

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

15 September 2016

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2016-____

FOR : HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS, BUREAUS, OFFICES AND AGENCIES OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND -CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS, INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATIONS, PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS, STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES; LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS, CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES AND ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT : ACCESSIBILITY RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL (NGP) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (DICT)

Section 1. ADOPTION OF THE WCAG 2.0 AS THE ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL (NGP)

Pursuant to Administrative Order No. ___ series of 2016, the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) hereby adopts the WCAG 2.0 as the standard governing web accessibility for the NGP.

The UN defines Web Accessibility as the means to allow persons with disabilities to use the Web. Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities.

These Accessibility Rules and Regulations defines how content is presented and made easier to use. WCAG 2.0 and its international standard, ISO 40500, will form the basis for these guidelines.

Section 2. OBJECTIVES

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These rules and regulations shall have the following objectives:

1. To enable the National Government Portal (NGP), as the main gateway for citizens to interact with government, to become more open and transparent in form and design; and
2. To allow the NGP to reach out to as many people as possible whether it is accessed online or offline. It aims to support persons with disabilities, the elderly, foreign nationals etc.

Section 3. SCOPE

These rules and regulations shall be applied to the NGP. Websites of other government agencies, instrumentalities, local government units, state universities and colleges, constitutional bodies, and other government entities not covered or integrated into the NGP are encouraged to adopt these guidelines.

These rules and regulations shall be implemented upon within sixty (60) days from the adoption of this Circular.

Section 4. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **Agency NGP Team:** group primarily in charge of the agency's web presence. Assists the executive in checking the compliance of web content to NGP standards. Also uploads them to the NGP once approved.
2. **Content:** General term for government information, statistics, and transactions, Divided into two broad categories: data and services;
3. **Data:** Information produced or commissioned by agencies. Data forms the base from which government gets its information in order to function and serve consumers. Data come in readily available, voluntarily submitted information, and releasable forms;

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4. **Legacy Content:** Information stored in an old format that needs to be processed for easier accessing;
5. **National Government Portal (NGP):** The Philippine government's front-end portal from which various agencies' content may be easily accessed;
6. **Services:** These are provided in direct coordination with consumers by the government. These are mostly transactional in nature, requiring consumers to provide identification. Most of these are transactional in nature which require consumers to provide identification; and are completed/performed through online and digital applications/platforms;
7. **Uniform Web Content Policy (UWCP):** a policy providing guidelines on how content will be selected, grouped, and dispensed in the NGP. This will provide a uniform method of providing content to users.
8. **Web Accessibility:** refers to the inclusive practice of removing barriers that prevent interaction with, or access to websites, by people with disabilities;
9. **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0):** adopted by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) as ISO 40500. This refers to an international set of guidelines on web accessibility and content;
10. **Web Content:** Government content hosted or accessible from the internet; and
11. **World Wide Web Consortium (WC3):** an international organization focused on web accessibility. They develop web accessibility guidelines in order to set global standards in web systems. WCAG 2.0 is one of their projects.

Section 5. KEY PRINCIPLES

In accordance with the WCAG 2.0, the NGP shall follow four key principles in order to make their content more accessible. The key principles are as follows:

Perceivable

1. Agencies shall provide text options/alternatives for non-text content.
2. Agencies shall provide captions, subtitles and other alternatives for multimedia.
3. Agencies shall create content that can be presented in different ways, including by assistive technologies, without losing meaning.
4. Agencies shall facilitate users in seeing and hearing content.

Operable

1. Agencies shall allow users enough time to read and use the content.
2. Agencies shall make all functionality available from a keyboard even without a mouse.
3. Agencies shall not use content that causes seizures or other similar ailments.
4. Agencies shall assist users in navigating and finding content.

Understandable

1. Agencies shall make the text readable and understandable;
2. Agencies shall make content appear and operate in predictable ways; and
3. Agencies shall assist users in avoiding and correcting mistakes.

Robust

1. Agencies shall maximize compatibility with current and future user tools. They must consider changes in software, coding, hardware and the advances in web technology.

Section 6. LEVEL OF CONFORMANCE

The DICT aims to make the NGP compliant with at least Level AA Conformance within a time frame to be decided upon by the NGP Steering Committee.

Under the WCAG 2.0, conformance to a standard refers to a web page's ability to meet or satisfy the Success Criteria of the WCAG 2.0. A Success Criteria is satisfied when there is no content which violates the Success Criteria. The detailed list of Success Criteria is defined in the WCAG 2.0 and its supporting documents.

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Conformance Level	Description
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The web page satisfies all the Level A Success Criteria, or a conforming alternate version is provided.
AA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The web page satisfies all the Level A and Level AA Success Criteria, or a Level AA conforming alternative version is provided.Level AA is the minimum acceptable level for agencies according to these rules and regulations. Note that different conformance levels per page also exist.
AAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Web page satisfies all the Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA Success Criteria, or a Level AAA conforming alternative version is provided.

Section 7. LEGACY CONTENT

Legacy content may either be updated to be compliant with the WCAG 2.0, or conforming alternate versions may be prepared. In the latter case, the conforming alternate version must be easily identifiable by users.

