flagship site to give a professional description. Service pages must have a short, well-written description.
dcterms.creator	The department (or equivalent) that created (or owns) the page.	Possible future usage.
dcterms.publisher	The government (or equivalent) that created (and owns) the site.	Possible future usage. Default to "Government of the Northwest

		Territories" or French equivalent.
dcterms.subject	The topic of the page, drawn from the list of Common Web topic taxonomy.	Search results are filterable by topic. Service directory is divided by topic.
dcterms.audience	The target audiences of the page, drawn from the Common Web audience taxonomy. Separate audiences by comma.	Search results are filterable by audience. Service directory is divided by audience.
dcterms.type	The type of page, drawn from the Common Webpage type taxonomy.	Filterable in search results. Used to select service pages in Service Directory.

A typical metadata block looks like:

```
<title>The title of the page</title>
<meta name="keywords" content="nwt key words" />
<meta name="description" content="Description of page contents"/>
<meta name="dcterms.title" content="The title of the page"/>
<meta name="dcterms.description" content="Description of page
contents" />
<meta name="dcterms.publisher" content="Government of the
Northwest Territories"/>
<meta name="dcterms.creator" content="Department of Finance" />
<meta name="dcterms.subject" content="Taxes and benefits" />
<meta name="dcterms.audience" content=" Employers,Employees"/>
<meta name="dcterms.type" content="Service"/>
```

The fields "dcterms.subject", "dcterms.audience" and "dcterms.type" use controlled vocabularies, which are published on the Common Web SharePoint site and maintained collaboratively by the GNWT communications community. A site's content management system can be configured to simplify the management of metadata. French language pages must have French language metadata.

8. Accessibility

> *GNWT websites will adhere to the Worldwide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) guidelines and will work on a wide variety of browser platforms and access methods.*

8.1 Rationale

The GNWT has a responsibility to ensure that its web content is available to all citizens, no matter how they need to or choose to access it. Some users are required to use an assistive device to access web content, such as a screen reader or keyboard. Some users prefer to view web content in a certain way, such as with different browsers or with certain preferences enforced (zoom or increased text size). Some prefer browsing with many tabs open and some with only one tab. A wide variety of viewing devices are used, from large monitors to tablets to smartphones. The usability of GNWT websites should not depend on or interfere with any of these choices.

8.2 Guidelines

8.2.1 Web Content Accessibility

The GNWT will make every effort to make its websites accessible and easy to use for everyone, no matter which web browser users choose to use, and whether or not they have any disabilities. Website must also conform to the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0)](#) of the W3C. All pages should comply with AA success criteria.

The GNWT web standard is designed to be accessible. The font size is relatively large by default, few images are used and navigation is simple. Sites based on it are likely to be accessible, as well.

8.2.2 Accessibility Page

Every GNWT website must include an "Accessibility" page, linked in the Footer (see **Section 1.6**). The page should contain:

Instructions on how to resize the text of the site (using the browsers' text size functionality typically)

Instructions on how to print pages from the site, typically using the browser's print functionality

Information on web browser limitations pertaining to the site

Any applications other than a web browser required to view the site content, such as Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash Player, Java and so on.

8.2.3 Browser Accessibility

GNWT websites will work in the following browsers:

Internet Explorer 8.0 and newer (Windows)

Mozilla Firefox (All recent versions on Windows, Mac and Linux)

Google Chrome (All recent versions on Windows, Mac and Linux)

Safari (All recent versions on Mac)

JAWS

Any other web browser that understands valid XHTML and CSS.

Websites must use valid eXtensible HyperText Markup Language (XHTML) 1.0 Transitional and CSS 2.0. It is recommended that accessibility be achieved primarily by designing the site with accessibility concerns in mind. This means keeping things simple and avoiding cutting edge techniques, complicated layouts, animations, effects and so on. The GNWT web standard is designed for a high degree of browser interoperability.

