

County of Monterey
Web Authoring Policy – DRAFT
Section G: Government and Administration
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About This Policy

Responsible Office: County Administrative Office Communications
Bureau & Information Technology Department (ITD)

1.0 Purpose

The County's web presence is essential to its mission of providing excellence in public service. However, any information published to a web server can potentially be viewed, copied, and redistributed by anyone who accesses it via a web browser. Additionally, this Web Authoring Policy defines the County's position with respect to acceptable and accessible content. The policy addresses the requirements for web content and the development of that content to ensure it is accessible and follows the direction of the County's Board of Supervisors and administration. Thus, the policy seeks to establish standards and guidelines that:

- Support the vision, mission, goals, and public service values of the County.
- Assist county web publishers in developing sites that comply with county policies, rules, and regulations, and all applicable local, state, and federal laws.
- Facilitate the official business of the County and appropriate online transactions while maintaining the necessary level of security and privacy.
- Outline mechanisms for maintaining the integrity and security of confidential/sensitive information that for legitimate business must be stored on or accessed via a web server.

- Define web account creation policies to ensure that only those individuals with proper authorization can publish content to web servers/systems that use an existing or future county domain such as: co.monterey.ca.us and CountyofMonterey.Gov

This policy is not intended as a style guide for the look and feel of web pages, nor does it address areas of web page design or branding. Please refer to the Communications Bureau SharePoint page for guidelines pertaining to county standards for branding. Specific requirements for the proper protection and handling of sensitive and confidential information in any medium by members of the County are described in the County's Data Privacy ([0-25](#)) policy document.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to the County's official website (co.monterey.ca.us and CountyofMonterey.gov), custom applications available to the public, and all public web pages using a county domain. The policy applies to any or all individuals who are responsible for content published on websites in the County's domains, or any/all individuals who are responsible for sending email communications that have embedded Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) within the email communication. Content includes but is not limited to text, layout, hyperlinks, video, audio, and graphics.

County-affiliated sites outside the County's domain using approved the County emblem, popular mark, or copyrighted materials, images, logos, etc.

3.0 Policy

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who have been assigned custodial rights to a department web publishing team are referred to as Web Authors.

Web Authors are responsible for the content of the pages they publish and are expected to comply with the highest standards of quality and responsibility. These responsibilities apply to all publishers, whether they are, departments, bureaus, or programs.

Web Authors that use third-party services/contractors to create content must ensure the materials provided comply with the County's policy standards.

All web content must conform to the County's [Data Privacy Policy](#). Among other things, this means that sensitive county information including, but not limited to, individual records, legal records, or any other confidential or private information may not be displayed on publicly accessible web pages or stored on a web server in unencrypted form.

Web pages may only be published to a server on a county domain using an ITD-authorized user account.

All accounts used for web publishing shall conform to the County's Account Management and Password Management Information Technology Security Policy ([O-60](#)).

Any website or online form that requests a username and password for authentication must do so over a secure sockets layer and transport layer security (SSL/TLS) connection for both the username/password entry and the actual form submission process. See Section 3.7 of this policy for more details.

A website's home page should clearly identify the department or unit responsible for its creation and maintenance. Any sub-pages linked from the site's home page should contain similar information.

3.1 Departmental Web Pages

Non-county web servers that are not supported by the County's ITD that are maintained and operated department's lead by an elected are subject to all county policies regarding server configuration, security, account management, accessibility, and content.

3.2 Accessibility

Accessibility standards, Browser and Mobile Website templates and web content must be compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) at the industry standard conformance level of the current adopted version of the guidelines as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as the County is a recipient of federal funds ([County Policy P-130, pg. 2](#)).

Web pages/applications and all content must be easily rendered by a wide variety of web browsers and devices. It is not appropriate to include "Best viewed with..." messages. Page layout and content must not be designed solely for the use of one browser/device.

Department managers should contact County Counsel if they have questions or concerns. This Accessibility Statement seeks to make programs and services, including electronic and information technology, accessible to people with disabilities. In accordance with the provisions of Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA, the County provides customers, staff, and community members with reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to its programs and activities.

Individuals with disabilities should contact the County's Civil Rights Office for assistance:

civilrights@co.monterey.ca.us
Telephone: 831-755-5117
TDD/TTY: 831-755-5349

Employees or members of the public having difficulty accessing a web page should be directed to the respective county webmaster by e-mail at:

webmaster@co.monterey.ca.us

and be directed to include their contact information in the email:

- Name
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Technical information regarding operating system (PC, Macintosh, Linux, etc.), browser version, any adaptive software used, and address of the website (URL) in question and describe the problem in accessing the page.

Standard Layout Template

To provide the community with consistency in site navigation and the flow of content for departmental websites, the County Communications Bureau and the ITD web team will develop a set of standard layout templates following the vision of the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and Senior Management. Departments are required to design their websites in these uniform layouts. However, departments will be able to select their own color themes and widget components to effectively present their information following the

[Branding Policy and Accessibility](#) guidelines. Redesign wireframes/mockups should be presented to the County Communications Director for review and approval.

