U.S. Department of Defense Chief Information Officer

Annual Report on the Progress to Implement the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act, Public Law 115-336

Prepared for the Office of Management and Budget and the public per the requirements of section 3(d) of Public Law 115-336

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1 Background

Section 3(d) of Public Law 115-336, the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (21st Century IDEA) requires the head of each Federal executive agency to report annually (through 2023) to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the public on the agency's progress towards implementing the requirements of the Act regarding website modernization.

This report summarizes the 2022 efforts of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to improve DoD website modernization and meet requirements therein of the 21st Century IDEA.

1.1 Sec. 3. Website Modernization – Implementation Activities

1.1.1 Web Enterprise Business (WEB)

The Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ATSD(PA)) promulgated responsibility to the Defense Media Activity (DMA) on June 15, 2021, through a Directive-type Memo (DTM)[1] for the establishment and responsbility of DoD website modernization. The DoD Defense Media Activity (DMA) consolidates policy, management, and governance of the Department's public-facing website hosting service to leverage enterprise-level purchasing power and efficient business operations, and make secure, compliant content available to the DoD and public.

Establishment of the Web Enterprise Business (WEB) as the DoD's centrally managed enterprise-wide service provides a common framework across the DoD to enable the Department to comply with the requirements of the 21st Century IDEA. DMA has developed a future-leaning strategy and guiding principles for the WEB program, and is conducting impact analysis, research on technology, business process, and best practices to solicit feedback on the vision of the WEB program for incorporation into the program's strategic plan. This includes collaboration with other DoD Components and industry via a Request for Information published October 28, 2022.

In addition, DMA collaborated with the Office within the General Services Administration (GSA) 18F, which is a Federal-wide technology and design consultancy. GSA's 18F provided an external assessment of the current WEB program, and DMA has taken actions in alignment with recommendations in the areas of planning, technical approach, and manpower.

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[1] https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dtm/DTM-21-001.PDF

DMA maintains the existing American Forces Public Information Management System (AFPIMS) content management system, servicing 990+ public-facing DoD websites – which includes an eight percent growth in sites serviced in 2022. The increase shows that AFPIMS continues to grow in terms of number of websites, number of customers, and public usage. DMA is working to identify the total number of in-scope public-facing websites across the Department for future aggregation and WEB administration.

DoD Instruction (DoDI) 8170.01, "Online Information Management and Electronic Messaging," January 2, 2019, as amended – directs DoD personnel to ensure that public DoD websites are operated in compliance with the laws and requirements cited in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-17-06, "Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites and Digital Services," November 8, 2016, which include secure connections (HTTPS), and analytics & user feedback.

WEB offers performance tracking via the SiteGauge web statistics analysis program as a means for webhosting customers to analyze statistics for their respective website(s). Additionally, DoDI 8170.01 directs the implementation of the Digital Analytics Program (DAP) code on all public DoD websites in accordance with OMB Memorandum M-17-06.

DMA is seeking to implement a new next generation platform to facilitate modernized, cloud-based public website capabilities for DoD, which are compliant with 508 accessibility and scale to meet 21st Century IDEA requirements out-of-the-box. Further, DMA is conducting research to pilot, implement, and migrate to a cloud-based platform that re-envisions public websites, shifting focus from a simple content management system to Content-as-a-Service, using artificial intelligence and omni-channel content distribution to ensure public DoD content reaches intended audiences without cyber risk. A dedicated team has been established to work on enhancing the WEB program, to include the addition of two highly qualified experts (HQE's) – one tasked with analyzing and developing a new cost model, which will make the program a "fee for service" self-sustaining in future years; and the other to focus on customer experience and to facilitate transformation of the existing AFPIMS platform to a cloud-based solution.
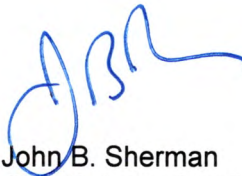
1.1.2   Progress in 2022

- DoD continues to make significant progress in the area of Section 508 accessibility compliance – specifically, in regards to the accessibility of public facing websites. The Department tested the Military Services' site in Calendar Year (CY) 2021 and CY 2022, and remediated many accessibility barriers within the AFPIMS framework, increasing significant overall conformance and standards.

    o Section 508 testing and remediation efforts are ongoing, with the total number of on-staff Trusted Testers within the Department Reported Trusted Testers increasing from four in February 2020 to 63 in August 2022.

    o The Department tested approximately 170K+ public facing pages over the periods of August 2021 to August 2022, with an overall conformance level exceeding 90% as of August 2022.

    o DoD recently entered into an agreement with GSA to, for the first time, scan .mil

website domains for accessibility conformance; with over 1,000 public facing websites now enrolled in the scanning program.

- o DMA implemented a new Section 508 open-source scanning webservice and dashboarding tool used by designers and developers to display and track accessibility issues. Within the past six months, with use of this tool, the team was able to bring development issues on flagship sites down by 20% (over 500 issues eliminated). The team is continuing to use this tool in conjunction with previously established testing to better identify compliance issues.

- o DoD has put increased emphasis on Department-wide performance in making electronic documents accessible, focused on those that are posted in the public domain as well as those that are widely distributed internally. DoD has conducted broad-based accessible document training and briefings, and has distributed numerous resources on how to make electronic documents conformant with Section 508 standards.

The Department continues to assess the most cost efficient and cyber resilient ways forward to meet the requirements of the 21st Century IDEA Act and remains committed to continuously modernize to improve the digital experience for DoD customers.

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Department of Defense