

PLANNING DOCUMENT: www.plainlanguage.gov**PART I: IDENTIFY WHERE YOU ARE GOING*****Plain Language (PL) Mission and Vision***

- Support and promote the public's right to clear information;
- Encourage Federal government to communicate more clearly;
- Take steps to put PL executive order into effect;
- Provide PL tools and resources to all audiences:
 - o government executives
 - o managers
 - o worker bees
 - o academicians
 - o advocates
 - o newcomers (the uninitiated)
 - o press
 - o critics
- Educate the public about PL (history of organization, uses, goals, achievements);
- Emphasize/cultivate PL as an international movement to catch attention/support within the Federal Government;
- Advocate PL and clear communication.

How This Site Will Support *the Plain Language Mission and Vision*

- Provides tools for all PL audiences (see above), including:
 - o "before & after" examples (*most-requested item*)
 - o explanation of time & cost-saving benefits
 - o resources for further exploration of PL
- Serves as catalyst for promoting PL by showing the communication improvements possible with PL;
- Present the PL argument in a way that "status quo" thinkers don't find threatening;
- Expands the audience, and hopefully the number of supporters of PL by providing up-to-date news and information about PL;
- Offers link to Center for Plain Language (www.plainlanguage.org);
- Provides a comprehensive resource and companion to community site (www.plainlanguage.org).

The Goals of this Site

Immediate

- Set up project schedule;
- Secure volunteers to execute project and class members;
- Get agreement (project plan sign-off) from stakeholders.

Short Term

- Provide the following resources:
 - o Show benefits through concrete examples (“before & after” samples);
 - o Success stories (“How using PL helped my organization”);
 - o Avoiding pitfalls (“Practices that work and practices that don’t”);
 - o Plan of attack (“How to think about projects from a PL perspective (i.e. a user point of view)”);
 - o Correcting misinformation (“PL myths and how to dispel them”);
 - o How-to/structure guide (“How to start a PL program at your agency”);
 - o Feedback mechanism (“Did you find this site helpful?”);
 - o Content related to awards program;
 - o Content related to PL Agency activities, other agency PL activities;
 - o Content that encourages people to provide their own “before & after” examples;
- Show value to current administration;
 - o Show relationship of PL to e-government initiative
- Set up structure for managing site access, mailing list;
 - o Find person to keep PL audience list up-to-date
 - o Possible resource: Director of Help Desk at Smithsonian
- Decrease Annetta’s email responsibility (i.e. make site answer more questions);
- Provide content that relates PL to usable electronic documents;
- I.D. current content:
 - o Complete a content inventory
 - mark content for keeping as-is/minor editing/major editing/removing
- Determine technical infrastructure related to databases, firewalls, site residence, opportunities to connect to search tools;
- GSA put PL site inside a firewall
- Prominently display PL logo on Home page and on subpages as the Home link.
- Present a site that is as useful to someone who has never heard of PL before as it is to a seasoned PL advocate.

The Goals of this Site cont'd...

Long Term

- See PL implemented and become the “norm” in government, i.e. see concrete examples of the government communicating more clearly with the public on a regular basis;
- Find out the ten most common documents the government uses, try to improve them (e.g. HUD-1 application for mortgages; passport application);
- Create contact list of pro-PL media (“Friends of Plain Language in the Pres.”);
- Create additional content:
 - o Long-term support guide (“The nuts and bolts of supporting an organization’s transfer to PL”);
 - secure support for research-based guidelines;
 - increase outreach to PL executive and management audiences;
 - provide concise reference content that agencies can present with their link to www.plainlanguage.gov to briefly explain the site.

Measures of Success

- See increase in:
 - o Site visitors
 - o Click-throughs to Center for Plain Language
 - o Workshop sign-ups
 - o Agencies that have internal websites
 - o Links across government to PL website, subsites.
- A mailing list function and database that works:
 - o Better management of new member lists:
 - Core list 120
 - Larger list 300
 - Unknown quantity of names in “mailing list function”
- Better stat management;
- Receive 20 emails on site usefulness during next fiscal year;
- Recognized acknowledgement from current administration;
- Improved relationship with government offices of public affairs;
- At least 1 press release per month released on PL within the year after site revision;
- Acknowledgement and recognition from at least one manager in every department;
- More people requesting PL outreach (such as training);
- Annetta answering fewer emails (because site provides answers).

