

Date: October 13, 2005
To: State Portal Steering Committee
From: State Portal Framework Team
Subject: Building a Common Vision

At the request of the State CIO, Clark Kelso, a State Portal Framework Team from the State Library and the California Research Bureau is developing a framework of policy and management issues surrounding the development of a new state portal. Based upon interviews with state agencies and initial research results, the Framework team considered it important to identify and clarify key concepts about the State Portal. These are divided into six categories:

- Recognizing Roles and Reality
- Customer Focus
- Government Without Boundaries – Cooperation and Collaboration
- Readable, Accessible, Understandable
- Accepted by People
- Sustainable and Evolving

Within the categories, there are 22 general conceptual guidelines with decision points to be reviewed by the State Portal Steering Committee at its meeting on October 14, 2005, with time on the agenda for Steering Committee members to provide direction.

The team presented this first segment of the draft framework, entitled *Building a Common Vision*, to the State Portal Review Board on September 9, 2005 for their review with an online survey made available the following week. Forty-seven percent of the voting members (17 of 36) completed the survey.

Survey results show general agreement with those concepts. There are three of the 22 questions in which two or more of those surveyed responded with “disagree.”

Question 7 - The State Portal should be all-inclusive of California state government.
10 respondents agreed, 4 respondents disagreed, and 3 respondents felt more information was needed. This question was the only decision point with significant disagreement in the Review Board survey responses.

Question 3 - Content development should recognize that many users will access State information, services and applications they want through non-State search engines, portals and web sites.
15 respondents agreed, 2 respondents disagreed with the statement. A comment was received from one of the dissenting respondents emphasizing that the state needs to improve its search functionality rather than relying on users to enter through third-party search engines.

Question 16 - State Portal development efforts will ensure needs of underserved communities are addressed.
9 respondents agreed, 2 respondents disagreed, and 6 respondents felt more information was needed.

The draft segment, *Building a Common Vision* (Attachment A), and the online survey with the Review Board response (Attachment B) are provided.

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Draft Framework Segment

We envision over time a virtual gateway to government where citizens and businesses are able to conduct their government business in an efficient, effective, pleasing and secure virtual environment. Our users should see an intuitive, informative entry designed specifically for them, not government organization or convenience. Government, especially in California, is so large and diverse that specialization and division of responsibilities are necessary to effectively manage resources and workload. These divisions should be invisible to our customers. To achieve that, state government will have to work together to understand those needs and to create a user-centered State Portal and cross-agency portals focused on specific topics and audience groups that bring together the appropriate information, services and applications to help.

Recognizing Roles and Reality

Beverly Godwin, Director of FirstGov – the award-winning U.S. portal, commented that the term portal is “very much in use today in the online world, but the definition depends on who’s using it. ... I am defining government portals as one-stop access to:

- All government information and services, or
- Information and services on one topic government-wide.” [*FirstGov is Your Gateway to the United States Government: The Business Impact of Government-wide Portals,* Beverly Godwin, April 19, 2001]

The new State Portal should serve as the public’s gateway to all information, services, applications and transactions that California State government provides online. In developing that gateway, we should recognize that the vast majority of the content the public finds – whether information, services, applications or transactions – have been and are being developed by the diverse government entities that make up State and local government within California. That means that while we are creating a central gateway into the rich online resources, agencies working individually and cooperatively will continue to be the primary developers of the content for which the State Portal provides entry. Agency leadership in

- program development,
- information technologies and
- funding success

are critical to quality content and services to be delivered.

We should also recognize that many, if not most, users will find State information, services and applications they want through non-state search engines, portals and web sites. The generic search engines such as Google, Yahoo and MSN are and will likely remain the first choice of users, even when the topic is California government. Others will come through the FirstGov search engine that includes state governments and still others through California county and city portals. Developing the State Portal, collaborative cross-agency portals and individual agency web sites should seek to maximize access through those alternative gateways.

Decision Points

Agencies working individually and cooperatively will continue to be the primary developers of content.

