

Digital Public Services Policy

Last reviewed: Jan 2024
Next review: Jan 2025

Digital Citizen Experience, Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement

This document outlines the Digital Public Services Policy, and references the supporting standards, that informs service design for Government of Saskatchewan public-facing digital services.

Background

The policy was first implemented in January 2018 to ensure the proper design and development for Government of Saskatchewan (GoS) public-facing digital services.

The public needs digital services that are simple and fast and can be accessed anytime and anywhere. The people of Saskatchewan want simplified processes that demonstrate government is an enabler to what they are trying to achieve, and that government values their time and effort.

GoS needs to deliver digital services that are high quality and cost effective in a timely manner with consideration given to timing, budget, available resources, operational limitations, privacy, security, etc.

Digital services, when designed and delivered effectively, offer an opportunity to take all these needs into consideration. The standards outlined in this policy ensure that project teams are delivering incremental value quickly while improving satisfaction with service delivery and saving both the people of Saskatchewan and GoS time and money.

Any projects started after the last reviewed date are subject to this policy.

Defining Digital Services

Government of Saskatchewan digital services are defined as:

- public facing;
- Executive government services that are offered to the public;
- non-Executive government services that are offered on Saskatchewan.ca or through Saskatchewan Account;
- owned by Government of Saskatchewan;
- new informational services;
 - typically, websites or mobile applications that provide information to the public
- new transactional services;
 - any service that leads to a change in the records held by government, such as, an exchange of information, money, licenses or goods: applying for a permit/license/lease; submitting a claim; applying for a grant; updating contact details; and requesting government assistance
- existing transactional services; and
- undertaken by third parties on behalf of government agencies.

Policy Framework

This policy establishes required standards for developing digital services to ensure that the Government of Saskatchewan's digital services provide value for both the people of Saskatchewan and GoS. All Government of Saskatchewan public digital services must adhere to the standards defined within.

At its core, this policy has **three objectives**:

1. Design and develop online services for and with the public;

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2. Deliver value quickly and continuously to Saskatchewan people and the Government of Saskatchewan; and
3. Reuse and build upon existing design knowledge and tools to maintain cost efficiency and support One Government strategy.

Along with **three key principles**:

1. **Collaboration**
Delivering digital services requires equal collaboration across technology, business process, and user needs. Tight coordination and collaboration between the program area ministry(s) and ITD, as well as other key stakeholders identified is critical to the success of the project.
2. **Shared assessment responsibilities**
The defined project team, no matter ministry or role, shares the responsibility of assessing the proper implementation of the standards to generate criteria that is user centric and not business centric.
3. **Pragmatic, value-driven, opportunity-focused decisions**
Application of this policy should promote practical problem solving to advance our Commitment to Excellence. A well-defined, user-centred problem becomes an opportunity to solve the problem while continuing to balance the interests of the public with the budget, time and resource constraints of the ministry.

At the onset of the project, the vendors, ministry and Digital Citizen Delivery team need to work closely to define the role and accountability for each party.

Policy Criteria

This policy endorses the application of six criteria to direct the successful implementation of Government of Saskatchewan digital services. The Service Design Standard must be followed during each of the six criteria driving the policy. Supporting standards in addition to the Service Design Standard will be noted under each of the six following items.

1. Understand user needs and be user focused
2. Design a consistent user experience
3. Use common government platforms and systems
4. Make accessible and responsive designs
5. Be iterative and test often
6. Measure performance and support users

1. Understand user needs and be user focused

When we identify who the users are and work with them to understand their needs and goals, it better informs the design of the service. Designs based on user feedback increase user satisfaction, save time and reduce costs.

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Benefits of the Criteria

Understanding user needs and being user focused, will:

- Identify the public users and internal users of the service:
 - define the different types of people that use the service and their characteristics
 - understand any needs or limitations the users may have
 - record the accessibility needs to address these limitations
- Document the users' goals:
 - understand the task(s) the user is trying to accomplish
 - document any technical limitations that could prevent the completion of these tasks
 - track the internal process required to support the completion of the user's tasks
- Record the major pain points recognized by user feedback:
 - define which pain points can be addressed within design and development
 - prioritize the pain points to implement as improvements
 - use improvements to streamline processes for internal staff and the public

Deliverable

Define the user audience and understand the user's needs and goals from feedback directly from the users. This understanding informs the design and development of the application including decisions made in the following criteria.

Gateway

To be completed prior to moving onto *Design a consistent user experience* to guide future decisions.

2. Design a consistent user experience

Designing digital services with consistency maintains standard page formats, navigation and patterns that reduce the cognitive load on users. The familiarity of one page to the next and the recognition of familiar patterns means the user does not have to spend time relearning the layout or the navigation to move forward. By making everything familiar, cognitive load is reduced and the user has more time to focus on the task they are trying to accomplish.

Supporting Standards

- [Digital Content Writing Standard](#)
- [Service Design Standard](#)
- [URL Standard](#)

Benefits of the Criteria

Designing a consistent user experience, will:

- Create familiarity and confidence with the public across GoS digital services with the Design Element and Pattern Standards.

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- Build user trust with the Government of Saskatchewan digital services ensuring continued use and return visits.
- Build easy to recall URLs and sub domains.
- Reduce traditional phone and in-person service needs and support.
- Increase online comprehension with content that is actionable, easy to read and written in plain language as outlined in the Writing for the Web Style Guide.
- Reduce design and development time by reusing standards that have been tested and proven.

