BRITISH COLUMBIA

B.C. Government Internet Strategy

September 2012

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STRATEGIC CONTEXT

THE RAPIDLY CHANGING ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Citizen Expectations

Governments both at home and abroad are taking steps to reinvent the way they work and provide information and services to their citizens online. Outstanding jurisdictions internationally include the governments of Australia, the UK and New Zealand; closer to home, the US federal government and key states like Utah and California are making online development a core priority. The key unifying factor in all these pursuits is an ambition to evolve government's online presence beyond traditional practices of broadcast communications towards a presence that actively facilitates citizen interaction through providing improved services.
The "citizen-centred" approach to web has come to define the most progressive programs towards government modernization, and had been re-enforced consistently through international and national research.

Research proves how quickly the needs of citizens with respect to service delivery are changing. For example, a study polling Canadians on service delivery concluded that online use had jumped from 30% to 47% between 2003 and 2008, and that in 2008 more than half of Canadians seeking services were already using multiple channels including online. In fact, Statistics Canada numbers from 2010 indicate that more than 80% of individuals over the age of 16 use the internet for personal use. With respect to online service quality measures, that same study concluded that timeliness, access, and clear information were most valued by users.

Closer to home, surveys show that British Columbians are frequently using multiple service channels to seek transactions, registrations or advice, and that 60% of British Columbians would now prefer to use the online service channel when also given options of those same services through in-person or telephone channels.

This decisive shift towards online is in no small part due to the proliferation of personal technology amongst citizens and an increasing familiarity and comfort with conducting an array of activities online ranging from multiple social interactions to in-depth retail transactions. For example, British Columbia is leading the country in overall internet use. British Columbians also lead the nation when it comes to making online retail purchases, purchasing nearly $3 billion worth of goods online in 2009 . Looking across Canada, weekly internet usage has now overtaken TV when it comes to use of leisure time.

This decisive shift towards online is in no small part due to the proliferation of personal technology amongst citizens and an increasing familiarity and comfort with conducting an array of activities online ranging from multiple social interactions to in-depth retail transactions. For example, British Columbia is leading the country in overall internet use. British Columbians also lead the nation when it comes to making online retail purchases, purchasing nearly $3 billion worth of goods online in 2009 . Looking across Canada, weekly internet usage has now overtaken TV when it comes to use of leisure time.

The benefits to governments in capitalizing on this enhanced citizen interest in online use and service are becoming increasingly clear. Research out of the United States is demonstrating a direct correlation between enhancing the quality of online government services for citizens and citizen loyalty and trust in government.

According to recent findings :

- Satisfaction with government's online services has grown from 69.1% in 2003 to 75.2% in Q1 of 2012. This outstripped general satisfaction with government overall (68.7%) for the quarter.
- Looking at the citizens who expressed satisfaction with improved services.
  - 92% say they are more likely to use the government website as a primary channel for interaction with government;
    - 86% are more likely to recommend people to the same resource;
    - 70% are more likely to trust the government department being measured; and
    - 48% are more likely to participate with that department in the future.

The demographic pressures confronting government are vast. We are facing a future where the public service does not have the resources necessary to meet growing demands. At the same time increased demands will be put on the Health and Education systems as the number of individuals accessing those services grows. A move towards allowing citizens to self-serve more frequently online presents one major opportunity to redirect costs away from expensive in-person transactions to provide greater focus on new emerging needs.

Technology presents many opportunities for government to deliver better services to citizens. Research shows that people increasingly look for immediate, specific, casual and personalized experiences when dealing with service providers, including government. Contrary to the thinking of the past, people expect technology to deliver that experience.

Technology continues to develop rapidly, and technologies that only recently seemed like science fiction, have become commonplace for many British Columbians. Government has spent years trying to effectively align itself to deliver services on static desktop computers, and now must prepare for a much more complex and rapidly shifting world.

Opportunities for B.C. have been laid out by the Premier's Technology Council, who in their last report outlined the following:

In the past, government program delivery has been the responsibility of each discrete Ministry. The focus has traditionally been on each individual program and how best to deliver it. The advent of modern information management technology allows for a new model, commonly referred to as Citizen Centred Services. It requires government to focus on the citizen rather than the program...

- PTC, 12th Report, p. 24-25

Mobile technologies are shifting expectations as citizens can now access services from nearly anywhere, using any one of a multitude of devices and exciting new capabilities, like location awareness. Government can no longer choose a target to aim for over a long period of time, but instead must prepare itself to sustainably delivery online services in a continually shifting environment.

> *"The internet has revolutionized every aspect of lives except government services"*
>
> - David Cameron. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Open Government

The Deputy Minister's Committee on Transformation and Technology (DMCTT) is a group of Deputies who lead the implementation of the Government 2.0 Strategy . The strategy outlines how the government of B.C. can use the power of technology to meet the changing expectation of citizens. It directs government to be more open and transparent and provide better, more modern services.

Citizens @ the Centre is the strategic guiding document that describes the strategy. It outlines three strategic shifts to make our services more citizen-centred:

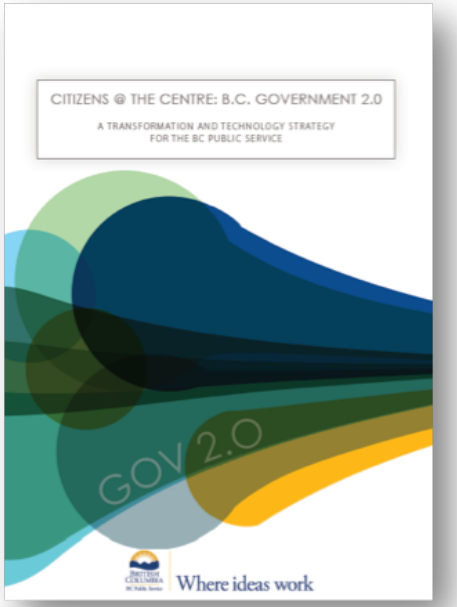
1. Citizen Participation - engaging British Columbians more directly with their government, particularly through improved access to government data and sharing of information.
2. Self Service - expanding opportunities for citizen self-service by improving and modernizing the government's online service offerings so they are shaped less by the structure of government and more by citizen needs.
3. Business Innovation – taking a more corporate approach to technology planning and innovation for the benefit of citizens and public service employees.

Citizens @ the Centre is supported by the IM/IT Enablers Strategy which describes priority corporate initiatives designed to get government ready for these three shifts.

The DMCTT is accountable for delivering on this strategy and is working through the Open Government initiative lead by the Ministry of Citizens' Services and Open Government (CITZ) to ensure it meets its objectives.

In 2010, The DMCTT extensively explored many of the issues associated with government's approach to web (at the time), and explored approaches taken in leading jurisdictions. Following significant content education and discussion on the topic, DMCTT made the following decisions for all of government:

- The thought leadership with respect to web development was not consistent with emerging trends in other jurisdictions who were putting increased investment and attention into the quality, consistency and coordination of citizen-focused web services; nor was it consistent with increased personal capacity and skills by citizen to interact with government through technology.



- The policy structure, division of resources, organizational alignment, and governance structures were not conducive to employing the necessary enterprise-wide shifts required to align the activities of agencies across government in a way that would put B.C. back into a position to adequately meet international expectations and domestic citizen demands.

