

State Standards for Internet Markup Language

Adopted by the Information Services Board (ISB) on December 1999

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[Definitions](#)

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to define statewide standards for Internet Markup Language so that employees, citizens, and businesses can access Digital Government information and services in a consistent, easy-to-use manner.

These standards are designed to:

- Provide **users** consistency and ease-of-use for accessing digital government services while using industry standard Web browsers and technologies.
- Provide **Web-based application developers, Web developers, and Web content creators** with minimum levels of non-proprietary markup languages for creating Web-based services that are universally accessible by a variety of technologies.

Statutory Authority

The provisions of RCW 43.105.041 detail the powers and duties of the Information Services Board (ISB), including the authority to develop statewide or interagency information services and technical policies, standards, and procedures.

Scope

These standards apply to all executive and judicial branch agencies and educational institutions, as provided by RCW 43.105, that operate, manage, or use information technology services or equipment to support critical state business functions.

Exemptions

None.

Standards

The Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML) 1.0 is the state Internet standard for creating new Web-based services including Web-based applications and Web sites. Alternately, Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) 4.01 may be used depending on business needs, but is not recommended for new Web-based applications.

Beginning August 12, 2005, all new development of Web-based services shall incorporate the new standards where applicable and compatible. Web sites or Web applications developed, or under development, prior to August 12, 2005 are not required to be in conformance with XHTML 1.0 or HTML 4.01 until these applications are re-designed.

Considerations

Agencies should identify their business and functional needs, as well as their technology resources and tools, to help them decide which version of the standard to use. Although XHTML 1.0 is the preferred standard for new Web sites, some Web development tools used to create and maintain content may not support it.

While industry standard browsers such as Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Netscape's Navigator generally support XHTML 1.0 and HTML 4.01, some features may be supported differently. Additionally, some browsers may support non-standard features.

Web site and Web application developers should test for compatibility and usability with their intended audience.

Basic Principles for XHTML and HTML

XHTML and HTML are common mark-up languages used for presenting information via the Internet. HTML is based on a limited, defined set of variables and has gone through various iterations to be able to deliver additional information like graphics, sound, and video. A Web browser, such as Internet Explorer or Netscape, interprets the HTML and presents the information to the user.

XHTML 1.0 is the latest World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) recommendation for creating Web content. XHTML document types are XML-based, and are designed to work with XML-based user agents. XHTML is extensible and allows for additional sets of variables to be created so that additional content can be delivered via the Web.

Three flavors of XHTML 1.0 are used to create Web-based content:

- *XHTML 1.0 Transitional* – Used for Web pages written for the general public.
- *XHTML 1.0 Strict* – Used for clean structural markup, free of any markup associated with layout. Used together with W3C's Cascading Style Sheet language (CSS) to get the font, color, and layout effects needed.

- *XHTML 1.0 Frameset* - Used when the browser window is partitioned into two or more frames.

XHTML and HTML are non-proprietary and can be created and processed by a wide range of tools, from simple plain text editors to readily available Web development products. Recommendations for XHTML and HTML are published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).