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Draft Framework Segment

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Agency leadership in program development, information technologies and funding success are critical to quality content and services.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Content development should recognize that many users will access State information, services and applications they want through non-State search engines, portals and web sites.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Customer-Focus

Government exists to serve the people, yet government websites are frequently designed to facilitate government programs and staff rather than customer needs. The State Portal should be organized so that customers are able to find the information and services they need in a simple and intuitive way in order to conduct their business in a secure, efficient manner. This lesson is one that other states and other governments are learning as well. "Federal agencies are discovering that a good Web site should be constructed to satisfy users, not designers. The latest update of FirstGov, the federal government's main portal, reflects that philosophy, making usability the organizing principle, according to officials in the General Services Administration, which manages the site." [*"Online feng shui," Diane Frank, FCW.COM, May 19, 2003.*]

We need to actively listen to the people we serve – through user focus groups, emails, surveys, constituent requests, advocacy groups and the experience of our own frontline staff . We also need to look at how we bring together the content from the users' perspective, identifying the best practices that will allow us to define and promote good web content management, interoperability standards and cross-agency cooperation and collaboration.

The Portal should be seen as one more means of access for government services, complementing the existing channels such as brick-and-mortar offices, telephone services, or mail services. Not all people embrace e-government and those that do may not choose electronic methods for all transactions.

Decision Points

The Portal should be designed to meet the needs of the people and businesses of California, not the convenience or organizational structure of State government.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Draft Framework Segment

The Portal should establish a model for including users in the planning, design, implementation and testing of the California State Portal and cross-agency portals.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

The Portal will complement, not replace, existing service channels.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Government Without Boundaries – Cooperation & Collaboration

The Internet now provides the technical ability for separate government entities to share information and services in a collaborative environment to present a single, unified entry into California state government. People should not have to know what agency provides a service or have to visit multiple sites to find services they need because different agencies or levels of government own separate pieces. An enterprise-wide portal should provide seamless services, with internal systems, not customers, responsible for communicating with the different agencies involved.

To provide government without boundaries, the development of a State Portal even in the beginning should be all-inclusive at a state level, representing the executive branch including all constitutional officers, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. For the State Portal to be an effective gateway to the full range of government services in California, it also needs to address the relationship with counties, cities, special districts and other local governments as well as selected federal services. As stakeholders and partners with the state in delivering services, local governments need to be actively included in the design, implementation and operation of the State Portal. Similarly, the state should encourage federal participation.

We must encourage and support policies, procedures and partnerships by state agencies that support cross-agency cooperation and collaboration, both within the state and with other government entities.

Decision Points

The State Portal should be all-inclusive of California state government.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

The State Portal should provide entry to and from California city, county and other local government services.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Draft Framework Segment

The State Portal should include entry to and from appropriate federal government services.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Representatives from other levels of government will be included in efforts to design the State Portal and cross-agency portals focused on topics and audience groups.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Policies, standards and tools should be developed to support and encourage communication, cooperation and collaboration.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Readable, Accessible, Understandable

State government services must be available to all members of California's large and diverse population. Critical information and services are needed by Californians regardless of age, language, ethnicity, ability, education level, or familiarity with the Internet. Web sites, if properly designed, provide an effective means for people with disabilities or language barriers to interact with government. The Portal will comply with federal and state laws including, but not limited, to Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act. We in State government also need to develop knowledge, skills and abilities involved in usability design and testing.

Decision Points

The State Portal and cross-agency portals will be readable to all users, with content written in plain language to be understood by the general public.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

The State Portal and cross-agency portals will be accessible, meeting at a minimum the criteria of Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act while increasing equality of services for persons with disabilities.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

The state should establish models for usability and its testing for both the Portals and agency web sites.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Draft Framework Segment

The state should develop guidelines on information and services that need to be provided in non-English versions.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

State Portal development efforts will ensure needs of underserved communities are addressed.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Accepted by People

To be effective, the State Portal must be viewed by the people and businesses of California as a viable and trusted way of interacting with State government. Users should find the Portal to be a more convenient, faster, and less expensive way of interacting with the government than traditional channels of brick-and-mortar offices, telephones, and mail.

Public trust has to be earned and maintained. The capabilities will be there for more transparent and efficient State government that shares information internally, enables electronic access to records and services, and has the technical ability to connect individual and corporate data. Portal users will want to know that policies, procedures, and accountability are in place to protect their privacy and the security of their information. Public information must be used appropriately; policy can establish limits and barriers to ensure this will occur.