In the fall of 2010, DMCTT directed the BC Public Service to:

- Move forward with a citizen-centric, service oriented design for government's web presence;
- Adopt a set of design principles to inform the development of government web;
- Develop a conceptual design for the new site; and
- Take steps to enhance government search.

These decisions specifically targeted improving the "tools and rules" of web development and supporting their proper use. The DMCTT also acknowledged that implementing these actions, and meeting the broader goals of the Citizens @ the Centre strategy, would require a far more holistic approach from government. As a result, DMCTT endorsed the development and implementation of an Internet Strategy to enable government as an enterprise to meet these specific deliverables in the near term, while at the same time laying the necessary foundations to support ministries in meeting their strategic goals over the longer term.

It was directed that CITZ would take overall responsibility for gov.bc.ca , the main public facing web presence for the government of B.C., and become the central body for strategic web governance including development of the Internet Strategy. This first set of decisions was communicated to ministries through a Memorandum on Web Governance in July of 2011.

In July 2011 the Premier announced the Open Government agenda for government, which formalized and built upon the initial concepts of Citizens @ the Centre. The Premier directed government to change the style and approach of governing to provide citizens with opportunities to influence and improve policies that impact them and their quality of life. This initial launch included a new open government policy, open government license and the new citizen-centric gov.bc.ca (including data.gov.bc.ca and openinformation.gov.bc.ca).

Government also made a central investment in fundamental technologies required to support government's delivery of web that includes:

- Corporate web content management that puts the ability to manage content in the hands of business owners;
- Enterprise scale web hosting that provides high availability to citizens;
- Enterprise search tools and capabilities using leading edge technology;
- A robust, proven web analytics solution that meets the privacy and security standards of government; and
- A flexible blogging (social media) platform that aligns to corporate standards for web, security and privacy.

Important Decisions for Government Web

1. Effective governance - CITZ would take responsibility for the strategic direction of government's web presence, and provide support and tools to ministries including establishing corporate governance for web. GCPE would have continued oversight of corporate communications.

2. New functions - CITZ would provide ministries guidance and best practice on the functions and roles required for effective online service delivery and web management, and would provide direct support to build capacity.

3. A citizen-centric approach - CITZ would establish a Centre of User Design Leadership to design the user experience for government, and to perform enterprise level research to guide service design. The development and redesign of all government web sites and online services would be directed by a citizen-centric design approach and adhere to relevant standards.

4. Flexible standards and tools - CITZ would create a series of toolkits to guide and standardize ministry web development. Ministries would have access to these tools, and were directed to engage with CITZ and GCPE to receive guidance and support to ensure that all web development is aligned with government's direction.

- July, 2011

B.C. GOVERNMENT ON THE WEB

In contrast to both the international examples and the documented preferences of citizens, the B.C. government's de-centralized approach to web development over the last 15 years has not put the province in an optimal position to provide modern, intuitive access to government services. Rather, performance on web development has been measured by volume, speed and communications priorities rather than the quality of service and design, integration with other government resources, and findability.

Government's web presence has grown organically, rather than strategically, over time. Initially, the web presented an opportunity for a "digital yellow pages", where various parts of government presented contact information for those seeking it online. Over time these properties grew to incorporate more detailed information about these programs, reports and publications and eventually design to support a brand. The web had not yet been used as an effective channel for service delivery to citizens, and had previously been used primarily as a channel for government's organizational needs, communications and branding.

The result was a government web ecosystem comprised of approximately 520 unique websites. In November 2011, an inventory across government (as part of the Transformation Planning Process, previously known as Transformation and Technology planning) showed these various web properties accounted for nearly 300,000 pages of web content and approximately 430,000 documents. In many cases these unique properties met business purposes very similar to other properties, and often the programs or brands they supported no longer exist.

In stark contrast, government reported only 265 transactional services available online (approximately 1 per 1000 pages of content) and many of these represented simple interactions or services that required other channels to complete. In order to effectively focus our resources on design and development of meaningful online services, government must have a more thoughtful, strategic approach to our overall web presence.

Government must manage its web properties differently to ensure they are effective and responsive to the needs of citizens. Many ministries still act in silos to create and organize information, and provide services to citizens. Finding a sought-after service requires in-depth knowledge of how government works. At the same time, we know that ministries must have the flexibility to deliver on their business, and have access to corporate resources and direction that support a unified approach and consistent user experience for citizens.

In contrast to what is not working well, ministries are increasingly trying to understand the demands of a new "Web 2.0" world where the Internet is used to facilitate direct government-to-citizen interaction through social media and provide richer content. Citizens are also turning their preferences towards the use of mobile technologies as their internet platform of choice, and the use of third-party web applications such as Google and Facebook to search for services and information across government. This evolution in user demand and experience requires a change in orientation and approach for the province to remain relevant to citizens.

Government realizes new ways of managing, packaging and delivering information and services to citizens are necessary. Open data (through the DataBC program) not only provides a meaningful way to manage and release highly structured government information, it presents an opportunity for adding value to the information as industries and communities develop the services they need using government data. Open data initiatives provide an opportunity to decommission web properties that provide information and data that citizens are seeking, but have historically proven to be resource-intensive to maintain.

Web Management and Governance

The current state of government's web presence is in part due to the lack of a unified corporate strategic direction and governance. In the past, government largely used a project-based approach to web development and management, which often did not provide opportunity for holistic planning across the organization or planning beyond the launch date. In addition, many ministries and sectors had no established governance structures, with each property driven by a unique business purposes and brand.

Most individual properties within government have distinct business owners, web managers, and content authors. A lack of governance at a corporate, or even ministry-level, means few opportunities to understand what is happening in other branches, business areas, or the rest of government exists.

This disconnected project and brand-driven approach has resulted, not only in a confusing web presence for the public (as demonstrated through usability testing) but also in inefficient application of web technology and resources.

Resources and Capacity

This lack of governance, and the use of web to primarily satisfy internal needs, puts an enormous strain on resources. Ministries and branches are continually solving business problems that have been solved in other parts of government. Day-to-day content maintenance is done "off the side of a desk" of a staff member who may be untrained or have other responsibilities better aligned with their skills. In some cases, the lack of a content management system means that content edits are often performed by senior technical resources who should be applying their skills to more sophisticated business problems.

A new approach to web requires that government find ways to reuse development across the enterprise. Organizations will be able to fully realize the most efficient application of their skilled staff when they have a strategic approach to the technologies that deliver their web presence, and, as much as is possible, leverage the enterprise technologies and services available to them.

It requires new skill sets and expertise in web strategy, user-centered design, information architecture, content strategy and design. Government has few resources with the experience to fill these needed skills, so will need to find or develop these critical skill sets. This has the added benefit of allowing senior technical resources to focus their energies and expertise on deeper business challenges, such as improving service through new online self service options.

Keeping up with Technology

Many parts of government rely on outdated and inefficient technologies to manage their online presence. They often require people to perform functions, such as data entry and content management, for which standard technologies are available.

Research shows that modern effective organizations use unified, enterprise content management , analytics, search and social technologies to manage their online presence and are working towards these systems being integrated with other key capabilities in enterprise architecture . A corporate approach to technology allows for the full use of these tools' capabilities, appropriate allocation of human resources, and decreased overall costs, resulting in improved effectiveness for both citizens and government.