8.2.4 Assistive and Mobile Devices

Websites should support and never interfere with the operations of assistive devices, such as keyboards, touchscreens and screen readers. Tabbing through links, navigating with a touchscreen and scrolling with the keyboard should not be hindered. Websites should not override the preferences of the user, such as preferred fonts and font sizes. Images and tables should be marked up so as to facilitate the use of assistive devices. Technologies, like Adobe Flash, that impede the use of assistive devices should be used sparingly and the content must be otherwise made accessible by providing a transcribed document of the content.

8.2.5 Browser Interaction and Cookies

GNWT websites should interact with the user's web browser in a predictable and non-intrusive way. This means that links should never open new tabs, browser windows or pop-up windows, unless that behaviour is clearly indicated. Links should never use JavaScript to open windows, as this interferes with the user's ability to control browser behaviour. GNWT websites should never install software in the user's browser or automatically save bookmarks.

The use of browser cookies or session variables is not recommended for most GNWT websites, unless they are applications with authentication and complex functionality. Most sites should be stateless, which facilitates bookmarks and link-sharing. Sites that use cookies should explain this behaviour clearly in a privacy statement.

GNWT websites must not use frames, except for in application functionality that requires them (usually iframes).

8.2.6 Low Bandwidth

Bandwidth varies considerably across the North. Some communities have fibre optic internet connections whereas others are on slower satellite connections. It is important to make the GNWT website a good experience for all residents.

A variety of steps can be taken to ensure your site is low bandwidth.

- The most important is to simplify your design as much as possible. Eliminate any unnecessary scripts, images and content. If the user has not asked to see something, do not show it unless there is a very strong case.
- Most website platforms have tools to reduce the size of pages, through compression and simplification techniques. Exploit these wherever possible.
- Uploaded documents should be simplified as much as possible. Consider a low-bandwidth version of media rich documents. Indicate the size of large documents next to the document name, so that the user can judge whether or not it is worthwhile to download the document.
- Images should be saved for web (72 dpi).

8.2.7 Print-friendliness

GNWT websites must provide a printable style using CSS. The printable style should remove the header, footer, navigation, backgrounds and unnecessary images. You should print key pages as a normal part of testing the site, using the native browser print function, and the printed document should be clean, minimalist and professional-looking.

Part Three: Content Standards

9. Terms of Use

Every GNWT webpage will link to a standard disclaimer, copyright and privacy statements.

9.1 Rationale

GNWT websites provide an opportunity for departments and related agencies to disseminate a wide range of materials to the public. It is therefore important to provide direct access on GNWT webpages to statements about the rights, responsibilities and legal obligations of both the information providers and the end-users, with respect to the information that is published on those pages.

This can be accomplished in the form of links to standard government disclaimer, copyright and privacy statements. Using these common notices will make it clear that copyright and other laws apply to all government webpages. As well, people will easily identify information on department websites as belonging to the GNWT. As copyright requirements may vary from one web document to another, the government entities responsible for each website must determine the appropriate use of materials published on their sites. The standard statements that are provided in these guidelines cover the minimum legal requirements; departments and agencies may expand on these to model their own statements after seeking proper counsel from the Department of Justice.

Note: These guidelines do not apply to crown corporations, who must obtain their own legal advice on the rights, responsibilities and legal obligations that apply to the content on their websites.

9.2 Guidelines

The following elements must be part of the Terms of Use page linked in the footer (see **Section 1.6**).

9.2.1 Disclaimer

The disclaimer is an opportunity to set expectations for the user and to protect the GNWT from risk. The disclaimer absolves the GNWT of any legal risk incurred by the website.

9.2.2 Copyright Requirements

Departments and agencies should determine the copyright requirements of web documents before publishing them on their sites. Content with unusual copyright requirements should be clearly indicated.

9.2.3 Privacy Statement

All websites collect a certain amount of information about their users as part of their regular operation. This information, along with other information users may provide through a site, may be used to personally identify users. It's important that all GNWT websites include a privacy statement that clearly details what personal information is collected, how it is used, and that the information is collected in compliance with the _Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPP)_. Pages can link to the general GNWT privacy statement or a site-specific one.