Deliverable

Consistent designs based on supporting standards that designers and developers use to standardize colour palettes, design elements and patterns along with usability best practices to create consistency within GoS digital services.

Gateway

To be completed prior to moving onto *Use common government platforms and systems* to guide future requirements.

3. Use common government platforms and systems

Reusing existing enterprise platforms and systems builds a sustainable infrastructure of technology and design that can be more easily managed and maintained when future services are added. Existing roadmaps of information and functionality aligns each project with current services and reduces fragmentation of standards or best practices. This approach increases the speed by which a product can be built and reduces the resources and costs associated with developing new services.

Supporting Standards

- [Browser and Device Standard](#)
- [Mobile App Store Standard](#)
- [Privacy Statement](#)
- [Service Design Standard](#)

Benefits of the Criteria

Using common government platforms and systems, will:

- Reduce design and development time by reusing standards that have been tested and proven.
- Build trust with the public by using security and privacy standards that have been tested and successfully measured during development of previous digital services.
- Bring users back to the digital channel by building trust and reducing more expensive and resource-heavy channels such as in-office and phone inquiries.
- Use consistent privacy review standards to determine data classification and terms of use for each service.
- Ensure the service follows *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Health Information Protection Act* by providing a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) signed by the ministry's privacy officer.
- Utilize Saskatchewan.ca Sitecore platform to ensure:
 - publicly available content lives on Saskatchewan.ca

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- integration of Saskatchewan.ca header/footer within applications
- Utilize Saskatchewan Account for:
 - user sign-on – providing single sign on to multiple digital services
 - profile management – ability to update user profile and manage profile credentials, contact information and account information for all services
 - Individual user authentication – validating user identity, Saskatchewan residency and age over 18 when required by specific digital applications
 - Organization user authentication – verify the organization and complete the business profile
- Utilize a Saskatchewan.ca subdomain
 - New Saskatchewan.ca sub-domain for all services

Deliverable

Leveraging common enterprise platforms, existing architectural work and micro services delivers faster and cheaper digital services with foundational components that have been through the rigour of security, technical review and user-centred design.

Gateway

To be completed prior to moving onto *Make accessible and responsive designs* to guide future requirements.

4. Make accessible and responsive designs

Accessibility standards support users with physical and/or cognitive limitations to ensure they can successfully use GoS digital services the same as any other user. Meeting these standards guarantees the digital service addresses all user needs and reduces pain points that could prevent a successful experience.

Guaranteeing users have a rewarding user experience with a digital service no matter the device (laptop, tablet or mobile phone, for example) or browser they are using addresses their different needs.

Supporting Standards

- [Accessibility Standard](#)
- [Browser and Device Standard](#)

Benefits of the Criteria

Making accessible and responsive designs, will:

- Address all levels of user capabilities to create equal user experiences within GoS digital services.
- Reduce pain points for users with limited abilities and special needs by following the Accessibility Standard.
- Ensure users have an equal experience no matter the device or browser they use with the Browser and Device Standard.

Deliverable

Meet or exceed accessibility Level AA (W3C WCAG 2.0 AA) from the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 standard.

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Create responsive designs that supply the same experience on digital services no matter the device users are on or the browser they are using.

Gateway

To be completed prior to moving onto *Be iterative and test often* to guide future decisions.

5. Be iterative and test often

Creating digital services based on iterations of design and testing allows the project team to respond quickly to changes from user feedback or platform updates. Incorporating changes into each iteration is quick and cost effective in both design and technology. Testing should be done before the design stages, after the build stage and after launch. Once deployed, digital services should be continuously assessed for improvements and maintenance.

Supporting Standards

- [Iterative and Incremental Standard](#)

Benefits of the Criteria

Being iterative and testing often, will:

- Detail the user's journey in the digital service - start to end - as they attempt to complete their goal.
- Use an iterative approach to future additions and fixes with prioritization.
- Ensure the user's needs are being met for successful completion of tasks.
- Test simple prototypes of the application with real users to collect quality feedback.
- Assess the feedback for viable recommendations and improvements.
- Integrate recommendations to refine the design and inform development.
- Test improvements at each stage of the planning and development process.
- Reduce development costs by eliminating changes after development has started.
- Ensure the digital service is easy to use with successful results on devices and browsers outlined in the Browser and Device Standard.

Deliverable

A minimum viable product (MVP) that has been designed and tested end-to-end with real users prior to development.

Gateway

To be completed prior to moving onto *Measure performance and support users* to guide future decisions.

6. Measure performance and support users

Each digital service needs a plan to measure the performance and success of the application

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after implementation. At the beginning of the project, key performance indicators (KPI) need to be charted to track where the service is succeeding or falling short with users. By continuously tracking the digital service, a proactive approach is taken to maintain and improve it based on data analysis and feedback surveys. A service support system must quickly and efficiently address user feedback, so they feel assisted.

Supporting Standards

- [Data Analytics Standard](#)
- [Service Design Standard](#)

Benefits of the Criteria

Measuring performance and supporting users, will:

- Promote continuous improvement of the public-facing digital service.
- Provide a process for tagging, tracking and reporting on public queries to support continuous improvement.
- Outline a process for prioritizing digital service improvements from user and staff feedback.
- Install Google Analytics on all public-facing digital services to track and manage user feedback to influence future improvements.

Deliverable

Integrate continuous improvement of the digital service into the understanding and maintenance of the application by measuring the defined key performance indicators (KPI) chosen at the beginning of the process.