In the past, as has happened in many other jurisdictions, different parts of government invested in separate technologies with the same purpose and general functions. In most cases these tools only reach full effectiveness and return on investment when used consistently across the enterprise. In addition, within a modern web context, the cost and effort associated with keeping up to date with government standards and citizen expectations with business specific technologies is high. An integrated service focused web presence is best, and arguably only, achieved through a unified set of tools. The IM/IT Enablers Strategy ensures that IT investments are aligned with corporate priorities and managed to make the best use of resources. New ministry investment in duplicating these types of technologies is difficult to justify.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer publish a number of standards that apply directly to web services, including privacy, security and enterprise content management standards. These standards, and the design standards for gov.bc.ca, have been implemented as part of the content management framework (see Appendix B) which provides ministries with an effective and cost-efficient opportunity to align their web properties with corporate direction.

B.C. GOVERNMENT INTERNET STRATEGY

WHY AN INTERNET STRATEGY

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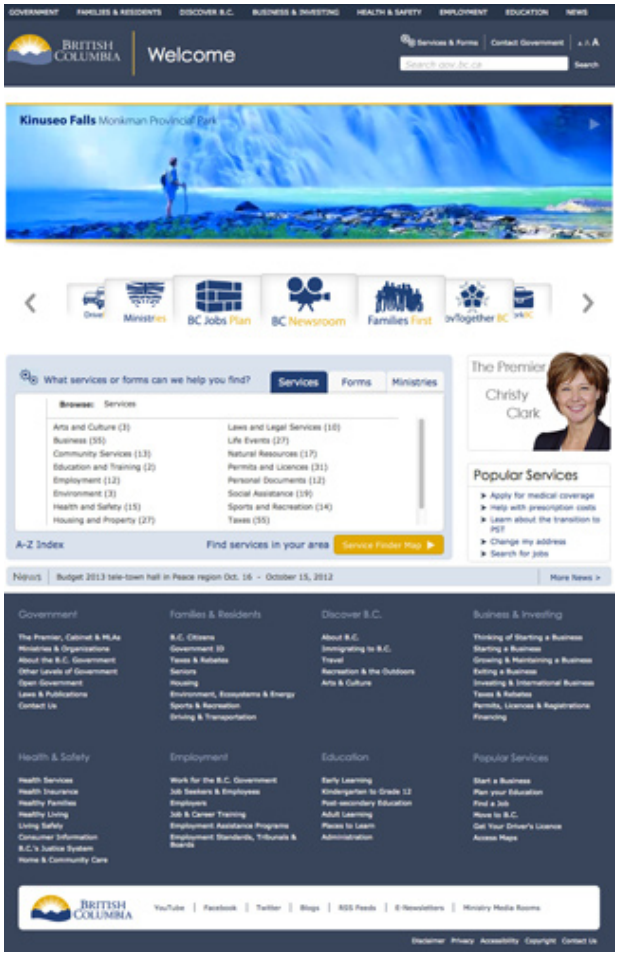
Direct research with citizens indicated clearly, that citizens could not find, never mind access, many key government of B.C. services online. We also know from Citizens First 5 that timely access to services is the key driver of citizen satisfaction with online services.

These challenges were exacerbated, and in some cases caused, by government's siloed approach to online service delivery. As a result, a solution was unlikely to emerge from the same environment that caused the problem in the first place.

It is government's job is to provide service to citizens. When people can't find the services they need, it is the responsibility of government to respond. A common strategy for government was required to align resources and focus efforts in a way that could lead to a citizen-centric web presence for government.



WHAT IS THE INTERNET STRATEGY

The Internet Strategy is a strategic response to growing concerns about government's approach to internet development at an enterprise level. The Internet Strategy seeks to address these challenges by pursuing core objectives of the self-serve shift to improve government's online presence and create the foundation for improved online service delivery.

The Internet Strategy is built on the three core beliefs that high quality online service delivery is:

1. Evidence Based
2. Citizen Centric
3. Service Focused

First Steps

RESEARCH

In early March 2010 a research plan was developed to inform the redesign of the Province's web and support decisions on the governance and operation of government web. The research was conducted by user experience designers and followed leading practices for gaining user and business insights to support evidence-based web and service design.

The key findings of this research included:

1. Communications focused messaging appeared to be obscuring access. Services and complimentary practical information are of more value to users.
2. Users ignored (did not click) graphic elements because they did not see their value.
3. Users expected predictable, consistent site navigation on the top and left side of pages.
4. The terms or words used in labels, menus, and navigation were too obscure or promotional and their meaning was unclear to users.
5. Fonts were inconsistent, animation was distracting, and colour choices reduced legibility.
6. Good content was obscured by jargon and branding.
7. Press releases and image carousels were not highly used, despite prominent emphasis on most sites.

Direct usability testing showed that citizens failed to find key government services 25% of the time, and had difficulty finding services 33% of the time. These failures were attributable to government's longstanding focus on organizational structure that often forced citizens to understand the structure of government in order to access its services.

A New gov.bc.ca

The completion of phase 1 of the Internet Strategy occurred with the launch of gov.bc.ca on July 19th, 2011. It focused on redesigning the main "doorway" to government services – gov.bc.ca – to enhance the look and usability, maximize the service experience for citizens, and break down the organizational structure of government.

The launch of a revised government web presence at gov.bc.ca was B.C.'s first step in transforming its approach and philosophy to engaging with citizens. This shift was about a conscious philosophy change that government's online presence must be driven by citizens. A user-centred approach to web site design, and the design of the services themselves, is vital to success.

The redesign of gov.bc.ca was a key first step for the Internet Strategy for a number of reasons. First, it sent an important "market signal" to the public and to broader government that the new business objectives for government web are to enhance access to services. Second, it established new global properties and alignments that are durable and sustainable, and will be adopted by ministries over time. Third, it is through this adoption that government can target deliberate and focused adoption of standards and best practices on new and legacy web properties.

As part of the Province's Gov 2.0 initiative, the new gov.bc.ca was developed using a user experience design approach and structured to provide information and services in the easiest way for citizen-users. Content was organized by theme (Employment, Business, Health, etc.) rather than by the administrative structure of government (Ministries). The design was tested with citizens prior to launch, and amended to increase usability.

Testing and research with British Columbians after the 2011 launch proved that this content organization (information architecture) improves ease of access to the most requested services provided by Government. Based on this direct research with citizens, additional enhancements were made and launched in spring of 2012.

The property itself is built and hosted upon government's enterprise web content management system. This system, which is scaled to host all of government's content, not only provides the most cost efficient and effective way for ministries to deliver their web content, but is by definition the implementation of the corporate standards (see Appendix B).

The ongoing intent of the Internet Strategy is to continue to refine the design of gov.bc.ca frequently to meet the shifting needs of citizens. Gov.bc.ca is not only the doorway to government information and services; it represents the standard for web that all government will align to.

KEY ELEMENTS OF GOV.BC.CA

Design Principles

To ensure a continued effective design of online services it is important to start with a foundation that can guide future activities. A set of user experience design principles, based on direct citizen research, serve this purpose for the Internet Strategy. They guide not only the development of gov.bc.ca, but serve as the principled foundation for all web development in government. Further research may uncover the need for additional design principles which may also apply to certain areas of government's web presence.