> If the site uses Google Analytics (or similar tool), this should be stated and explained.
> If the site uses cookies, this should be stated and explained. Note that cookies are not recommended for most GNWT websites.
> Any other personal information collected, used or disclosed should be stated and explained.

10. Contact Pages

Every GNWT website must provide a page with basic contact information.

10.1 Rationale

Maintaining an ongoing dialogue between the GNWT and Northerners is essential to providing quality services. Towards this goal, GNWT websites must provide consistent means for users to initiate dialogue, whether through the web or some other means.

10.2 Guidelines

10.2.1 Contact Information Page

Every site must include a contact information page. Every page must link to a contact information page. This link should be in the header (see **Section 1.4.1**) and footer (see **Section 1.6**) and may be linked from elsewhere.

11. Newsroom

> *All GNWT departmental sites must include a newsroom where news releases and other information are made available.*

11.1 Rationale

While the newsroom is open to the public, the information is targeted at the news media for use in reporting on government activities. Over 50% of media visit corporate sites looking for information. Having the information they are looking for in a consistent place will improve usability. Moving this information into a specific place also reduces the content shown to the general public.

11.2 Guidelines

Departmental newsrooms must include the following content. Newsrooms can be structured as one or more pages, depending on the amount of content. Additional content can be added at the department's discretion.

11.2.1 Navigation to Newsroom

At a minimum, a link to the newsroom should be in the site footer (see **Section 1.6**).

11.2.2 Newsroom Content

The newsroom should contain at a minimum:

- News releases, media advisories and event listings pertaining to the department should be available in the newsrooms. Associated news feeds (RSS, Atom, etc…) should be made available here and only here. Media advisories should only appear here, not on the homepage.
- A summary of social media accounts owned by the department should be identified and linked to in the newsroom. While social media links and icons can appear elsewhere on the site where relevant, a complete list should only be in the newsroom, not the homepage.
- A link to the Minister's official biography, contact information and a high-quality image.

12. Internal Content

> *Content for GNWT employees and links to internal-facing websites must be kept separate from public content and their audience must be clearly indicated.*

12.1 Rationale

GNWT websites can and should be used to communicate with and provide service to GNWT employees. While dedicated internal-facing websites like SharePoint are often a better choice for internal content, it is often appropriate or necessary to use a public-facing website. However, caution must be taken to prevent non-employees from being confused by internal content.

12.2 Guidelines

12.2.1 Consider Intranet Tools First

Before putting internal material on the website, consider whether an internal tool like Microsoft SharePoint is a better solution. Reasons to put internal content on a public website might be:

- You need to communicate with employees while travelling or at home;
- You need to provide the information to vendors and contractors;
- You need to communicate with GNWT employees in boards, agencies, corporations, etc…

12.2.2 Separate Content for Employees

Having website content for employees on public-facing websites is fine, so long as it is separate and easily distinguishable from regular content. Consider creating a separate section for employees with separate menus and landing page. All material with an internal audience should go here. This reduces the possibility that the public mistakes internal content for something public.

12.2.3 Linking to Internal-facing Content

Linking from a publicly-accessible page to internal-facing (restricted) content is not recommended for security and usability reasons. If you do, observe the following recommendations:

- Do not mix accessible links with restricted links on one page;
- Link first to a publicly accessible page explaining that the link with take the user to a restricted page;
- Explain clearly next to the link text that the link leads to an internal destination.

13. Official Languages

> *GNWT websites must provide content in official languages in accordance with the applicable standard.*

13.1 Rationale

The Northwest Territories is home to speakers of many languages who have the right to get information and service from the government in the language of their choice. The minimum requirements for language support are dictated by the functional requirements of particular sites, as well as directives from official language authorities in government.