Section 8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are the roles and responsibilities of agencies covered by this Circular.

A. The Department of Information Communication and Technology shall:

1. Prepare the guidelines, implementing rules and regulations, and other policy issuances necessary to effect the accessibility standards adopted in this circular;

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2. Implement the WCAG 2.0 in the NGP;
3. Provide training, materials, and support relating to web accessibility to agencies whose content are integrated with the NGP; and
4. Conduct monitoring of agency compliance with these rules and regulations.

B. Government Agencies shall:

1. Prepare content for the NGP in compliance with the WCAG 2.0 and the Accessibility Rules and Regulations, other implementing rules and regulations, and other policy issuances of the DICT;
2. Revise and update legacy content to comply with these rules and regulations before or upon migration to the NGP, or prepare conforming alternate versions;
3. Incorporate the accessibility rules and regulations as a part of the agency's transition plan to the NGP;
4. Follow these Accessibility Rules and Regulations not only when releasing web content to the public but also when sharing data to other agencies through the NGP;
5. Attend trainings relating to accessibility and the implementation of these Rules and Regulations; and
6. Submit to the DICT progress reports and updates on compliance with this circular.

Section 9. TRANSITION

A. With the exception of an additional Audit Phase, these Accessibility Rules and Regulations shall follow the timeline set by the AO on the National Government Portal. The stipulations of this circular shall be included in the NGP transition training. Agencies shall follow the NGP migration timeline as is presented below:

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1. *Audit Phase:* The DICT shall conduct a precursory audit of government agencies covered by AO No. ____. The audit aims to establish a database of the accessibility levels attained by the various government agencies.
2. *Phase 1: Transition Training (Six months)* - The DICT shall provide agencies covered by AO No. ____ and this Circular with web accessibility training, as well as training relating to the NGP, and related documents, including the Uniform Web Content Policy and the DNS Policy. This phase shall cover the first six (6) months following the effectivity of these rules. Agencies will be required to submit a transition plan and a draft website;
3. *Phase 2: Migration (One year)* - During this phase, agencies are expected to work toward Level A compliance in accordance with their transition plans. The DICT shall provide support and shall conduct monitoring of agencies during this period. This phase shall last one (1) year after the agency training in Phase 1. Agencies are expected to submit monthly progress reports to the DICT during Phase 2; and
4. *Phase 3: Finalization (One year with an additional one year allowance when deemed necessary)* - During this phase, agencies formally complete their migration into the NGP. Agencies in this stage shall begin moving from Level A to Level AA compliance. Agencies shall submit progress reports to DICT twice a year while in this phase.

Regional and Provincial Offices (ROs and POs) shall form their own NGP Team. The staff shall join Phase One (Transition Training).

Agencies currently relying on third-parties for their website maintenance shall have to wait until their contracts with the said third-parties lapse. These shall then form their NGP team afterwards and join Phase One (Transition Training).

B. In the event that an agency has already achieved a WCAG 1.0 certification level, please check the guidelines provided by WC3 on updating WCAG 1.0 to WCAG 2.0. The guide can be found at: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/from10/websites.html> Additionally, agencies may consult WC3's checklist comparing WCAG 1.0 to WCAG 2.0 requirements on their own from: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/from10/comparison>

Section 10. CONFORMANCE TESTING

Starting from Phase Two, the DICT shall conduct quarterly conformance testing to ensure that content in the NGP conforms to the prescribed conformance level. The conformance testing shall be in accordance with the success criteria defined in the WCAG 2.0 or by the DICT Accessibility Checkpoints.

Section 11. REPORTING

Starting from Phase Two, agencies shall submit progress reports to the DICT, which reports must contain the information on the current state of the agency's content, a summary of changes made, updates on compliance with the guidelines and the transition plan:

- A. Agencies in Phase Two shall submit quarterly progress reports to the DICT.
- B. Agencies in Phase Three shall submit bi-annual progress reports to the DICT.

Section 12. ACCESSIBILITY SEAL

The NGP shall undergo site evaluation by the Philippine Web Accessibility Group (PWAG), an organization supervised by the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) and the DICT. The NGP shall display the Accessibility Seal in compliance to the standards set by the PWAG Accessibility Maturity Stages.

Section 13. ISO 40500 ACCREDITATION

After Phase Two and upon compliance with at least Level AA Conformance of the content in the NGP as evaluated by the DICT, the NGP Steering Committee shall lead the accreditation of the NGP with ISO 40500.

Section 14. SEPARABILITY

If any provision of this Department order is declared void or unconstitutional, the remaining portions or provisions hereof shall continue to be valid and effective.

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Section 15. REPEAL

All issuances, orders, rule, and regulations or parts thereof that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Memorandum Circular are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 16. DIRECTIVE TO THE DICT RECORDS OFFICE

The DICT records officer is hereby ordered to furnish three (3) certified true copies of this Memorandum Circular to the University of the Philippines Law Center.

SECTION 17. EFFECTIVITY

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately.

Endorsed by:

DENIS F. VILLORENTE
Undersecretary
Department of Information and Communications Technology

Approved by:

RODOLFO A. SALALIMA
Secretary
Department of Information and Communications Technology