The BC Government design principles are:

- Evidence based design - Design of navigation and site structure based on the observation and analysis of user behaviour in the completion of common tasks. Site analytics show the main areas of interest for users and pinpoints through search terms the ways and words used to find services and information.
- Improved way-finding - Single, global navigation guides the user to the key areas of service and information, consistently and predictably, without navigating through government structure.
- Balanced approach to services and messaging - Functional User Experience Design (UXD) makes citizens services easier to find, understand, and use. Brand and style lends credibility and cohesion. Government's direction, priorities and actions are clearly messaged and appropriately placed.
- Accessible, without compromise - Universal design principles and evolving practices ensure accessibility to all users, from screen readers to mobile devices. Capacity to continuously improve accessibility over time (across the enterprise), and embody the best application of improved cross-government web standards and design practices is critical.
- Declare the new – Government's new direction of openness, transparency, service-focus and citizen-friendly technologies is conveyed both through function and light, modern colours and visual styles.

Information Architecture and Core Content

The launch of gov.bc.ca established new information architecture by dividing government content into themes/topics using terminology that citizens can understand. Many ministries have been working to bring their content into this new architecture.

The information architecture of gov.bc.ca provides a structure to develop core content, across all sectors, and create and manage inter-related content. The technology solution (content management system) underpinning this architecture allows users across ministries to efficiently manage thematic content, across multiple ministries.

Information architecture and content services are available to ministries through Strategic Initiatives Division (see Appendix C).

Functionality

The strategy recognizes that citizens are not coming to government online to learn about government alone; they come to complete tasks or activities. UXD helps them find what they are looking for as quickly as possible, so they can complete their activity and save time and money. Content must be well structured, simply written and use a common vocabulary to ensure it is readily findable by search engines.

The new gov.bc.ca exemplifies this approach to visual and interaction design. In addition to a new open design that provides a visually appealing and usable experience, the behaviour of different elements of the site was designed to be highly usable and accessible. The overall design and layout represents a deliberate shift for government from web being a promotional and branding tool, to web being a tool that supports the access of information and services by citizens.

Gov.bc.ca provides information and services to users through global navigation using language that makes sense to citizens. This navigation carousel is available on every page of gov.bc.ca to ensure that users can navigate to different parts of government effectively. Specific areas of gov.bc.ca have additional navigation elements to help users navigate deeper.
Gov.bc.ca also includes a service finder function which allows citizens to navigate to online service transactions easily and quickly. It provides a catalogue of services, described in citizen friendly language and linked directly to the service itself, with descriptive information to support access. The site also uses the corporate web search engine, Google Search Appliances, to provide a superior search experience for users.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a cornerstone of the commitment to evidence-based and citizen-centered design. Accessibility means that all citizens should be able to access government services online, using the devices that work for them. Prior B.C. government web standards set a respectable, industry-accepted standard for accessibility. The new gov.bc.ca site and the programs that support it represent a more focused, ambitious and meaningful commitment to serving all citizens.

Meeting that accessibility objective to date has evolved on a number of levels:

1. **Design** - The new gov.bc.ca continues to grow with a commitment to universal design – that is, design that ensures it is workable for all. Based on direct observational research, gov.bc.ca now exceeds the international World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards for accessibility by creating inherently accessible design such as simple, consistent navigation and structured and concise content. These innate design foundations allow for easy display and computability on screen readers and other adaptive technologies and are primed for mobile delivery.

2. **Usability** - B.C. established a user group of citizens with disabilities to inform design decisions. Usability testing of gov.bc.ca with this group began in November, 2011. Participants were visited in their homes or workplaces and asked to complete common tasks on the site to find areas for improvement. This work provided a new understanding of their real challenges. Work with this group will continue on ongoing web and service design projects to help inform further refinement of web standards and design to improve accessibility. Ongoing testing, user input and improvement based on the result of that testing is critical to the cross-government adoption of the Internet Strategy and to how the performance of gov.bc.ca is measured and managed.

3. **Standards** - The Province's web standards and guidelines were updated to set higher expectations for accessible web. They continue to evolve based on industry standards and practices, current research, and established principles of web and UXD, and align with the design, structure, and design strategy of gov.bc.ca.

Standardized site design also means a common user experience across websites, allowing for predictable features, greater ease of use, and common look and feel. When standards and guidelines are implemented, online content is more usable, evolves more easily to changing technologies, and is simpler to migrate, manage, and maintain.

The application of these standards reduces unnecessary features, simplifies design and documentation, improves usability, streamlines design and development, incorporates business goals, and focuses on the user's overall experience. They are inspired by evidence-based design and will help improve way-finding and accessibility, balance services with messaging, and a focus on openness and transparency.

All public facing B.C. government websites benefit by following these standards and guidelines and applying them to web development and redevelopment projects, as do citizens who use and rely on those websites.

Single Distinctive Brand

Internationally, governments that go online do so by establishing brand that is deemed by users and citizens alike to represent a highly trusted source of information. The Province of British Columbia has a very strong asset in its possession (gov.bc.ca) that allows it to set itself apart from a great deal of other entities within the internet ecosystem. The use of a standard and consistent domain approach for an entire organization's web presence is critical for government. There is a long history of this type of approach with URLS worldwide in the private sector (i.e. apple.com, amazon.com, google.com) that makes them recognizable and intuitive to users. It is for these reasons that the Province of B.C. looks to gov.bc.ca as its central brand online, and why the revision of that property was the fundamental starting point for this strategy.

Unfortunately, approaches to date have not taken advantage of this opportunity. Issue-specific URLs are often inexpensive to purchase and provide a near-term communications opportunity to drive a specific program brand. There has been a growing proliferation of stand-alone brands across the B.C. government web space offering a multiplicity of graphic and design interactions. In fact, current data indicates there are over 520 unique websites that represent unique brands across the B.C. government – many of which do not bear any association to the central gov.bc.ca brand.

Brand itself is not actually the issue; often, there may be good reasons to differentiate from a central brand. However, individual brands in the context of online services can be difficult to sustain over time with citizens in the absence of peripheral marketing. Additionally, little consideration is traditionally given to how the overall proliferation of brands can be detrimental to the usability and citizen-centricity of government's web space as a whole.

That impact is seen in a number of ways:

- Lack of connection to government's information architecture (navigation and structure) creates barriers to citizens trying to navigate through government for multiple services;
- Lack of connection to gov.bc.ca reduces likelihood that citizens will be able to effectively navigate to the property from gov.bc.ca;
- Lack of connection reduces the much-needed relationships between properties that major search engines rely upon to return the best results to user requests;
- Inconsistent look and feel creates a negative navigation experience for citizens, and may even damage their perception of the integrity of government information; and
- Unique design and standalone infrastructure mean that, in additional to unnecessary increased costs for initial development and build, the property does not benefit from on going enhancements to gov.bc.ca, which results in a higher cost impact for ministries and government as a whole.

Aligning government services under one valuable and distinctive brand, gov.bc.ca, will allow government to put user need before its own. It follows the model set by leading jurisdictions, and private sector leaders such as Apple, Google, Amazon and others.

This does not mean that all existing government sub-brands should be discontinued. Rather, it means organizations must use corporate governance to evaluate sub-brand, and through direct evidence from citizen-centred research, understand which brands are meeting the needs of citizens. It also means that government strategically integrates those brands with persistent citizen value into the design and architecture of gov.bc.ca. As a result, when sub-brands are required, those decisions are approaching in way that ensures brands interact and enhance each other, instead of the reverse.