Decision Points

Comprehensive privacy and security policies will be in place specific to the Portal and digital government in California.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

The state's privacy and security policies will be readily available and clearly communicated to the public.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Draft Framework Segment

Sustainable and Evolving

Planning for the State Portal must address governance, sustainability, and enhancement. Governance structures must be created to ensure the Portal stays true to its charge and its users. Departments remain responsible for developing, funding and managing web content and services within their programs; however, some enterprise-level information and shared services will need to be funded and governed at a state level. Sustainability will be dependant upon securing funding to support ongoing development and maintenance of the core Portal services.

The Portal must be developed so that it can remain responsive to the impact of technologies upon improved services and changes in user behaviors. Technologies are changing rapidly, with potential applications for State government such as XML, RSS feeds, wireless services, streaming audio/video, and iPod casts. The Portal infrastructure, guidelines, and standards should be flexible enough to embrace new technologies that will enable the state to provide high quality, low cost and efficient services.

Decision Points

Planning for the State Portal must address governance, sustainability, and enhancement.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

The state should pursue multiple funding streams to support the State Portal, cross-agency portals on topics and for audience groups, and program specific agency web sites.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Ongoing operations for the State Portal need to have their own assured sources of funding based upon the value of the Portal to the state.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Development of the Portal infrastructure, guidelines, and standards should be flexible enough to include emerging technologies.

Agree *Disagree* *More Information Needed*

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Survey with Review Board Results

Section I - Recognizing Roles and Reality

The new State Portal should serve as the public's gateway to all information, services, applications and transactions that California State government provides online.

1. Agencies working individually and cooperatively will continue to be the primary developers of content.

Review Board Survey: 13 agreed, 1 disagreed, 4 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

2. Agency leadership in program development, information technologies and funding success are critical to quality content and services.

Review Board Survey: 15 agreed, 0 disagreed, 2 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

3. Content development should recognize that many users will access State information, services and applications they want through non-State search engines, portals and web sites.

Review Board Survey and Comments: 15 agreed, 2 disagreed, 0 needed more information

"I think it is critical that the State incorporate a GOOD search engine in its portal development. Why send users somewhere else to find what they are looking for on our Portal? Saying that customers use other search engines like Google ignores the frustration every user feels when they try the horrible search engine currently in use by nearly all State websites."

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Survey with Review Board Results

Section II - Customer Focus

Government exists to serve the people. Customers should be able to use the State Portal to find the information and services they need in a simple and intuitive way in order to conduct their business in a secure, efficient manner. We need to actively listen to the people we serve and look at how we bring together the content from the users' perspective

4. The Portal should be designed to meet the needs of the people and businesses of California, not the convenience or organizational structure of State government.

Review Board Survey and Comments: 17 agreed, 0 disagreed, 0 needed more information

"The portal development requires two perspectives of vision. One is the desire of the state to be accessible to its citizen. The more difficult is that of the citizen who enters the portal, one person at a time, so from that perspective it is a more personal inquiry, then the state perceives it's response. The portal should be user driven; yet "non-users" are developing it. A worthy challenge."

"We must keep in mind that there are different levels of maturity in portal usage. For example, some small business need a basic screen-based entry system to get their data to the appropriate agencies while larger, more sophisticated employers need a file transfer mechanism to get their large volumes of data to the appropriate agencies. We need to design for various levels of sophistication."

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

5. The Portal should establish a model for including users in the planning, design, implementation and testing of the California State Portal and cross-agency portals.

Review Board Survey: 13 agreed, 0 disagreed, 4 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

6. The Portal will complement, not replace, existing service channels such as brick-and-mortar offices, telephone centers, and mail.

Review Board Survey: 13 agreed, 0 disagreed, 4 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Survey with Review Board Results

Section III - Cooperation and Collaboration

An enterprise-wide portal should provide seamless services, with internal systems, not customers, responsible for communicating with the different agencies involved. Users should not have to know what agency provides a service or have to visit multiple sites to find services they need because different agencies or levels of government own separate pieces.

7. The State Portal should be all-inclusive of California state government.

Review Board Survey: 10 agreed, 4 disagreed, 3 needed more information

Framework Team Note: Question 7 was the only source of significant disagreement in the Portal Review Board survey responses. Further research and discussion are needed.