PART II: IDENTIFY HOW YOU WILL GET THERE

--- ENVISION USERS

Users

- government executives
- managers
- worker bees
- academicians
- advocates
- newcomers (the uninitiated)
- press
- critics

Users Personified:

- Government Executive
 - “I am in the private sector and am implementing a PL program at my business.”
 - “Why should I care about PL?”
 - “Who else is doing it?”
 - “I need an executive summary that explains how much I can save.”
 - “How do I get started?”
- Manager
 - “How can I sell PL in a way that will make it a success?”
 - “Show me ‘before & afters’ from my own work-world.”
 - “I don’t have a ‘before & after’ at my organization. Can I send you a ‘before’ document and have you create an ‘after’ and use the two as examples on your site?”
 - “Give me statistics on time and money saved using PL.”
- Worker Bee
 - “I need to find a particular document.”
 - “Which word should I use in this sentence?”
 - “Give me lots of tools that will help me apply PL concepts to the document I am working on right now.”
- Academician
 - “My students are doing papers on PL and want information.”
 - “I am interested in the PL movement and want to connect with people who are involved.”
 - “I am a Plain Language advocate and want a source for information and networking.”
 - “I’m trying to apply this same kind of concept at my university. The PL site ‘finally makes me feel like I’m home,’ talking to like-minded people.”
- Advocate
 - “I want a source for information and networking.”
 - “I want tools that will help me spread the word about PL (definitions, before & after examples).”

Users Personified cont'd...

- Advocate cont'd...
 - o "Give me a list of the best arguments for using PL, and ways to refute arguments against PL."
 - o "Give me the most up-to-date information on PL available."
 - o "Give me information on PL and PL techniques presented in a format that is easy to pass on to others."
- Newcomers
 - o "What is PL and why should I care?"
 - o "Connect me with other people interested in PL."
 - o "Who/what organizations currently use PL? Has it helped them and if so, in what ways?"
 - o "Show me the key information quickly and easily."
 - o Give me some examples (before & after)."
- Press
 - o "Is this movement newsworthy and if so, why?"
 - o "Give me a list of reliable sources who can answer my questions about the PL movement."
 - o "Show me the latest news coverage of the PL movement."
 - o "What is the history of the PL movement?"
- Critics
 - o "I heard that PL overstates its cost-effectiveness figures. Is this true and if not, why have I heard this?"
 - o "Isn't this just one more way for the government to impose control and time-consuming exercises on its employees?"
 - o "Convince me that my misgivings about PL are unfounded/less important than the advantages of PL."

User Purposes/Goals

- Content is helpful in concrete ways (e.g. "before & after" examples);
- PL standards/regulations harmonize with U.S. regulations;
- Show what actual agencies are doing with PL right now;
- Keep current about PL in government;
 - o Keep involved with Federal PL community
 - o Understand relationship among PL and other PL organizations;
- Understand how PL is "usable" language;
- Explore practices that work and practices that don't work;
- Incorporate PL principles in project planning (focus on user goals);
- Discover myths and how to dispel them;
- Find out how to start a PL program;
- Provide useful feedback;
- Understand relationship between PL and e-government initiative;
- Find out how to edit content within a PL framework;

User Purposes/Goals cont'd...

- Be able to get answers to most questions on the site (i.e. without having to contact PL volunteers for support);
- Find content that relates PL to usable electronic documents.
- Convince others (supervisors, colleagues, friends) of the merits of PL.

Possible Disconnects between business goals and user goals

- Volunteers with limited funds/limited time;
- Volunteers with limited time for incorporating change;
- Concerns over the label “Plain Language” (a word-focused term that inhibits a broader application of the concept).

User Tasks

USER TASKS

Government Executive

Find out why I should bother.

Find out if I can blow this off.

Look for arguments that combine persuasion with “it’s good for you” attitude.

Get answers to “in what ways is this too complex to be plain?” questions.

Find out if PL is more than words.

Find out how much this will cost me.

Find out what is the least I can do

Find out if this is a basic kind of thing.

Find out where to get help doing this.

Manager

Discover ways to sell PL in a way that will make it successful at my organization.

Get “before & after” examples and the date on which the example was last updated (i.e. currency of the update).

Submit my own “before” documents for PL treatment, then use “after” result in a “before & after” example on my company’s website.

Find examples of how other government offices use PL.

See references to any new publications and/or research papers on PL.

Find information to send to my staff & colleagues about how apply PL to grant writing.

Find links to other relevant websites.

Get a list of resources where I can call before I submit an example

Find "things I need" -- performance support system for testing what I've written

Review tips for presenting information via PowerPoint, etc.

Guides for "selling" Plain Language to make the business case

Give me basics that step me through how to do something (design a form)

get decision support from table that shows different tools for improving writing

Link learning, information, performance support ...tutorials on writing regs/policies

Get information on how to write KSAs to explain this is what I did (not job description, tasks, challenges, results)

Getting Writing for the web support

See examples of usable operations manuals

Access Federal standards (if Annetta likes it)

Respond to comment that says, "you can't convey technical information if you write in plain language"

Find out if FOGG texts are important/useful

Get information for writing for the spoken word (identify ways to support people in speaking)

Find me a PL expert I can bring in to provide a new set of eyes

What do I do if I find a format that stinks?