ENABLING BETTER WEB FOR CITIZENS

The previous sections describe the context and strategy for creating an evidence-based, citizen-centric and service focused government web presence. This section outlines the tactical elements required to achieve this vision, followed by an overview of the tools and services in place to support this strategy.

STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

User experience design (UXD) and more recently, service design, have become accepted industry practices for achieving great products that work for the people that use them. A UXD approach is not strictly about a visually appealing presentation for content. Rather, it is a set of methods and activities used to discover what users need from websites and online services.

Instead of making assumptions about how people want to interact with government, the UXD approach to government services and web uses testing, observation, co-design and other techniques to gain insight into what users need. This approach requires government to change their approaches to technology and service projects. Rather than proceed with a set of business requirements gathered from internal government stakeholders, a UXD approach demands that service developers work directly with citizens prior to design and development to understand their needs, barriers and pain points. It then takes that understanding and lines it up to the organizational objectives through a discovery exercise. This allows the service provider to apply resources efficiently to create the most value for the user as well as the business.

This discipline extends beyond focus groups and surveys, and informs every aspect of service design (including the development of web and print products, business process, policy and more). UXD research can be used throughout the project lifecycle– at the very beginning, it will uncover the things that users need and will help build a research plan that focuses efforts and makes the most effective use of time, budget and people. Throughout the project and after launch, it will validate work, assess performance and identify areas for improvement.

Education Web Presence

CITZ partnered with the Ministry of Education to renew the ministries web and service offerings in alignment with the Province's Internet Strategy. The project also acts as an example to demonstrate how ministries can align to the corporate strategy and provides valuable lessons learned for ministries as they adopt the approach.

A joint project team was formed to conduct thorough research in the field with teachers, parents and students, and developed an evidence-based strategy to guide near-term web development, in alignment with gov.bc.ca. The project also charted ambitious projects over the first 18 months and set the stage for exciting new projects.

The ministry refreshed and streamlined its web content and retired stand-alone web properties to achieve a concise, up to date "Education" section on the gov.bc.ca site. The result is improved access to key information for citizens, and a lower maintenance burden for the ministry.

The newly established Education theme information architecture and core content represents the first significant on-boarding to gov.bc.ca, and the first implementation of on-boarded content on to the Content Management Framework (CMF – appendix C) that supports gov.bc.ca.

The Education Web Presence project is building an improved product for citizens and changing the culture within the ministry. Through this work, ministry web and service staff has adopted design practices that will support evidence-based, citizen-centred projects in future.

Web and Service strategy

A key step in adopting and evolving citizen-focused web and service is establishing an evidence-based web and service strategy. This ensures that development is thought-out, timely, and relevant and should include:

- Insights gained during design research (including internal business discovery and citizen research);
- Consideration of not only the web channel, but meaningful integration between online, telephone, in person and print channels;
- Design principles;
- An outline of coordinated activities, and
- Measures of success.

The approach may also include documentation of how government services address the tasks that citizens needs to accomplish.

Ministries are developing high level strategies to guide development, utilizing recommendations and tools provided by CITZ (see Appendix B).

Effective Technology

As much as new technology brings new challenges, it also brings a wealth of opportunity. Mobile technologies, web based services, social media, and open source provide new ways of delivering services that were never before possible. This does not mean government should pursue technology opportunities for technology's sake, but rather should identifying how technology can address strategic challenges for government and improve service for citizens.

Technology not only provides new opportunities for interactions with citizens, but also for how we deliver and administer as an organization. In fact, technology introduces incredible opportunities to begin closing the gap between the citizen expectations of the future, and the limited resources government will have to deliver on that expectation. Effective technology is not simply about the best technology or the best design; it is about how government effectively marshals its resources to establish capabilities in a way that is consistent, integrated and cost effective.

The old approach of multiple web domains on multiple infrastructures increased the costs and to government, and reduced the reliability of the overall web presence to citizens. To enable self-serve, government must move toward managing content and services rather than web sites. The deliberate move away from government structure and toward an extensible information architecture that focuses on government services has created an inexorable path forward that is best achieved with unified tools.

Although they require upfront spending, technology solutions often save money in the long run, and a strategic approach to these investments will result in long-term savings to government and better services for citizens.

Appendix B contains information on the technology enablers for the Internet Strategy and Appendix C describes the available technology services from Strategic Initiatives Division to be used by ministries for their web content.

Governance

This new corporate approach to web asks government to make a lot of changes to how it manages its web presence. Big change is only possible when a common vision is shared of where an organization needs and wants to be and works together to get to that place. Governance provides the structure under which this is possible.

Governance provides strategic guidance by making the big decisions about direction and role. It describes who has power, what decisions are made and by who, how people are heard, and how everyone is held accountable. It support and guides existing and planned projects, supports a meaningful transition between projects and operations, and helps keep all functions aligned with an overall strategy – critical aspects of creating a unified citizen-centered web presence.

See the Appendix B for more on governance.

PURSUING THE SELF-SERVE STRATEGY

Enterprise Level Research

Research is the foundation of building a citizen-centred service platform. Government is conducting research on an ongoing basis on topics that reaches across ministries and programs areas. Current research includes:

- Usability Testing - regularly conducted with citizens to ensure that gov.bc.ca, as it grows and evolves, is meeting the needs of users. Recent testing includes citizens with accessibility challenges.
- Exploratory Research - aims to understand the diversity of the Province's citizens beyond statistics and demographics. In support of the Government's commitment to respond to the needs of families and to progress open government, direct research was conducted with families to understand the challenges they face accessing government services and information. This included working directly with vulnerable families, through in-home inter views and diary studies, to understand their realities and using this learning to design better services.

The results of this research are shared across government through presentations and working groups. Plans are underway to create a knowledge base of user experience research projects that can be accessed by all government, or publically when no personal information is included.

Enhancing Online Service Delivery

As government focuses on improving its service delivery, and doing so in a way that addresses both citizen's needs and the resource constraints of government, there are three broad questions that need to be addressed:

- How do we enable better access to services?
- How do we improving the quality of services once they are accessed?
- What are our priorities for areas of service improvement and evolution?

This first stage of the transformation, the Internet Strategy, addresses the initial question of access, and the quality of information-based services. It also begins to implements tools and structure that will better prepare government to continue the self-service shift.

The Internet Strategy (including its tools, methods and technologies) are critical enablers to a future approach or strategy for online service delivery, but they do not represent the whole picture. Key questions like how to create meaningful integration between service channels, how to improve service design practices and enterprise service architecture, and what are the key elements of a fulsome self-serve strategy, are envisioned as future strategies as part of Citizens @ the Centre. Whether dealt with in a future iteration of this strategy, of through a parallel stream of work, these must be addressed.

APPENDIX A - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MINISTRY ROLES

Transformation Planning was created by the DMCTT to provide a framework through which ministries would describe how they will make the shifts outlined in Citizens @ the Centre.

Ministries were grouped into sectors and the first plans were completed in 2010. As part of these sector plans, ministries must demonstrate alignment and progress under three strategic priorities: Open Data, Open Information, and Internet Strategy. Plans were revised and expanded in 2011 based on instructions from DMCTT, and as of July 2012 ministries have been asked to refresh their plans to reflect any changes as they go into the next planning cycle.

The corporate Internet Strategy, as described in this document, will inform how ministries develop and implement the internet strategy portions of their sector or ministry Transformation plans.