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

8. The State Portal should provide entry to and from California city, county and other local government services.

Review Board Survey: 13 agreed, 0 disagreed, 4 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

9. The State Portal should include entry to and from appropriate federal government services.

Review Board Survey: 12 agreed, 1 disagreed, 4 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

10. Representatives from other levels of government will be included in efforts to design the State Portal and cross-agency portals focused on topics and audience groups.

Review Board Survey: 13 agreed, 1 disagreed, 3 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

11. Policies, standards and tools should be developed to support and encourage communication, cooperation and collaboration.

Review Board Survey: 16 agreed, 0 disagreed, 1 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Survey with Review Board Results

Section IV - Readable, Accessible, Understandable

State government services must be available to all members of California's large and diverse population. Critical information and services are needed by Californians regardless of age, language, ethnicity, ability, education level, or familiarity with the Internet. Web sites, if properly designed, provide an effective means for people with disabilities or language barriers to interact with government.

12. The State Portal and cross-agency portals will be readable to all users, with content written in plain language to be understood by the general public.

Review Board Survey: 16 agreed, 0 disagreed, 1 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

13. The State Portal and cross-agency portals will be accessible, meeting at a minimum the criteria of Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act while increasing equality of services for persons with disabilities.

Review Board Survey and Comments: 15 agreed, 1 disagreed, 1 needed more information

"We may not be able to make our web sites as accessible to as many people as possible. Some state web sites serve very technical audiences using sophisticated web services like GIS. GIS is inherently a visual medium and the enabling technologies are not yet and may never be to the point of providing total accessibility to all groups. Further, many agencies may not have the resources (staff and funding) to effect optimal accessibility. So our choice may be to allow some web sites/content however imperfect rather than no web content at all."

"Section 4, item 13, I said "Disagree" because it said "at a minimum" meet the Rehab guidelines. I think it is important to follow these guidelines, but there could be instances where we want to provide services using technologies that may not be accessible to all users. We would want to provide alternatives for these users, but those might not be web alternatives."

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

14. The state should establish models for usability and its testing for both the Portals and agency web sites.

Review Board Survey: 15 agreed, 0 disagreed, 2 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

15. The state should develop guidelines on information and services that need to be provided in non-English versions.

Review Board Survey: 15 agreed, 0 disagreed, 2 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

16. State Portal development efforts will ensure needs of underserved communities are addressed.

Review Board Survey: 9 agreed, 2 disagreed, 6 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

**Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal
Survey with Review Board Results**

Section V - Accepted by People

To be effective, the State Portal must be viewed by the people and businesses of California as a viable and trusted way of interacting with State government. Users should find the Portal to be a more convenient, faster, and less expensive way of interacting with the government than traditional channels of brick-and-mortar offices, telephones, and mail. Public trust has to be earned and maintained. Public information must be used appropriately. Portal users will want to know that policies, procedures, and accountability are in place to protect their privacy and the security of their information.

17. Comprehensive privacy and security policies will be in place specific to the Portal and digital government in California.

Review Board Survey: 17 agreed, 0 disagreed, 0 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

18. The state's privacy and security policies will be readily available and clearly communicated to the public.

Review Board Survey: 17 agreed, 0 disagreed, 0 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

Building a Common Vision for California's New State Portal Survey with Review Board Results

Section VI - Sustainable and Evolving

Governance structures must be created to ensure the Portal stays true to its charge and its users. The Portal must be developed so that it can remain responsive to the impact of technologies upon improved services and changes in user behaviors.

19. Planning for the State Portal must address governance, sustainability, and enhancement.

Review Board Survey: 16 agreed, 0 disagreed, 1 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

20. The state should pursue multiple funding streams to support the State Portal, cross-agency portals on topics and for audience groups, and program specific agency web sites.

Review Board Survey: 14 agreed, 1 disagreed, 2 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

21. Ongoing operations for the State Portal need to have their own assured sources of funding based upon the value of the Portal to the state.

Review Board Survey and Comments: 14 agreed, 0 disagreed, 3 needed more information

"I think the Portal needs its own funding. Relying on funding commitments from other departments will put the project at risk every budget cycle."

Agree Disagree More Information Needed

22. Development of the Portal infrastructure, guidelines, and standards should be flexible enough to include emerging technologies.

Review Board Survey: 15 agreed, 0 disagreed, 2 needed more information

Agree Disagree More Information Needed