Temporary exceptions due to recent efforts of redesigning and launching their new website. Redesigns for exempt websites will need to be reviewed and approved by the County Communications Director.

Document and Attachments

- (1) All documents on the County's website must meet accessibility standards. Documents that fail to pass the accessibility test will be included in the monthly Web Author report. Web Authors should work with their department(s) to ensure documents uploaded meet accessibility standards.
- (2) Outdated documents and portable document formats (PDFs) three years or older must be removed from the County's website and archived on either a platform or a county local/cloud storage. Documents should be retained following the corresponding department's record retention policy. Archived documents will be available to the public through an official public records request.
- (3) Whenever possible, create web pages instead of PDF documents as they can meet accessibility and [Title VI](#) of the Civil Rights Act compliance.

Images

- (1) Avoid using images of text. Text should be part of the page content; to allow assistive technologies to read the text, the text to be enlarged, or the color to be changed.
- (2) All images must have an alternative description (alt text). These descriptions should give meaning to the image to allow those using assistive technologies to understand the context. Heavy text images make it difficult for individuals who may use assistive technologies since it limits what is read from the alt text field.

Video and Audio

- (1) Provide text alternatives to audio and/or video, such as closed captioning or transcripts.
 - (a) A captioned video is accessible to individuals that are hearing impaired as it makes the video full-text searchable. Captions allow services with translation artificial intelligence (AI) to

automatically translate to other languages during playback. Captions can be used to generate an interactive transcript.

- (b) Providing a transcript for video and audio assists individuals with both hearing and vision disabilities and those with low internet bandwidth to access the content. Video hosting platforms may have the option to download the captions to use as a transcript.
- (c) Provide the option for users to turn on/off audio and visual content, such as using a video hosting platform.

Structure

Provide organized and structured content to ensure users will find the information they need.

Page hierarchy

Pages should be clearly titled with each header, sub-header, and section visually distinguishable from the main text. This method of organization should be consistent between all pages within the site.

- (1) Headers and sub-headers should be clearly defined as such in the source code (h1, h2, h3, etc.), as screen readers rely on this identification to scan through the major sections and contents of each page.

3.3 Quality Assurance

- (1) Web Authors are responsible for content freshness and accuracy. Web pages should be reviewed at least once a year to ensure the content is still relevant and up to date.
- (2) Web pages should not contain broken links. A monthly report from ITD is sent to Web Authors letting them know if there are broken links on their pages. As SMEs, Web Authors should review the link(s) and update as needed or submit a ticket with the new link(s) to ITD support for assistance.
- (3) Content should not include misspellings. A monthly report is sent from ITD to Web Authors letting them know if there are misspellings on their pages. Web Authors should review the term(s) and update or submit a ticket with the correct term(s) to ITD support for assistance.

3.4 Language Access and Effective Communication

All web content (pages, images, videos, documents, etc.) must comply with the County's Policy [P-130](#) Language Access and Effective Communication by offering a bilingual option to their content for the second most spoken language in the community, presently Spanish.

The Civil Rights Office will conduct routine audits to ensure departments are Title VI compliant.

All documents translated using machine-generated tools must be reviewed by a department SME to validate the content for accuracy.

3.5 County Calendar

All departments are required to post public meetings to the public-facing County Calendar on the main County Website, regardless of having their own procured event management solution. The County Calendar should not be used to post confidential meetings where the public is not allowed to participate.

3.6 Copyright

All web publishers are required to respect the intellectual and creative property rights of others and comply with all applicable policies and guidelines for fair use of copyrighted materials.

Adhering to guidelines, policies, and procedures outlined in this document- Copyrighted Material Requirement Intellectual property and copyrighted material are prohibited on County websites without approval of the originator or copyright holder. However, when using or duplicating information from the private sector under "fair use" provisions as part of an information resource, product, or service, the bureau or department must ensure that the property rights of the private sector source are adequately protected.

These protections apply to any material posted to public websites, such as stories, documents, graphics, or audio files. Department managers and/or County Counsel must review content to determine if the material is subject to copyright laws. A copyright is a law that gives the owner of a written document, musical composition, book, picture, or other creative work, the right to decide what other people can do with it. A work can only be used, reprinted, or posted online if the owner of the copyright gives permission. Departments that receive permission to

use copyrighted material are required to securely file the notice and be able to produce confirmation when requested by County Counsel. Department managers should review the relevant laws and regulations to ensure that their website meets the full range of requirements.

3.7 Online Forms and Transactional Web Pages

Various bureaus, departments, and administrative units have a legitimate need to collect and process information using online forms and transactional web pages. The following rules apply to any online form or transactional web page, whether it is hosted on an operated web server, bureau, or departmental web server.

Individual (personal) web pages may not be used to gather personally identifiable information (PII) such as passwords, social security numbers, home addresses, or any other PII as defined by applicable state, federal, and local laws.