Get real examples that my staff/colleagues can connect to

Find ways to help people see things better

Give me tool that my staff can use easily

Give me tools that my staff can use to show people above how information could be clearer

Show managers they don't have to put gobbledygook back in documents after g-gook was taken out

Find a real business case for clarity

See more justification.

Find more than samples--find case law that people can use to justify

Worker Bee

Define Plain Language

Get help with a particular document.

Find a cheat-sheet for how to write a PL document.

Find documents that are similar to what I'm working on and contacts related to this document.

Use site to network, and learn and understand

Get word suggestions.

Download a "PL grammar rules" list.

Get simple, usable, "short" examples of plain language verbiage.

See a list of contacts for plain language consulting or advice.

Get "before & after" examples and the date on which the example was last updated (i.e. currency of the update).

Learn about new products that support PL (e.g. Stylewriter, Clearwriter, etc.)

Use a chat room to discuss/comment on PL and the site.

Find ways to present information clearly to different audiences, different ages.

Find ways to apply PL concepts to combining the use of graphics with text.

Find links to other relevant websites.

Determine if documents I've created meet current PL guidelines.

Find articles about PL.

Show me how PL can be a tool in my writing toolbox.

Show me info on PL through humor (worst "before" samples, etc.)

Find jobs

Get more background and context on PL so I can help my clients

Learn more about regulations

Academician

Find information that will help my students write papers on PL.

Learn more about the PL movement and connect with others involved.

Use the site as a source for networking and current information.

Use the site to find ways to start using PL at my university.

Use a chat room to discuss/comment on PL and the site.

Advocate

Get numbers.

Get impact: dollars saved. Find out how it reduces the documents I get, time to move the document through the statement

Find materials that bolster arguments.

Find news articles about PL to stay up-to-date.

Find information/arguments for PL presented in a format that is easy to pass on to others.

Find out who else is doing it.--- "working to get people involved" "Find family" even though the initiative is more popular... " get strength to go on."

Tell me how you know the government supports plain language.

Link to other PL resources.

See process change.

See process improve: dollars saved and processes made more effective.

Find something to support me when I have an argument with a lawyer (Brian Garner...*Plain Language for Lawyers*).

Get examples of:

- o notices
- o regulations
- o websites
- o different document types

Find out how to set up an awards program in my agency.

Find contacts in the media who might write a positive PL story. ("Friends of PL in the Press").

Learn about upcoming PL events.

Find out about new developments in this administration's support of PL.

Use a chat room to discuss/comment on PL and the site.

Use site to locate particular individuals related to PL.

Help people at remote agency locations write more clearly

I'm sick of the stuff I have to read--make it clearer.

Newcomer

See what I can get from this page

Define PL.

Find out why I need it.

Find out who else is doing this work.

Get text to steal & put in another document.

Get facts about PL (history, accomplishments, goals, challenges, etc.).

Find a before & after example to show my boss.

Find out what PL looks like.

Get a one-page sheet with essential PL information.

Find a list of questions that I haven't thought of.

Find out if there is a difference between "gov't to gov't" and "gov't to citizen."

Network with other PL people.

Find out what newsletters and associations are available.

Read press and news about PL.

Find answers to grammar/syntax choice questions such as "e-mail vs. email" and links to other grammar resources.

Find out how to judge if something is clear.

Find out who judges if something is clear.

Get examples: is there a way to say it more clearly?

Get links to other relevant sites, including specific documents hard to find elsewhere.

Find out if I can get CEUs (etc.) as a professional

Find out if there are local chapters before I join

Find out if there are personal advocates to help me with a question

Find out information about past conferences (track record)

Press

Find out why this movement is noteworthy.

Get list of knowledgeable contacts that I can talk to.

Get history of PL.

Get quick list of current activities, news-related items, that will give me facts for my story.

Find out whether there is an awards program, and if so, who has won awards

Skeptics

Learn about the arguments against PL.

Learn what PL advocates are saying to refute the arguments.

HOW YOU WILL GET THERE

--- ENVISION HOW SITE WILL MEET USER GOALS

Project Schedule

Separate document

Resources

Separate document

Challenges & Limitations

Discussed

PART IV: FIND OUT IF YOU'VE ARRIVED

Benchmarks

*identified

Notes on Signoff

Agreement reviewed by committee and signed by A. Cheek by **July 8, 2004**.