In 2011, ministries were instructed to support government's commitment to evolve its web presence by:

1. Completing a template to provide fundamental information about their web properties and their management.
2. Providing a strategy over the next 12 months to rationalize their web properties and render its web presence more citizen-centric and service focused, by:
    - Identifying their audience
    - Undertaking citizen-centred research to understand their audiences needs
    - Ensuring effective management and governance of their web properties
    - Identifying opportunities with other ministries and agencies
    - Moving high-value services online where evidence suggests that this will better meet citizens needs
    - Aligning new web development with gov.bc.ca and their existing web properties
    - Ensuring out-of-date and unnecessary sites and content are retired

In 2012, ministries and sectors are working toward implementing the commitments they made in these plans. This includes:

- Prioritizing, managing and releasing their data and information through ascribed processes;
- Ensuring that they have the structures and processes in place to align their web properties to the corporate strategy and design principles; and
- Meeting their Ministry- or sector-specific commitments outlined in their plans.

CITZ'S ROLE

To deliver exceptional service online, ministries need access to flexible tools that focus on possibilities rather than restrictions, additional capacity across the organization to deliver solutions with these tools and real opportunities for ministries to apply best practices in delivering their business. We no longer have the resources to continuously solve the same design problems and technology questions in silos; instead, solutions should be created once and shared across government.

Using corporately purchased, developed and supported resources, technologies, and tools ministries can reduce the reliance on ministry resources, focus on service delivery, and create a consistent user experience across government for all citizens by:

- Saving money and resources that would otherwise have been spent to purchase, develop and support individual technology solutions;
- Saving money and resources that would otherwise have been spent researching best practices and developing strategies and processes to meet corporate direction;
- Sharing resources and building on existing research to find solutions to common challenges; and
- Directing saved resources to other services and initiatives that provide value to citizens.

Tools are not enough to drive transformation. The BC Public Service has invested in building capacity by partnering with ministries on design research projects to build their strategy. Having ministry resources participate on the project team to research, design and architect, build capacity and be in a position to continue using the tools in their ministry.

CITZ is responsible for providing corporate support to all Ministries for these initiatives, including policy, guidance, standards, governance and infrastructure.

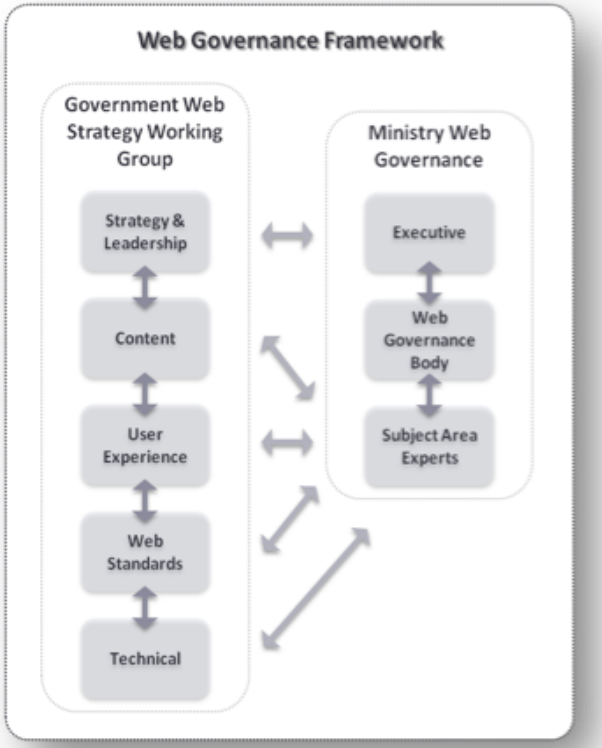
The current phase of work is looking towards the future of web management across government, and is guided by the following objectives from Citizens @ the Centre:

- Piloting the use of innovative Web 2.0 tools and platforms to expand access to online services and content.
- Pursuing the best practices in search engine optimization, taxonomy, and meta-tagging to assist clients in locating key services, regardless of what doorway they choose.
- Fostering excellence in user-centred design and content development through shared web development toolsets across government, including improved approaches to content creation and maintenance.
- Working with ministries to assess their current service environment and collaboratively work towards key service improvements – either through new services, discontinued services or improvements to existing services.
- Emphasizing user, citizen and stakeholder preferences for self-service improvement, feed back and awareness.
- Improving awareness of government services and incrementally bringing together transactional services under a single distinctive brand.

APPENDIX B - KEY CORPORATE ACTIVITIES

As discussed previously, the self-serve shift in Citizens @ the Centre outlined a series of objectives for government. As the ministry with strategic accountability for government's web, CITZ has begun four streams of activity to meet the outlined objectives and to enable the shift for other ministries. These initial streams of work are described below, while the operational support model for the strategy is described in Appendix C.

To get involved or to find out more about any of the programs and activities listed below, ministries are encouraged to contact the User Experience Design Team (UXBC) at uxbc@gov.bc.ca.



EXPAND AND REFINE GOV.BC.CA

Revising gov.bc.ca, based on user-centered design and research, marked the first step to realizing government's Internet Strategy, which sends a market signal on government's direction, provides a foundational platform for government's core content and is a demonstration of government's new design and web standards. The property must continue to evolve to be responsive to the needs of citizens, and to provide a meaningful enabler for government.

Government's commitment to evidence-based design is demonstrated by continued citizen research. As we perform usability testing, conduct UXD, test across multi-platform devices and conduct accessibility testing with citizens, CITZ continue to improve gov.bc.ca. As we learn how to better serve the needs of citizens we will evolve our properties and toolsets.

Expanding Content and Services

The success of gov.bc.ca depends upon ministries contributing and maintaining core content to ensure a consistent user experience across relevant services and information government provides. This includes:

- Adoption - CITZ is partnering with ministries to support them to adopt the corporate approach and align content with gov.bc.ca. Based on design research and the development of a web and service strategy, ministries are refreshing content, decommissioning stand-alone sites, adopting the graphic design of gov.bc.ca and bringing new content into the central information architecture.
- Content - Through training, cross-government working groups, newly defined positions and responsibilities, CITZ is supporting ministries to make web content a priority. Writing for the web, the development and utilization of a government-wide metadata standard to improve content maintenance and search is supported by CITZ.

Becoming Mobile and Geo Friendly

The use of mobile devices to access services and information online is a necessity for British Columbians. As government has attempted to meet increasing demand for mobile interaction it is apparent that it adds an extraordinary level of complexity to traditional web development and service delivery and creates an ongoing sustainability challenge.

Being mobile friendly demands more thoughtful and structured web development. Special attention must be paid to elements such as content, interaction, and design.

The evolving mobile market is a highly volatile and involves a multitude of operating systems, devices, hardware and browsers. The landscape continues to change at a tremendous pace as suppliers try to capture market share. Developers and designers are left scrambling to catch up. Government is now faced with key strategic decisions, such as whether mobile services should make use of particular device features (e.g. geo-location, camera) or if they should be designed to work with as many devices as possible. This question becomes ever more important as government considers the cost of developing and maintaining mobile applications across multiple platforms. Ongoing success and sustainability depend on directing government resources to the highest value activities.

A strategy will guide its progress and make sure we do not experience the same challenges with mobile that it did with desktop web. To this end CITZ is developing an evidence-based, citizen-centric mobile strategy for government which will meet three major objectives:

1. Define an overall mobile framework or approach to guide government web development.
2. Establish a technology roadmap for government's enterprise content management system.
3. Determine, and in some cases establish, tools to support ministries as they consider or develop mobile services.