13.2 Guidelines

In addition to references to authorities on official language requirements, these guidelines offer additional guidance on web-specific issues.

13.2.1 Language Detecting and Switching

The default language of a page should be detected from the user's browser setting. No attempt needs to be made to prompt the user to select a language. Users can switch languages using a link (when only 2 languages are supported) or drop-down (when 3 or more languages are supported) located in the Global Navigation.

13.2.2 French Language Requirements

In the GNWT, the authority for French language website requirements is the [Francophone Affairs Secretariat](#). From April 1st, 2014, all GNWT websites must be translated into both English and French. Generally, all content must be translated, including:

    Page text, audio or video material
    Header, footers and menus
    Text in images and alternative text
    Uploaded documents, forms and publications

However, there are exceptions where translation is *not* required. This means that English content can legitimately appear within a French-language page. Exceptions are:

    Sites targeting communities other than French-language "significant demand communities";
    Content for GNWT employees (English-only);
    Content exclusively for aboriginal audiences; and,
    News releases, other than those related to health and public safety.

Examples:

A site targeting Inuvialuit youth	French language not required for whole site.
Information about territory-wide program	French is required.
HR PeopleSoft resources	No French required for employee resources.
Flood warning	French required because public safety involved.

13.2.3 Other Official Language Requirements

The authority for aboriginal official languages is the Official Languages division of ECE. The Official Languages Act and the Official Languages Policy should be consulted when planning the official language requirements for any website.

The recommended approach for supporting aboriginal languages is to embed appropriate aboriginal language resources within the English website. Consideration should be given to non-textual resources, such as audio and video resources, as these are often more beneficial to users and can be easier for translators to produce.

Another option is a full translation of a website into all (or some) aboriginal languages. This is advised when certain conditions are met:

The site is targeting a specific aboriginal language group; or

The quality of translation into the aboriginal language can be comparable to that provided for French (given the quality standards described in **Section 13.2.2**)

It is not recommended to provide aboriginal-language websites that either cannot meet the standards used for French or reduce the content and features of the website. In those cases, it is better to just embed aboriginal-language content as a feature within an English-language site.

13.2.4 Other Internationalization Web Issues

Some websites may choose to use a language-neutral welcome page, before directing the user to the actual homepage, but this is not required. Department sites should not have a welcome page.

Some websites may choose to use non-English URLs and file names, but this is not required.

14. Link, List and Table Style

A consistent style will be adopted across all GNWT websites for links, lists and tables.

14.1 Rationale

Consistent styling of HTML elements creates a clean and professional look to our website. Good style contributes to usability, clarity and readability. Implemented correctly, it also reduces the time and effort needed to produce content for websites.

14.2 Guidelines

The exclusive use of Cascading Stylesheets (CSS) is recommended for styling in order to achieve a consistent and adaptable style across all GNWT sites. It is recommended that you use the default Consistent User Experience styles wherever possible. If they do not meet your needs, it is recommended that

14.2.1 Links to Documents

Links to documents should indicate the file type of the document with an icon or the file type in parentheses. For large files (1 MB or more), the size should be indicated, as well.

14.2.2 External Links

For links to external (non-GNWT) resources, use the external link icon provided in the toolkit or append "(external link)" after the link text.

14.2.3 Lists

It is recommended to use the default bullet style for lists. Example:

- Nulla vulputate laoreet arcu quis ultricies.
- In ac ligula non lorem rhoncus facilisis vitae ac nulla.
- Praesent vitae congue mi, vel adipiscing velit.

    - Sub-item 1
    - Sub-item 2
    - Sub-item 3
    - Sub-item 4

- Nullam hendrerit vestibulum orci, nec congue est tempor in.
- Morbi sed nulla non nulla lobortis imperdiet.

14.2.4 Tables

Tables should be used to display tabular data and not for layout purposes. It is recommended to use the table styles built into the CSS stylesheet.

Example of rendered table:

Heading 1	Heading 2	Heading 3	Heading 4
Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4