Bureaus, departments, and administrative units needing to gather PII may only do so using web forms or transaction systems that have been provided by ITD for this purpose or have been evaluated by ITD for security and privacy compliance.

Any online form or transactional website must clearly state on the site what will be done with the information collected and provide a link to the County's [Data Privacy policy](#).

All transactional websites must comply with county policies regarding server configuration, security, account management, and content.

Online forms and transactional websites should only collect the minimum amount of information that is required to complete the form or transaction.

Where possible, users must be given the option of not identifying themselves. Clearly state who is collecting the information and provide context so that users are aware of why it is being collected.

Use and disclose personal information only for the primary purpose for which it was collected, and in accordance with the County's [Information Technology Data Privacy](#) policy.

3.8 Linking

Links referenced on all county websites must serve the mission of the County. Sharing links solely to draw attention to goods and services is prohibited.

External links that navigate the user to external resources where the link is to an external domain that falls out of the defined scope (i.e., anything other than a county domain such as: `co.monterey.ca.us` and `CountyofMonterey.Gov`, must be communicated to the user by means of informing that the link is to an external website and that County is not responsible for the content of the said resource. The user must also be informed of the name of the website and the purpose of the external link. External linking to payment processing providers must not include any unique data within the URL.

Internal links referencing resources where the link is to a domain that falls in the defined scope (i.e., any site suffix ending in: `co.monterey.ca.us` and `CountyofMonterey.Gov`, must not include circular references (i.e., links that redirect the user back to the same location from which they came).

3.9 Prohibited Content

Since hosting and web services are drawn from county funds, content on all web pages falls under the jurisdiction of the County. Any information found on the County's domain as defined in the "Section 2.0 Scope" of this document, must comply with existing county policies, and with domestic and international law. Web content that, by word or image, falls under the following criteria is prohibited. This list includes, but is not limited to:

- Displays or promotes pornographic or offensive or obscene material.
- Promotes violence, or the use of weapons, alcohol, or illegal drugs.
- Contains abusive or threatening language or imagery that targets individuals or groups.
- Contains personalized attacks.
- Ridicules or promotes stereotypes, discrimination, intolerance, or hostility towards any race, sex, color, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, creed, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, or citizenship.
- Publishes information, the purpose of which is to cause harm, or which would reasonably be known to cause harm.

4.0 Web Consistency

The following guidelines acknowledge the importance of the web for open communication and public service activity, while also recognizing that users have the responsibility to use these resources in an efficient, ethical, and legal manner. Bureaus and department website content should present a clear image of programs, services, and general information; therefore, official web pages must undergo the same professional scrutiny and careful preparation given to any other official publication. Web Authors are responsible for the content of published pages and are expected to comply with the highest standards of quality and responsibility. The guidelines below are to assist Web Authors in maintaining and developing professional and consistent pages.

The County Communications Bureau serves as an active participant in web development and is responsible for:

- Developing and enforcing web guidelines, policies, and procedures
- Working with Web Authors to ensure that websites and pages comply with appropriate policies, branding, and standards as well as applicable legal requirements
- Facilitating website change review procedures
- Ensuring a consistent look and feel throughout the County's website
- Ensuring consistent navigation throughout the County's website
- Conferring with department managers to ensure web content has been reviewed and meets their approval process
- Managing department photo release filings
- Consulting with the assigned Web Author or county web team for any technical issues or questions

5.0 Web Author Roles and Responsibilities

Anyone responsible for website maintenance is responsible to ensure:

- Content delivered meets accessibility standard that support all mainstream internet browsers
- Content that does not infringe upon copyright laws
- Content is not duplicated across multiple sites and/or pages
- Links embedded adhere to the content linking policy
- Content does not contain prohibited material
- Content complies with the relevant privacy acts

Departments sending communication or directing users to third-party websites must ensure:

- That URL links to third-party websites are redirected via a county URL first, such as (co.monterey.ca.us/redirectpath).
- Email communications that contain embedded links must be redirected via a County URL first, such as coMRY.us/health

6.0 Compliance

Non-compliance with this Policy may result in disciplinary action following existing Human Resources processes.

7.0 Contacts

- Information Technology Department, Webmaster
- County Communications Director
- County Counsel's Office, Deputy County Counsel
- Civil Rights Office, Director

8.0 Links to Related Policies

The County policies are located as follows:

[BOARD POLICY MANUAL | Monterey County, CA](https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-administrative-office/budget-analysis/county-policies/board-policy-manual)

URL: <https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-administrative-office/budget-analysis/county-policies/board-policy-manual>

The related policies include:

- [Monterey County Values and Guiding Principles](#)
- Email Use – [Information Technology Appropriate Use \(0-20\)](#)
- [County of Monterey Branding Guidelines & Policies](#)
- [Social Media Policy and Style Guide](#)
- [Communications & Public Relations Guidelines](#)
- [Language Access and Effective Communication Policy](#) (Title VI)