To support this work, CITZ is providing ministries with toolsets, standards, policy, and technology solutions to ensure that citizens have barrier free access to our web properties. These include:

- Completion of the Content Management Framework project that delivered a user friendly content management tool available to all of government. Allowing content to be managed completely separately from its presentation, a leading industry practice for delivering content to multiple platforms including mobile devices.
- Decision-making support and an app store for government that were made available to ministries beginning in March 2012.
- Design work for a fully mobile "responsive" design for gov.bc.ca, which is anticipated for winter 2012/2013.

ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

As previously described, a strong and integrated governance framework for web is needed to ensure government moves forward in a consistent and cohesive manner and realizes the goals for web outlined in the Internet Strategy.

The Web Strategies Working Group (WSWG) will provide the structure for the long term sustainable adoption of this new corporate approach. It will support corporate or enterprise-wide decision making that will get government where it wants to be – a unified more citizen-centred and service focused approach to web.

It is a collection of function-based decision making and collaborative bodies, or subgroups, including Strategy and Leadership, Content, User Experience, Web Standards and Technical.

The objectives of the group include:

1. Supporting a unified approach to online services across government;
2. Improving understanding and alignment with the corporate approaches and directions at all level in government;
3. Communicating across ministries regarding specific goals, priorities, and plans in relation to web;
4. Finding and sharing solutions to common web business problems across government; and
5. Sharing resources and efforts to find efficiencies and improve service across government.

Aligning Ministry Governance

A strong and integrated governance framework requires participation at both the ministry and corporate level. It relies on a unified approach to governance based on sound principles of collaboration, integration and accountability, as shown in the model below.

Each ministry is responsible for establishing a governance model for their ministry to enable effective implementation of a sector internet strategy as identified within their Transformation plan. The governance structure should meets the principles described in the corporate approach, but also needs to meet each ministries business and stakeholder needs, and fits with ministry capabilities, resources, and culture.

The BC Gov User Experience Toolbox - Governance outlines this approach and model in detail. It provides principles, examples and recommendations for ministry web governance that will lay the foundation for successful online service delivery. In addition, CITZ provides support and guidance for ministries as they develop and implement web governance structures.

BUILDING BETTER WEB FOR CITIZENS TOOLKITS

CITZ is creating a series of toolkits to guide and standardize ministry web development. These include best practices and tools for implementing governance, planning web projects, improving and managing content, using taxonomies and metadata and performing user research. The toolbox is available on gov.bc.ca and ministries are directed to engage with CITZ to receive guidance and support to ensure that all web development is aligned with government's direction. The templates and standards of the past, which focused on layout and style, do not meet the needs of the current government approach. In the current context the planning, developing and maintaining of web is as important to its success with users, if not more, than the "look and feel". These tools will make up the BC Gov User Experience Toolbox. They provide flexible options for web teams that focus on user-centred design and measurable quality, rather than superficial adoption of a branding template. They are organized into the following modules:

PLAN

1. The Introduction to Online Service Delivery helps to paint a picture of online service delivery in public service and how we need to rethink our positioning so that citizens can access more of our services online more easily.
2. Design Research sets the foundation for much of the rest of the toolbox components. The module explains when to conduct research and gives examples of different types of design research and when to use them.
3. The Web Strategy module addresses both ministry and project-level online strategy, providing best practice tools, guidelines and exercises.

BUILD

4. The Information Architecture (IA) module describes the IA of gov.bc.ca and where program areas might fall within that IA. Please note: this IA is based on a future state of gov.bc.ca and many of its components are not yet implemented. It's expected that the new IA or some version of it will be implemented by winter 2012/2013.
5. The Content module helps ministries better understand how to plan for content, how to write for the web and for intended audiences, and provides tips and best practice guidelines.
6. The Metadata module helps ministries and agencies to understand and comply with their obligations to produce descriptions of their online content. The guidelines in this component will ensure a consistent approach to describing provincial government online content and will help citizens find, retrieve and understand the information and resources they need.
7. The Technology and Tools module describes the technologies and tools available at an enterprise level and how they can be used to enable ministry and sector web strategies to help understand and connect with users, the citizens of B.C., improve service delivery online, and create a user experience consistent with the rest of government.

RUN

8. The Governance module outlines an approach for governance that will help ministries adopt the principles outlined in Citizens @ the Centre and make their online service delivery more citizen-centred. It includes principles, models, examples and recommendations for governance that lay the foundation for successful online service delivery.
9. The 2012 Internet Standards & Guidelines provide B.C. Government standards and guidelines for the design and development of browser-delivered online content.

The tools will be expanded and refined over time, in response to emerging design practices and inputs from cross-government working groups.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN

To support ministry alignment with this strategic shift, CITZ created the Centre of User Design Leadership, also known as the User Experience (UX) team. It was established to design the user experience for government, and to perform enterprise level research to guide service design. It has responsibility to assist ministries in building capacity to support user experience design.

To support the implementation of the revised standards and toolkits described above, the UX team is building capacity within ministries through a User Experience Design Training program and by working directly with ministries.

The training curriculum complements the BC Gov User Experience Toolbox and supports alignment with gov.bc.ca. It also provides immersion in industry best practices for User Experience Design (UXD) at a caliber not offered locally.

There are four modules:

1. User Experience 102
2. Design Research and Insight
3. Strategy, Vision and Design
4. Information Architecture and Content Strategy

Rather than send 100 employees to leading conferences, the Province's brought that expertise here and developed a customized curriculum at a much lower cost. The initial program ran for 12 days over 3 months, and includes workshops, office hours with experts (to explore ministry-specific questions) and expert presentations. Each ministry received a UXD library including classic and leading books to support and inspire web practitioners.

In addition, CITZ works directly with ministries through project partnerships to advance the corporate Internet strategy, support ministries to implement their Transformation planning commitments, and build capacity for user experience design within ministries.

TECHNOLOGY ENABLERS FOR THE INTERNET STRATEGY

A number of years ago government made a decision to purchase (HP Autonomy) Interwoven Teamsite as the web content management system (CMS) for government and to host its main web property, gov.bc.ca. The Content Management Framework (CMF) project delivered a new user interface that simplifies the writing and publication of web content. This technology is the most efficient and effective way for ministries to manage their web content and align with the new corporate web standards in a way that is increasingly cost-effective for ministries to adopt. It separates the storage of content and metadata from the display of content, making it easier to find and re-use content.

As a result, ministries are able to access a bundle of easy to use and already optimized services, including web hosting, metadata management, search, and web analytics. It provides the entire suite of technology required for ministries to deliver an evidence-based, citizen centric and service focused web presence. Further details on this offering are provided in Appendix C.

This technology approach not only provides a pathway for alignment, it significantly enables the shift for our organization. Citizens are not looking for service bundles, but instead integrated services; this means that our technology approaches must support the delivery of content across a consistent information architecture and taxonomy, in a structured format and with a separation between presentation and content. The content management framework makes this a reality for government.

APPENDIX C - OPERATIONAL SUPPORT MODEL

STRATEGIC FACILITATION MODEL

CITZ will continue to be responsible for providing corporate support to all Ministries for these initiatives, including policy, guidance, standards, governance and infrastructure. This continues to include oversight of the key strategies and approaches that inform Transformation planning and Citizens @ the Centre.

The Strategic Initiatives team within the CITZ leads and supports key strategic government initiatives, such as web and data services, transformation planning and open government. It plays a critical role as a strategic enabler for government to expand and evolve its business on multiple levels. It is responsible for developing and supporting the corporate approach to web, and facilitating its broad adoption across government. It does this through a number of process and methods, as detailed below.

The team reaches out to ministries at all levels through a number of channels and processes, both formal and informal, including the Transformation planning process, deputy communications, and communities of practices.

Ministries are responsible for overseeing and executing their sector Transformation plans including ensuring they have the structures and processes in place to align their web properties to the corporate strategy and design principles.

Ministries are encouraged to engage the Strategic Initiatives team throughout this process to confirm alignment and to gain access to enterprise toolsets to support their initiatives. If ministries need more help, information or support, they are encouraged to reach out to the team at uxbc@gov.bc.ca.

CORPORATE ONLINE SERVICES

Corporate Online Services is a branch of the Strategic Initiatives division of LCITZ, which provides skills, tools and resources to enable ministries to deliver on their internet strategy commitments. There are 3 main teams within the branch that are described below.

Online Technology Services

Online Technology Services (OTS) is the department that manages the enterprise content management framework described in Appendix B. It includes hosting, CMS, search and web analytics applications, which allow ministries to efficiently and effectively deliver their business while aligning to government's strategic direction for online service delivery.

These services are available to all government organizations. OTS is ready and experienced with finding technical solutions and supporting transition for important business functions. In addition to technology solutions and management, a technical service desk is available for client support during business hours.

Full service descriptions are defined in a client service agreement that identifies escalation points, agreed service levels and billable services and rates.

Contact the OTS to find out more about their tools and services at uxbc@gov.bc.ca.

User Experience (UX) team

The Centre of User Design Leadership, also known as the UX team, was established to design the user experience for government, and to perform enterprise level research to guide service design. The development and redesign of all government web sites and online services will be directed by this group using a citizen-centric design approach and adhering to relevant standards.

The UX team is made up of experts in design research, metadata and information architecture, graphic design, content design and management, and writing for web. The team has extensive training and experience in User Experience Design. When paired with their experience implementing web development projects at the enterprise, ministry and program level, their UX focus makes them uniquely suited to facilitate the adoption of the Internet Strategy across government.

They understand the unique challenges of this work and are eager spread their knowledge to create a culture across government that embraces UX design on a grass roots level, so that in future this important and engaging work can be done without them. Contact the team at uxbc@gov.bc.ca.

Project Management Office (PMO)

Given the scope and visibility of our strategic initiatives, the costs involved, and the risks to the organization and the province should they not be successful, a critical success factor for the Strategic Initiatives division is provided by the PMO team. The team ensures we have reliable insight into the current state of all projects and that we understand overall trends to help address immediate issues, make tactical decisions, and formulate long-term strategies.

The PMO oversees a broad range of projects, and each project strives for:

1. Successful and consistent use of project management practices on all projects.
2. Fostering an environment where project teams, project managers and projects can flourish.
3. Support and embrace innovative project management solutions to ensure unique project requirements are met and the organization is not at risk.
4. Provide project performance data at a level of detail required for effective and efficient decision making for all levels in the organization.

SERVICES PROVIDED

The following integrated services are supported through Corporate Online Services. Contact the team at uxbc@gov.bc.ca to get more information about these services, what they cost, how they are supported, and how to adopt them.

Design Research, Strategy and Web Content Development

As described above, the UX team supports ministries and sectors to develop and implement a process to conduct design research and develop and implement a web strategy based on their research finding. This is done through a combination of integrated toolkits, training and personalized support to program areas to help plan and implement specific web and service design projects (see Appendix B for more detail).

Strategies are agreed to by the ministry or sector and provide a common understanding of the particular citizens that ministry serves. Through this process we are able to ensure that work defined in ministry strategies accomplishes both the ministry and program areas service objectives and meets the needs of their users. It also ensures that the resulting web presence meets corporate direction and all relevant web standards and guidelines.

By engaging with this process, ministries are able to benefit from an enterprise wide view and share in the expertise, lessons learned, and research gathered corporately and by other participants. This ensures that ministries do not undertake unnecessary work; work already done by someone else or work that does not meet the needs of citizens and improve service delivery.
The services include:

- Business discovery research
- Usability and accessibility testing
- Exploratory research (ethnographic and behavioural)
- Web strategy development
- Information architecture and content development
- Graphic design and prototyping

This process will not only ensure government's web presence is more consistent and user focused and provides better service, but will also provide substantial cost saving opportunities for ministries.

Content Management and Publication

Corporate Online Solutions manages government's main web presence, gov.bc.ca, and works with programs to integrate their web content. We are committed to ensuring that citizen-facing, service-focussed web content from across government is optimally presented in gov.bc.ca.
As described above, the tool that support governments enterprise content management framework is (HP Autonomy) Interwoven Teamsite 7.2.1. It is a highly ranked self service tool that allows a user to safely and securely make updates to content on a controlled website. It is accessible through single sign-on only and supports both static (Sitepublisher) and dynamic (LiveSite) content.

The Content Management Framework project, described in Appendix B, was completed in the first quarter of the 2012-13 fiscal year. The newly simplified interface puts content in the hands of the content owner, allowing them to quickly and easily make corrections, immediately publish into production, and automate information release. The interface is easy to use and intuitive, so no extensive training or confusing manuals are required.

In addition, this tool is fully integrated with the Google Search Appliances described below, providing the added benefits of good metadata management and search technology.

Government is strongly recommending the use of this tool across ministries. It is the best option available and provides substantial cost saving opportunities.

Webtrends Analytics

Webtrends Analytics is a corporate service that helps business areas better understand their web performance. It provides tools and methods to analyze use and determine the effectiveness of their web properties and transactional services.

Webtrends leads the field in its ability to manage key data, such as visits, hits and site behavior. It also includes embedded time sensitive tools, such as heatmaps, which can help inform advertising, promotions, or web design decisions.

When analyzed and interpreted together with user experience best practices and the corporate approach outlined in this document, Webtrends data will help ministries create more complete and multi dimensional service design strategies.

Government is strongly recommending the use of Webtrends Analytics across ministries. With a single web analysis toolset government can ensure it has an enterprise view of web effectiveness, which will inform better, evidence based service design decisions.

Google Search

In conjunction with the launch of the redesigned main government website, gov.bc.ca, government purchased Google Search Appliances (GSA) and licensing to support enterprise wide implementation of public and internal web search.

Important features of this product include faceted search (in use by MyHR), integration of search with the CMS, self service search page configuration for web property owners, and proof of concept for authenticated search.

Government is strongly recommending the use of GSA Search Service across ministries. It will greatly improve consistency and relevance of search results, and will provide substantial cost saving by reducing or eliminating licensing, hosting and support duplication.

Professional Services

Strategic initiatives division has a strong commitment to providing innovative, enterprise solutions that help transform government, and for supporting ministries in delivering on their business. Over the past year its work has included a number of special projects that have resulted in approaches and tools to support data visualization and presentation, app development, mobile content, high definition web casting, cloud services and more.

The strategic initiatives division also includes DataBC, who provide enterprise data services, geolocation services, mapping application frameworks and support Open Data for the BC Government. Find out more in the DataBC Concept of Operations.